



SFERA
INTERNATIONAL



2023 SFERA ANNUAL REPORT





Motto

**Be the change
you want
to see in the
world
~ Gandhi**

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About Us

The Association for Sustainable Development SFERA International – Bitola (in continuation: SFERA International) focuses on youth and all citizens of the municipality of Bitola to achieve its main goals, activities, and actions in accordance with our mission. We want to raise awareness and educate local communities, using non-formal education methods, about environment protection, cultural and natural heritage, healthy lifestyle, long-term sustainable youth development, and youth active participation through volunteerism in North Macedonia. SFERA International, as an association, will achieve its goals with coordination and regulations determined by the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as other legal norms which regulate this area. A member of the Association can be any citizen, in coordination with the Statute of the association. Membership in the association is voluntary, and can be achieved by accepting the Statute of the association, the goals of the association, and signing an application. The organisation has more than 600 members with profiles ranging from high-school students to professionals.

We first started working with the program "Youth in Action" because of the common project topics such as environment and sport, art and culture, national heritage, health, etc.

Currently, we work with the Erasmus+ program to achieve our goals on an international level in order to create a bigger youth impact.



Our vision

SFERA International's vision is to become one of the largest internationally focused NGOs in North Macedonia. We want to provide the citizens of North Macedonia with the opportunity to train in youth work, harness skills that will make them well-rounded citizens, and the opportunity to learn more about Europe as a whole and the EU.

Our mission

The organisation's mission is to raise awareness and to educate communities throughout North Macedonia through non-formal education methods on a variety of topics including environmental protection, cultural awareness, healthy lifestyle, youth development, sport, art, and active participation through volunteerism in North Macedonia and Europe.



Goals/ Objectives

- Protection of the environment, cultural and natural heritage.
- Promoting sustainable development and the usage of alternative sources of energy.
- Promoting healthy lifestyle – sport, healthy diet.
- Development of professional and leadership skills among young people.
- Education of youngsters in the field of crisis management (floods, earthquakes, fires, erosion and other natural disasters).
- Promoting non-formal education and encouraging the creation of systems to support young on local, national and international level.
- Promoting youth activism and active citizenship among young people and informing youth about all the opportunities they have.
- Raising the awareness of equality, tolerance, democracy and the introduction of human rights to the youngsters.
- Support and facilitate the process of Europeanization of the country.
- Providing primary free legal aid to citizens from vulnerable categories.

Values and Competences

- Environmental Responsibility
- Ecology and Recycling
- Sustainable Development
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Human and Youth Rights
- Volunteering
- Tolerance
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Democracy
- Youth Empowerment
- Active Citizenship

Our History



2007

SFERA International – Bitola was first established as an informal group in 2007.

2009

However, in July 2009, it was officially registered as an NGO in North Macedonia. The general goal of SFERA International – Bitola is through non-formal methods to educate the population in North Macedonia about the protection of the environment, cultural and natural heritage, youth empowerment, and to raise the awareness of all age groups about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and its benefits.

2015

In March 2015, the organization changed its Statute to focus on youth sustainability development, and youth empowerment, based on its values and competencies.

SFERA has worked on projects focusing on:

- Developing leadership skills and democracy among youth
- Encouraging youth to get active in their community and take care of their country
- Organizing training's, workshops, and camps on a national and international level
- Networking with national and international organizations and networks.

Team Members



Milcho Duli



Katerina Popovska



Mende Sekulovski



Evgenija Geramitchioska



Martin Mojanovski



Snezana Bojkovska

Donors and Supporters



Membership, Coalition and Network

National Networks



National Youth Council
of Macedonia



International Networks



Structure and Management

SFERA International has every year a General Assembly where the board is changing and is bringing the yearly program of projects planned for the next year. Regarding the structure, it is not changing a lot as we have set up a good working team. The human resources of SFERA organization consist of staff and volunteers that help bring SFERA, as an NGO organization, to be more active in local and international projects. All people involved in the organization have the skills and expertise needed to be involved in future activities, and youth work in the community. The organization consists of decision-makers who focus on development, youth, and local, national, and international initiatives. Below are some of the key members of the organization who focus on the organization's engagement, programs, and development.

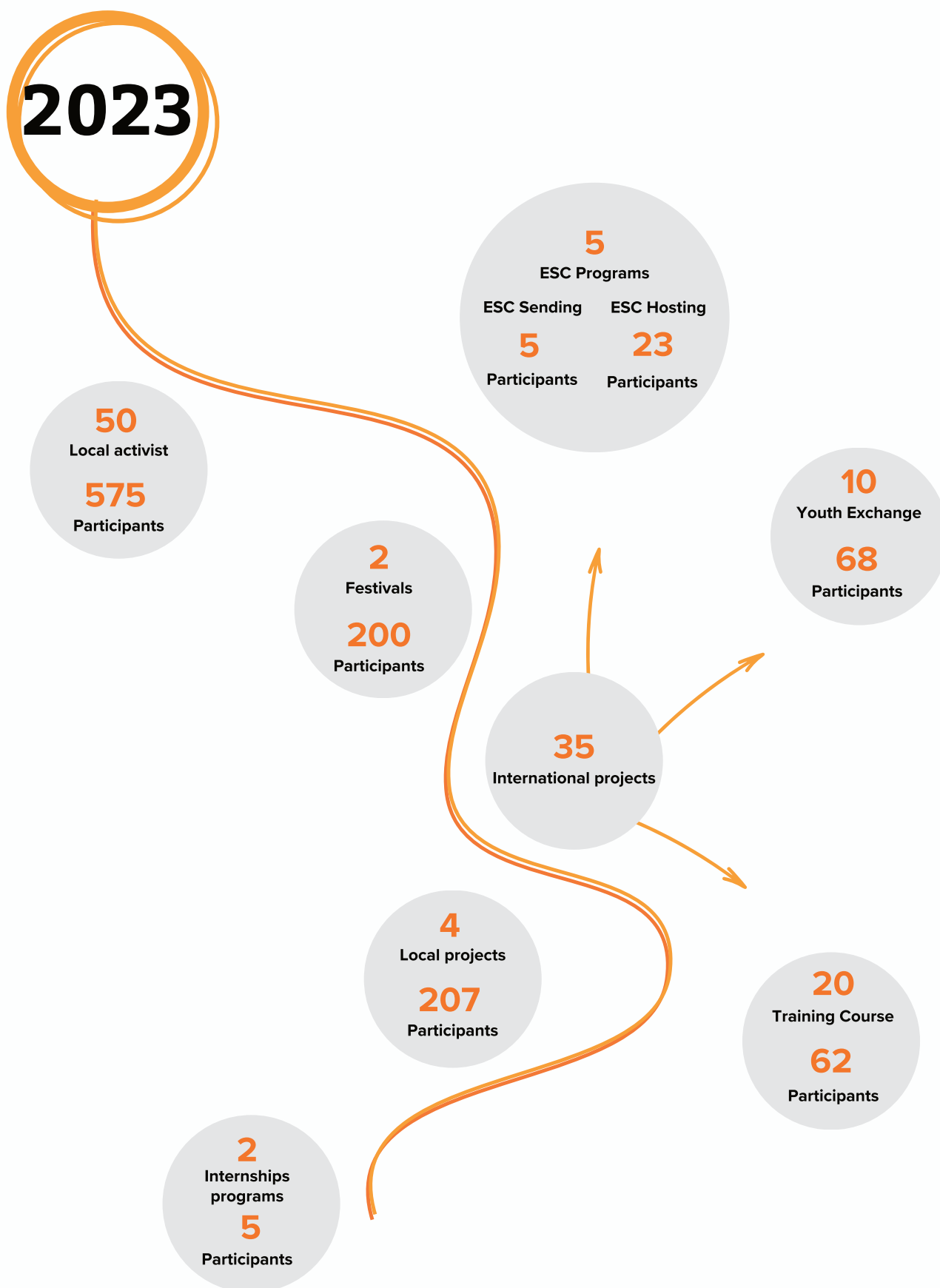
Milcho Duli is the President and one of the founders of the NGO Sfera. He has more than 15 years of experience in the youth work sector and has been working hands-on with the youth organization since its beginning. He has a Master's Degree in Economy; however, youth work, social development, and project management are his passion. He has been active in many local and international activities organized by SFERA INTERNATIONAL which have a big impact on a local and national level of dissemination, especially in the field of education focusing on youngsters to develop skills and competencies. On an international level, he has participated in a great number of Erasmus + projects (and Youth in Action projects) as a participant and trainer in more than 15 Training courses in different countries in Europe. Milcho has a very wide experience, especially in the areas of non-formal and informal education, leadership, democracy, human rights, entrepreneurship, and employability as his primary learning. He brought the non-governmental organization to the next level of achievement in all sectors. Sfera was awarded in the years 2015- 2018 as the Most active and popular NGO in Bitola and the Most Successful NGO in Bitola in 2019 thanks to all projects and great work done in the years of 2013- 2014-2019.

Mende Sekulovski is the Vice President of SFERA International and an active youth worker in the organization with 6 years of volunteering experience with the NGO and 8 year of working experience. He has participated in over 50 Youth Exchanges and Training Courses. He is always motivated to work with the youths to share and learn new non-formal methods and techniques. The experience that he has had during the last 8 years on working with youth projects has made him a skilled project writer and coordinator. He is an expert about Erasmus + programme and ESC regarding the promotion of youths, democracy, inclusion and self-development. He holds a Bachelor of law and Masters Degree of Criminal Law.

Katerina Popovska is a project manager, youth worker and the general secretary of Sfera International. She has been actively working with youth for about 7 years; however, she has been volunteering with SFERA organization for over 14 years. She has previous experience in working with local youth to promote and empower leadership, democracy and self-development. On an international level, she has successfully implemented a large number of youth exchanges and training courses, and has participated in many trainings and seminars to develop her skills in working with youth. Throughout the years with the organization, she's gained project management and leadership skills that makes her one of the most active youth workers in Sfera. In 2021 she finished a course for youth workers and is among the first nationally certified youth workers in the country. Katerina holds a Bachelor in Financial Management, and is currently working on her Master's thesis's topic "Social responsibility of companies in North Macedonia, and the connection with the profit."

Evgenija Geramitchioska is a project assistant at SFERA International since 2021. At the age of 18, she was introduced non-informal education and the non-governmental sector for the first time, and from that moment on, she fell in love with non-formal education. Since then, she has been active in SFERA as a local volunteer, and an international volunteer and she has participated in 20 youth exchanges and training courses. Her desire, passion, and love is the non-governmental sector, which works with young people, especially on topics such as human rights and the environment. She has a Bachelor of International law and law of the European Union and now she is preparing her master's thesis. In addition to this, she also graduated from the Human Rights Academy and has a passion for languages, especially German. Her passion is to travel and visit new places and she loves to read books.

Our Year in Numbers





Local Activities

Movie Nights

23 January 2023 Youth Centre, Bitola

1 May 2023 Youth Centre, Bitola

3 August 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

3 November 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

5 December 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

SFERA International hosted a series of engaging movie nights at the Youth Centre in Bitola, each offering unique themes and thought-provoking discussions.

On January 23, "In the Fade," a film about the aftermath of a terrorist attack as seen through the eyes of Katja, a grieving widow seeking retribution for the murders of her son Rocco and her Turkish immigrant husband Nuri, captivated the audience. The screening prompted reflections on grief, justice, and the cycle of violence as attendees pondered what they would do in Katja's shoes.

On May 11, the movie "Wall-E" was shown, emphasising environmental issues and sparking conversations about personal responsibility, environmental activism, and the urgent need for action to mitigate climate change.

On August 3, the movie "Allied" was presented, narrating a tale of love and espionage during World War II. The film's intricate plot and themes of trust and loyalty amidst war led to lively discussions among attendees, who delved into the complexities of human relationships in times of conflict.

On November 3, a movie called "Narvik" was featured, which is about a World War II battle in a town called Narvik in Norway. The movie was interesting because it showed how the German leader experienced his first defeat in this battle. People enjoyed watching the film together, and it helped create a sense of community and interest in history among the attendees.

On December 5, the movie "Princess Mononoke" was featured, encouraging contemplation on the relationship between humanity and nature and advocating for environmental awareness and sustainability. The screening served as a catalyst for further engagement in environmental awareness and activism.

Overall, these movie nights provided not only entertainment but also opportunities for reflection and dialogue on important social, environmental, and historical issues, fostering a sense of community and shared understanding among attendees.

Intercultural events

January 18,, 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

11 August 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

20 October 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

20 December 2023 Youth Centre, Bitola

SFERA International organised an intercultural event on January 18 to showcase volunteers from Turkey and Algeria, who presented their traditional food, dances, and culture. Turkish volunteers prepared dishes like baklava and kisir, while Algerian volunteers shared hmis appetisers and ksra bread. Attendees learned about the history and way of life of both countries.

The second intercultural night was held on August 11. This event celebrated the cultural heritage of Italy and Turkey and featured Italian cuisine such as pasta and pizza, alongside Turkish music and dance performances. The night emphasised cultural exploration and connection.

The third intercultural event was held on October 20. This event celebrated the cultural diversity of the Netherlands and Turkey, offering attendees a taste of cultural dances and culinary delights from both countries. It aimed to foster understanding and appreciation among participants.

The last intercultural event for the year was held on December 20. Through quizzes, presentations, and traditional foods, volunteers from Turkey, the USA, Portugal, Austria, North Macedonia, and Bangladesh hosted this event to highlight cultural exchange. It provided insights into various cultural backgrounds and promoted appreciation for diversity.

Across the series of intercultural nights at Bitola Youth Centre, diverse cultures came together, fostering understanding and connection. From Turkish and Algerian flavours to Italian and Dutch traditions, each event offered a unique glimpse into global diversity. Through food, dance, and shared stories, attendees gained valuable insights and forged meaningful connections. These nights served as powerful reminders of the beauty of diversity and the importance of building bridges across cultures. As participants departed, they carried with them not only memories but also a deeper appreciation for the richness of human culture.

Karaoke nights

30 January 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

1 August 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

16 August 2023 Vezilka Bitola

19 December 2023 Youth Centre, Bitola

The first karaoke nights, held on January 30, 2023, brought together young people from Bitola and SFERA International employees for a night of uninterrupted entertainment. Participants sang their favourite songs in various languages, including English, Macedonian, Turkish, French, and Serbian. The night ended with applause and gratitude towards the organiser, leaving behind cherished memories captured in photos.

On August 1, 2023, at the Youth Centre in Bitola, a karaoke night workshop was held, creating an incredibly enjoyable experience. Ten lively participants embarked on a nostalgic musical journey through the 90s and 00s, singing a diverse selection of retro songs spanning pop, rock, and R&B genres. Solo performances highlighted individual talents, while duets showcased delightful harmonies. The evening left a lasting impression, combining the magic of music with a sense of camaraderie, making it an unforgettable event filled with joy and connection.

On August 16, 2023, at Vezilka in Bitola, there was an amazing karaoke night. Volunteers filled the place with energy, singing songs in Turkish, Macedonian, and English, creating a joyful atmosphere. Everyone who joined in and showed off their singing skills deserves a big shoutout. Let's keep the fun going and look forward to more exciting events ahead!

On December 19, our international volunteers organised a festive Christmas Karaoke Night at the Youth Centre, bringing together attendees for a joyous celebration. The event was filled with singing as participants enthusiastically performed Christmas classics and more, complemented by dancing and socializing. It was an evening that fostered camaraderie and a festive spirit among all those present.

Art Attack

19 April 2023, Mladi Hub Bitola

17 August 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

In order to promote creativity, community, and mental health through art, SFERA International organized the transformative Art Attacks at the Youth Center Bitola

Collage Art Attack (19 April, 2023): **Art Attack: "Embrace Your Canvas of Emotions" (17 August, 2023):**

- This event focused on collage art, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to express their creativity.
- Participants created stunning works of art, showcasing intricate designs and bold patterns.
- Beyond art, the event aimed to provide a space for socialisation and building connections among young people.
- The event successfully fostered a sense of community, with attendees engaging in conversations, exchanging ideas, and collaborating on art pieces.
- This workshop centred on the healing power of art and its connection to mental well-being.
- Participants embarked on a journey of self-expression, using art as a medium to navigate their emotions.
- Guided activities facilitated self-reflection, allowing participants to tap into their emotions through colours, shapes, and textures on canvas.
- The workshop provided a supportive and non-judgmental space, fostering connections among participants with shared experiences.
- Through the act of creation, the workshop celebrated the beauty of imperfections, the magic of self-care, and the strength of the human spirit.
- Participants came together to create, heal, and celebrate, bridging the worlds of art and mental well-being.

Both events highlighted the transformative potential of art in fostering creativity, community, and mental well-being, providing attendees with enriching experiences and opportunities for self-expression and growth.



Deep Talk

6 July 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

6 October 2023, Ulaf Ste Coffee Bar Bitola

A deep talk was organised by our ESC volunteers on July 6. We discussed favourite TV series, movies, and books, but also how to improve your English and meet new friends.

On October 6, our ESC volunteers held the second Deep Talk event that took place in Ulaf Ste Café. The Deep Talk Event was designed using the "36 Questions that Lead to Love" questionnaire. A psychologist created the questionnaire with the intention of fostering closer relationships between strangers. In a study at the State University of New York, psychologist Arthur Aron explored whether intimacy between two strangers could be accelerated. What he came up with were the 36 questions that lead to love. Thus, as an experimental event, we have used this questionnaire to build deeper connections between the participants. Each participant picked a question from the SFERA Questionnaire Glass, and other participants listened to their detailed responses to those questions. The event has been fun and informative, and it led to thorough conversations.

Exhibition of works of art on the theme „Women Empowerment“

8 March 2023, Mladi Hub

On the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8th), an exhibition on the theme "Women Empowerment " was organised in MladiHab in Bitola. The exhibition marked the struggle for economic, political, and social equality for women!

Under the direction of Buba M. Solak, Ljubica Buba Solak, one of the best painters in Bitola, 8 young artists painted the pieces. The exhibition featured a presentation of the works, a cocktail reception, networking opportunities for the artists with local guests, and a discussion.

After the event concluded, some of the painted works were donated to Mladi Hab Bitola, while others were donated to public institutions in the Bitola municipality. Our goal was to support and promote young artists from the Bitola region, as well as provide them with a platform to promote their work, thereby directly contributing to spreading the message of gender equality and gender equity.

This event was part of the project "MladiHab: Overcoming Inequality Among Young People," implemented by the National Youth Council of Macedonia and Stella Network, an organisation that contributes to improved access to educational and employment opportunities for girls and women. The British Embassy in Skopje provided funding for the project, which had as its goals to support and encourage girls and young women to become more involved in society and to create equal access to opportunities in public life, the private sector, and in the decision-making process at the local and national levels.

"Bitola Photo Contest"

The Bitola Photo Contest Puts Environmental Pollution in Focus

21 March 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

SFERA International was investigating the environmental issues in Bitola!

We invited residents of Bitola to fill out a form to better understand environmental issues in the area. The form was open to anyone living in Bitola and consisted of 14 questions, including multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Our aim was to increase environmental awareness in Bitola based on the insights provided by local residents regarding environmental issues.

7 April 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

Twelve striking photographs of the pollution plaguing Bitola were submitted to our photo contest. The contest aimed to raise awareness about the grim state of our environment, as the pictures revealed the extent of littering, urban decay, and other factors contributing to the city's environmental degradation. Young people who were trying to capture the stark reality of Bitola's pollution in the most inventive and striking ways possible took the photos. Our judges had a difficult task ahead as they evaluated these images based on their impact, originality, technical quality, and overall message. A winner was announced on Thursday, April 7, and we shared the top photos on our social media platforms. This photo contest aimed to inspire everyone to take action and take care of the environment so that, together, we could create a more sustainable and healthy future for Bitola.

Celebrating Earth Day

22 April 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

SFERA International, in celebration of Earth Day, organised a workshop titled "Art for the Environment" at Youth Center Bitola. The event aimed to involve young people from the local community and raise awareness about the importance of protecting the planet through upcycling workshops. During the workshop, participants developed ideas and created artistic items from plastic bottles and natural materials such as leaves, rocks, and tree bark.

Charades Night

19 April, 2023 Youth Center Bitola

On April 19, 2023, SFERA International organised 'Charades Night' at the Youth Centre Bitola. Participants enjoyed a lively game night centred around the theme of "films and books." After a brief explanation of the rules, everyone enthusiastically engaged in the gameplay, acting out scenes, characters, and book covers to convey clues. Laughter and socialising filled the room as attendees guessed each other's actions and shared their own interpretations. The event fostered a sense of camaraderie and was a fun evening that brought everyone closer together.



Grand opening of Youth Centre Bitola

25 May 2023 Youth Centre Bitola

The grand opening of the Youth Centre Bitola on May 25, 2023, was a momentous occasion eagerly anticipated by all. It marked the culmination of months of meticulous planning, dedicated effort, and unwavering determination. The realisation of the centre's vision was a testament to the collective passion and commitment of everyone involved. The centre's calendar was thoughtfully curated to cater to the interests and needs of its youthful community. Beyond just a physical space, the Youth Centre Bitola symbolises hope, opportunity, and empowerment for the young people it serves. It is a place where dreams can be nurtured, talents can be discovered, and aspirations can be realised.

Gratitude to all who contributed, Municipality of Bitola, the Union for Youth Work, MladiHub, SFERA International, YMCA, MKC Bitola, and all others who contributed in any way to the opening of this youth center.

Let's cook together

28 June 2023, Mladi Hub Bitola

We cooked, socialised, and had fun to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the National Youth Council of Macedonia - NYCM - KRNМ.

MladiHub and SFERA International organised the culinary workshop through the rich flavours of the Balkans! The event was organised in honour of the jubilee 10th birthday of the National Youth Council of Macedonia! In this unique gastronomic experience, we gathered recipes from North Macedonia, Turkey, and Albania to explore the art of cooking traditional Balkan food. Participants were able to boast about a vivid culinary heritage, making this intercultural cooking adventure a delightful exploration of taste and tradition. The assembled youth made delicious dishes such as stuffed peppers, beans, moussaka, lentil soup, kisir salad, and Shopska salad. After various tasty food tastings, a DJ party was held for all visitors!



"Find and Maintain Your Balance"

July 13, 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

The workshop speakers were participants in the training "Find Your Balance" held in Tirana, Albania.

The following topics were covered in this workshop:

- Healthy lifestyle
- Economic and ecological lifestyle
- Maintaining balance in everyday life
- Taking care of the body and mind
- Building skills for emotional balance

World Coffee

14 July 2023 Ulaf Ste Bitola

We held our World Coffee event in Ulaf Ste! The event was held by our Turkish volunteers, and we talked about psychology, sociology, addiction, and the environment. Thank you very much to everyone who participated. See you next week with new topics!

Casual Ping-Pong Tournament

20 July 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

SFERA International turned into a buzzing hub for ping pong lovers on July 20th, hosting a laid-back tournament that was all about fun and friendly rivalry. Everyone from beginners to seasoned players showed up, paddles in hand, ready to give it their best shot and maybe snag one of the coveted top spots. The vibe was super chill, with lots of laughter and high-fives as players battled it out across the tables. In the end, the three coolest players walked away with certificates, but it was the laughs and the shared love for the game that were the real winners. It was just another awesome day at the Youth Centre, where good times and good sports come to play.



Learning Turkish language

19 July 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

Merhaba! Merhaba! Bugün nasılsın was one of the words that we learned with our Turkish volunteers in our Turkish language lesson. We had a lot of fun while learning simple conversation phrases and how to introduce ourselves in Turkish while getting to know their culture a little more up-close.

Let's Explore

21 July 2023, Bukovo

Our amazing volunteers led an adventurous walk to Bukovo, where we explored the serene beauty of the Bukovski Monastery and its picturesque surroundings. Immersed in the tranquility of nature, we marveled at the historical and cultural richness of the area. It was a day of connection, both with nature and our shared heritage.

Types of trees in Bitola

26 July 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

Our volunteer Milan held a lecture on tree species in the city of Bitola and its surroundings. Attendees had the opportunity to learn several interesting facts about the trees they encounter daily in their environment and to familiarize themselves with the origins of the species, their use, and their importance to people.

Board Game Night

8 August 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

We came together with people from different nationalities for a night of laughter and epic game battles. Chess strategies were plotted, high-stakes deals were struck in Monopoly, gravity-defying Jenga towers left us in awe, and Twister twisted us into fits of giggles!

Learning Italian

4 August, 10 August, 14 August, and 15 August 2023 Youth Centre Bitola

Our Italian volunteer organized several Italian lessons. Participants learned simple Italian phrases. We studied the verb "to be" and simple grammar. Additionally, the volunteers incorporated cultural insights, enhancing participants' understanding beyond language basics. Each lesson fostered a supportive environment, encouraging participants to practice conversational Italian with newfound confidence.

Agro Ecology

9 August 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

Our Italian volunteer dove into agroecology through engaging presentations and interactive sessions. Agroecology's mission is to strike a harmonious balance between agricultural production and environmental preservation. By highlighting traditional and extensive farming methods, the programme aimed to safeguard agrobiodiversity and stunning landscapes. With the meta-research, it was discovered that the use of agroecology does not impact agricultural production, and in some cases, agricultural production has increased significantly.

Fabulous Girls' Night!

15 August 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

It was an opportunity to unwind and connect, and we had a blast and an unforgettable girls' night.

Game On, Sip & Socialise, Glam Up, Self-Care Soiree, Make New Friends—these are the words that are describing this night! We also had a dress code, or better said, dress color, so everyone could feel free to express their unique style! Whether they wanted to rock casual chic or glam it up, the choice was theirs; they just had to wear something pink. It was a night of fun, laughter, and unforgettable moments.

Digital Marketing

23 August, 31 August, and 6 September 2023 Youth Centre Bitola

Our Turkish volunteers organized digital marketing workshops. Attendees were presented with the opportunity to dive into the captivating realm of the digital world, uncovering the intricacies of digital marketing secrets. The event offered a chance to grasp fundamental principles, receive tips on social media strategies and content management, learn techniques in search engine optimisation (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM), and unveil the intricacies of effective email marketing and automation. It provided an interactive experience catering to everyone from beginners to intermediate levels, offering a fantastic opportunity to both learn and network.



Make your own collage

15 September 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

Our Turkish volunteers organised a creative and artsy gathering where we made collages together, cutting and pasting from an eclectic mix of magazines and printouts we adored. Each of us crafted our own unique masterpiece, infusing personal touches and imaginative flair into our designs. Some of us chose to hang our collages in our rooms as a vibrant testament to our creativity, while others gifted their artful creations to best friends, sharing a piece of this memorable experience. It was a fun-filled event that brought out the artist in each of us, leaving us with tangible memories of a delightful day spent in the company of friends and creativity.

Want to try something new? Learn to knit

18 September 2023, Youth Center Bitola

Our Turkish volunteers hosted an exciting knitting activity that brought together enthusiasts eager to unleash their creativity. Participants crafted their own cosy scarves and stylish berets, adding a personal touch of warmth and style to the winter season. It was a delightful session where needles clicked, yarns intertwined, and laughter filled the air, leaving everyone with not just handmade accessories but also cherished memories.

Find your peace in the sunset

12 October 2023

On Thursday, October 12th, our ESC volunteers successfully hosted the event "Find Your Peace in Sunset" at the Aeroplanes location. The gathering was marked by engaging ice-breaker games and lively conversations, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Participants seized the opportunity to enhance their English language skills through interactive and enjoyable activities, all set against the backdrop of a beautiful sunset. The event fostered a sense of community and active learning, making it a memorable and fun-filled experience for everyone involved.

Let's go on an adventure

18 September 2023

We embarked on a scenic hike in Bitola, gathering at the Youth Centre in Bitola. Our journey took us towards the enchanting Heraclea waterfall, followed by an ascent up the mountain. The hike, lasting approximately two hours, was both invigorating and picturesque. Participants came prepared, wearing comfortable shoes and equipped with water and snacks, ensuring a pleasant and energised experience. The rendezvous at the Youth Centre Bitola marked the beginning of a memorable adventure in nature.

Security in Love

26 October 2023, Youth Centre Bitola

On October 26th, 2023, our Turkish volunteers held a workshop at the Youth Centre in Bitola focused on fostering good and safe relationships. Participants engaged in discussions about setting personal boundaries, identifying red flags in relationships, and cultivating trust and respect with others. The event provided valuable insights and tools to help individuals ensure their safety and well-being in partnerships. It was a productive session that empowered attendees with the knowledge to build healthier, more secure relationships.

Social Day

9 November 2023

Peace begins with a smile. SFERA International, together with Youth Can, celebrated Social Day 2023. On this day, our volunteers and a student named Eva from Bitola spread messages of peace and love and had the opportunity to share some smiles with others! The idea of Social Day is to encourage young people to actively participate in positive changes in society. They get the chance to exchange a day at school for work of their own choice. This allows them to contribute to the realisation of youth projects and to advocate for social solidarity.

25th anniversary of the Pelagonija Association

17 November 2023

"Pelagonija Association" marked its 25th anniversary in Bitola, celebrating its efforts in fostering Macedonian-Greek cultural and academic cooperation. Notable figures, including Bitola's mayor, the Greek Ambassador of Skopje, and other dignitaries from both nations, graced the gala dinner event. The association's president, Mr. Evgenije Ristevski, highlighted the importance of civil collaboration for the mutual advancement of the two countries, particularly emphasizing youth engagement. A special mention was made of Marija Robe and Mr. Kristijan Veljanov for their significant contributions to the association's educational initiatives. Certificates of appreciation were awarded to key partners, including SFERA International, recognising their role in promoting international collaboration and understanding through educational projects. The event underscored the lasting impact of "Pelagonija's" work in bridging cultural ties between Macedonia and Greece.



Green Quiz Night

24 November 2023

"Green Quiz Night" took place at the Youth Centre in Bitola, engaging attendees in an informative session on the environment, climate change, and sustainability. Our new volunteers, Joana and Karo, hosted the event, challenging participants with questions about crucial environmental issues, including the alarming amounts of plastic in our waters and the extensive food waste each year. The quiz night offered a fun and interactive way to deepen understanding of environmental matters, accompanied by snacks and music, making for an enjoyable and educational evening. The event not only tested but also expanded the environmental knowledge of all who joined, fostering a greater awareness of sustainability issues.

Democracy in Our Society

25 November 2023

Our volunteers delved into the theme of democracy in our society, recognising its paramount importance for societal progress and harmony. In a reflective post, they encouraged discussions on the role of democracy across various aspects of life, from national to local levels. They questioned how democracy shapes our daily realities, the adequacy of representation of democratic values and human rights in our society, and the ways to fortify these principles for a brighter future. The call to share personal insights on democracy and human rights aimed to gather diverse viewpoints, underscoring the significance of each individual's perspective in understanding and enhancing our democratic fabric.

Graphic Design Course

Lesson 1

29 November 2023

Our volunteer from Portugal, Joana, initiated a series of mini-courses on graphic design, offering an excellent starting point for those interested in learning the basics and applying their new skills hands-on. The first session of this educational series took place on Wednesday, November 29th. Participants joined us for this inaugural graphic design activity, enjoying a fun and interactive learning experience.

Lesson 2

6 December 2023

Our volunteer from Portugal, Joana, led the second activity in our graphic design series, focusing on the fundamental principles of graphic design. Participants delved into the intricacies of creating visually appealing designs and expanded their knowledge of design vocabulary. The session provided valuable insights into the art of graphic design, laying the groundwork for future creative projects.

Lesson 3

13 December 2023

At our Youth Centre, our volunteer Joana led a graphic design activity focused on Adobe Illustrator. The session started with an introduction to the use of vectorized images, color models, and an overview of Adobe Illustrator's tools. Participants then applied what they learned by creating their first vector drawings, actively engaging with the software under Joana's guidance.

Zero Waste Workshop

30 November 2023

Our volunteer from Austria, Karo, led a zero-waste workshop aimed at those curious about reducing their environmental footprint through everyday actions. Participants gathered to learn practical tips and engage in meaningful discussions on minimizing waste in their daily routines. The workshop also delved into simple DIY projects, encouraging attendees to repurpose items like old T-shirts and empty tin cans, giving them new life and purpose. For those who couldn't bring their own items, materials were provided, ensuring everyone could partake in this hands-on experience. The event was a step forward in fostering a more sustainable and environmentally conscious community.

Modern Systems for Sustainable Heating of Households in Bitola

6 December 2023

An informative presentation on "Modern Systems for Sustainable Heating of Households in Bitola" was held at IT CROWD. The event provided valuable insights into innovative heating solutions, focusing on sustainability and efficiency for local households. Attendees gained a deeper understanding of the latest advancements in home heating technologies designed to reduce environmental impact and promote sustainable living in Bitola.



Community Service Fair

5 December 2023

The 7th Annual Community Service Fair, hosted by the American Corner Bitola in collaboration with the Local Volunteering Council, took place on December 5, 2023, at the Centre for Culture in Bitola. From 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., local NGOs, institutions, and organizations had the opportunity to present their volunteering and internship programmes, fostering connections and exploring potential collaborations. The fair facilitated meaningful engagement among organizations and individuals passionate about volunteerism, highlighting the collective effort to make a positive impact in the community. In the lead-up to the fair, each participating entity was featured on social media, amplifying their work and available opportunities to a broader audience.

Volunteers Day

5 December 2023

On December 5th, to commemorate Volunteer Day, SFERA International and the Local Volunteering Council of Bitola hosted a volunteerism discussion at the Centre for Culture. The session, led by SFERA's president Milcho Duli and librarian Gordana Gjorgievska Nedelkovski, offered insights into the impactful role of volunteering within the community. The "World Café" activity further engaged participants in meaningful dialogues about volunteerism and social responsibility, encouraging a collaborative atmosphere. These discussions heightened awareness and a sense of duty among attendees, emphasizing the critical contribution of volunteers to societal betterment. The event wrapped up with a networking cocktail, leaving participants inspired to pursue their volunteer endeavors.

Democracy and societal structures

7 December 2023

Our Macedonian volunteers held an event that sparked dynamic conversations and brought forth new ideas, centred around discussions on democracy and societal structures led by our volunteers. The event featured a presentation on various societal systems and their applications in different countries, followed by an engaging interactive game. Participants tackled global issues, seeking creative solutions, an exercise that was both entertaining and thought-provoking, enhancing critical thinking skills. The discussions that ensued delved into the effectiveness of democracy across different nations.

The strangest laws in the world

12 December 2023

Our Macedonian volunteers hosted an intriguing event titled "Strange Laws from Around the World," where participants discovered some of the most bizarre and unusual laws still in effect today. Attendees were both bewildered and entertained by the range of strange legislation presented, from restrictions on playing too many non-Canadian artists on Canadian radio to the law in Samoa making it illegal to forget your wife's birthday. The event featured a lively discussion on these peculiar laws, enriched with anecdotes and stories that provided insight into the unique legal frameworks of various countries.

No Food Waste Game Night

14 December 2023

Our volunteer Karo hosted an engaging game night centred around the theme of food waste at our Youth Centre, providing both entertainment and education. The evening kicked off with a discussion on minimising food waste and its positive impacts on both our lives and the environment. Participants then dove into the game activities, which included a food storage puzzle, a quiz, and a round of bingo, all designed to highlight practical ways to prevent food waste. Through these interactive games, attendees gained valuable insights into sustainable food practices. The event underscored our commitment to sustainability and the collective effort required to drive positive change.

"Most Successful NGO in Bitola for 2022"

15 December 2023

SFERa International was recently awarded the "Most Successful NGO in Bitola for 2022" by Bitolski Vesnik, marking a significant achievement for the organization. This accolade reflects the collective effort and commitment of SFERA International's team, volunteers, and supporters who have contributed to meaningful community initiatives, including youth empowerment and environmental sustainability. The organisation expressed deep gratitude towards everyone involved in their journey, emphasising that such accomplishments are a result of shared dedication. This award not only highlights SFERA International's positive influence in Bitola but also reinforces the belief in collaborative efforts to create lasting change.



ECHO Academy

18 September 2023

SFERA International hosted the ECHO Academy in Bitola, successfully delving into the rich musical traditions of the Bitola region. Ten handpicked artists embarked on a journey to explore the area's ritual song heritage, engaging with both traditional and contemporary musical treasures, from UNESCO-listed celebrations to iconic dances. Participants drew inspiration from Bitola's ritual songs, collaborated with music historians and local musicians, and employed sustainable art techniques. By the end of the immersive 3-week programme, each artist had crafted a unique music concept, with the top three receiving grants to record their creations. The academy's activities, centred around the Youth Centre Bitola, offered a perfect blend of tradition and innovation, celebrating the vibrant rhythms of Macedonian culture

21 September 2023

The talented musicians from the ECHO Academy had the privilege of attending a masterclass on "Ethnographic and Ethnological Aspects of Bitola and its Region," led by the esteemed Msc Ljupka Stefanovska. As an M.Sc. in Ethnochoreology and assistant at the Department of Ethnochoreology at "Shtip" University College, Stefanovska brought a wealth of knowledge from her extensive involvement with the Cultural Artistic Society "Ilinden" at the Bitola Cultural Centre and the "Macedonia" Academic Ensemble. Participants delved into the melodies and rich cultural heritage of Bitola's traditional music, explored the fascinating world of ethnology and its influence on traditional songs, and gained insights into various dancing areas. The masterclass provided a profound understanding of the region's musical traditions, enriching the academy's curriculum and inspiring further exploration and creativity among the attendees. The journey of learning for our ECHO Academy musicians continued with a masterclass hosted by the esteemed Professor Goran Angelov, a distinguished faculty member at the Faculty of Music Art, Goce Delcev University of Štip. During this engaging session, the musicians delved into the rich melodies of North Macedonia's traditional instruments, including the tambura (a stringed instrument), kaval (flute), zurla (a double-reed woodwind instrument), and tapan (a large drum). They explored the history, usage, significance, and unique sounds these instruments contribute to the region's musical heritage. This masterclass significantly enriched the participants' understanding of North Macedonia's rich cultural heritage, adding depth and context to their musical education.

22 September 2023

On the third day of our ECHO Music Academy, our talented musicians attended a masterclass led by Vera Miloshevska Josifovska, a university professor and the esteemed vocalist of the Ljubojna band. The session offered an in-depth exploration of traditional folk music and singing, providing participants with the unique opportunity to delve into the essence of traditional folk melodies. Guided by Josifovska's expertise, they immersed themselves in the rich heritage of folk music, allowing their voices to harmonize with the timeless tunes passed down through generations. This masterclass not only enriched their musical repertoire but also deepened their connection to the cultural roots of the music.

The musicians from the ECHO Academy had the honor of being tutored by Saso Popovski, a distinguished professor at the Faculty of Music Arts at the University "Goce Delcev" in Stip, renowned for his expertise as a jazz guitarist and composer. They delved deeply into the intricacies of the music industry, gaining insights into the realm of world music, the unique ways artists in this genre express themselves, and key aspects of booking and promoting original music. This enlightening session not only expanded their understanding of the global music landscape but also inspired them to integrate these learnings into their artistic and professional pursuits.

25 September 2023

On the memorable day of September 25th in Skopje, our ECHO Academy musicians experienced a day filled with music, art, and cultural exploration. They were warmly received at the Faculty of Music, Faculty of Fine Arts, and Music High School in Skopje, where they were moved by the passionate performances of the students. The joy was contagious as our musicians joined the performances, sharing laughter and creating lasting memories. The adventure continued with a captivating walk through Skopje's Old Bazaar, adding a layer of historical charm to the day. A visit to Macedonia's oldest workshop and musical instrument shop, home to the first electric guitar in the country, was a highlight, marking the day as one of musical discovery, dance, history, and new friendships.



27 September 2023

As a part of ECHO Academy, we were delighted to host a vibrant jam session night at Везилка / Vezilka, where music lovers and creators gathered to share their talents on September 27, 2023. The night was a celebration of music and creativity, featuring an open stage that welcomed musicians of all levels. Artists from North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, the Netherlands, Colombia, and Bangladesh collaborated, creating a unique blend of styles and sounds. The enthusiastic and supportive audience added to the atmosphere, making the event a memorable occasion for everyone involved. It was a night of unforgettable melodies and connections, truly a testament to the power of music in bringing people together.

17 October 2023

We concluded our ECHO ACADEMIES music residency project with a grand finale pitching event at Porta-Jazz, where ECHO Academy's talented young artists presented their innovative pilot projects. Influenced by the ritual songs of Bitola, the artists transformed their inspirations into unique musical compositions after engaging deeply with music historians, participating in traditional festivities, and collaborating with local experts. The event celebrated the culmination of a 3-week intensive musical journey in Bitola, highlighting each artist's creative achievements. Special congratulations went to Nikola Andrejić, Emil Ejupi, and Carlos Hurtado Múnera, who stood out as the top artists of the evening, each earning a grant to record their exceptional musical concepts. The event was a vibrant testament to the artists' dedication and the rich cultural heritage of Macedonian music, supported enthusiastically by all attendees.



A photograph of a diverse group of people at an outdoor festival. In the foreground, a man in a grey polo shirt and khaki pants stands next to a woman in a black top and sunglasses. Behind them, a man in a black t-shirt with a 'V22' logo and khaki shorts stands next to a man in a yellow t-shirt and khaki shorts. A woman in a white top and red pants stands in the center. To the right, a man in a green t-shirt and black pants stands next to a man in a green t-shirt and black pants. In the background, a woman in a red top and light blue jeans stands next to a man in a white t-shirt. The scene is set outdoors with a brick path, grass, and a building with a red tiled roof in the background. A large orange circle is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

Festivals

Youth Festival - Experiencing Cooperation

5 September 2023, Valandovo, North Macedonia

On September 5th, in the heart of Valandovo, the Youth Festival 'Experiencing Cooperation' took place. A part of our team, along with 140 young people from Greece and North Macedonia, were part of this wonderful event. With this event, we proved that together we can overcome all mountains and build bridges of friendship. The youth demonstrated and showed how to collaborate!

Si-Do Back to School Happening

5 September 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia

Creative energy at Magnolia Square! For the second time under the open sky, the Si-Do Back to School happening transformed Magnolia Square into a magical world of music, colours, and creativity. The gathered children and their parents celebrated the beginning of the school year. This year, the event united children of all ages who expressed their talents in drawing, songwriting, and crafting through creative workshops. SI-DO stars with their hits inspired and motivated the creatives in the workshops, and the little ones enjoyed the face painting section. The presence of our teachers and volunteers provided the necessary support for the children. The dance club StepUp enriched the programme with a dance performance. Maja Andonovska Ilijevski and Clown Zagi filled the moments with even more fun, creating an incredible festive atmosphere for all attendees. The event concluded with a lottery, where the audience and participants had the chance to participate and win gifts. Si-Do Back to School Happening is an experience filled with joy, music, fun, and creativity. This event was a collaboration with PROLOCAL, SFERA International, Rotary Club Bitola Shirok Sokak, and the Municipality of Bitola.





Local projects

Youth Inclusive Local Communities

1 February 2022–31 December 2024, North Macedonia

The main goal of the project was to engage youth civil society organisations to provide support to their local communities and to use existing mechanisms for participation in local policies and decision-making processes that relate to their needs and the needs of their constituents. The main activities of the project included: strengthening the capacities of youth organisations and local youth councils through a series of workshops; monitoring the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies; evaluating the inclusiveness of young people in local governments in North Macedonia; drafting recommendations for policies; and supporting youth advocacy initiatives that increase youth participation in public policy. Partners of the project are: National Youth Council of Macedonia – NYCM, Local Community Development Foundation Shtip (LCDF Shtip), Youth Empowerment Platform Gostivar (YEP Gostivar), and SFERA International.

This project is funded by the European Commission through the European delegation of North Macedonia.

The specific objectives are:

- to assist local authorities in developing and implementing regulations and policies through the strengthening of youth participation mechanisms;
- to build the capacities of local youth NGOs;
- to encourage dialogue and social cohesion to combat discrimination and segregation.

Results:

The planned activities within the project aim to improve the implementation of local services provided for in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy and to strengthen local youth civic organisations to advocate for social inclusion, involving young people with disabilities and young people from vulnerable groups in local policy and decision-making processes, encouraging them to volunteer, engage in youth activism, and youth work to protect the interests of the youth. The project will contribute to bringing North Macedonia closer to EU integration by supporting innovative and proactive civic activism and volunteering to enhance local governance, with a special focus on including women and people with disabilities.

Activities in 2023:

Development and presentation of the monitoring report

6 October 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia

In 2023, the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies as the Public Policy Document were developed, and the results were presented at Mladi Hub Bitola on October 6th. At the event, Milcho Duli, the president of SFERA International, had the opening speech, and Ane Matevska, a programme manager at NMSM, presented the results from the monitoring report on the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

Strengthening and networking of NEET youth

16 March 2022–16 January 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia,

The project "Strengthening and networking of NEET youth" was part of the larger project "WB&T for EmploYouth," funded by the European Union in cooperation with the network "Youth Hub Western Balkan and Turkey Network," and aimed to contribute to the reduction of youth unemployment in the Municipality of Bitola through research, training, and an event for networking the business community with young people from the NEET group. The aim of the project was to increase the capacities of the NGO sector to promote methods and training for easier employment and retraining of young people. Through the planned activities, we contributed to raising awareness among other stakeholders about the importance of training and employment for young people from the NEET group.

Within the framework of the project "Strengthening and Networking of NEET Youth," implemented by SFERA International for 8 months, a series of events were conducted that explored the causes of youth unemployment in the Municipality of Bitola. Additionally, young people from the NEET category were trained, and we succeeded in networking them with companies from our region to enable them to continue their careers.

Activity in 2023:

Preparation of the final report.

The Local Volunteer Service Bitola

1 August 2022–1 September 2023, North Macedonia, Bitola

The Local Volunteer Service project stimulated local democracy by renewing and nurturing solidarity and volunteering among young people with the aim of their greater involvement in the community. Partners in the project are the Youth Cultural Centre - Bitola (MKC-Bitola) and SFERA International, already established civil organisations from Bitola that work with young people and actively participate in the creation of youth policies at the national and local level. The target group in the project were young men, boys, and women, aged 15–29, from Bitola. Due to the specificity of volunteering at three levels: personal development, solving specific problems, and the development of society, the project contributed to increasing civic activism among these young people through their active involvement in the process of designing and implementing local volunteer actions. For this project, two workshops and two training courses were held to strengthen capacity for volunteer management. As a result, five local problems were identified, and five actions were taken to improve living conditions in Bitola. The end result was to create a "local volunteer service" with 200 young people from Bitola. The "Local Volunteer Service Bitola" project was implemented within the framework of the Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 - ReLOaD2, which was financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Municipality of Bitola.

First Initiative

At the Aeroplanes

16 June 2023, Bitola

From the aeroplanes in Bitola, the view is crystal clear! Trash landed in the bins! More than 20 bags of trash were collected by volunteers from the Local Volunteer Service - Bitola. Back on June 16, 2023, over 40 volunteers cleaned the area known as "At the Aeroplanes" and Smolevo as part of the "Clean Runway" volunteer campaign by the Local Volunteer Service - Bitola. The need to carry out the campaign was driven by the factual situation that the "At the Airplanes" area is a neglected part of the city lacking ecological awareness, and this clean space is needed for many events since from there, Bitola is seen crystal clear! As part of the action, there was also a DJ on a simulated runway and a performance by some of the female volunteers dressed as flight attendants from recycled materials.

Second Initiative

Artistic interventions in public spaces

21 July 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia

Hatred on the walls of Bitola—an artistic outcry against hate speech through graffiti and drawings

Locations: SOU Taki Daskalo" - Bitola

OU Stiv Naumov - Bitola

Kindergarten Prolet – Bitola

Motivated by the idea that the wall is a mirror of the city, we transformed the hatred inscribed on some of Bitola's walls into love and happiness for children and youth.

Third initiative

Tumbe and Coffee and a Stage for the City

27 June 2023

Tumbe Cafe is a space with the potential for hosting cultural and artistic events. Therefore, let's keep it clean and raise awareness about recycling! This was our motto for the volunteer action "Tumbe and Coffee and a Stage for the City," held on June 27, 2023, at the Summer Stage of "Tumbe Cafe" - Bitola. Through a simulated scavenger hunt for waste and recycling, volunteers from the Local Volunteer Service - Bitola artistically expressed themselves by creating sculptures from the found materials.

The sculptures were displayed at the Summer Stage. The need to carry out this volunteer action is to restore the luster of the Tumbe Cafe's summer stage, to host more cultural and artistic events there, to express the desire of the youth through alternative art, and to make a call to the people of Bitola to keep their Tumbe Cafe clean and functional."

Fourth initiative

Re-bike Cycle

27 July 2023–11 August 2023

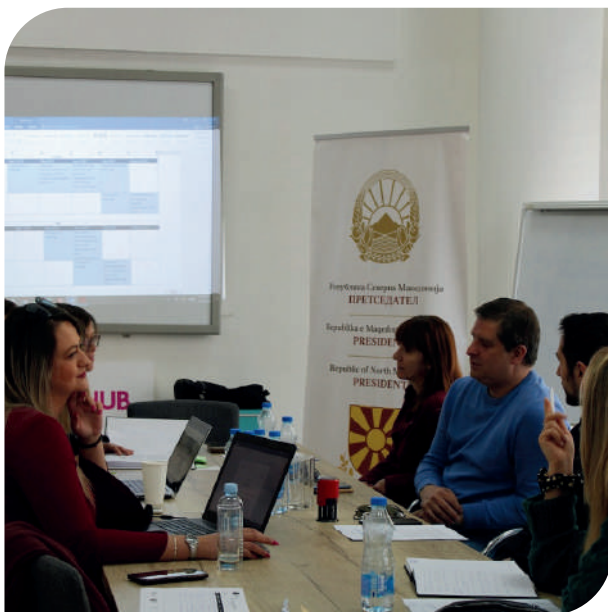
Our fourth initiative was "Re-bike Cycle," where we called on everyone who has an extra bike they are not using to give it to us to fix and then give to someone in real need to perform good deeds.

The volunteer action "Re-bike Cycle" promoted a healthy lifestyle and improved the cycling culture among the youth in Bitola. Through the "Re-bike Cycle" volunteer action, we collected 7 bicycles, repaired them, and donated them to the school "Mirka Ginova" Bitola, with whom we achieved successful cooperation. As part of the same action, we also set up a bicycle parking area in front of the student dormitory. Through the implementation of this volunteer action, we aimed to ease the mobility of students residing in the dormitory, allowing them to move to their schools more quickly and economically. In addition, through the same initiative, we organised sports activities in schools. Sports play a crucial role in the development of youth. It helps maintain good physical, emotional, and social health. Volunteering in sports is relatively unknown as a younger branch of sports management. Without volunteers, every sports event, especially the big ones, would be unimaginable to hold. The goal of the volunteer action "Re-bike Cycle (Sports Polygon)" was to promote sports activities through volunteering as a key element in the healthy growth and development of the youth, as well as an opportunity for socialising, competing, having fun, interacting, and spending less time in front of smart devices.

CLOSING EVENT OF THE PROJECT "LOCAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE BITOLA"

26 September 2023

On September 26th, the closing event of the "Local Volunteer Service Bitola" project, implemented by the Youth Cultural Centre - Bitola in partnership with SFERA International, was held within the framework of the Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 - ReLOaD2, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Municipality of Bitola. A video story created during the project was promoted at the event, and the project results were presented. The mayor of Bitola municipality greeted the attendees, emphasising the local government's commitment to supporting volunteering. "I am particularly pleased that today we have the opportunity to witness the presentation of the results of a successfully implemented project that primarily encourages solidarity among young people while simultaneously directing them towards participating in improving the quality of life, involvement in public life, and creating a sense of responsibility for solving problems that exist in the community. The Municipality of Bitola is one of the most advanced municipalities in the country in terms of volunteering, thanks foremost to the initiative and involvement of the civic sector but also to the activities of the Volunteering Council, which acts as a consultative body, recognised in the community, and the annual volunteering award given to active individuals, informal volunteer initiatives, civic organisations, and institutions. The "Local Volunteer Service" project is yet another confirmation of our joint commitment to promoting volunteering as an important civic act, a tool to combat social exclusion, and to address specific community problems, especially for vulnerable groups of citizens, as well as a significant impetus for delivering higher-quality public services. The long-term results are particularly commendable, where through informal education, activists acquire knowledge, skills, and qualities to strengthen active participation in political and social processes, initiative, and responsibility in solving certain societal problems.



Empowering Voices: Guerrilla Campaign to Raise Women's Awareness in Bitola.

Be a little bold

SFERA International was implementing the project: "Empowering Voices: Guerrilla Campaign to Raise Women's Awareness in Bitola." The project "Empowering Voices: Guerrilla Campaign to Raise Women's Awareness in Bitola" was supported by the "YouthHub - Overcoming Inequality among Youth" MladiHub, implemented by the National Youth Council of Macedonia - NYCM in collaboration with Stella Network, with financial support from the British Embassy Skopje. The project aimed to support and encourage girls and young women to be more active in society and to create equal access to opportunities in public life, the private sector, and the decision-making process at both local and national levels.

More specifically, the goal was to raise the voices of women in Bitola through digital content created by 12 young girls from the city.

Activities:

Mentoring sessions

3–12 October 2023, Youth Centre, Bitola

The first activity consisted of training over 6 days, mentoring sessions on digital tools, and creating powerful digital posters. Through this training, 12 young girls from Bitola had the opportunity to create posters on various topics and problems experienced by women in our society.

Key objectives of the project include:

- Empowerment through training: training for 12 young women from the Pelagonija region to create attractive digital content.
- Awareness and Advocacy: using digital posters for advocacy and raising awareness of women's issues.

Guerrilla Campaign: A creative strategy that combines physical and digital elements, stimulating discussions in Bitola about women's challenges. The physical campaign included a two-day exhibition in Bitola and Skopje and placing the works throughout the city centre and busy streets in Bitola so that citizens could see the works and the messages they convey as they go about their day.

Exhibition:

6 November, Europe House, Bitola

On November 6, 2023, we witnessed an unforgettable event at Europe House Bitola, where we officially opened the "Empowering Voices" exhibition. This exhibition was more than just a space for art; it was a reflection of courage, hope, and a striving for change. The exhibition was the culmination of the "Empowering Voices: Guerrilla Campaign to Raise Women's Awareness in Bitola" project, implemented by SFERA International. The works were created under the mentorship of Angela Hristovska, who led the workshops under the motto "Be Little Bold," where 12 women from Bitola were trained in the use of digital tools and created digital posters on various topics, specifically issues faced by women in our society. Every picture and every digital imprint in this exhibition carries a unique power—the power of a story and a struggle that needs to be heard. Our goal was to transform this place into an environment where all voices are heard and every young woman feels encouraged to follow her dream.

The exhibition was opened by Katerina Popovska, project coordinator of SFERA International, with speeches also given by Aleksandra Filipova from the National Youth Council of Macedonia, who explained the idea behind the larger project and the need for such projects in our country. In her speech, Angela Hristovska introduced us to the world of "Be Little Bold" workshops and the process the participants went through, while the words of Dominika Robe Popovska and Elena Gj. Kostadinovikj touched each of us with their personal experiences and motivation behind participating in this project. In the end, let this event be not just a celebration of art and female power but also a reminder of the ongoing need for understanding and support for equal opportunities. Each work and every story here aim to serve as a seed for the changes we can all achieve together.



Creative Europe Echo Academy

18 September–8 October 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia

ECHO Academies - ECHO was an arts project that aimed to foster young and emerging European talents in specific artistic fields by using heritage elements as a means and inspiration for their work.

Background

Given the experiences of "ECHO: European Cultural Heritage Onstage," "ECHO II: Traditions in Transition," and "ECHO III: For Memory's Sake," the project tried to **tackle the issues of visibility, networking, employability, and opportunities to enter the art market for new European talents**. When it comes to the use of heritage as an inspirational tool, it builds on the values of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and its legacy, the New European Bauhaus, and glocal (critical heritage discourse) perceptions of heritage.

Aims and Objectives

- 1) Cultivate young and emerging European talents from the fields of arts and the Cultural and Creative Sector (CCS) in order to enhance their resilience through monothematic, small-scale creative academies in the fields of comics, fashion design, music, photography, and architecture by exploring different expressions of European heritage.
- 2) Offer training opportunities and build capacities for artists and CCS professionals in order to improve employability through Capacity-Building activities (CBAs) that offer new tools and skills.

- 3) Create networks between artists and CCS professionals in the art market by facilitating networking and synergy-building that will help artists generate jobs and growth, and
- 4) Promote artists and their work on the international level in order to increase opportunities and outreach by supporting them in terms of resources in the implementation of pilot projects (for selected Academies' artists) in order to generate jobs and growth, and by performing targeted communication and dissemination of the artists, their artworks, and projects internationally.

Prizes and Pilots

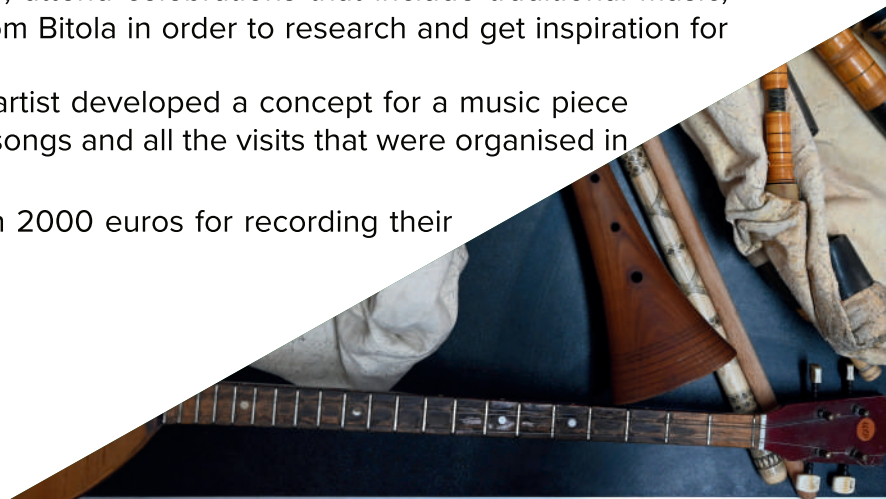
- At the end of each academy, an **international committee of three experts** from the cultural and creative sectors decided on **three prizes** that were given to the distinguished artists. Each hosting partner was responsible for forming the international committee for the academy that was hosting (not one committee for all academies).
- For the Bitola Academy, the top 3 artists were funded with 2000 euros to record their music pieces.

About the Bitola Echo Academy

- Participants did research on **the ritual songs and heritage of the Bitola region, specifically songs about the calendar cycle, life cycle, pagan holidays, and other traditional holidays.**
- Bitola has a rich music tradition (both traditional and modern/contemporary music).
- Macedonian traditional music includes rural and urban branches and expressions and includes, among others, ritual songs. In addition, the "Hidrellez" spring celebration, the beginning of spring cultural practices, the "Glasoechko" singing, and the "Kopachkata" dance belong to the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list.

What we asked artist to deliver in 3-weeks time

- Artists got to visit music historians, attend celebrations that include traditional music, and meet with fellow musicians from Bitola in order to research and get inspiration for their work.
- At the end of the academy, each artist developed a concept for a music piece inspired by the Macedonian ritual songs and all the visits that were organised in the 3-week period in Bitola.
- The top 3 artists were funded with 2000 euros for recording their music pieces.





ERASMUS + K1

Mind-U

11-20 January 2024, Malaga, Spain

The main objective of the project was to improve professional training and promote educational development through non-formal and informal learning methods for participating youth workers, thereby increasing the quality of their actions and projects within their organisations and promoting mental health and personal well-being.

Specific objectives:

- Raise awareness of mental health and the importance of its visibility to prevent and address mental health and well-being problems caused by mental illness.
- Promote reflection and critical thinking to fight against stereotypes, prejudices, taboos, and discrimination in relation to mental health.
- Promote healthy lifestyle habits as well as leisure-recreational and cultural activities that contribute to improving personal well-being and mental health while exploring artistic, creative, and innovative methods.
- Share and exchange ideas, experiences, and good practices developed in different European contexts on the promotion, awareness, and approach to aspects related to mental health in work with young people.

Power of Youth

30 October - 5 November 2023, Châtillon-sur-Indre, France

Through workshops, animations, simulation games, and role-playing, youth workers acquired skills and tools to act as effective mentors for young people. They were supported and encouraged in their societal commitment through positive thinking, problem solving, and proactivity.

Goals of the project:

- to contribute to improving the quality of socio-educational activities through tools and a methodology conducive to helping young people in society to dare, trust, and/or bounce back;
- to develop life forces by encouraging and accompanying vocations in the field of youth work;
- strengthen the role of youth workers and socio-educational organisations;
- intensify the international dimension of youth work.

Nonviolent CommuniAction

17-26 October 2023, Laroie, Pau, France

Goals:

- Introduction to nonviolent communication methods
- Improvement of conflict resolution methods
- Audiovisual education and literacy to develop critical thinking towards digital communication
- Promotion of the Erasmus+ programme and international mobility opportunities at the local level
- Intercultural learning through teamwork and cooperation to achieve a common goal
- Acquisition of specific skills for video recording and editing.

Promoting diversity and tolerance through media and information literacy

19-27 November 2023, Rottengeng, Austria

The project, 'Promoting Diversity and Tolerance Through Media and Information Literacy,' aimed to promote inclusive growth by equipping youth workers with media literacy skills to combat social exclusion and discrimination. It is intended to deepen their understanding of these societal issues and offer hands-on experience with media tools that shed light on such issues. The primary goal was to enhance youth workers' ability to promote constructive dialogue and engage younger individuals, increasing social inclusion. Objectives range from heightening participants' critical approach to media, deepening their understanding of social exclusion and discrimination, improving the quality of related activities, encouraging the active participation of youth in creating inclusive societies, and sharing best practices in this domain. Additionally, it aimed to expand their knowledge of the Erasmus+ programme, sparking new project ideas and future collaboration opportunities..

Youth Workers on Inclusion of Refugees

10–18 November 2023, Eskisehir, Turkey

Specifically, the aforementioned NFE methods were applied in the programme, namely getting to know each other and team-building activities, city games, theory-oriented sessions, brainstorming, world cafes, role plays, forum theatre, simulation games, small group discussions, open space technology, study visits, and reflection activities.

In order to get a general understanding of the topic, the participants worked in small groups and tried to find the types, reasons, and impacts of migration. A simulation game was followed to understand the role of immigrants in our societies and how it feels to be an immigrant. Sharing experiences and best practices was done with the method of open space technology, where participants shared the tools and methods they used while working with young people with immigrant backgrounds. Based on the knowledge and shared tools, the participants elaborated a recommendation paper and ToolKit with the purpose of disseminating it among other youth workers and assisting them in their youth work with young immigrants.

Ecopreneurs

30 October–8 November 2023, Dobczyce, Poland

The goal of the project was to support young people in developing their employability and competencies and promote environmental education and protection through responsible consumption and upcycling. The project aimed at developing youth workers' competencies in the field of empowering youth through eco-entrepreneurship based on handcrafting and sewing.

Objectives:

- Developing the competencies of youth workers to support migrants, NEETs, and youth with fewer opportunities to develop their competencies and increase their employability
- Developing youth workers' soft skills and competencies in handcrafting, sewing, entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment
- Developing competencies in the project-based learning approach
- Creating opportunities for participants to learn about product design and business planning models.

Green Comp

14-21 September 2023, Eani Kozani, Greece

Our main target was to explore the GreenComp framework and empower youth workers through the development of sustainability competence, raise awareness about the importance of sustainability and its impact on local and global communities, and implement sustainable practices in their local community and with their youngsters, especially those with fewer opportunities.

Objectives:

1. Get familiar with the framework of GreenComp, the European Framework, which identifies the key components of the 12 competences organised into the four areas.
2. Embody mindfulness and mindful communication and learn how to observe and be aware of both their environment and emotions—theirs and others'.
3. Develop themselves physically, mentally, and socially, as, according to the World Health Organisation, health is defined as the condition of full physical, mental, and social well-being in a person and not just the absence of disease or condition..

Journey to the core

3-11 November 2023, Tirana, Albania

The aim of this project was to spread good practices among youth workers and volunteers; share, learn, and develop skills on healthy lifestyles and sustainable environments; inspire each other and other people in our local communities to adopt more sustainable and healthier habits. The study visit was designed for youth workers and/or volunteers who are engaged in organisations, centres, and institutions that work in the fields of a healthy lifestyle and sustainability. This activity invited participants interested in exploring, learning, and sharing among other youth workers and/or target groups they work with their experiences, new methods, and techniques related to the topics that were tackled during the study visit. Youth workers were empowered with skills, knowledge, motivation, methods, and attitudes on how to make a meaningful impact on the lives of young people and the health of our planet among the communities in which they work within their organisations.

Green Photos

13–22 October 2023, Dobczyce, Poland

The idea of the project was to learn how to use alternative photography as a tool for social change. We prepared the activity, allowing participants to learn new artistic and digital skills, more ecological behaviours, create workshop ideas, and use new educational tools to work with youth facing different obstacles. The project aimed to empower youth workers with fewer opportunities as leaders of their communities through creative workshops of alternative photography and intercultural activities, giving them the possibility to turn their talents into a tool for social change. It creates opportunities for raising their self-esteem, ecological and intercultural awareness, improving digital skills, and boosting more active citizens

Digital Wellbeing

4–11 September 2023, Kozani, Greece

Our main target was to support a balance in the digital world, explore the DigComp framework, and empower youth workers through the development of digital competence, which involves the confident, critical, and responsible use of and engagement with digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society, especially for those working with young people with fewer opportunities.

Objectives of the Mobility "Digital Wellbeing":

1. Get familiar with the framework of DigComp, the European Framework, which identifies the key components of digital competence in five areas.
2. Practice mindfulness and mindful communication, and learn to observe and be aware of their own and others' emotions.
3. Develop themselves physically, mentally, and socially, as, according to the World Health Organisation, health is defined as the condition of full physical, mental, and social well-being in a person and not just the absence of disease or condition.
4. Learn how to create and facilitate workshops enhancing information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving.
5. Develop their digital skills, both in terms of digital literacy and digital wellbeing, through mindfulness.

Health On

25 September–1 October 2023, A Coruña, Galicia, Spain

This project was an incredible journey towards better well-being!

"Health On" aimed to raise awareness about the importance of adopting healthy habits. Many of the activities were outdoors.

Bridges: Building relevant intercultural dialogue and generating effective skills

24–30 August 2023, Valea Verde–Bansko, Bulgaria

Through engaging activities and nonformal education, everyone who participated developed essential skills to become effective dialoguers in their communities. We elevated the quality of initiatives on national, regional, and international levels, fostering impactful projects.

Project Goals:

- Enhance non formal education skills for active youth workers and leaders.
- Form a vibrant community of trained dialoguers using a specialized methodology.
- Invest in your professional development by mastering the art of the dialoguer's role.

Nature as a Classroom

16–25 September 2023, Dilijan, Armenia

"Nature as a Classroom: Developing Skills and Confidence through Experiential Learning" was an exciting project focusing on health-related issues among young people in EU and EaP countries. The aim was to promote physical and mental well-being through innovative teaching and learning practices while enhancing the professional skills of educators and trainers in outdoor education.

Goals and Objectives:

- Understand the principles and practices of outdoor education and experiential learning.
- Equip participants with the skills and knowledge to design effective outdoor education programmes.
- Foster an exchange of good practices in outdoor education among participants from different countries.



Social Entrepreneurship For Youth

7–15 July 2023, Sivas, Turkey

Objectives:

- Understand what social entrepreneurship is and its relation to sustainable development.
- Explore different social enterprise approaches and identify different models through showcasing and local study visits.
- Learn about the social impact of social enterprises.
- Create a social enterprise business plan.
- Explore Erasmus+ for entrepreneurial education and a source of social enterprise starting points.

Think outside of the box

22–30 August 2023, Veliki Žitnik, Croatia

A 7-day training course for youth workers in order to learn how to implement experiential learning methods in their future youth work. The focus was on the outward-bound learning method, which is not only adaptable to outdoor activities but also to regular everyday life.

As an organisation that is a part of the Outward Bound International School Network (with over 37 schools worldwide) and has over 18 years of experience in implementing programmes and projects for youth and youth workers, they shared the experience and knowledge they have accumulated over the years and helped other youth workers improve their everyday work, create better learning outcomes, and have a greater positive impact on their participants.

Touch the nature II

6–14 August 2023, Hejnice, Czech Republic

Touch (the) Nature was an ideal training course for those who liked the wind in their hair and the mud behind their nails. They looked at nature from various points of view and looked for ways to make it an attractive and challenging environment for the youth to work in. During 7 days full of outdoor and indoor activities, we inspired each other, played, challenged, relaxed, and created to explore various aspects of youth work in nature and get new ideas for it.

Objectives:

- New types of activities with youth in nature
- How to design an outdoor programme for youth
- What is experiential pedagogy, and how do you use it in youth work?
- The importance of motivating youth to spend time in nature and how to motivate youngsters.

Networking for a greener future

24-31 August 2023, Pušų Šlamesy, Lithuania

This was a training course for youth workers to increase the quality and quantity of sustainability-friendly youth projects in ecovillages and youth sustainability education projects. It took place in the eco-resort Pušų Šlamesy, Lithuania, from August 24th to August 31st, 2023. The participants came from 12 countries: Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, Greece, North Macedonia, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia. We explored the possibilities offered by the Erasmus+ programme and got some background knowledge relevant to youth projects. The participants improved their skills and knowledge of project design. The networking aspect of the project created a lot of new connections, and we formed teams around the most promising project ideas that likely developed into project applications that will be submitted and hopefully become future projects.

Social Inclusion of Refugees

23 June–1 July 2023, Eskisehir, Türkiye

Objectives:

- To provide a conceptual framework for the main notions of refugee, migrant, asylum seeker, immigration, integration, interculturalism, and multiculturalism;
- To reflect on the emigration and immigration situation in participating countries and find out the reasons for migration, namely push and pull factors;
- To discuss and analyse the current migration challenges in Europe and try to offer solutions from the perspective of youth work;

Specifically, the aforementioned NFE methods were applied in the programme, namely getting to know each other and team-building activities, city games, theory-oriented sessions, brainstorming, world cafes, role plays, forum theatre, simulation games, small group discussions, open space technology, study visits, and reflection activities. In order to get a general understanding of the topic, the participants worked in small groups and tried to find the types, reasons, and impacts of migration. A simulation game was followed to understand the role of immigrants in our societies and how it feels to be an immigrant.



Find Your Balance

22–29 June 2023, Tirana, Albania

In this project, they wanted to put the focus on the positive impact that a healthy lifestyle has on people's health through learning, inspiring, and promoting self-care. Together, we explored the world of movement, nutrition, art, nature, sustainability, and emotional and physical balance, discovering the beliefs they had about health and determining which 'healthy' habits we already have and which ones we want to acquire. We spent two full days and organised workshops in nature outside the city of Tirana. This was essential for youth workers who are in direct contact with young people, communities, leaders, and institutions. We invited all participants to participate actively throughout the training course and encouraged them to exchange experiences and knowledge while showing a sense of initiative and responsibility.

Find your inside – outside

11–24 May 2023, Popova Shapka, North Macedonia

The training course aimed to improve the quality and outreach of youth work by developing the participants' competencies in the area of facilitation of learning and training and equipping them with the tools and methods relevant for working with young people.

The general aim of the project was to promote using outdoor activities as a tool for personal development among youth and to increase physical and mental health. The specific objective of the project was to promote the importance of outdoor activities and the health benefits they have, encourage and initiate intercultural dialogue through outdoor activities, and use the outdoor methodology for the self-development of the youth.

Outdoor bound

6–17 April 2023, Ventspils, Latvia

Participating in sports and physical activity has positive direct and indirect effects on people, society, and the economy. Better self-confidence, inspiration for learning, a sense of responsibility, and a stronger connection amongst peers are just a few of the key effects of outdoor education. The project's objective was to improve the quality of youth work by training representative youth workers and encouraging healthy, sustainable, modern, and learner-oriented youth work practices.

Two Sides

13–20 April 2023, Suchedniów, Poland

It is not always easy to handle intercultural challenges, understand the communication codes of different cultures of young people, treat appropriately diverse values, norms, and schemes of intercultural behaviour, and face stereotypes and prejudices coming from young people towards each other without really knowing what they are afraid of and why they become more and more xenophobic. Feeling in our skins, we needed to improve our youth work competencies through conflict resolution and mediation in order to be able to offer such types of youth work activities locally and at the European level where young people with different cultural backgrounds can cooperate together and handle their cultural diversity as the added value of their common activities through emotional intelligence and communication.

Lifecomp for youth work

22–28 January 2023, Kozani, Greece

LifeComp for Youth Work is an Erasmus+ mobility programme for youth workers that brought together 40 youth workers from all over Europe in Aiani Kozanis, Greece. We aimed to spend five days together, contributing to each other's personal growth with the help of non-formal education and group learning.

Our main target was to explore the LifeComp framework and empower youth workers through the development of personal, social, and learning competences, especially those working with young people with fewer opportunities.



In Control. Let's Discover Preventive Education

27 November–6 December 2023, Valea Verde–Alba, Romania

This youth exchange programme offered teenagers a unique opportunity to explore preventive education, decisional autonomy, and healthy coping strategies in a creative and introspective manner. Over the course of eight days, 26 motivated teenagers aged 13–18 were engaged in a series of activities and workshops. The first part of the programme focused on validated methods that delve into decision-making processes, emotional literacy, autonomy, and behavioural patterns. In the second part, participants had the chance to develop and lead their own workshops, honing their facilitation skills. The programme, part of the IPTA collection of youth activities, was designed for individuals committed to enhancing their decision-making autonomy and understanding addictive tendencies. It aimed to equip teenagers with a deep understanding of maintaining control over their choices and actions when faced with addictive substances or activities. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to empower young participants to promote preventive education in their communities and build resilience while fostering healthy relationships.



TOYS-Think Outside Yourself

11–17 October 2023, Baia Mare, Romania

The aim of this mobility was to approach sustainable development from a holistic perspective, starting with individuals and continuing with local communities, nations, and the global level.

The focus of the activities is personal development, from individual choices to civic involvement.

Nonviolent CommuniAction

17-26 October 2023, Laroin, Pau, France

Goals:

- Introduction to Non-Violent Communication Methods
- Improvement of conflict resolution methods
- Audiovisual education and literacy to develop critical thinking towards digital communication
- Promotion of the Erasmus+ programme and international mobility opportunities at the local level
- Intercultural learning through teamwork and cooperation to achieve a common goal
- Acquisition of specific skills for video recording and editing.

A Commitment to Healthy Relationships

6–14 August 2023, Valea Verde – Câmpeni (Alba), Romania

The aim of this project is to explore the intricacies of relationships, emphasizing the importance of commitment and recognizing when it's necessary to let go for the sake of one's well-being. It delves into the significance of relationships in shaping our lives, decisions, and overall quality of life. Through this exploration, the project seeks to provide insight into distinguishing between toxic and healthy relationships, as well as understanding the dynamics of short-term and long-term connections. Ultimately, it aims to empower young individuals to cultivate meaningful and fulfilling relationships that contribute positively to their lives and environments.

Youth for Europe: YOU Participate

2–10 September 2023, Eskisehir–Turkiye

The main goal of youth exchange ‘Youth for Europe: YOU Participate’ was to empower young people to become active citizens, taking part in decision-making processes in their countries and impacting decisions shaping their lives.

Objectives:

- to explore various forms of youth participation across participating countries: youth organisations, youth clubs, and youth parliaments
- to increase participants competences in the field of youth participation
- to encourage the level of involvement of the participants and empower them to participate
- to create a series of three short videos on the topic of youth participation with the aim of promoting the topic in participating communities during follow-up events.

No friendly fire

21–27 August 2023, Burdur, Turkiye

The main aim of the project was to make our participants aware of how to act before, during, and after natural disasters with authorities under the theme of forest fires.

The objectives were:

- Identifying the roots and causes (push and pull factors) of friendly fires for mother nature;
- Creating digital content about the detected issues for social media platforms and sharing it;
- Learning how to act before, during, and after a forest fire with the authorities and how to help and coordinate.

Circular Economy Local Challenge

27 June–4 July 2023, Komotini, Greece

The world is changing, and environmental challenges raise serious concerns for the welfare of current and future generations. Human action and green education are key elements to raise awareness, improve life quality, and create an optimistic future for humanity. The project’s idea was the incorporation of sustainable solutions in everyday activities and the adaptation of a circular local economy to promote eco-friendly behaviours and collaboration within the local society. Promoting a circular local economy is a great way to start implementing sustainable solutions.

The main priority for the project was promoting, engaging, connecting, and empowering young people around the circular economy as a means to mitigate the effects of climate change. The purpose of the project was to educate participants on circular economy structures and how they could implement them within their local society.

Participants learned how:

- to make an initial outreach
- to clarify and set goals
- to create strategy (tactics)
- to develop an action plan and set a timeline.

Sportify

1 – 9 July 2023, Bansko, Bulgaria

The SPORTIFY (Sport as an Investment in the Future of Youth) Youth Exchange was about supporting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of young people through sport, outdoor activities, and other relevant practices. Together with our international partners from five other European countries, with whom we shared similar ideas and missions for the development of youth communities, during the exchange we organised sessions with demonstrations and practices of various sports that are practiced among young people in the respective countries. One of the main goals of the project was to show the young generation how easy it is to access sports and a healthy, balanced, and fulfilling lifestyle. Participants received information and knowledge about different types of sports in order to choose the most suitable one for them and their daily lives. A very important element in the programme to which we paid special attention is the food we eat as a factor in achieving physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Through the activities of the project, we aimed once again to raise the awareness of young people about a healthy lifestyle and show them that it is not difficult to play sports and that for this purpose it is not necessary to visit gyms and studios. In this way, young people who have limited economic opportunities and for whom the financial aspect is one of the obstacles to active sports can be motivated to play sports. Many outdoor sessions in yoga, pilates, sport dance, zumba, gymnastics, etc. were offered to the youth to gain hands-on experience as well. The team of the MIS association, as the host of the project, also plans a day of trekking in the Pirin Mountains.



Eco-Friendly Youth

14–25 June 2023, Brebu, Caras-Severin, Romania

This project was born following the aim of the association, which is to encourage the young generation to be more active regarding environmental issues and ecology.

The objectives of the project were:

- to enrich the knowledge of the 40 young people from four countries about protecting the environment and combating climate change;
- to develop the skills and competencies needed by 40 young people from 4 countries to organise and carry out volunteer activities for environmental protection and combating climate change.

My youth goals 2.0

28 May–3 June 2023, Varna, Bulgaria

The project My Youth Goals 2.0. was a follow-up youth exchange aimed at young people who are interested in debating the future of the European project. The youth exchange gave an overview of five of the youth goals connected to diversity, human rights, and the inclusion of young people in society. Each day of the youth exchange was focused on one of the selected five youth goals: #3 inclusive societies, #7 quality employment for all, #8 quality learning, #10 green Europe, and #11 youth organisations and European programmes.

The specific objectives of the training course were:

- To get a better understanding of the EU's youth policy,
- To foster the inclusiveness of young people in society and their transition to the labour market;
- To equip young people with skills and competences to effectively participate in democratic and community life;
- To debate and discuss possible scenarios for the future of the European project through young people's vision and needs;
- To get acquainted with various programmes and funds in the field of youth.

Act Green For a Week

15–23 May 2023, Chania, Crete, Greece

One of the greatest challenges facing humanity, especially today, is climate change. Climate change can have implications that pose significant risks to human well-being and the natural environment. The aim of this programme was to provide experiential workshops, seminars, presentations of good practices, personal development sessions, and specialised workshops for the participants to gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes about climate change, as well as the impact of nutrition on the ecological footprint. As well as the need to protect the environment. Environmental protection can be enhanced through the acquisition of new habits and the adoption of a lifestyle that can help combat climate change through recycling and composting, as well as the use of renewable energy sources such as photovoltaics, waste reduction, and the non-use of plastic. In addition, emphasis was placed on the importance of voluntary actions, such as garbage removal, that could work positively for the local community of the city where the programme is conducted.

The main objectives of this project were:

- (i) to enhance knowledge about climate change, its causes, and its effects;
- (ii) planning and adopting individual and collective action measures to combat climate change;
- (iii) encouraging participants to change their lifestyle to reduce their ecological footprint on the planet;
- (iv) designing and adopting daily habits that can make participants' lives more environmentally friendly;
- (v) highlighting the importance of recycling, composting, and renewable energy, and promoting the reduction of waste and the non-use of plastic;
- (vi) the empowerment and inspiration of participants to create their own environmental projects.

Digiecology

7–15 May 2023, Olveiroa, Galicia, Spain

Digital tools play a crucial role in our everyday activities, serving myriad purposes such as information retrieval, research, travel planning, and locating accommodations or attractions. They facilitate studying, entertainment, and leisurely reading. Moreover, these tools contribute significantly to environmental stewardship, a core focus of our project. The primary aim is to empower youth to utilise existing digital resources for ecological initiatives, innovate new tools, and generate ideas aimed at fostering a cleaner, more sustainable world.

Far and beyond with digital storytelling

2–8 May 2023, Nitra, Slovakia

Through this project, we addressed the problem of the social exclusion of youngsters from rural areas by giving them a concrete opportunity for personal and professional development. The opportunity offered by a specific tool, which is digital storytelling, and its benefits.

It was used as an instrument for social inclusion and social development specifically to address the problem of marginalisation and lack of participation of people from rural areas, and, in this field, we are oriented to the needs of young people with fewer opportunities: youngsters from rural and isolated areas; youngsters with low income; and early school leavers.

Non-formally-based activities will follow these goals:

- To develop new and transferable skills and knowledge in participants in the field of digital storytelling, this objective will be achieved, especially thanks to workshops and activities related to the creation of videos, workshops about storytelling, online and offline promotion, storytelling, and the creation of comics.
- To promote the recognition of different backgrounds and abilities, especially for those with fewer opportunities, this objective is connected with the inclusion and acceptance of different backgrounds and abilities. Starting with the preparation of the participants, they will learn about intercultural differences and will have workshops about intercultural dialogue.

Antygone

23 April–2 May 2023, Athens, Greece

The youth exchange followed a similar methodology based on the use and study of classical ancient drama as a tool for the identification of problems and discovering space for solidarity and reflection on contemporary European problems. Starting with Sophocle's Antigone, participants were introduced to various theatre and improvisation techniques, body movements, and a series of non-formal learning activities in order to widen their horizons and get acquainted with their own feelings and emotions better

Rhythm of youth

30 March–8 April 2023, Malta

This project idea was built on and designed to address the modern non-formal educational and social needs of disadvantaged young people: young people who have not succeeded in their school life and are experiencing frustration and the need to find new ways to get out of deadlocks linked to the past and the future in a creative way. Music and its methods seem to have been, since ancient times, a good way to find harmony, contribute to balance, and reach spiritual progress. At the same time, music-based education produces noble and cultured citizens, internationalists, and advocates of multiculturalism. What is more, a stable and creative culture must know its traditions and be able to project and improve them throughout the years. In a millennial Europe, in a melting pot of civilizations, we must meet our fellow citizens, educate them in their values, and strengthen our ties. This project therefore links history and culture, unites people, fosters peace and cooperation, promotes the European ideal, and discovers new musical ideas and values useful to citizens with fewer opportunities.



ERASMUS + K2

Biodiversity Outdoor Learning

1 March 2022–28 February 2023

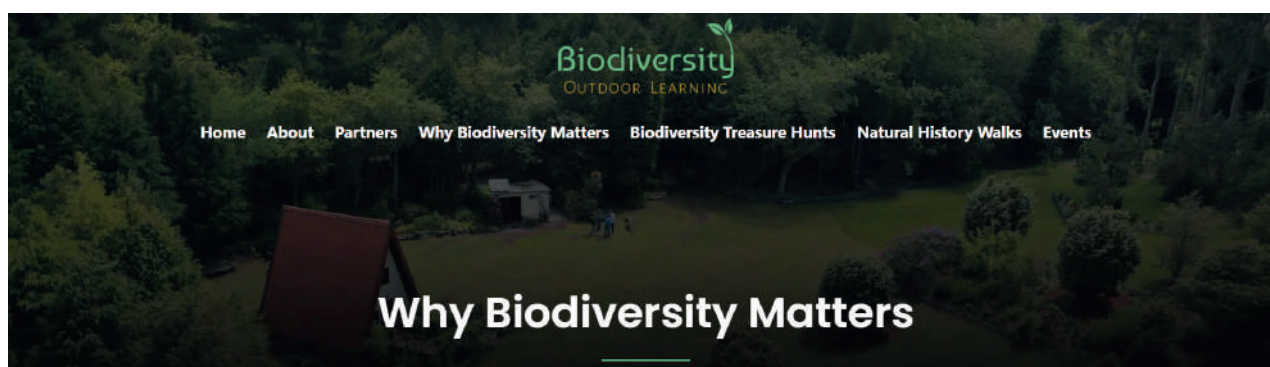
SFERA International participated in a small-scale Erasmus+ project that lasted for one year and was called Biodiversity Outdoor Learning.

The aim of this project was for people to learn about biodiversity and to provide them with an opportunity to protect it at the local level. For the purpose of this project, an e-book about biodiversity was created, and two natural history walks and two treasure hunts were organized. The Natural History Walk allowed participants to learn about the local ecosystem, including its flora and fauna, whether local species are indigenous, and the peculiarities of the local climate and how it affects its biodiversity. The Treasure Hunt allowed people to learn about biodiversity in three locations: Funchal, Bitola, and Cantabria. The project on biodiversity and outdoor learning was in partnership with My Madeira Island and Abrazo House. The project was financed by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union.

Activities in 2023:

13 February 2023

For the purpose of this project, a website was created where all can learn more about biodiversity and why biodiversity matters. This website provides the opportunity to learn more about biodiversity ideas, projects, and difficulties across Europe, with a special focus on Portugal, Spain, and North Macedonia.



Final meeting

25–28 February 2023

From February 25th to February 28th, 2023, we hosted the final meeting in Bitola, North Macedonia, concluding our project. During our meeting, we explored the natural wonders of Pelister on a guided natural history walk, reflecting on our accomplishments and strategizing for the next phase of our work. In the meeting, we had our final evaluation, where we outlined plans and set objectives for future initiatives.

Power Saving Check goes Citizens

1 May 2022–30 March 2024

Strategic Partnership for the development of innovation in the field of adult education, financed by the Erasmus+ programme, with a duration of 36 months.

Objectives of the project:

- Concrete contribution to the achievement of the European climate protection targets by:
- Decreasing the consumption of electricity, water, and heating energy in private households and public buildings.
- Reducing CO2 emissions in private households and public buildings.
- Promoting the circular economy.
- Involving the citizens actively, reasonably, and target-oriented with digital solutions in this process.
- Disburdening low-income households financially.

Expected Results

- Curriculum for the education of power-saving checkers.
- Handbook for Power Saving Checkers.
- Training material for the pilot training and the webinar for trainers.
- Online Course for the Education of Power Saving Checkers, completed in the fields "Air Conditioning" and "Waste Separation".
- 14 staff members of the partner organisations were trained as trainers.
- 42 power-saving checkers were educated by the trained trainers.
- The educated Power Saving Checkers have implemented 100 checks in low-income households during the test phase.
- The Power Saving Checkers have implemented six checks in public buildings.
- The Checkers have implemented 50 Checks in households that ask for services via the app.
- The Checkers have promoted environmental awareness through informal education.



Gen Z Digital Workforce: Improving online Employability and resilience of young people with fewer opportunities

1 November, 2021 – 1 November, 2023

Gen Z Digital Workforce: Improving Online Employability Opportunities and the Resilience of Young People with Fewer Opportunities is a project co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. It was a 2-year initiative between 5 organisations: (You)th Develop Denmark (coordinator), Uniamoci Onlus (Italy), SFERA International (North Macedonia), Innovaform (Hungary), and My Madeira Island (Portugal). The target group of the project were young people (also currently abbreviated as Generation Z or Gen Z), especially those with less opportunity, because the materials were developed specifically for them, and such groups participated in project activities. The project targets young people from remote and rural areas, migrants, representatives of minorities, those with health problems and disabilities, and those with economic and educational barriers, as they can now take advantage of job opportunities from a distance for their benefit. The aim of this project is to contribute to the reduction of unemployment in the EU, focusing on supporting people with fewer opportunities. The priorities covered by this project aim to pilot education and training systems that promote a higher rate of employment, training, and innovation, as well as increasing social mobility and equality towards special groups. The project addresses the direct needs of the partnership and our target groups.



Activities in 2023:

Remote Work Bootcamp Youth Exchange

24- 29 March 2023

SFERA International participated in the Remote Work Bootcamp Youth Exchange in Palermo from March 24th to March 29th as part of the Gen Z Digital Workforce project. The Bootcamp in Palermo was a continuation of the online training for young people and career counsellors, and therefore it actualized and strengthened the competencies of young people in theoretical and practical aspects of building an online career, as well as that of youth workers, regarding the support they gave young people in employability. Additionally, it also had a critical importance for the development of the project materials as we collected personal, deep feedback on the online course for both target groups and modified or upgraded the online course before releasing it massively for public use. The physical boot camp took place after the participants took the online course, so they already had the knowledge needed to acquire an online job. The activities were facilitated through the collaboration between My Madeira Island, Youth Develop Denmark, Uniamoci Onlus, Innovaform, and SFERA International. With this youth exchange, we achieved another important step in the Gen Z Digital Workforce project.

Online testing of the online course

14–22 June 2023

SFERA International had testers for an online course as part of the project 'Gen Z Digital Workforce'. The online course for testers aimed to test the following ten modules:

- Advantages and disadvantages of remote work
- CV for applying for remote jobs
- Online entrepreneurship
- Fighting prejudices in remote work
- Rights of remote workers
- Which jobs can be done online?
- Resilience and mental health in the digital era
- Digital communication
- Time management for remote work

Motivation and self-management for remote work

Online session

18 December 2023

SFERA International was part of an insightful session with our guests, Judit Kriska-Jambor from Innovaform (HU) and Anastasia Mazur from My Madeira Island (PT). They were diving deep into two critical KA2 questions based on their experiences:

- How do you conduct a thorough needs analysis and proper research?
- How do you create valuable, tangible project results?

Their insights were framed around the Gen Z Digital Workforce KA2 project.

The session was moderated by Anna Webster.

We had a discussion followed by KA2 Networking, designed for organisations interested in:

- employability and entrepreneurship;
- digital youth work;
- career planning and remote jobs.

Multiplier event – Panel discussion

25 October 2023

As part of the "Gen Z Digital Workforce" project, SFERA International organised a panel discussion on the topic "Enhancing online employability and resilience of young people in the post-COVID digital era," where the project's results will be shared. The following speakers addressed the panel: Alexandra Mitrevska (Native Teams), Martin Cvetanovski (Monday), Vasko Dimovski (BlueCloud), and Dr. Kostas Filipidis (Active Youths Florina). The panel discussion took place on October 25, 2023, at Europe House Bitola from 11:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Our discussion focused on improving online employability and resilience among young people in the post-COVID era, as well as exploring the various opportunities available to youth in the region for employment in both domestic and foreign companies offering hybrid or remote work options.

Result in 2023:

E-course

We launched an e-course designed to kickstart an online career journey. This course uncovered invaluable insights on navigating the dynamic landscape of online employment, with step-by-step guidance to establish a robust digital presence and tips to shine and stand out in the vast digital space.



Young Entrepreneurs in Time of Crisis – YETC

1 February 2022–1 February 2024

Young Entrepreneurs in Time of Crisis (YETC) was an Erasmus+ project that aimed to facilitate youth activism and foster an entrepreneurial mindset through networking, sharing best practices, and developing innovative NIFL tools. The project results will help young people overcome the uncertainty caused by the unstable socio-economic situation across Europe and create positive value by filling the gaps and promoting new entrepreneurial endeavors. The YETC project addressed the needs of young people and youth workers in finding realisation of their creative ideas and initiatives through entrepreneurship and active participation. The project involved young people from six countries, which are: North Macedonia (SFERA International), Italy (Demostene Centro Studi per la promozione dello Sviluppo Umano), Poland (Fundacja Inkubator Innowacji), Greece (EKO), Bulgaria (Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Culture, and Education), and Romania (Asociatia Europeana de Dezvoltare a Adultilor). The partners conducted a survey among young people on their current needs and skills mismatches in entrepreneurship and youth activism. Based on the survey and desk research on national and EU policies for supporting youth entrepreneurship, the partners will produce an action plan for entrepreneurial skills and learning. The YETC project had the following specific objectives: to contribute to building the capacity of youth workers and youth organisations through joint research activities, training, and cooperation. to promote young entrepreneurs in partner countries through collecting good practices, producing a guide and video collection, and organising a networking event to create new NFIL tools and modules promoting entrepreneurship and youth activism tailored to the current needs of young people in the partnering countries.

Activities in 2023:

1. Drafting the training toolkit and online course (Jan-May 2023)

2. Bootcamp for Entrepreneurial Skills 1 April - 30 June 2023

Subactivities

3-day Bootcamp for Entrepreneurial Skills (April 2023, Sofia)

The bootcamp enhanced participants' capacity to employ innovative methods and approached in promoting youth entrepreneurship while broadening their understanding of diverse entrepreneurial models and contemporary challenges. It fostered a heightened appreciation for transversal (soft) skills crucial in entrepreneurship, such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, and creative thinking. Participants gained knowledge on mobilising resources, effective planning and management, and risk mitigation. Furthermore, the bootcamp instilled ethical and sustainable perspectives, bolstering self-awareness and efficacy. Attendees honed their ability to identify opportunities, cultivate creative concepts, strategically pursue visions, and value ideas. Finally, they acquired proficiency in integrating the project's outcomes into their daily interactions with young people.

Local sessions with young people (May–June 2023)

14–15 June 2023

The local sessions aimed to enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards youth entrepreneurship and activism among local youth. The training was a 2-day event conducted by youth workers participating in the Entrepreneurial Skills Bootcamp. The training included activities from the following entrepreneurial sectors: entrepreneurship, green entrepreneurship, culture, social entrepreneurship, and digital entrepreneurship.

Final conference

27 September 2023

The final conference of the project "Young Entrepreneurs in Times of Crisis" was held in Europe House Bitola - Officer's House, on September 27, 2023, at 11:00 AM. The participants had the opportunity to hear about the experiences from the project, learn more about it, and listen to the successful entrepreneurial stories of our fellow citizens, Martin Angelov – Ulaf Ste Coffeeshop, and Ilche Bedelovski – ITcrowd MK. The project aimed to facilitate youth activism and foster an entrepreneurial mindset through networking, sharing best practices, and developing innovative NIFL tools. The results of the project will help young people overcome the uncertainty caused by the unstable socio-economic situation across Europe and create positive value by filling gaps and promoting new entrepreneurial approaches.



Cooperation for youth integration (CO4YOU)

2 November 2021- 2 November, 2023

This project aimed at strengthening partner work through cooperation among organisations working in the youth field and having different know-how and backgrounds, enhancing common values in a cross-fertilisation process that strengthens the expertise of each partner, and stimulating and developing European active citizenship paths for young immigrants' residents in the partner countries. CO4YOU was a 2-year initiative between 4 organisations: Centro di Studi ed Iniziative Culturali "Pio La Torre" ONLUS (Palermo, Italy), Crossing Borders (Copenhagen, Denmark), Fundacio Privada Ficat (Barcelona, Spain), and Association for Sustainable Development Sfera International Bitola (Bitola, North Macedonia). At the end, each partner organisation has increased skills and competencies in promoting active citizenship among young people. Each partner organisation has strengthened both local and European partnership networks, involved young people in experiencing an active citizenship path, and raised awareness of being actors in a change for the benefit of integration.

The project is funded by the Agenzia nazionale per i giovani (ANG) and coordinated by the Pio La Torre Study Center from Italy as part of the Erasmus Plus program.

Activities in 2023:

International meeting in Palermo

26.04.2023 to 28.04.2023

In this meeting, it was discussed about the following activities that needed to be implemented in the following months: After the discussion, we visited a local university, where the results from the interviews were shared with local state holders and students from the university. There was an open discussion about active citizenship and the inclusion of young immigrants.

Local dissemination

16 September 2023

The first local dissemination activity of the project "Cooperation for Youth Integration," promoted by Centro Pio La Torre, took place in Bitola (North Macedonia) on September 16th. SFERA International implemented the activity by involving speakers and participants dealing with the situation of migrants in North Macedonia. Afterwards, participants enjoyed the different cultural elements of Roma, Albanian, and Egyptian cultures living in the territory of Bitola through a presentation of different traditional dances, food sampling, and listening to a wonderful poetry reading. It was also the occasion "for networking, getting to know each other, strengthening existing collaborations, and starting new ones." Loredana Introini, president of Centro Studi Pio La Torre and project coordinator, spoke at the occasion and was there as an observer.

Published results' booklet

October 2023–November 2023

A booklet was created at the end of the project. It included the results of the project. It was published in each partner language (100 copies per partner), and an e-book version is available in English.

Final evaluation and follow-up meeting

4-6 April 2023

This meeting took place in Bitola. It lasted 1 working day and an arrival and departure day (2 nights). One representative from each partner took part. In this meeting, we concluded the project and discussed future collaboration.



FoodConnection

1 January 2023-31 December 2023

SFERA International, in partnership with Kontakte fur Europa Germany, the Municipality of Halandri Greece, HEEDA Hungary, Mondo Nuovo Italy, and Open University Subotica Serbia, was implementing the project “FOOD Connections.” The duration of the project was 12 months, and in the frame of our project, we identified best practice examples with the potential of a European transfer that make the redirection of goods from the shops to people in need possible or better, as is the case with the “Food Banks” in Germany. Besides, we developed ideas for education concepts together with citizens and relevant stakeholders in order to change purchase behaviour, process food better, and reduce food waste in private households. The education concepts also contained measures of sensitizing for the situation of people in need and the relevant aspects of combating climate change. “Food Connections” was a cooperative partnership for the exchange of best practices. The project was financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

Objectives:

With Food Connections, the project partners from Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and the North Macedonia and Serbia aim in the long run at combating poverty and, at the same time, at reducing food waste. Accordingly, adult education is indispensable, and it is the key to cultural and social participation.

Project activities:

1. Research: identification of best practice examples with the potential of European transfer, making the redirection of goods from the shops to people in need possible or improving it.
1. Dialogue: with citizens and relevant stakeholders to find out the education needs of adults in order to change their purchase behaviour and improve the processing of food.
1. Development of the concept for a follow-up project with which the detected needs will be covered.

Results:

- Calendar with recipes from food left-overs
- Project Brochure
- Dissemination of project results



Activities:

Activity 1

Partner Meeting

31 January 2023–3 February 2023, Plauen, Germany

SFERA International participated in the first partner meeting for the project “Food Connections,” which took place from January 31 to February 3, 2023, in Plauen, Germany. In this meeting, we discussed the project implementation for each project activity. As part of this meeting, we had the opportunity to visit the food bank in Plauen called Tafel. It is a larger facility with more departments. They gather the food from companies and markets and deliver it to the bank, where it is divided into rooms and sorted by date, while also being divided into rooms for fruits and vegetables. Low-income individuals can shop for food there. You may buy food for a week for 6 euros. Depending on the number of people living in the family, families must meet various income requirements in order to make purchases from there. In addition to meals, they also have a section where they sell clothes for very reasonable prices.

All the involved parties benefit from the Food Bank idea: retailers and producers take on social responsibility, and people in need receive much-needed, high-quality groceries. Furthermore, food waste is reduced, which protects the environment and valuable resources. The Food Banks are one of the largest volunteer-based organisations in Germany. They are financed by donations and receive no public financing. Only food that is donated to the Food Bank can be distributed to those in need; no food is purchased. Rent, transport, and administrative costs of the food banks are covered by private donations and the business community. It would be wonderful to implement something similar in our country, because it is such a pity to waste so much food considering that many people cannot afford food.

Activity 2

Research

- Existing concepts and legal basics for the redirection of goods from shops to people in need and the identification of best practices with European transfer potential.
- Survey with consumers to find out their purchase behaviour and the occurring food waste in their households, as well as conditions that need to be fulfilled to reduce it.
- Guideline interviews with traders were conducted to find out the amount of food waste occurring and their ideas for reducing it.
- Determination of the need for education for all involved.



Activity 3

Partner meeting

12–15 June 2023, Lucera, Italy

As part of the project Food Connection, SFERA International participated in the partner meeting from June 12–15, 2023, in Lucera, Italy. As part of the meeting, the representatives visited the Food Bank in Foggia and discussed their work and how we can lower our food waste in each country through sharing good practices.

The meeting had two main goals:

1. Introduction of the results of the survey with a total of 1,338 citizens in the partner countries on the subjects of purchase behaviour, food processing and disposal, and avoiding food waste.
2. Introduction of best practice examples for redirecting food from shops or producers to people in need.

Based on that, we brainstormed the first ideas for the large-scale project that should follow this small cooperation partnership.

In parallel, the project partners presented recipes from their countries that can be prepared with food leftovers. Afterwards, we selected the 12 recipes that were part of the calendar.

Activity 4

Dialogue with relevant stakeholders

Round Table

20 September 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia

Conclusions:

- Elaboration of a concept for the transfer and adaptation of the “Food Bank” model as follow-ups.
- Elaboration of concept notes for the education of citizens aiming at the change of their purchase behaviour, at processing food better, and at reducing occurring food waste in their households, as well as their sensitization for the situation of people in need and relevant aspects of combating.
- Climate change as the basis for follow-ups.
- Establishment of golden rules for consumers in order to change their purchase behaviour.

Activity 5

Final meeting

28 November–1 December 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia

SFERA International convened the final meeting of the Food Connection project, where the partners engaged in discussions about the outcomes of the round table. During this meeting, the focus was on the project's achievements and the lessons learned. Additionally, there was a forward-looking discussion about the potential continuation and expansion of the project into a second phase.

European Solidarity Corps – ESC

ESC “Building an inclusive society”

7 September 2022–7 July 2023, Croatia

In September, SFERA International sent a volunteer to be part of the project "Building an Inclusive Society" in Croatia from September 7th, 2022, until July 7th, 2023.

During this project, our volunteers are involved in the following activities:

in the local community:

- Volunteers prepare and implement different types of workshops for our beneficiaries.
- Participate in the “Spring on Trešnjevka” event.
- Language lessons: volunteers have the opportunity to prepare small lessons in their native languages and cultures.
- The Solidarity Blog and short film.

at personal and organisational development:

- Volunteers have the opportunity to create, prepare, and implement a personal project.
- Promotion of the organisation.



ESC “ACT FOR A CHANGE”

May–December 2023, Romania

Aim:

The volunteer programme was dedicated to fostering active citizenship and personal development among students through a variety of non-formal education methods. The aim was to enhance students' attention spans, logical thinking, and hand-eye coordination through creative and engaging activities.

Objectives:

Improve Attention Span: Engage students in handicraft workshops where they create animals from cardboard, cotton, and other materials, encouraging focus and creativity.

Enhance Logical Thinking: Introduce games that involve mathematical calculations, such as the "dice game," to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Boost Hand-Eye Coordination: Organise activities specifically designed for students in special schools, focusing on tasks that improve coordination through fun and interactive sessions.

Activities:

Weekly Workshops: Our long-term ESC volunteer participated in weekly workshops covering the aforementioned objectives, tailoring activities to meet the students' needs and interests.

Outdoor Workshops in Romanescu Park: During June, there were several outdoor workshops covering themes like Creativity International Day, dance, ecology, sports, and volunteering. These sessions provided opportunities for volunteers to collaborate with local volunteers, children, parents, and teenagers, enhancing the community's active citizenship.

Cultural Engagement: On June 24th, volunteers joined the traditional event in Craiova, conducting non-formal workshops for youth and immersing in the local culture through dances, food, and music.

Language and Skill Development: Volunteers received Romanian language lessons twice a week and participated in office meetings, as well as individual and team mentoring sessions to support their ongoing learning and integration into the community.

Summer Activities: Throughout the summer holidays, volunteers continued leading outdoor events and workshops using non-formal education methods, focusing on various topics to maintain engagement and learning momentum.

Through these activities, our volunteers not only contributed to the personal growth of students but also immersed themselves in cultural exchanges, enhancing their own skills and understanding of active citizenship within the community.

ESC “ACT FOR A CHANGE”

We're truly impressed by our volunteer, who is a long-term ESC volunteer. This September was nothing short of dynamic.

This volunteering has included:

- Project overview: objectives, activities, timeline, beneficiaries, results.
- Better understanding of the main points of the whitebook, the rules, the procedures, and the project.
- Increased understanding of the ACT structure and its financial aspects, with the objective of clarifying.
- Presentation of ACT instruments and internal procedures (personal and professional development plan, activity description/evaluation, weekly reports, monthly evaluation, volunteer code of conduct) in order to have a clear notion about its purpose and how and when to fill them in.
- Examples of best practices are presented through a presentation of ACT previous projects brochures.
- How to plan and evaluate activities.
- Creation of promotional materials for social media: Instagram account, design of project logo and poster, and video presentation.
- The former volunteers gave a session to the new volunteers, where they shared experiences on non-formal learning methods, activities carried out, and working methods.
- They had the opportunity to meet the psychologist from Beethoven High School of Technology. He gave the volunteers valuable information about our dear beneficiaries, how to work with them, and how to take their needs and interests into account when planning activities in the high school.
- In Bailesti, the volunteers carried out activities in the park and schools, such as bowling with plastic bottles, colouring on drawings that had animals affected by pollution, ping pong games with plastic cups filled with water, puzzle games with coloured drawings about the environment, quizzes about nature's problems, and experiments to make students more aware of the development of plants in an artificial environment, among others.



ESC Volunteering projects

Green practices, Environmental protection, Sustainable development and Climate

With this project we wanted to achieve a changed mindset a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle of young people in North Macedonia. We wanted to educate them that all of our daily choices can contribute towards worsening or bettering the natural environment that we live in, so they can consciously start making the right choices for themselves and the environment. We want to have a young population which is educated about all the factors that influence the environment and enhance their motivation to stand up and fight for a healthier environment. This is linked with the issue in North Macedonia which is the lack of awareness for protection of the environment, high levels of air pollution, and the general lack of knowledge in the fields of sustainability among young people, and what are the benefits for the nature and ourselves if we lead a sustainable lifestyle. We are witnesses of an increased number of landfills, pollution everywhere in our nature, in the national parks, on our streets, an increased number of cars instead of green transport solutions, choosing to use firewood to heat the homes, which is contributing to the high air pollution in many cities all over the country. All of this proves that there is a general lack of knowledge about what is causing pollution and this is why we would like to address this issue with providing educational workshops to young people and empower them to make the necessary changes in their life choices to contribute towards a cleaner and healthier natural environment in North Macedonia.

Terms: 01 April–31 July 2023, Bitola, North Macedonia - In this term we hosted one volunteer from Serbia.

01 October 2023–02 February 2024, Bitola, North Macedonia- In this term we hosted one volunteer from Austria

Topics:

- Green practices
- Environmental protection, sustainable development, and climate



Outputs in the First Term:

Research paper: "Types of Trees Around Bitola"

Hiking Trails Around Bitola

Environmental Activism in North Macedonia and Serbia

Each week, one environmental activity

Outputs in the Second Term:

Each week, one environmental activity

Research paper on the textile industry in North Macedonia and its impact on the environment

Research paper on What Do Bitola's Youth Think About Single-Use Plastic Coffee Stirrers?



Democracy, Advocacy, Leadership

The main goal of this project was to empower young people in North Macedonia to develop skills and enhance critical awareness to be an effective youth advocate, to increase awareness on the advantages of building positive leadership for personal and professional development, to be self-confident, find their identity, and to pursue their dreams. The objective links with the need of lack of development in engagement, leadership, and empowerment among youth, with focus on North Macedonia, moreover the opportunity for youth to develop their personal and professional skills. With strong youth engagements, exchanges, and system support, a young person is able to develop new skills and knowledge that will allow him or her to participate in system building and to be of support to peers. We need to value youth as leaders by creating an effective learning culture, promoting equality, building empowerment and resourcefulness, reducing anti-social behaviors, developing resiliency and emotional intelligence, and life skills.

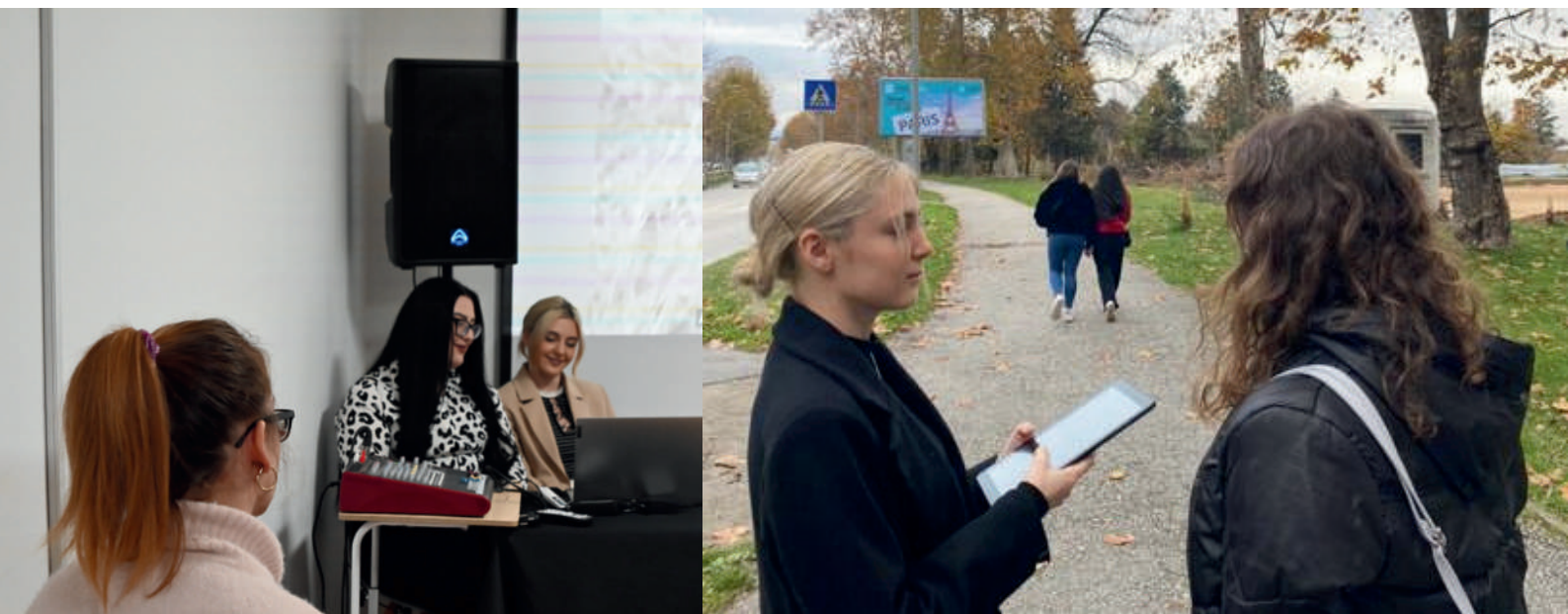
3 November 2023–5 March 2024, Bitola, North Macedonia - We hosted two volunteers from Ohrid and Struga, North Macedonia

Topics:

- Advocacy
- Leadership
- Democracy

Outputs:

- Research on Citizenship and Democracy in North Macedonia;
- Organised educational workshops and information campaigns for participation in democratic life and youth politics;
- Engaging in intercultural dialogue with the local community through different types of activities;
- Promoting volunteering and active citizenship by organising various actions and activities with the local youth;
- Work with other local and international volunteers;
- Work on social media pages and the website of SFERA International;
- Work on Canva and create posters to promote their events;
- Promote European values and European citizenship;



Virtual components and/or digital technology, Digital transition

The aim of this project was to empower young people to effectively transform their skills and preferences into employment. Through this objective we wanted to contribute towards lowering the youth unemployment rate in North Macedonia, which in the first half of 2020 (youth aged 15-24) was 33.8. (Source <http://www.stat.gov.mk/>) . We wanted to achieve this through implementing a series of workshops for skills and personal development for young people, including soft skills and technical skills, so they are more competitive on the labor market. This objective is linked to the challenge of the high unemployment rate in North Macedonia, and we believe that the NGO Sector can contribute towards increasing the skills and competencies of youth to be competitive on a labor market on a local regional and national level. We believe that the non-formal education can be complementary to the formal education that the youngsters have already attended, no matter which level. Through the NGO sector youngsters have the opportunity to gain soft skills (such as: effective communication, teamwork, public speaking, leadership, flexibility, problem-solving, adaptability, etc.) which usually aren't gained through the traditional formal educational systems in our country.

Another element is the volunteering opportunities which NGOs offer, which are considered as crucial step for gaining the proper skills and attitudes which lead youth to employment.

Term:

1 October 2023- 2 February 2024 - In this term we hosted one volunteer from Austria

1 December 2023- 31 March 2024 - In this term we hosted one volunteer from Turkey

Topics:

- Virtual components and/or digital technology
- Digital transition
- Digital literacy

Outputs in the first term (1 October 2023- 2 February 2024):

- A digital course about Illustrator
- Maintaining SFERA social platforms
- Creating designs
- Additional workshops on digital literacy
- Outputs in the second term (1 December 2023- 31 March 2024) :
- A digital course about E Commerce
- A digital course about Amazon
- Workshops about how to create CV, Linkedin profile and profile on Upwork, Online Entrepreneurship



ESC Turkey

Bitola, North Macedonia

The main goal of the project was to improve the knowledge of volunteers and students about environmental problems and how to deal with them. They learned about the problems in nature and how to deal with them. They developed creativity and the ability to create new things from already-used materials.

2 March 2023-29 April 2023 - For this term we hosted 2 volunteers from Turkey

Activities:

- Environmental workshops
- Research paper on pollution in Bitola
- Campaign about the environment and car pollution

22 June 2023–20 August 2023- For this term we hosted 2 volunteers from Turkey

Activities:

- Environmental workshops
- Research paper on digital apps and the environment
- Research paper on Entrepreneurship and the Environment in Turkey and North Macedonia
- Workshops on the topics: Environmental, Digital skills.
- Turkish language lesson

2 August 2023–13 September 2023 - In this term we hosted 3 volunteers

23 August 2023-22 September 2023 - In this term we hosted 2 volunteers

The activities of the volunteers were divided into the following areas:

- Environment protection
- Cultural differences
- Art as a tool for non-formal education
- Event management
- Creativity

16 September–10 November 2023 - In this term we hosted 2 volunteers

The activities of the volunteers were divided into the following areas:

- Environment protection
- Cultural differences
- Art as a tool for non-formal education
- Event management
- Creativity

21 December 2023–15 February 2024 - In this term we hosted two volunteers from Turkey

Activity:

The activities of the volunteers were divided into the following areas:

- Environment protection
- Cultural differences
- Art as a tool for non-formal education
- Event management
- Creativity workshops

ESC Building an inclusive society

September 2022 till July 7th, 2023, Zagreb, Croatia

Marija Davidovska, our dedicated volunteer at Udruga Amazonas as part of the ESC project "Building an Inclusive Society," co-funded by the European Union, has immersed herself in Zagreb for over six months, engaging in diverse activities. She leads conversational English classes for adults, provides support in training sessions for children on the autism spectrum, creates solidarity videos, documents Amazonas social events, and more. Additionally, Marija undertakes the responsibility of writing blog articles, recently focusing on the critical issue of violence against women.

A Blooming Plant

Mus, Turkey

13 September 2023–12 October 2023

30 September 2023–29 October 2023

The goal of the project was to build an inclusive society that brought people with cancer and their families closer to the local community.

The project focused on the following aspects:

- Helping young people with cancer who are severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through volunteers who will acquire knowledge and skills for a healthy lifestyle and improve the cooperation of organisations by building a network.
- Improving the participation of families, young people, and non-governmental organisations in the fight against cancer by increasing the capacities of platforms and networks that work with cancer patients.
- Development of research and projects to increase social awareness and cancer awareness.

Volunteering

Montijo, Portugal

Project 1: "**Volunteer Team: Teammate**": Joined forces with 2 Portuguese volunteers to contribute to sustainability and environmental projects. This involved planning, preparation, and implementation.

Project 2: "**Individual Volunteering**"

ESC Eastpackers

Bitola, North Macedonia

Through this project we aimed to cultivate a culture of sustainability and community engagement. Through workshops, events, and hands-on activities, we strived to raise environmental awareness, empower individuals, and foster a sense of collective responsibility towards our planet. With this activities, we were creating a greener, cleaner, and more interconnected community, where every action, no matter how small, contributes to a brighter future for generations to come.

1 September - 18 September : In this term we hosted one volunteer from The Netherlands

Outputs:

- Youth participation awareness campaign.

1 September 2023–1 November 2023: In this term we hosted one volunteer from The Netherlands

Outputs:

- Research on environmental issues in North Macedonia;
- workshops or events on environmental issues in Bitola;
- cleaning action in some parts of Bitola, like parks, parking lots, and landfills;
- environmental awareness campaign;
- recycling and upcycling workshops.



Internships

Internship through the Youth Hub project

The "YouthHub: Building Employment Skills, Competencies, and Networking Opportunities for Youth" project is implemented by the National Youth Council of Macedonia and the Youth Group. The project is financed by the British Embassy in Skopje and supported by the President of the Republic of North Macedonia, aiming to contribute to the professional development and economic independence of youth through a sustainable system for building skills and competencies tailored to the needs of the labor market. Through this project, we had four interns: Leontina Dimovska, Angela Ogdenova, Luka Velickovic, and Sara Mitrovska, who were mostly focused on working with design and social media.

The project achieved this goal through three components:

- Building practical skills in youth that will help them find suitable employment;
- Creating opportunities for connecting youth with employers and
- Providing support for youth to enter the labour market and opportunities for their personal and professional development.

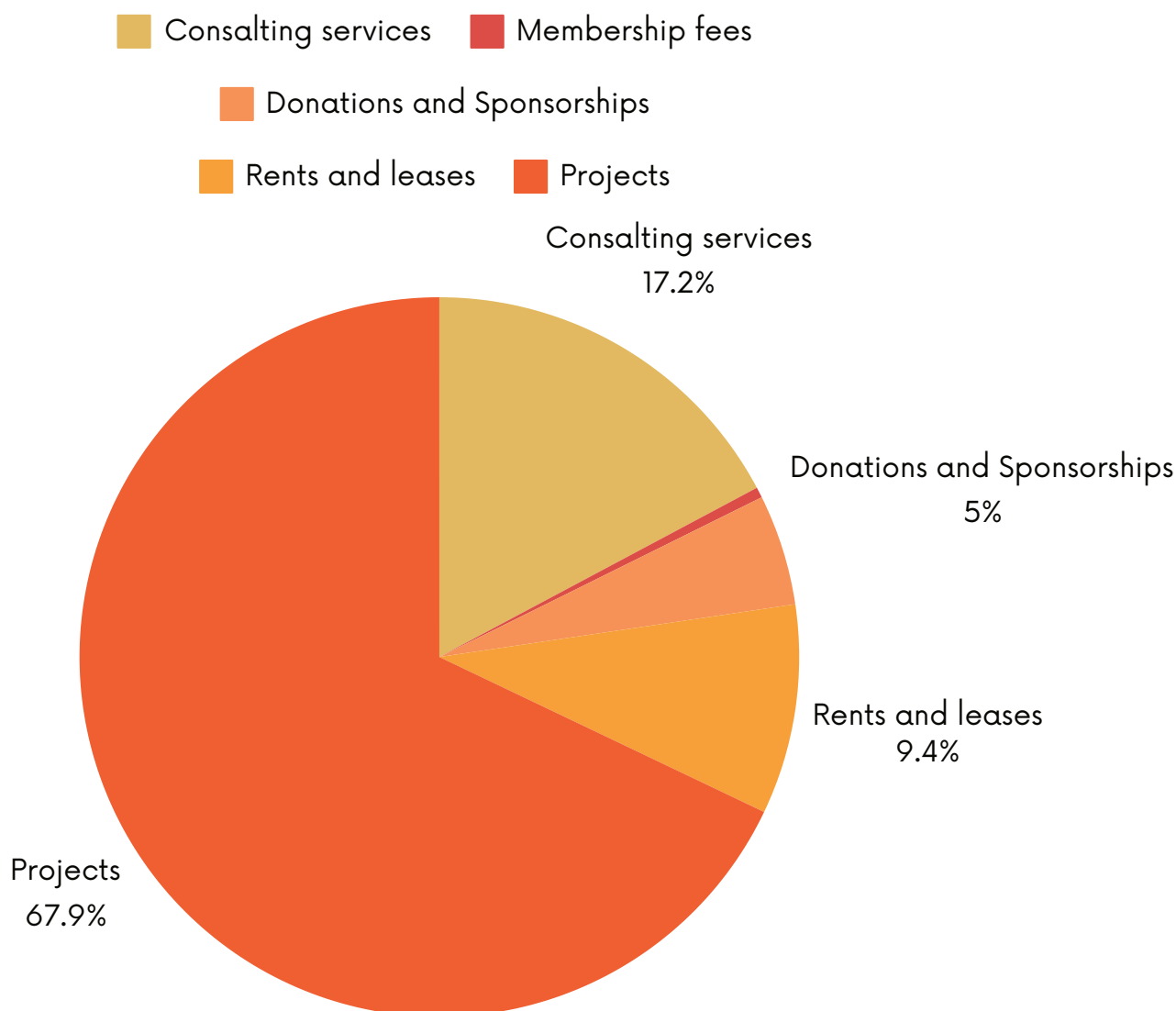
“Empowering people of Pelagonija”

The "Youth Empowerment in Pelagonia 2" project will impart knowledge to young people through innovative open-air workshops, public debates without prejudice, simulations of Council sessions, trainings and trainings on personal development topics held by domestic and foreign experts. Most young people will participate for the first time in a project outside the classrooms or lecture halls in regular education because in smaller and rural municipalities there is almost no informal education and activities for the development of young people. In addition, with the project, 14 young people get a chance for paid internships in the public and business sectors as well as in civic organizations.

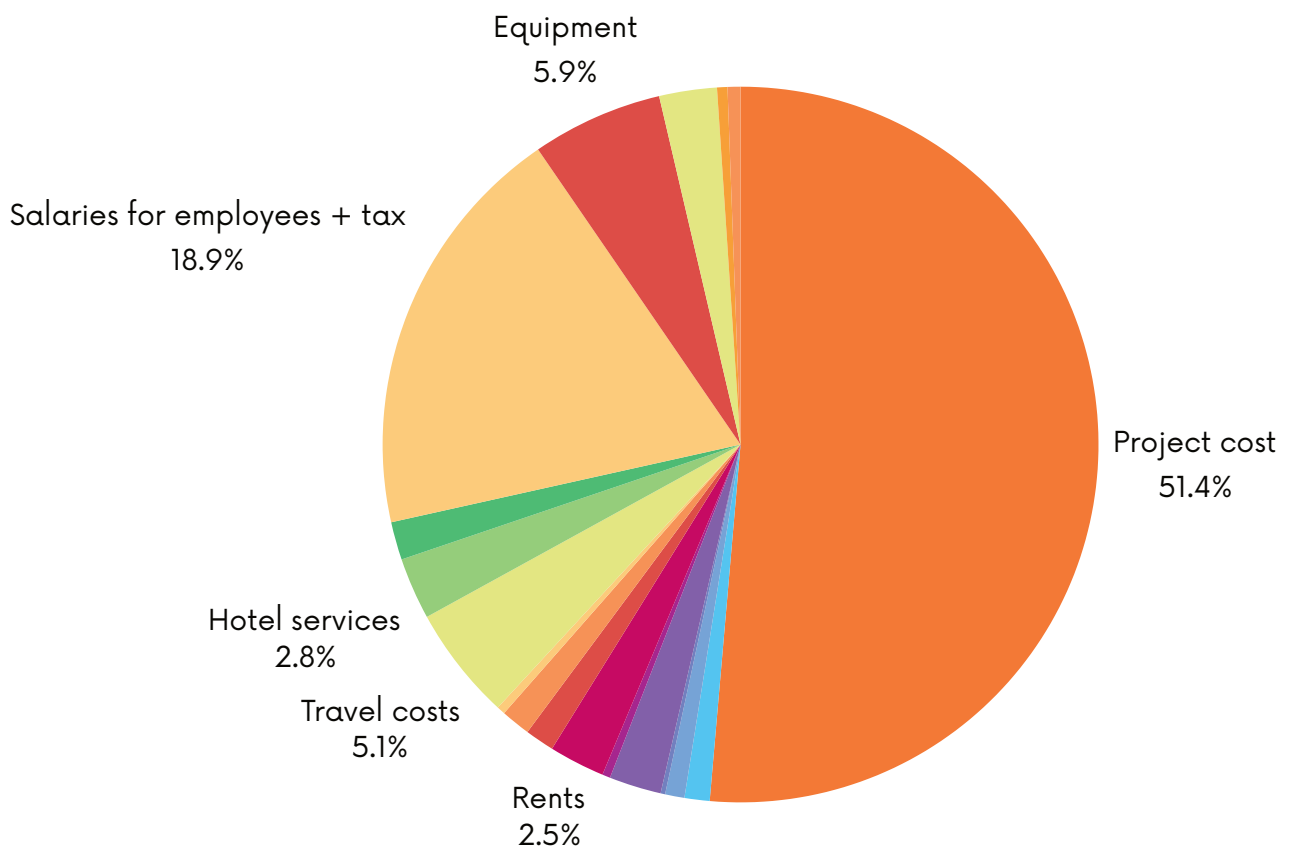
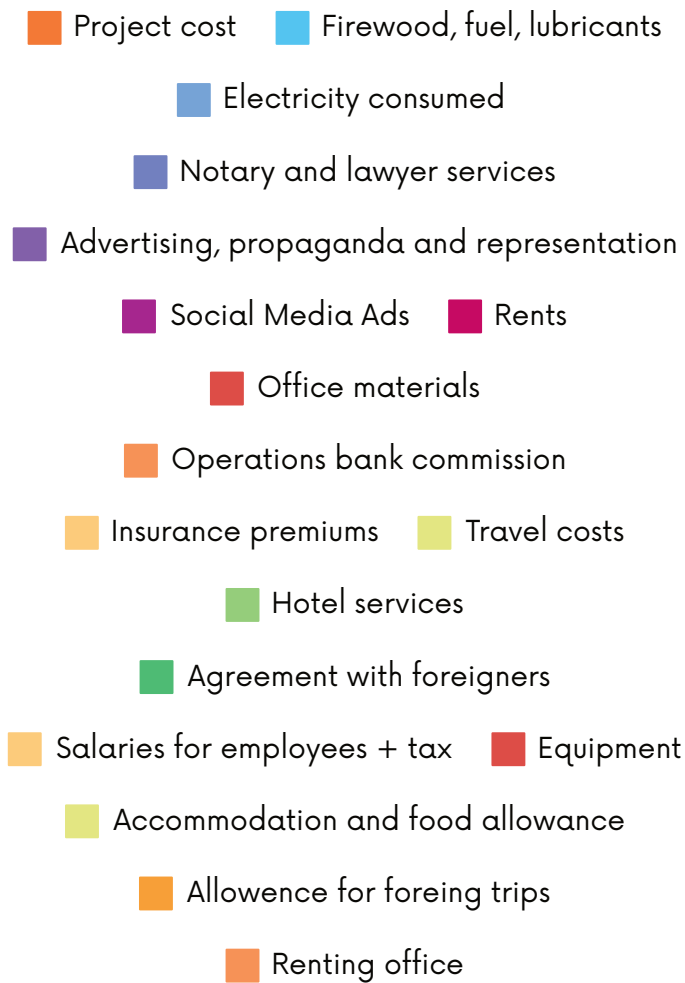
The “Empowering People of Pelagonija” project is realized by the organization Pro Local and financed by the embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and municipalities in the region of Pelagonija in the Republic of North Macedonia. Within the framework of the project, there were internship opportunities with different NGOs, including SFERA International. During this project, we had one intern, Andrej Naumovski, who had the invaluable opportunity to develop a diverse range of skills within our organization.

Annual Budget

Income - 10.844.924 MKD



Expenditure - 10.844.924 MKD





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