

TRAIN BRAIN PROJECT REPORT BY CROATIAN PARTICIPANTS

The youth exchange took place from 16 to 23 June 2025 in Rijeka, Croatia, at Dom Učenika Sušak (High School Dormitory Sušak), which also acted as the local partner of the project. The exchange gathered 24 participants from different countries and backgrounds, creating a diverse and dynamic learning environment. A significant part of the group, 16 participants, were young people with fewer opportunities, primarily facing geographical and educational obstacles. This diversity strongly shaped the learning process and reinforced the inclusive character of the exchange.

The main aim of the youth exchange was to foster personal development, intercultural learning, social inclusion, and active participation through non-formal education methods. Throughout the week, participants were encouraged to step outside of their comfort zones, reflect on their personal values, and actively contribute to group processes. The exchange provided a safe and supportive space where young people could express themselves freely, learn from one another, and build meaningful connections.

Activities and Learning Process

The programme was carefully designed to balance educational content, experiential learning, and social interaction. Activities included ice-breakers, team-building exercises, thematic workshops, group discussions, simulations, creative tasks, reflection groups, and intercultural evenings. Many activities were based on learning by doing, allowing participants to gain knowledge through experience rather than through traditional classroom-based approaches.

Particular emphasis was placed on cooperation, communication, empathy, and critical thinking. Through group work and problem-solving tasks, participants learned how to work in multicultural teams, manage conflicts, and respect different perspectives. Interactive workshops encouraged participants to reflect on their own identities, backgrounds, and opportunities, while also gaining insight into the realities faced by others.

Outdoor activities and informal learning moments, including visits to the beach and the city of Rijeka, played an important role in strengthening group cohesion. These moments allowed participants to continue learning in a relaxed setting, where conversations naturally developed and friendships were formed. Evening activities, such as games, social gatherings, and intercultural sharing, further supported bonding and intercultural exchange.

An important added value of the exchange was the involvement of students and staff of Dom Učenika Sušak. They had the opportunity to participate in selected activities, which enriched the programme and strengthened the connection between international participants and the local community. This cooperation allowed for mutual learning and helped make the exchange more inclusive and locally rooted.

Methods Used

The exchange was based on non-formal education methods, focusing on participant-centred learning. Methods such as group work, peer learning, reflection circles, role-playing, creative expression, and experiential learning were widely used. Daily reflection sessions allowed participants to process their experiences, express emotions, and connect activities with personal learning outcomes.

Special attention was given to creating an inclusive environment for participants with fewer opportunities. Activities were adapted to different learning styles and educational backgrounds, ensuring that everyone could participate equally and feel valued. Facilitators encouraged mutual support within the group and promoted a culture of understanding and solidarity.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the exchange, participants reported significant learning outcomes on both personal and social levels. Many participants developed greater self-confidence, improved their communication skills, and became more aware of their own strengths and potential. They gained a deeper understanding of intercultural differences and similarities, as well as increased tolerance and openness towards diversity.

Participants with educational obstacles especially benefited from the practical and experiential nature of the activities, which allowed them to learn in ways that suited them better than formal education settings. Those facing geographical obstacles expressed that the exchange broadened their horizons and gave them new motivation to engage in international opportunities.

Impact and Follow-up

The impact of the youth exchange extended beyond the project duration. Participants expressed strong motivation to stay active in youth work, participate in future Erasmus+ projects, and share their experiences within their local communities. Many reported increased interest in volunteering, civic engagement, and intercultural cooperation.

For the local partner, Dom Učenika Sušak, the exchange strengthened international cooperation and opened new perspectives for involving young people and staff in future non-formal learning activities. The project contributed to greater awareness of inclusion and equal opportunities within the local environment.

In conclusion, the youth exchange successfully achieved its objectives by providing a meaningful learning experience that combined education, inclusion, and intercultural dialogue. The strong focus on participants with fewer opportunities, combined with high-quality non-formal methods and local involvement, ensured a lasting positive impact on both participants and the hosting community.