

# SozialMarie

PRIZE *for* SOCIAL INNOVATION

20  
25



**“Social innovation designs solutions to urgent societal challenges. It provides space for new approaches, innovative answers, and identifying new paths. It responds to emerging social issues or solves problems in our world through new approaches. These actions can come directly from communities. However, in all cases, decisions and actions must be supported and shaped together with the community. Social innovation creates sustainable, exemplary solutions to inspire actions for change.”**

**Definition of Social Innovation**  
Unruhe Privatstiftung

# Dear readers,



## Insights into the practice of SozialMarie

A good friend recently paid me a compliment: “I have been part of many juries, but I have never seen such careful and meticulous work as SozialMarie”.

I was quite surprised and wanted to know how the process worked for other awards. She explained that in many cases the jury members barely read the submitted projects, well-known projects are favoured or decisions are made through internal agreements. Not all juries are careless, but they are often under a lot of time pressure.

I am not sure if you are familiar with our selection process. We really try to be very careful and precise. This includes annual discussions on how we can improve the process, the criteria, the transparency and our guidelines.

The selection process is as follows: First, the country-specific entries are reviewed by two native-speaking evaluators. Their role is not only to filter out the best socially innovative projects in their country, but also to forward disqualified projects and ineligible entries to the jury coordinator. Disqualifications may occur, for example, if the submitted project does not fit within our framework, does not meet our criteria, or has already been completed.

Some applicants may also receive personal feedback if they present a very innovative idea, but the project is too early and not yet running. In such cases, we encourage them to reapply the following year.

The projects selected by the evaluators (a maximum of 15% of the submissions from each country) are then sent to the jury. The jury coordinator meets twice with all jury members from the six eligible countries (Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia). Between the first and second jury meeting, some projects are visited by the jury coordinator and the respective country coordinator. Questions are asked, ambiguities are clarified – after all, paper is patient, and an on-site visit gives us a clearer picture. Only then does the jury select the winning projects.

This is a demanding process, and although it involves extensive discussions, they remain peaceful, as everyone wants to achieve a result that we can proudly present to the public. SozialMarie seeks to highlight exemplary initiatives among the many active ones, so that others can learn from them. After all, the wheel does not always have to be reinvented!

With best regards and all the best to you,

*Wanda Moser-Heindl*

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# About us



Friedrich Moser & Wanda Moser-Heindl

Unruhe Privatstiftung (Unruhe Private Foundation) is distinguished by its support and advancement of the arts, science, research, and innovation. The foundation is the sponsor of SozialMarie – Prize for Social Innovation and was founded by Wanda Moser-Heindl and Friedrich Moser in 2000. Unruhe Privatstiftung is a founding member of Sinnstifter, an Austrian association for community social project development.

SozialMarie is a prize for social innovation awarded to 15 outstanding projects every year. With its first call for applications in 2004 and prize award in 2005, SozialMarie is the oldest prize for social innovation in Europe and celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2024. Beyond its financial recognition and support, SozialMarie is, above all, a public stage for projects that provide innovative answers to societal challenges based on new approaches. SozialMarie supports its networks of outstanding projects while driving forward dialogue on social innovation.

The SozialMarie Criteria for Social Innovation focuses on engaging diverse communities and stakeholders, project impact, effective implementation, and providing best practices for other projects for social change. SozialMarie awards successfully implemented projects and is a premium seal of quality for effective social innovation.

Annually on May 1st, the SozialMarie expert jury annually honours 15 outstanding projects with a total of €54 000. The top three prizes awarded are respectively, €15 000, €10 000, and €5 000; the following twelve prizes are each awarded €2 000.

The SozialMarie – Prize for Social Innovation initially awarded projects in Austria and international regions within a 300 km radius



The SozialMarie Prize for Social Innovation in 2005 initially awarded projects in Austria and regions within a 300 km radius from Vienna. SozialMarie has since expanded and awards projects based in Croatia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia.

of Vienna. Since 2000, SozialMarie has further expanded by establishing local teams of jurors, coordinators and evaluators and recognises projects based in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Croatia. 2023 was the first year in which Slovenia participated in the application and selection process with its own local team.

Each year, during the award ceremony on May 1st, inspiring individuals take on the role of active patrons for SozialMarie. They contribute their expertise through workshops, one-on-one mentoring, or—this year in Slovenia—the IEDC Bled School of Management is offering its 'MBA in a Day' program to a selected project. SozialMarie has developed into more than an award over the years. With an engaged and growing international network of jury members, country coordinators, active patrons, and local evaluators, it has become an important player in the social innovation ecosystem in Central and Eastern Europe. It brings together winning projects and nominees from previous years in various online and offline events and provides possibilities for innovative organisations in the non-profit, private, and public sectors to strengthen international bonds and start new cooperative ventures.

# Expert Jury



**Elisabeth Hammer**  
neunerhaus, Vienna



**Veronika Č. Janýrová**  
The Vienna Institute for International  
Economic Studies (wiiw)



**Katalin Teller**  
ELTE Institute for Art Theory and  
Media Studies, Budapest



**Tanja Tamše**  
Municipality of Celje, Slovenia



**Ana Jeinić**  
Institute of Architectural Theory,  
Arts and Cultural Studies,  
Graz University of Technology



**Miroslav Kocúr**  
Academic Dean at Schooltogo,  
Bratislava



Jury Coordinator  
**Anna Misovicz**



# Giving Social Innovation a Voice – The Why Why Why Podcast by SozialMarie

**Jose Antonio Morales** is the founder of Aurora Coworking in Slovenia, a founding member of ACN.coop, and the author of Fear Enough, Deconstructing Fear and Understanding Failure. Podcaster for SozialMarie.

**Voices have the power to connect us, to inspire, and to bring unseen stories to life. Social innovators work tirelessly to create change, yet their voices often remain unheard. That's why we created this podcast—to give them a stage, to share their passion, struggles, and successes, and to make their impact visible. Why Why Why dives deep into the journeys of changemakers, asking three essential questions: Why did you start? Why is it successful? And why do you keep going? Their answers will move you, challenge you, and maybe even inspire you to take action.**

A few years ago, a friend pointed me to an online museum of voice messages recorded long ago. I listened to the voices of soldiers calling home, sharing their experiences and deepest emotions. It was amazing – these voices transported me through time, carrying an intensity that felt both immediate and deeply personal.

The human voice carries more than just sound. It carries emotion, history and connection. It can evoke familiarity, inspire empathy and even trigger our prejudices. As many radio experts say, the human voice has the power to make us feel accompanied, to remind us that we are not alone.

I think this is why podcasts have become so popular and powerful. At their core, they reveal a fundamental truth: we need to feel part of a community – a tribe, a group of people who inspire and uplift each other.

The world of social innovation and social impact entrepreneurship is a challenging one. It is not a widely understood field, and those leading these initiatives are constantly pushing the boundaries of what is possible. Yet their impact is often invisible or difficult to communicate, making access to funding a constant struggle. This is why we created our podcast – to ensure that our community and its achievements are heard.

I believe SozialMarie has a crucial role to play. It is more than an awards ceremony – it is a collective of people who are passionate about making the world a better place. By amplifying the voices of changemakers, SozialMarie helps us see and understand the love, compassion, wisdom and optimism that drive social innovators.



Curious about these stories? Scan the QR code below and immerse yourself in our episodes. The people I interview often share their enthusiasm for the podcast. They are happy to participate because we give them a space to tell their stories. The links to the different episodes are always available, so they can share the interviews with their networks at any time.

The interviews have had a profound impact on me. They fill me with a sense of 'it is possible' and also an immense sense of gratitude. It is so empowering to see how much effort and love goes into social innovation.

We called the podcast Why Why Why because we always ask three core questions: Why did you start it? Why is it successful? And why do you keep at it? These simple yet profound questions guide our guests to open up and reflect on their journey.

I love editing podcast episodes. We are all non-native English speakers with many different accents and levels of expertise, and I think that makes the podcast deeply inclusive. We all strive to express our ideas and stories as clearly as possible. The nature of the recording is also a challenge – most episodes are recorded online and the sound quality is different every time. This means I have to use state-of-the-art software to reduce echo, balance volume levels and improve sound quality to make it more enjoyable for our listeners.

If you haven't listened to any of our previous episodes, I encourage you to take a moment – make yourself a cup of tea, sit back and enjoy. It is like a meditation that invites us into deep conversations about the issues that really matter.



## Patrons 2025

Each year, during the award ceremony on May 1st, inspiring individuals take on the role of active patrons for SozialMarie. They contribute their expertise through workshops, one-on-one mentoring, or—this year in Slovenia—the IEDC Bled School of Management is offering its 'MBA in a Day' program to a selected project.



**Marie Jílková** *Czech*  
 Member of Czech Parliament, Chair of the  
 Standing Commission for Family and Equal  
 Opportunities, member of the Social Policy  
 Committee

“Social innovations are great not only in their final outcome, but what I truly love is the process of getting there. A process that steps outside the usual paths, thinks beyond conventional frameworks, and connects worlds that might never have crossed—until someone thinks to bring them together. Social innovations are, in essence, the pinnacle of creativity combined with profound humanity.”



**Martina Kolesárová** *Slovakia*  
 Executive Director of the Pontis Foundation,  
 leads social innovation projects and Impact  
 Ventures. Participant of the Obama Founda-  
 tion Leaders Program 2023

“Social innovations respond to acute crises as well as long-term problems, finding solutions where others struggle for health, success, equality, and even life itself. There is increasing excitement about innovations in business, but I believe that soon we will realize how much we need them and should support them where society’s biggest problems lie – from fighting poverty to saving democracy.”



**George Ligeti** *Hungary*  
 PhD in sociology, author, lecturer, organiza-  
 tional development consultant, personal  
 consultant, animated film creator

“I feel honored to be the patron of Hungarian projects in 2025. Getting to know the candidate projects, we will not only discover highly innovative solutions but also recognize the great and persistent effort behind these innovations and their implementation.”



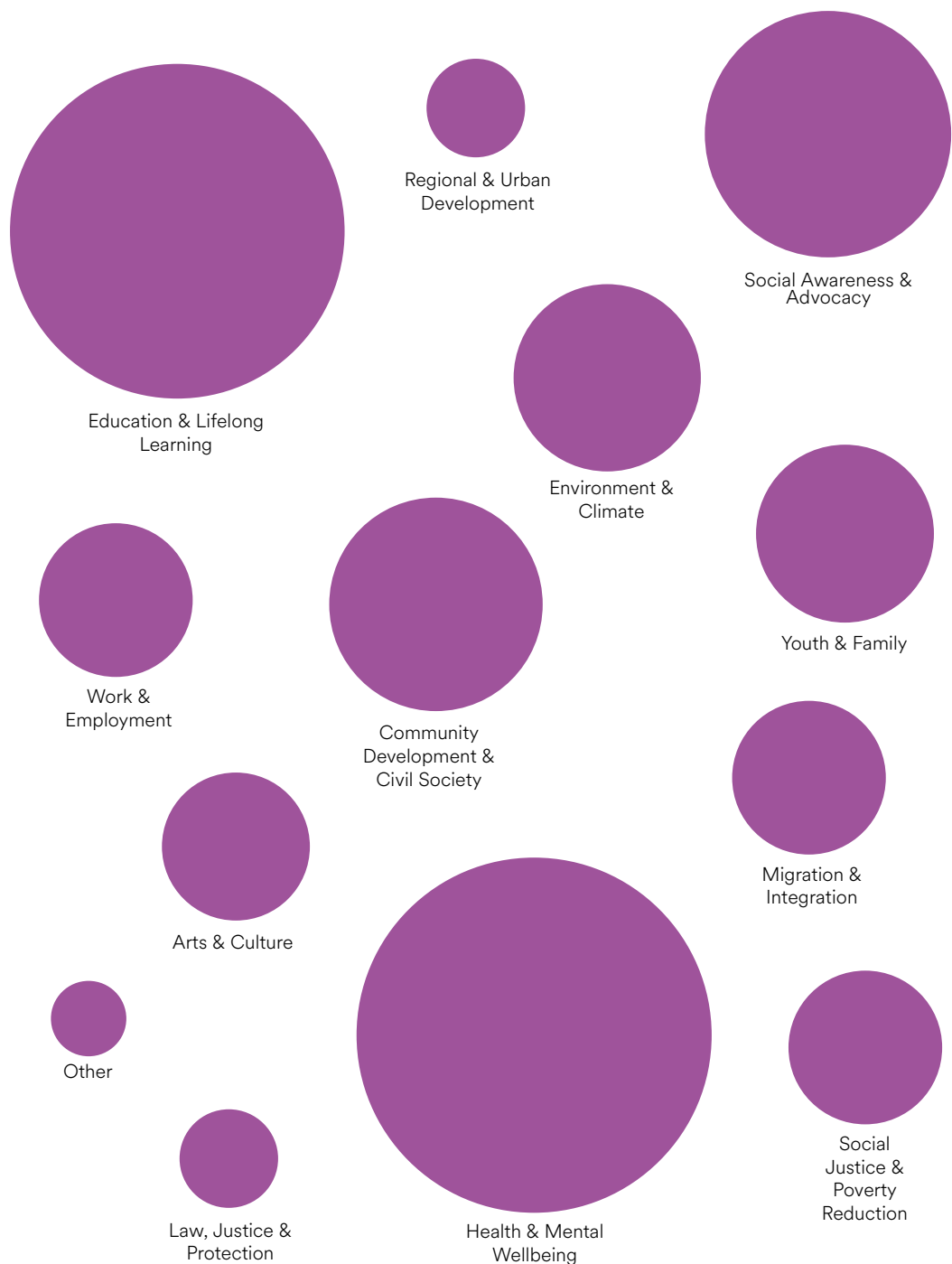
**The IEDC** *Slovenia*  
 Bled School of Management, founded in  
 1986 as the first management school  
 of its type in Central and Eastern Europe,  
 is one of Europe’s leading international  
 management development institutions.

“Every morning when you look in the mirror, when you shave yourself, or when you put on your lipstick: is the person in the mirror the person you want to see?.”

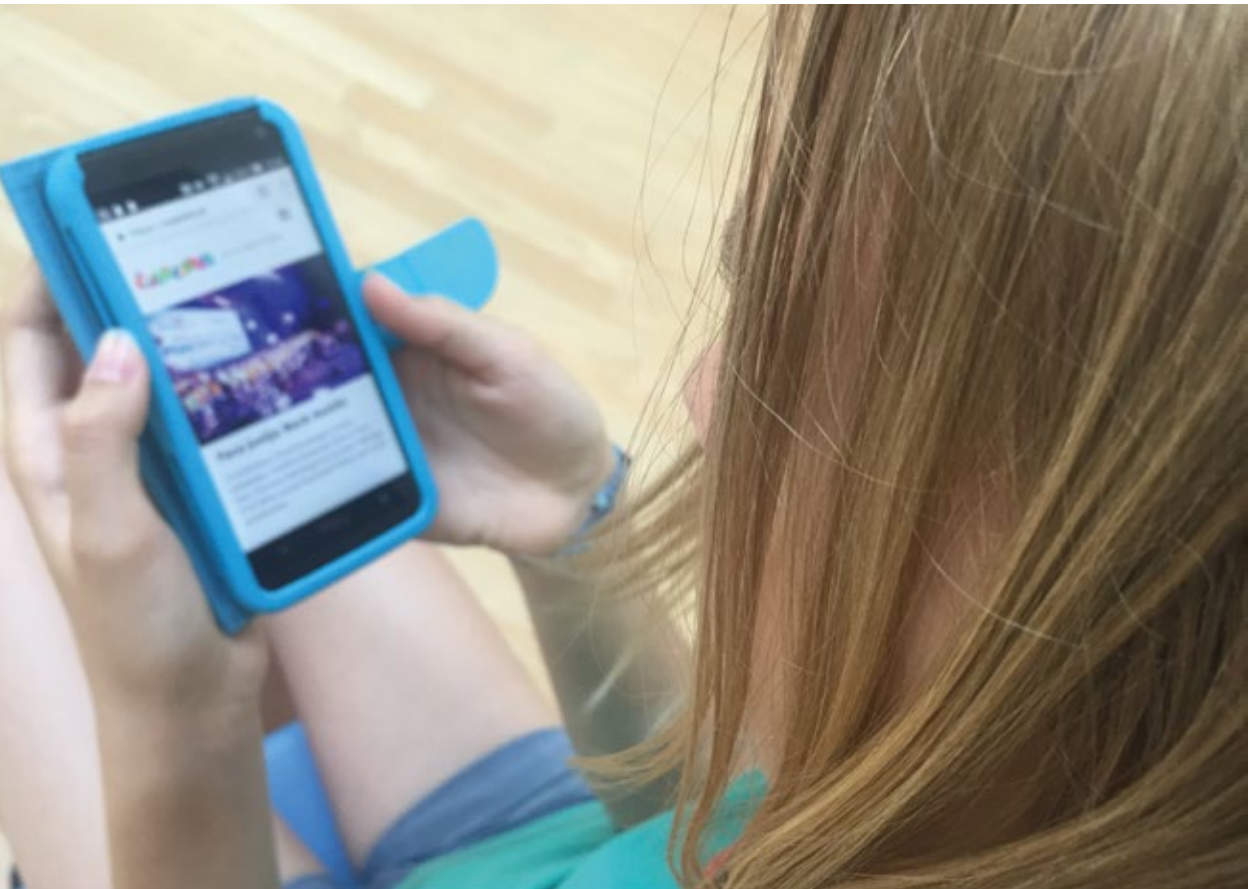
Danica Purg, The Financial Times

# Fields of actions of submitted projects in 2025

401 projects were submitted to SozialMarie in 2025.  
These projects indicate multiple fields of action.



# Prize Winners 2025



<b>Country</b> Slovenia	<b>Organisation</b> Sonja Merljak Zdovc
<b>Region</b> Implemented nationwide	<b>Contact</b> Sonja Merljak Zdovc +386 41 756 503 sonja@casoris.si
<b>Sector</b> Civil Society Social Economy	<b>Website</b> www.casoris.si
<b>Fields of action</b> Non-formal education, Awareness raising, Youth welfare	

**challenge** Disinformation poses a serious threat to democratic societies—especially when children lack the media literacy skills to navigate it. With platforms like TikTok shaping their media consumption, young people are particularly vulnerable to biased or false information. Without the tools to critically assess news, their ability to make informed decisions is weakened, increasing the risk of polarization and extreme reactions.

**idea** Časoris focuses on promoting news media literacy for children by providing them with trustworthy news and the tools to critically evaluate information. The project fosters an understanding of journalism’s role in democracy, and empowers children to create their own content, engage in critical thinking, and contribute to narratives. It involves educators and parents to ensure a supportive environment for learning.

**actors** A dedicated core team oversees implementation, collaborating with educators and media literacy experts to develop age-appropriate content and design workshops. Journalists contribute by producing news stories, while partnerships with NGOs and civil society organizations help extend the project’s reach. Children are guided through content creation, gaining hands-on experience. Regular meetings and digital tools support coordination and adaptability throughout.

**impact** The project’s innovation lies in its participatory approach, where children actively create content and contribute to the media landscape. It integrates storytelling, games, and workshops into everyday learning, making it accessible and relevant. The project bridges schools and families, promoting media literacy through a community-driven model. Its adaptability to current challenges, such as disinformation, ensures ongoing impact.

**transfer** Public perceptions are reshaped by emphasizing the importance of journalism, media literacy, and children’s roles in society. Initiatives like the Kid of the Year Award highlight children’s creativity and leadership, fostering respect for young voices and encouraging trust in credible journalism among families and communities. This inclusive approach has helped inspire more informed and engaged media consumption.

**appreciation of the jury** Časoris, Slovenia’s only children’s daily newspaper, uniquely combines media education with journalistic practice. It involves young people in producing reliable news, empowering them to navigate misinformation and understand journalism’s democratic role. By teaching critical thinking and democratic values, Časoris develops an informed, engaged generation capable of participating in societal debates. Its innovative mentorship model strengthens journalistic skills, civic awareness, and young people’s connection to media and society.



# My Voice, My Choice



**Country**  
Slovenia, Austria,  
Hungary, Czech  
Republic, Slovakia,  
Croatia, Italy,  
Germany, Poland

**Region**  
Implemented  
nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Health

**Organisation**  
Zavod za zaščito in napredek  
reproduktivnih pravic  
My Voice, My Choice

**Contact**  
+386 40 150 893  
projekti@8marec.si

**Website**  
[www.myvoice-mychoice.org](http://www.myvoice-mychoice.org)

**challenge** Across the EU, 20 million women lack access to safe abortion services, while another 79 million live in countries where it is legal but not free. This reality jeopardizes women's health, restricts their rights, and forces many into unsafe procedures. To address this, a bold push is being made to introduce EU-wide legislation ensuring access to safe abortion through the European Citizens' Initiative.

**idea** At the heart of the campaign lies the strategic use of the EU's only direct democracy tool—the European Citizens' Initiative—to gather 1 million signatures supporting safe abortion access for all. By activating a pan-European support network and collaborating with more than 300 organizations, the effort aims to reshape public perception and ensure reproductive rights are safeguarded at the legislative level.

**actors** Spearheaded by a Slovenian team led by Nika Kovač, the campaign draws strength from a diverse coalition: an advisory board of renowned human rights advocates, 300+ supporting organizations across EU member states, and a committed network of volunteers. Coordination structures are tailored nationally, adapting to the scale and needs of each local community.

**impact** Never before has the European Citizens' Initiative been used to champion reproductive rights—and never with such momentum. As the fastest campaign to reach 500,000 signatures, and with over 1 million collected in total, the effort has galvanized public attention and drawn unprecedented political support, setting the stage for meaningful legislative change.

**transfer** Beyond the legal goal, the campaign has sparked a Europe-wide conversation about reproductive rights and democratic participation. Public engagement surged, media coverage spread its message, and similar initiatives are already being inspired. This grassroots model proves how collective action can shift public discourse and drive EU-wide advocacy.

**appreciation of the jury** *My Voice, My Choice* is a youth-led grassroots campaign breaking taboos around reproductive rights across Europe. It reframes abortion as a human rights issue rather than a cultural debate. Using the European Citizens' Initiative for legal change, the campaign built a decentralized volunteer network with a custom signature collection platform. Through viral social media outreach, it transformed civic action into a cross-border movement. The team created a sustainable, inclusive model of participatory democracy that connects activists and scales effectively to defend reproductive rights throughout Europe.

# Maritimo Recycling



**Country**  
Croatia

**Region**  
Dubrovnik-Neretva  
County

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Awareness raising,  
Urban development,  
Environmental  
protection

**Organisation**  
Maritimo Recycling

**Contact**  
+385 98 214 028  
maritimorecycling@gmail.com

**Website**  
www.maritimo-recycling.com

**challenge** Beach and seabed pollution—especially plastic waste—remains a pressing challenge. A key issue is the lack of education around plastic recycling, particularly among younger generations. Many people are unaware of the potential that waste holds, such as the possibility of transforming discarded plastic into useful products.

**idea** Creative recycling lies at the heart of this initiative. By collecting, sorting, and processing marine plastic into items like sunglasses, the team demonstrates how small-scale, locally accessible technologies can empower communities. The accompanying webshop raises ecological awareness and supports inclusion through a sustainable business model.

**actors** A dedicated team of eight people powers the project: four full-time, two part-time, and two employees from a probation office. Operating from the sea plastic recycling center, they innovate, educate through workshops, and partner with communities and stakeholders to broaden the project’s reach and effectiveness.

**impact** Simple yet scalable technologies make it possible for local communities to recycle independently. By avoiding reliance on large industrial systems, this approach fosters grassroots solutions. Workshops and public engagement activities play a crucial role in spreading awareness—especially among young people—about plastic waste and its potential.

**transfer** What sets the project apart is its ability to motivate others. Communities, organizations, and individuals are inspired to replicate the approach using the openly shared knowledge and tools. By supporting localized adaptation, the initiative sparks a growing movement of practical, community-based responses to plastic pollution.

**appreciation of the jury** *Maritimo Recycling* combats plastic pollution by making recycling accessible through low-cost, self-developed machines. The initiative enables schools, communities, and individuals to transform plastic waste into valuable products while raising environmental awareness. Children become sustainability advocates, and the project creates employment opportunities for people with disabilities. From beach cleanups to creative reuse, this comprehensive initiative generates multilevel impact with easy transferability to other communities, converting waste into knowledge, connection, and a circular vision for the future.



# Alternative Education



**Country**  
Croatia

**Region**  
City of Zagreb

**Sector**  
Public  
administration

**Fields of action**  
Interculturality,  
Migration, Culture

**Organisation**  
The Ribnjak Youth Center

**In cooperation with**  
In cooperation with primary and  
secondary schools of the City of Zagreb

**Contact**  
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pavlica.bajsic@cmr.hr

**Website**  
[www.cmr.hr/alternativna-nastava-interkulturalni-skolski-sat/](http://www.cmr.hr/alternativna-nastava-interkulturalni-skolski-sat/)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9ba2fKZ91o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9ba2fKZ91o)

## Alternative Education

PRIZE WINNER

**challenge** In the context of rising nationalism, migration, and xenophobia, the arrival of migrants often triggers fear and exclusion. The lack of dialogue and spaces for human interaction deepens hate and negative attitudes towards foreigners. This directly impacts children and youth, shaping their views on migration and reinforcing stereotypes, which affects their understanding of global issues like conflict, climate change, and inequality.

**idea** A space for intercultural dialogue emerges through this project designed to counter social division with meaningful connection. Personal stories, cultural identities, and migration motivations become learning materials as students engage directly with migrants. These exchanges foster mutual understanding while illuminating global migration causes and solidarity's importance. For participating migrants, the experience offers validation and recognition, supporting both integration and social affirmation.

**actors** Ribnjak Youth Center stands at the organizational heart of this program, recruiting migrants who contribute artistic skills and personal knowledge. Partnerships with schools, civil society groups, and local authorities help bring these enriching experiences into classrooms. Careful preparation characterizes the process as program coordinators collaborate with educators to develop tailored lesson plans that address specific student learning needs.

**impact** Power dynamics undergo significant transformation when migrants step into teaching roles, sharing valuable experiences and skills within school settings. Cultural diversity gains appreciation through interactive encounters and creative collaboration, nurturing a welcoming community atmosphere. Beyond student education, the approach empowers migrant participants while strengthening their social integration pathways through meaningful contribution opportunities.

**transfer** Enthusiastic responses from the educational community describe the program as both eye-opening and deeply engaging. Ongoing discussions continue long after formal lessons conclude, indicating sustained impact on migration understanding. Family conversations and community interactions reflect the program's extended influence, contributing to more inclusive and constructive social discourse about migration and cultural diversity.

**appreciation of the jury** *Alternative Education* combats rising xenophobia in Croatia through dialogue. In Zagreb schools, migrants serve as guest teachers, sharing cultural knowledge, personal stories, and creative practices. In just one class period, students gain fresh perspectives, challenge stereotypes, and experience cultural diversity firsthand. This powerful role reversal—where migrants are valued for their knowledge rather than defined by trauma—builds empathy, recognition, and lays groundwork for a more cohesive society.



**challenge** In Hungary, there is a lack of accredited training programs focusing on child protection and child rights. While professions such as social workers, teachers, and lawyers are required to collect credit points, many courses did not address the specific needs of children. Additionally, credible and comprehensive resources for child protection, especially on prevention, were scarce.

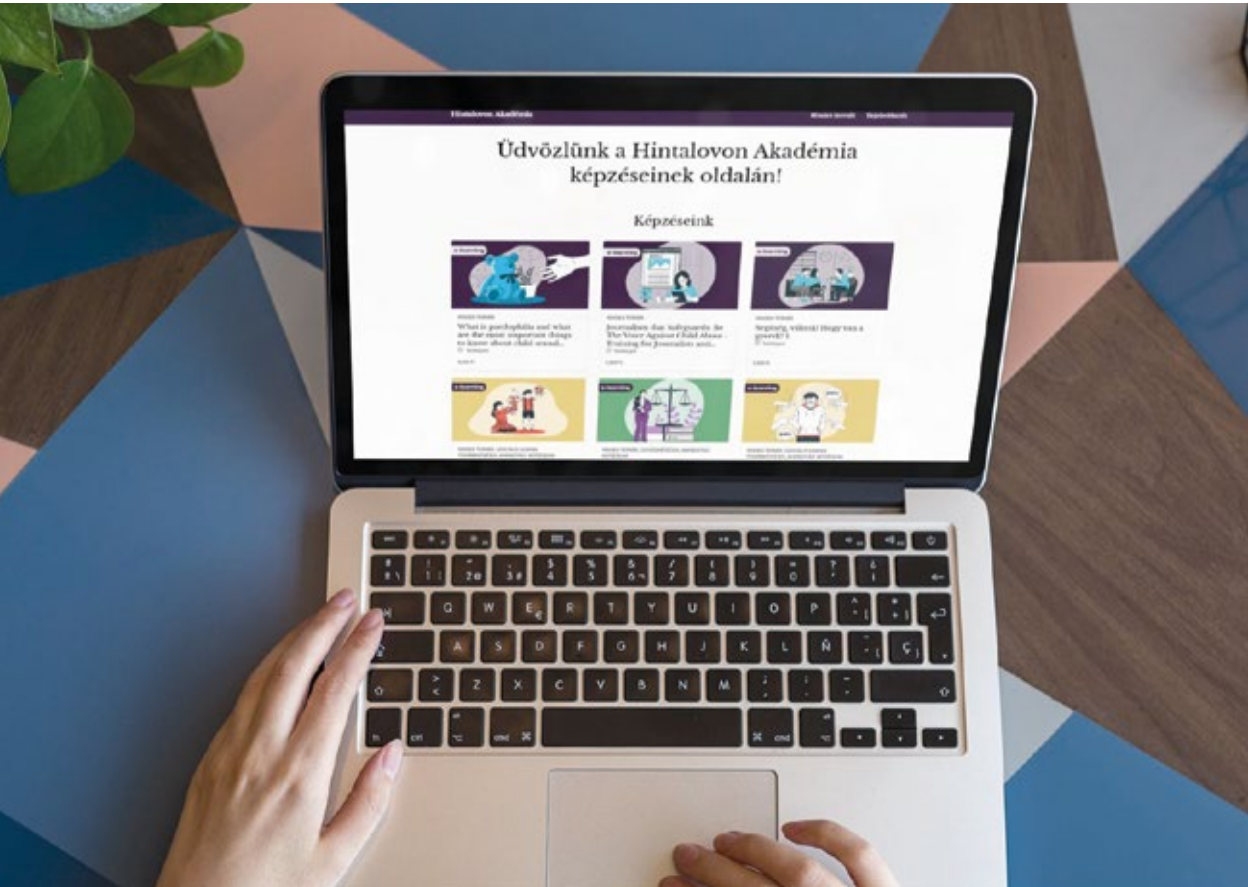
**idea** *Hintalovon Academy* offers online and hybrid training courses designed to promote advocacy, legal awareness, and child rights education. The courses cover diverse topics like online safety, divorce, abuse, and sexual education. They emphasize prevention and proactive measures, providing a knowledge base for responsible adults and professionals. The courses also foster collective learning and community support through training groups.

**actors** The team includes a child rights advisor, project manager, training developer, communications expert, and volunteer administrator. Course development, implementation, and evaluation are further supported by Foundation staff, Kid Colleagues aged 13–18, and external specialists. All courses are designed, reviewed, and refined on an ongoing basis in response to participant feedback.

**impact** The innovation lies in the development of accessible, self-paced e-learning courses that offer flexibility for parents and professionals unable to attend in-person sessions. The inclusion of children in course development ensures their voices are heard, shaping perspectives on children's rights. The Academy's community-driven, discovery-based learning approach fosters active engagement and advocacy.

**transfer** The Academy successfully launched a freely accessible e-learning course in response to a child protection scandal in 2024. The course equipped adults with the knowledge and skills to address child protection challenges. With over 60% of participants registering through recommendations, the initiative's effectiveness is demonstrated by increasing discussions and reflections on child rights, further reinforcing the need for accessible child rights education.

**appreciation of the jury** *Hintalovon Academy* addresses a crucial gap by centering children's rights and protection in Hungarian professional education—areas typically absent from official curricula. Through innovative digital courses and hybrid formats, it equips educators, social workers, and families with essential tools for effective action. By involving children directly in content development, the Academy democratizes knowledge while making children's rights education accessible, practical, and transformative, despite the challenging political climate.



<b>Country</b> Hungary	<b>Organisation</b> Hintalovon Gyermekjogi Alapítvány, Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation
<b>Region</b> Implemented nationwide	<b>Contact</b> Dori Merenyi +36 205 834 080 dori.merenyi@hintalovon.hu
<b>Sector</b> Civil Society Social Economy	<b>Website</b> www.hintalovon.hu/ hintalovon-akademia
<b>Fields of action</b> Adult education, Awareness raising, Advocacy	www.hintalovon.thinkific.com/ collections

**challenge** Gentrification forced the Cvernovka creative community to leave their original building. The challenge was to transform an abandoned building into a sustainable, accessible hub for creativity and innovation. Overcoming financial, legal, and bureaucratic obstacles while ensuring community involvement and maintaining cultural relevance required strategic planning and resilience.

**idea** A vibrant creative ecosystem emerged when *Nová Cvernovka* successfully transformed an abandoned building into a thriving multi-disciplinary center housing 130+ studios and 450 professionals. Beyond providing physical space, this initiative cultivates creativity, innovation, culture, and sustainability through focused efforts on urban regeneration, social innovation, and collaborative community approaches to building a sustainable future.

**actors** Over 40 staff members employed by the Cvernovka Foundation manage the campus and its ongoing development activities. Operational structure divides into specialized departments: Administration, Cultural Center, Communication, Financial, and Fundraising. Oversight responsibilities fall to the Board and Board of Trustees, which includes representation from the Bratislava self-governing region. Community voices significantly influence direction through resident input and consistent project management practices.

**impact** Creative sector expertise merges with civil society values in *Nová Cvernovka's* distinctive methodology, advancing both innovation and cultural sustainability goals. Continuous reflection, collaboration, and adaptation become possible through the careful balance maintained between NGO mission fulfillment and business realities. Bureaucratic hurdles prove surmountable when thoughtful management practices create conditions for a cultural center to flourish, as demonstrated by this project's sustained success.

**transfer** "This model should be included in educational curricula," noted Slovak cultural expert Marek Adamov when praising *Nová Cvernovka's* exemplary cultural management approach. Large-scale creative spaces can simultaneously maintain cultural functions, deliver quality services, and navigate financial and legal complexities, as proven by this initiative. Cultural management and urban regeneration projects elsewhere now draw inspiration from the project successes.

**appreciation of the jury** *Nová Cvernovka* exemplifies creative resilience through community and care. After eviction by developers, the collective rebuilt their ecosystem in a repurposed industrial building, now Slovakia's largest independent cultural center. With over 130 studios, it serves as a grassroots platform for creative collaboration and social inclusion, bringing together diverse participants and marginalized groups. *Nová Cvernovka* demonstrates how collective action and shared values can generate structural change despite challenging circumstances.



<b>Country</b> Slovakia	<b>Organisation</b> Cvernovka Foundation
<b>Region</b> Bratislava Region	<b>Contact</b> +421 903 921 449 oravec@novacvernovka.eu
<b>Sector</b> Civil Society Social Economy	<b>Website</b> www.novacvernovka.eu
<b>Fields of action</b> Urban development, Environmental protection, Culture	





<b>Country</b> Austria	<b>Organisation</b> Central European University
<b>Region</b> Vienna	<b>In cooperation with</b> Various external partner institutions
<b>Sector</b> Commercial enterprise	<b>Contact</b> +43 676 886 49 222 seidlery@ceu.edu
<b>Fields of action</b> Poverty, Education institutions, Migration	<b>Website</b> <a href="http://www.ceu.edu/ceu-science-society-hub">www.ceu.edu/ceu-science-society-hub</a> <a href="http://www.ceu.edu/ceu-science-society-poster-conference-27-november-2024">www.ceu.edu/ceu-science-society-poster-conference-27-november-2024</a> project_country

**challenge** A growing disconnect between academic research and societal needs creates barriers to real-world application. Too often, research is produced without engaging the communities it aims to support, resulting in limited relevance and trust. Marginalized voices in particular remain excluded from both the research process and broader societal discourse.

**idea** Equal partnerships between Central European University (CEU) and civil society organizations form the foundation of this initiative. By involving communities in every step of the research—from identifying questions to collecting and analyzing data—the model promotes community-driven inquiry. Outcomes benefit both academia and society, enriching research quality and giving students valuable, hands-on experience.

**actors** Management is carried out by the CEU *Science for Society Hub* under the university’s External Relations Office. One full-time and one part-time staff member coordinate the initiative, supported by student interns and volunteers. Broad collaboration with civil society partners, academic staff, and students ensures inclusivity and collective ownership throughout the process.

**impact** Innovation emerges through the participatory approach that weaves community insights directly into academic research. This collaboration yields more relevant and applicable outcomes, increasing the likelihood that findings will shape real-world policy and practice. By including social experts and practice-based knowledge, the process redefines academic relevance and brings research closer to the people it is meant to serve.

**transfer** The approach was highlighted at the CEU *Science with Society* conference in November 2024, where partner organizations and students jointly presented their work in an interactive setting. Positive reception confirmed that co-creating knowledge with civil society makes research more accessible and socially relevant. The model offers a replicable method for other institutions aiming to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world application.

**appreciation of the jury** *Science with Society* transforms university research by centering NGO needs within a structured, participatory collaboration framework. Civil society organizations co-design all research phases with support from a hands-on facilitation team. Results are shared accessibly and applied for real-world impact. This approach empowers NGOs, reshapes student perspectives, and challenges traditional academic norms—creating opportunities for research conducted with society rather than merely about it.



**Country**  
Austria

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Awareness raising,  
Law, Justice, Violence prevention

**Organisation**  
NEUSTART - Probation,  
Conflict Regulation, Social Work

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**challenge** *Sicher.net §207a* of the Austrian Criminal Code was tightened in 2023, criminalizing the possession and sharing of pornographic material involving minors. Many of the offenders are juveniles who share such images, not adult pedophiles. The rise in such offenses, fueled by social media, requires a response that addresses the underlying issues, as conviction as a sex offender can harm the social and professional development of young people.

**idea** *Sicher.net §207a* presents an alternative path for minors caught in this legal framework. Rather than facing conviction, young people enter a probation period guided by professional probation services. Through structured reflection, juveniles learn to understand consequences, develop critical thinking about media norms, respect boundaries, and build victim empathy during individual and group sessions designed to address root causes.

**actors** Probation services form the implementation backbone across 36 Austrian departments, each led by department heads overseeing dedicated social workers. Expert teams from the Central Social Work Division collaborated to develop the program methodology. Courts and prosecutors serve as referral sources, directing appropriate cases toward this alternative intervention after social workers complete specialized training to facilitate the program.

**impact** Education and reflection replace stigmatization in this innovative departure from punitive responses. Despite initial shame surrounding pornography discussions, participants respond positively to the program's respectful, open approach. Young people gain valuable perspective while avoiding destructive sex offender convictions that would otherwise follow them throughout their lives, demonstrating the effectiveness of rehabilitative methods over punishment.

**transfer** Judicial perspectives have shifted as judges and prosecutors increasingly recognize the ineffectiveness of convicting juveniles under § 207a. Prevention and rehabilitation stand at the center of this alternative approach. Media campaigns extend awareness beyond legal circles, reaching young people, parents, and educators through strategic communication efforts that enhance visibility and expand the program's societal impact.

**appreciation of the jury** *Sicher.net §207a* tackles the criminalization of minors for sharing sexualized peer images with a socially grounded approach. Rather than stigmatizing young people as sex offenders, it provides a structured program for reflection and education covering media literacy, personal and legal boundaries, and victim empathy. The initiative addresses what courts often cannot: the complexity of adolescent digital behavior. As debates continue about lowering the age of criminal responsibility, this scalable prevention model offers a humane, forward-looking alternative.



# Simbioza Mobiln@ - a Mobile Classroom on Wheels

Simbioza Mobiln@ - a Mobile Classroom on Wheels

PRIZE WINNER

**challenge** Slovenia has one of the fastest-growing elderly populations in Europe, yet 38% of those aged 65-74 lack digital skills, especially in rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic further isolated the elderly, leaving them disconnected from society. Despite good digital infrastructure, the elderly face significant barriers to accessing education and technology, hindering their social inclusion.

**idea** Digital education reaches rural elderly through *Simbioza Mobiln@*'s innovative mobile classroom approach, effectively overcoming geographical and social barriers. Elderly participants develop ICT skills that enhance independence and social inclusion. Beyond technical knowledge, the program builds community connections and intergenerational relationships, with the Magda app providing supplementary self-learning opportunities between formal sessions.

**actors** Volunteers and staff from Simbioza Community collaborate to create a robust support system for program participants. Strategic partnerships with organizations throughout Slovenia, particularly in underserved rural areas, extend the program's reach. At the local level, dedicated coordinators manage essential functions including recruitment, training delivery, and promotional activities. Awareness grew through targeted media campaigns, while responsive communication channels ensure the program adapts to specific community needs.

**impact** Workshops, personalized counseling, and ongoing support characterize *Simbioza Mobiln@*'s comprehensive approach to sustained participant engagement. The elderly receive consistent assistance throughout their learning journey thanks to committed volunteers and team members. Operational effectiveness depends heavily on local coordinator involvement, while the curriculum balances technical digital literacy with complementary soft skills development to maximize social inclusion benefits.

**transfer** National recognition came when the Ministry of Digital Transformation launched „Mobile Heroes“ based on *Simbioza Mobiln@*'s successful model. This expansion demonstrates the concept's scalability and replication potential across diverse settings. Digital divides narrow as intergenerational cooperation flourishes through this initiative, contributing to more equitable digital skill development among elderly populations and advancing broader social equality goals.

**appreciation of the jury** *Simbioza Mobiln@* delivers digital literacy directly to elderly people in remote areas, combining technology with human connection. Through its mobile classroom, custom app, and trained volunteers, it bridges the digital divide while fostering intergenerational relationships and reducing isolation. The structured program connects in-person learning with ongoing digital support via the Magda app and local follow-up. Beyond workshops, it creates pathways to connection, confidence, and inclusion. Its effectiveness has led to integration into Slovenia's national digital transformation strategy, expanding its impact.



**Country**  
Slovenia

**Region**  
Implemented  
nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Adult education,  
Non-formal education,  
Inter-generational work

**Organisation**  
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# Strategic Planning Collective

**challenge** In Hungary, as democratic institutions weaken, grassroots organizations face increasing socio-political and financial pressure. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are struggling to maintain their effectiveness and sustainability while advocating for democracy and social change. Most CSOs lack the resources and knowledge for strategic planning, hindering their long-term impact in a repressive environment.

**idea** Responding to these challenges, the *Strategic Planning Collective* helps CSOs lead strategic planning processes, strengthening their ability to work towards goals consciously and effectively. At its core, this initiative fosters resilient, sustainable organizations that stand for democracy, especially in authoritarian contexts. Through regular strategic planning sessions, participating CSOs can focus their efforts, build stability, and lay the groundwork for systemic democratic change.

**actors** Under the leadership of the School of Public Life, the *Strategic Planning Collective* coordinates training and workshops. Collective members, collaborating in pairs, facilitate planning sessions with the support of strategic planning coordinators. Each session benefits from close collaboration between the Collective and CSOs, ensuring high-quality, tailored support for individual organizational needs.

**impact** Innovation emerges through the collaborative nature of the Collective, where members receive continuous professional support. Ongoing evaluations and development sessions ensure the constant improvement of strategies. Several successful strategy sessions were conducted for large organizations in 2024, reflecting significant growth. Planned expansion in 2025 will increase the Collective's reach and further professionalize its impact.

**transfer** Beyond immediate benefits, the *Strategic Planning Collective* promotes the importance of long-term strategic planning and organizational adaptation to social shifts. By demonstrating that seeking external help is valuable and normal, this initiative fosters cultural change in Hungary's civil society. Collaborative approaches are encouraged throughout the process, setting an example that knowledge-sharing leads to greater collective success.

**appreciation of the jury** *The Strategic Planning Collective* provides crucial support to Hungarian NGOs operating in a hostile political environment. Through tailored strategic planning facilitated by experienced activists, it helps civil society groups transition from reactive survival to proactive, long-term impact. The project distinctively incorporates democratic values into its methodology, strengthening NGOs' resilience and effectiveness amid persistent threats. Its accessible, participatory approach is internally transforming civil society organizations throughout Hungary.



<b>Country</b> Hungary	<b>Organisation</b> School of Public Life Foundation Közélet Iskolája Alapítvány
<b>Region</b> Implemented nationwide	
<b>Sector</b> Civil Society Social Economy	<b>Contact</b> +36 20 957 1610 fernengel.agi@kozeletiskolaja.hu
<b>Fields of action</b> Non-formal education, Community development	<b>Website</b> www.kozeletiskolaja.hu/ szolgaltatasok-strategiai-tervezes

# Sun in Križevci



<b>Country</b> Croatia	<b>Organisation</b> Energy cooperative ZEZ Sun
<b>Region</b> Koprivnica-Križevci County	<b>In cooperation with</b> Green Energy Cooperative and the City of Križevci
<b>Sector</b> Civil Society Social Economy	<b>Contact</b> +385 959076702 mislav.kirac@zez.coop
<b>Fields of action</b> Poverty, Community development, Climate change	<b>Website</b> www.zez.coop/zez-sunce

**challenge** In Croatia, there is a lack of citizen trust and low participation in collective action. Public resources, like rooftops, are underutilized, often rented to external investors, while citizens remain disconnected from the energy transition. Rising energy poverty is also a significant challenge, as citizens are excluded from local decision-making processes about energy usage.

**idea** Croatia's first community-owned solar plant emerges as a solution to these gaps or challenges, combining democratic participation with renewable energy innovation. Citizens gain opportunities to co-own solar energy through an accessible cooperative structure. Public rooftops transform into valuable community assets while a Community Benefit Fund channels profits toward addressing energy poverty and supporting local social initiatives.

**actors** Green Energy Cooperative (ZEZ) coordinates the operational framework, spearheading both community engagement and technical management aspects. Financial backing and decision-making authority rest with ZEZ Sun cooperative members who invest in the vision. Community involvement and local ownership strengthen through collaborations with local authorities, the utility company, and KLIK, the local energy cooperative.

**impact** Citizen-authority-expert collaborations flourish through innovative partnership approaches, resulting in truly community-owned energy solutions. Local participation expanded dramatically following a targeted campaign that offered local citizens a 7-day priority window to join the cooperative. Interest across Croatia ignited after the project successfully raised €140,000 in just 10 days, showcasing how citizen-led initiatives can simultaneously boost energy autonomy and rebuild trust in local governance structures.

**transfer** Media coverage has spread the concept nationwide, with municipalities beyond Križevci now seeking to implement similar models. Active support from Križevci's Mayor amplifies the message to other cities about leveraging public assets for community benefit and energy independence. Replicability stands as a key strength of this proven model, motivating municipal leaders throughout Croatia to consider comparable approaches to energy transition challenges.

**appreciation of the jury** *Sun in Križevci* puts clean energy directly into citizens' hands as Croatia's first community-owned solar plant. It transforms public rooftops into shared assets and enables collective ownership through a cooperative model. Even small contributions convert passive consumers into energy stakeholders. In a context of low institutional trust, this project reframes energy as a public good—reducing energy poverty, building local resilience, and demonstrating that democratizing the energy transition is both achievable and impactful.



# One School to Change the System



<b>Country</b> Slovakia	<b>Organisation</b> Občianske združenie Rozmanita
<b>Region</b> Bratislava Region	<b>In cooperation with</b> Rozmanita, a non-profit organisation
<b>Sector</b> Civil Society Social Economy	<b>Contact</b> +42 194 7952 093 tatiana.petrovic@rozmanita.sk
<b>Fields of action</b> Education institutions, Awareness raising, Disability	<b>Website</b> www.rozmanita.sk

**challenge** Slovakia has one of the least inclusive education systems, with high rates of segregation and low functional literacy. Roma children, students with disabilities, and those from low-income or immigrant backgrounds face significant barriers to quality education. Schools lack the resources, training, and tools to support diverse learners, while teachers are often unprepared to work in inclusive classrooms.

**idea** *The Rozmanita lab school* expands access to inclusive education by gradually adding new classes, aiming for 160 students over four years. It provides tailored methodologies for diverse learners, integrating digital tools, sensory aids, and differentiated learning spaces. Teachers receive comprehensive training and mentoring, while the curriculum fosters future skills like digital literacy, creativity, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking.

**actors** A flat organizational structure supports shared decision-making throughout the initiative. Strategic leadership comes from the Advisory Board, while daily operations are overseen by the Executive Director. The Program Director manages operations, programming, and fundraising. Leadership of the lab school and preschool, alongside an Inclusion Methodologist, ensures strong collaboration among teachers, parents, and donors.

**impact** The lab school serves as a testing ground for inclusive education models, bringing together educators, parents, and experts to co-create practical solutions. The approach integrates mentoring for teachers, real-world application of innovative methodologies, and active family involvement. The school's tools and methodologies are scalable and transferable, ensuring a systemic impact on inclusive education across Slovakia.

**transfer** *Rozmanita* demonstrates that inclusive education works, breaking down prejudices through internships, workshops, and open school visits for teachers, parents, and experts. The school serves as a living example, inspiring other institutions and communities. By raising awareness and promoting diversity, it fosters a more cohesive and prosperous society, encouraging other schools to adopt inclusive models.

**appreciation of the jury** *Rozmanita lab school* transforms inclusive education in one of Europe's most segregated school systems. At Rozmanita, the team develops a holistic, data-driven model guided by the commitment to provide every child with necessary support. They demonstrate that educational excellence and inclusion can coexist. Firmly established within the national education framework, Rozmanita scales its adaptable five-pillar approach through pilot schools, mentoring, and policy partnerships—reshaping education from within the system.



# Open Learning Initiative (OLive)

**challenge** In Hungary, state support for refugees has largely withdrawn, including the education and economic sectors. While some civic groups advocate for refugee rights, *OLive* uniquely offers non-formal education to help refugees transition into formal education and lifelong learning. This creates a space where displaced individuals collaborate in solidarity and activism.

**idea** The educational project follows three core goals: 1) Providing tutoring to support educational inclusion; 2) Offering employment access through IT, language, and career skills training; 3) Encouraging critical thinking via academic and arts-based courses like animation, journalism, psychology, and filmmaking—helping students reimagine their role in society.

**actors** An education manager leads the team alongside experienced teachers and a Core Team of long-term volunteers from education and civil society sectors. Legal and administrative oversight comes from the Board. Notably, 50% of the team are refugees in leadership roles, ensuring community-driven inclusivity.

**impact** By blending academic knowledge with practical skills in small, interactive classes, this holistic approach enhances performance, employability, and participation. Students are seen as co-creators of their learning, and strong partnerships with NGOs and universities provide stability and impact.

**transfer** *OLive* shifts negative perceptions of refugees by enabling them to contribute directly to society. Students have launched NGOs, succeeded academically, created films, and shared their knowledge. Through narrative ownership and public engagement, *OLive* influences global perceptions and empowers authentic representation.

**appreciation of the jury** *OLive* provides a rare, inclusive learning environment for refugees in Hungary, where educational access is legally and politically restricted. Through customized curricula, critical pedagogy, and former students as co-teachers, it empowers learners of all ages to resume interrupted education and shape their futures. Built entirely on volunteer commitment, this initiative represents a quiet yet powerful demonstration of solidarity amid widespread exclusion.



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<b>Fields of action</b> Adult education, Non-formal education	

# “Pass Egal Wahl” for Schools

“Pass Egal Wahl” for Schools

PRIZE WINNER

**challenge** Over 1.5 million people in Austria, including more than 50,000 students of voting age, are excluded from elections due to lack of Austrian citizenship. This exclusion negatively impacts young people, particularly those who have grown up in Austria. Teachers face challenges when explaining that „their vote counts“ to students who are disenfranchised, which undermines the democratic values of participation.

**idea** To counteract this democratic deficit, the project focuses on raising awareness of electoral exclusion by allowing students to participate in a symbolic election. Materials provided to teachers help integrate the topic into classrooms, fostering solidarity among students. Empowering students, promoting democratic values, and encouraging public recognition of the consequences of disenfranchising young people in Austria remain core goals of this initiative.

**actors** School acquisition, public relations, project management, ongoing teacher support, and the creation of teaching materials form the backbone of implementation efforts. Training, online workshops, and guidance equip educators to independently run the “Pass Egal Wahl” with their students, while SOS Mitmensch offers a school information package to facilitate the process. Based on their school’s capacity, participating teachers can adapt the project accordingly.

**impact** Autonomy stands as a central emphasis, as the project enables schools and teachers to run the symbolic election independently through online training and support. Reaching a wide audience and scaling according to each school’s capacity becomes possible through this flexible approach. Active citizenship and awareness of electoral exclusion flourish when students participate in the election process through this educational methodology.

**transfer** Discussions about voting exclusion have been catalyzed by the “Pass Egal Wahl” project, extending beyond Austria to Germany and Switzerland. Both national and regional elections can incorporate this adaptable framework, allowing responsiveness to local political contexts. Regular application across Austria and potential expansion to other countries with similar challenges highlights the versatility of this methodology.

**appreciation of the jury** “Pass Egal Wahl” for Schools highlights the democratic exclusion of over 50,000 voting-age pupils in Austria. Through symbolic school elections, it promotes active citizenship and solidarity, helping students appreciate voting’s value regardless of their eligibility status. For some participants, it inspires pursuing naturalization. With its teacher-led, replicable format, the project creates participation opportunities while bringing this overlooked issue back into Austria’s public discourse.



**Country**  
Austria

**Organisation**  
SOS Mitmensch

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**In cooperation with**  
Institut Urban Diversity Education at the Pädagogischen Hochschule Vienna (for the teaching materials)

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

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**Fields of action**  
Awareness raising,  
Interculturality, Law,  
Justice

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# Pferdinands Trostbox

**challenge** Children and young people often experience the loss of loved ones, but grief is difficult to process in society. Suppressing grief can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, causing long-term emotional and psychosomatic consequences. Supporting children through grief is vital, and the challenge is to provide an accessible, healing process for them to cope with their emotions in a healthy way.

**idea** *Pferdinands Trostbox* emerges as a responsive tool supporting children through grief processes. Within its carefully designed contents are materials that help children confront death in age-appropriate, open ways. Experience spanning 25 years informs the box’s approach to addressing children’s questions, enabling them to use imagination for processing grief at individual paces. Professional social workers provide additional support to complement the box’s resources.

**actors** A dedicated team manages the *Pferdinands Trostbox* initiative, while logistics and shipping fall under the responsibility of a designated colleague working with a partner company. Phone support from social workers creates connections between families and regional support networks. Those directly affected by grief contribute to curating materials, with grieving mothers offering artistic elements to enhance relevance. Process streamlining continues as the project evolves toward greater efficiency.

**impact** Creating grief-support materials both for and with affected individuals represents the core innovation, resulting in resources that balance empathy with effectiveness. Critical emotional needs find support through the box’s psychosocial approach, while family feedback drives continuous content improvement. Trainees across health, care, and social sectors will encounter this initiative through Sterntalerhof’s new academy, multiplying its potential impact throughout these fields.

**transfer** Funeral homes, hospitals, and psychosocial services now commonly recognize the *Pferdinands Trostbox* as an essential resource. Crisis preparedness motivates many organizations to maintain demonstration boxes for immediate availability. Collaborative relationships have flourished through extensive networking efforts, while newly established regional acute grief counseling services drive increasing demand for specialized outpatient grief support targeting children and young people.

**appreciation of the jury** *Pferdinands Trostbox* tackles childhood grief, one of the most difficult and often silenced experiences. Developed from 25 years of frontline support, it provides children and families with age-appropriate tools to confront loss honestly and compassionately. Its straightforward yet profound format breaks taboos, initiates essential conversations, and builds resilience. Beyond being merely a product, Comfort Box serves as a compassionate companion during the grieving process, delivering crucial support to hospitals, schools, and families throughout Austria and Germany.



<b>Country</b> Austria, Germany	<b>Organisation</b> Sterntalerhof- Hospice for Children and Families
<b>Region</b> Implemented nationwide, throughout Germany	<b>Contact</b> claudia.horvath +43 664 811 20 26 claudia.horvath@sterntalerhof.at begegnung@sterntalerhof.at
<b>Sector</b> Civil Society Social Econom	<b>Website</b> www.sterntalerhof.at/de/ pferdinands-trostbox/trostbox/trostbox www.sterntalerhof.at
<b>Fields of action</b> Awareness raising, Family, Mental health	

“

“*Časoris* turns children into journalists, not just readers—building media literacy and democratic awareness through Slovenia’s only daily newspaper for kids.”

“*Rozmanita* proves that inclusion and excellence go hand in hand—offering a working model to transform one of Europe’s most segregated school systems.”

## The Jury says ...

“*My Voice, My Choice* breaks the silence on abortion rights—mobilizing a cross-border youth movement with Europe’s only direct democracy tool.”

“By bridging digital gaps with mobile classrooms and inter-generational support, *Simbioza Mobiln@* turns digital literacy into lasting connection—and national policy.”

“Turning plastic waste into social change, *Marittimo Recycling* makes sustainability hands-on—empowering kids and people with disabilities through creative reuse.”

“*Nová Cvernovka* turns eviction into evolution—showing how shared values and creativity can build a cultural powerhouse from the ground up.”

“*Alternative Education* turns classrooms into spaces of empathy, where migrants teach—and students unlearn stereotypes—in just one transformative hour.”

“*Science with Society* shifts academic research into real-world relevance by co-creating knowledge with civil society—not just about communities, but with them.”

“With honesty and care, this gentle guide helps children face grief—and opens space for healing conversations where silence once ruled.”

“Democratizing child rights education, *Hintalovon Academy* puts children at the center—not just as learners, but as co-creators in shaping their own protection.”

“*OLive* builds an inclusive learning space in Hungary where refugees reclaim education and agency—powered entirely by volunteer solidarity.”

“Instead of punishment, *sicher.net § 207a* offers teens space to reflect, learn, and grow—building empathy and digital responsibility in a complex world.”

“By turning public rooftops into shared solar power, *Sun in Križevci* makes clean energy a community asset—and citizens real stakeholders in the energy transition.”

“By turning symbolic school elections into real civic experiences, *Pass Egal Wählt* empowers excluded students and reignites public debate on democracy and belonging.”

“By turning public rooftops into shared solar power, this project makes clean energy a community asset—and citizens real stakeholders in the energy transition.”

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# Nominated Projects 2025

## Community and Fixing Workshop

NOMINATED

**challenge** This initiative tackles dual issues: environmental sustainability and social exclusion in a disadvantaged district. Residents cannot afford repairs or new purchases, creating waste and hardship. The multicultural neighborhood faces prejudice and isolation, with vulnerable residents lacking access to support systems and community participation opportunities.

**Country**  
Hungary

**Region**  
Budapest

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Awareness raising,  
Interculturality,  
Community  
development

**Organisation**  
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**idea** Sustainability finds expression through this workshop repairing items from furniture to electronics. The space functions as a community resource center offering assistance with résumés, job searches, and service access. Mutual support develops through volunteering and donations, while prejudice diminishes as diverse people engage in dialogue within this inclusive environment.

**actors** Six individuals form the permanent team maintaining operations with volunteer assistance. Coordination happens through shared digital tools tracking repairs, donations, and inquiries. Local organizations and corporate partners provide support through donation management and service provision. Regular volunteer shifts at a nearby homeless shelter demonstrate commitment to broader community care.

**impact** Community-building merges with sustainability goals through this adaptable approach. Functioning as both repair facility and social gathering space promotes inclusion across diverse backgrounds. Practical needs find solutions while connections develop through volunteer engagement, effectively reducing prejudices through shared purpose and interaction.

**transfer** Public conversations about sustainability gain momentum through this grassroots initiative. Values promotion occurs through local events, social media, and volunteer activities shaping public perception. Similar models can emerge elsewhere, potentially fostering greater social cohesion through practical approaches to shared challenges.



# füruns Extremismusprävention

NOMINATED

**challenge** Existing extremism prevention in Austria focuses on social work and schools, neglecting the volunteer sector. Nearly half of Austria's population volunteers, yet these individuals lack preparation when facing extremist ideologies. Practical tools for handling extremism remain unavailable to this crucial sector of civil society.

**Country**  
Austria

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Awareness raising,  
Violence prevention,  
Climate change

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Civil Society)

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mismusprävention/  
angebote-extremismu-  
spraevention



**idea** Democracy strengthening through extremism prevention forms this initiative's core mission. Human rights values provide the foundation. Collaboration between volunteers, organizations, and prevention experts develops through workshops and seminars. A website serves as information hub, networking platform, and resource center designed for volunteer needs.

**actors** The Center for Civil Society coordinates activities, organizing workshops and developing collaborative formats. External experts contribute specialized knowledge. Volunteers, organizations, and civil society entities participate in community-strengthening activities designed to counter extremist influences through informed response.

**impact** Current events shape the approach, shown by workshops addressing radicalization following the „wolf salute“ incident. Topics receive attention in events like the Civil Courage Symposium. Resource pooling enables the project to deliver practical support addressing volunteer sector needs.

**transfer** Networks connect the project with municipalities, schools, and organizations developing prevention strategies. Visibility expands through No Hate Speech Committee membership. Other regions can adapt this model, gaining insights for establishing extremism prevention initiatives through documented approaches.

# InDU

NOMINATED

**challenge** The project addresses social exclusion faced by people with disabilities. Existing products often highlight disability as central identity, rather than recognizing their abilities and talents. This leads to negative perceptions and limits their expression. Many solutions focus on providing help rather than promoting cooperation and self-expression.

**Country**  
Croatia

**Region**  
City of Zagreb

**Sector**  
Public  
administration

**Fields of action**  
Work, Awareness  
raising, Disability

**Organisation**  
University of Zagreb,  
Faculty of Architecture,  
Department School of  
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**In cooperation with**  
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indu-radionice-2



**idea** Identity takes precedence over disability in InDU project's inclusive designs. TRIANGLE bag, VEST bag, 2in1 bag, and APRON combine accessibility with appealing aesthetics, generating interest beyond specialized markets. Cooperative engagement replaces traditional aid models, empowering individuals with disabilities while delivering solutions benefiting everyone regardless of ability.

**actors** University of Zagreb's Sanja Bencetić collaborates with Irena Rački from URIHO, an institution specializing in rehabilitation. Design students join with URIHO employees in conducting inclusive research merging participatory methodologies with production techniques. Production responsibilities rest with URIHO, ensuring products remain accessible across diverse populations.

**impact** Educational frameworks gain inclusive design principles through this approach. Empowerment drives the methodology. Perception shifts become possible when design education combines with collaborative experiences. Design emerges as a tool for developing solutions celebrating inclusion. Designers learn to recognize contributions of individuals with disabilities.

**transfer** Sectors beyond product design can adopt this methodology to reframe differences as strengths rather than limitations. Attitudes evolve when initiatives advocate for understanding disability as one aspect of identity rather than its defining characteristic. Design approaches demonstrate how perception changes can drive broader cultural transformation, recognizing potential in all individuals.



**challenge** The educational system reinforces existing structures, causing alienation, consumerism, and lack of critical thinking. With challenges like climate change, inequality, and technological alienation, traditional education fails to address urgent needs. The response was creating a revolutionary school on Vis island with an innovative approach to education and community building.

**Country**  
Croatia

**Region**  
Split-Dalmatia  
County

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Non-formal education,  
Community  
development, Culture

**Organisation**  
ISSA — Island School  
of Social Autonomy

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issa-school.org



**idea** Traditional knowledge merges with modern technologies on Vis, where *ISSA* established an alternative educational framework. Dry stone walling and rainwater harvesting complement solar power within this community-driven school. Locals collaborate with visiting artists and experts in the fields of sustainability practices and social autonomy models.

**actors** An NGO provides organizational support, with management distributed among co-founders. Facilities operate through rental arrangements. Expertise comes from one employee, supplemented by volunteers and educators. Community participation includes construction projects and educational programming. Events across Europe extend the project's methodologies.

**impact** Practical solutions emerge through *ISSA's* hands-on approach. Experimental sustainable technologies flourish, including rainwater harvesting and solar energy. This initiative offers an integrated framework combining social and ecological responses. Alternative institutional models demonstrate viability through this example of practical problem-solving.

**transfer** Online platforms and collaborations extend *ISSA's* influence beyond Vis. Alternative institutions prove resilient during crises, inspiring other communities to explore experimental educational approaches. *ISSA* shows that autonomy and innovation can manifest in present-day contexts rather than remaining theoretical possibilities.

# KLEINSTADTBIOTOP Vöcklabruck

**challenge** Store closures and migration to the outskirts leave vacant spaces in city centers, creating a lack of meeting points and services, especially for families. Retail entrepreneurs struggle economically, while people with disabilities remain marginalized. Young social initiatives lack visibility and opportunities.

**Country**  
Austria

**Region**  
Upper Austria

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Work, Disability,  
Regional development

**Organisation**  
KLEINSTADTBIOTOP  
Vöcklabruck

**In cooperation with**  
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und ECO Neuhauser  
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**idea** Within an old building transformed by KLEINSTADTBIOTOP (KSB), a solidarity-based economic hub flourishes. Various establishments occupy this revitalized space, while inclusive employment opportunities welcome people with disabilities. Community connections strengthen through programming and social innovation. Families enjoy dedicated spaces alongside a marketplace, workshops, and an art gallery.

**actors** Seven volunteers oversee operational areas from retail to inclusive employment. Workplace practices develop through partnership with Lebenshilfe to integrate people with disabilities. Cooperative principles guide businesses, with workdays shared among operators to streamline responsibilities.

**impact** Downtown visibility and meaningful employment characterize disabled participants' experience working in central operations. Shared retail responsibilities have reduced costs while improving efficiency. KLEINSTADTBIOTOP demonstrates inclusion in action, inspiring other communities while showcasing social innovation's potential in revitalizing urban spaces.

**transfer** Intergenerational connections and collaborations address multiple social challenges. Media coverage has expanded with increasing tour requests and municipalities seeking to learn from this model. The project received the 2024 Inclusion Award and appeared in the „30 Years of Austria in the EU“ exhibition.

# Menstruation Festival

NOMINATED

**challenge** Menstruation remains heavily stigmatized, reduced to shame and silence, leading to ignorance and isolation. Many individuals, especially from conservative backgrounds or with conditions like PMDD or endometriosis, lack access to proper menstrual education and discussion spaces, contributing to social challenges. The challenge is normalizing conversations around menstruation and creating platforms for open dialogue.

**Country**  
Croatia

**Region**  
Primorje-Gorski  
Kotar County

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Awareness raising,  
Gender equality,  
Culture

**Organisation**  
Association for  
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menstruacije



**idea** Taboo transforms into public discourse through the *Menstruation Festival's* approach to normalizing menstrual experiences. Educational components merge with activism and entertainment to create discussion spaces focusing on menstrual health, dysmenorrhea, endometriosis, and medical dismissal of women's pain. Participant feedback drives the festival's evolution, ensuring it addresses community needs while dismantling stigmas.

**actors** Activists unite with researchers, organizations, and corporate partners as Pariter orchestrates this collaborative festival. Activities emerge from partnerships that honor and preserve the festival's community-led spirit. The festival remains free from external grant requirements, protecting its authentic character.

**impact** Public perception shifts when menstruation appears in festival contexts, normalizing previously hidden conversations. Creative methodologies including film screenings, quizzes, and workshops attract diverse audiences while fostering dialogue. The adaptable festival model enables replication across various communities, extending influence throughout the menstrual justice movement.

**transfer** Destigmatization strategies find demonstration through the festival's engaging approach. Wide appeal results from interdisciplinary collaboration, participatory design, and innovative formats. Similar initiatives gain guidance from this blueprint, supporting collectives in developing customized menstrual education spaces tailored to specific community contexts.

# Moving Forward: Empowering young minds

NOMINATED

**challenge** Young people with disabilities and NEETs face barriers due to inadequate support, isolation, and unemployment. Skill deficits, mental health challenges, prejudice, and accessibility limitations create obstacles to independent living. Without intervention, these barriers lead to dependency and exclusion, perpetuating marginalization cycles.

**Country**  
Hungary

**Region**  
Budapest, Pest

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Unemployment,  
Non-formal education,  
Disability

**Organisation**  
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**idea** Holistic empowerment emerges through personalized support combining life skills development, mental health resources, and vocational training. Interdisciplinary methodologies create tailored development pathways. Self-awareness, independence, and self-advocacy grow as participants contribute to program design, ensuring interventions address their specific needs and aspirations.

**actors** A core team includes project managers, youth specialists, counselors, teachers, social workers, and autism specialists. Support comes from external professionals such as trainers, therapists, psychologists, and HR personnel. Continuous assessment enables personalized approaches.

**impact** Traditional single-focus programs give way to comprehensive support addressing multiple needs simultaneously. Burdens decrease when participants access integrated services in one location. Multi-diagnosed individuals discover their value through peer interactions. Customized approaches have yielded results, with 30% of participants securing employment.

**transfer** Prejudice reduction happens through interactions between disabled and non-disabled individuals. Volunteer engagement drives broader social change. Work trials promote inclusive workplace cultures. Community events spread disability awareness throughout diverse populations.



# My Body is mine

NOMINATED

**challenge** Body shaming is widely tolerated in the Czech Republic, causing anxiety, eating disorders, and mental health issues. This practice particularly affects young people, with girls facing harsh scrutiny. Non-violent communication and respect for all body types form the core response to this problem.

**Country**  
Czech Republic

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Awareness raising,  
Gender equality,  
Mental health

**Organisation**  
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**idea** Awareness rises through initiatives promoting respectful approaches to body image. Young people, parents, teachers, and communities engage through workshops, programs, and educational materials. Free brochures offer guidance on discussing body image with children, while exhibitions reach wider audiences. Respect and empathy toward diverse body types are primary goals.

**actors** Artist Ridina Ahmedová leads a team including Klára Unzeitigová (operations), Hana Blažková (production), and workshop coordinators Dita Votavová and Kateřina Šarkovská. Support comes from lecturers, volunteers, and graphic designers. External expertise comes through collaborations with psychologists, counselors, photographers, filmmakers, and partner organizations.

**impact** Public debate on body shaming challenges established norms while creating dialogue on taboo subjects. Women find empowerment to speak against harmful commentary. Empathy and self-awareness grow through workshops and exhibitions. Physical differences undergo destigmatization while healthier self-concepts develop among teenagers.

**transfer** Models for addressing body shaming combine educational workshops with public discourse strategies. School-based workshops raise awareness while building resilience against societal pressures. Open conversations about body image flourish, shifting public opinion while providing templates for similar initiatives in diverse communities.

# Netzwerk AsylAnwält\*innen (NWAA)

NOMINATED

**challenge** Asylum seekers face disregard for human rights in asylum procedures. Asylum law has become politicized, putting vulnerable refugees at risk of denied justice. Lack of legal clarity on fundamental issues hinders refugee protection, with potentially unconstitutional laws harming their rights.

**Country**  
Austria

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Poverty, Gender  
equality, Migration

**Organisation**  
Caritas Austria  
(Coordination),  
Diakonie Austria

**In cooperation with**  
Österreichisches  
Rotes Kreuz, Amnesty  
International, SOS  
Kinderdorf, Verein  
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**idea** Specialized legal representation for asylum seekers in supreme court proceedings forms NWAA's mission. Fundamental rulings that clarify legal questions become the strategic objective, creating benefits beyond individual clients. When necessary, preliminary rulings to the CJEU may challenge potentially unconstitutional laws.

**actors** Two employees coordinate while eleven specialized lawyers provide expertise. Cases come through partner organizations consulting with NWAA. Lawyers handle legal representation with NWAA's financial backing. Social counselors and advisors collaborate with attorneys to maintain support systems for asylum seekers.

**impact** Strategic litigation generates favorable case law and overturns unjust decisions, improving refugees' legal standing. Legal framework changes receive flexible responses through partnerships, extending benefits beyond individual clients. Legal protections for asylum seekers strengthen as a result of these coordinated advocacy initiatives.

**transfer** Strategic litigation exclusively for asylum seekers distinguishes NWAA from other advocacy projects, addressing a population with minimal representation. Nationwide coverage emerges from a network connecting attorneys throughout Austria. This adaptable approach is transferable to additional legal domains, establishing a template for advocacy in other underrepresented fields.

# One Child one whole World

NOMINATED

**challenge** Hungary, 23,000 children grow up in state care, often in institutions lacking emotional support. These already traumatized children face isolation and distrust, and without nurturing family background, they struggle to find stable housing, education and employment, leading to high rates of homelessness when they have to leave children's home.

**Country**  
Hungary

**Region**  
Budapest,  
Veszprém

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Early childhood  
education, Victim  
support, Youth welfare

**Organisation**  
Világshép Gyermek-  
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**idea** The goal is to build long-term, trusting relationships with children separated from their families. The approach is based on 5 pillars: including mentoring, community-based programs, and experiential learning. Each child is given unconditional acceptance, offering them the opportunity to become healthy adults and integrate into society.

**actors** Staff collaborate with volunteers, mentors, leaders, and coordinators to implement the programs. Five mentors form the core team, while 50 volunteers, including storytellers and youth trainers, support activities such as camps and club meetings. Expert guidance ensures stable, continuous relationships with the participating children.

**impact** Stable relationships emerge through the therapeutic approach, providing emotional healing and social integration. Long-term mentoring and trauma-informed care help children develop independent futures. Sustainability is strengthened when former participants return as youth trainers, creating a mentorship cycle.

**transfer** Project pillars offer therapeutic support, helping children build a happy and independent future. On average, the Foundation supports each child for 10 years, aiding their social integration. Communication campaigns focus on relationship-building and raising awareness of children in state care. Knowledge sharing extends influence to other organizations working with vulnerable youth.

# Peer Support for People Living in Housing Poverty

NOMINATED

**challenge** Homeless people and refugees face isolation, lacking social connections and struggling to access basic services. Traditional social work often involves hierarchical relationships that hinder trust. These individuals need support systems promoting integration, mutual respect, and empowerment in managing everyday lives.

**Country**  
Hungary

**Region**  
Budapest

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Homelessness,  
Migration, Advocacy

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programok



**idea** Lived experience becomes valuable when peer support pairs mentors who have overcome similar challenges with current mentees. Support flows through horizontal relationships. Trust develops naturally while power imbalances diminish, strengthening community connections and easing integration for formerly homeless and refugee clients.

**actors** A coordinator and senior mentor oversee six paid mentors within this democratic structure. Case discussions occur during weekly meetings where professional support remains available. Mentors receive supervision and training to enhance skills. Comprehensive support emerges through connections with social workers and complementary services when additional resources are needed.

**impact** Non-judgmental spaces where mentors and mentees feel safe represent the core innovation. Tailored support develops through consistent contact, helping clients navigate systems and understand rights. Individual and collective empowerment grows alongside mentors' personal development. Vulnerable populations experience greater integration through this relationship-centered methodology.

**transfer** Empowerment thrives through peer support models that equip clients to navigate complex services and assert rights. Awareness spreads to NGOs, homeless services, and academic settings, reducing stereotypes. Professional validation comes through research studies that recognize this approach as exemplary practice, leading other providers to adopt similar frameworks.



# Perpeetuum Mobile

NOMINATED

**challenge** Children with physical disabilities face limited mobility, hindering physical and mental development. Lack of movement leads to isolation and developmental delays, affecting participation in activities and increasing future dependence on social assistance. The challenge is providing these children with opportunities for active participation and inclusion in society.

**Country**  
Czech Republic

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Disability,  
Youth welfare,  
Environmental protection

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**idea** Freedom of movement becomes accessible through Perpeetuum Mobile's specialized bicycles. People with disabilities manufacture these custom vehicles, provided free to recipient families. Once outgrown, bicycles return for recycling and redistribution, creating a sustainable system. Mobility enhancement and self-confidence development allow children to participate actively in community life.

**actors** Operational oversight falls under the director, while specialized mechanics apply expertise to bicycle design. Assistant mechanics provide production support. Donor relationships receive attention from a dedicated fundraiser. Racing events and activities come to life through volunteers. This structure balances client needs with accessibility and quality.

**impact** Three innovations distinguish this initiative: bicycle recycling promoting sustainability; meaningful employment for people with disabilities in production; and efficiency through 3D printing technology. These approaches drive broader social change by demonstrating practical paths toward inclusion and universal mobility.

**transfer** Environmental sustainability merges with social responsibility and support for children with disabilities. Families benefit from free eco-friendly bicycles. Inclusive employment practices demonstrate valuable contributions of people with disabilities. This model has attracted 13,000 Facebook followers while advancing social integration goals.

# Project Ilica: Q'ART - Community Art Festival

NOMINATED

**challenge** The project addresses fear, alienation, and ecological threats caused by social distancing, natural disasters, and economic insecurity. It helps people overcome isolation and builds spaces of solidarity and care. The project tackles social crises and trauma through artistic and therapeutic interventions, fostering resilience and community connection in uncertain times.

**Country**  
Croatia

**Region**  
City of Zagreb

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Interculturality,  
Community development, Art

**Organisation**  
Imagination – Association for Creativity and Social Development

**In cooperation with**  
Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, Faculty of Textile Technology in Zagreb, Zagreb Chamber of Trades and Crafts, ULUPUH (Croatian Association of Artists of Applied Arts), HDLU (Croatian Association of Visual Artists), Humana Nova Cooperative.

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**idea** Art becomes a powerful connector when *Q'ART Community ART&CARE* engages citizens, artists, and experts in collaborative care activities. Empathy develops through festivals, street exhibitions, and interactive workshops. Social and ecological issues find creative expression through platforms that transform fear into resilience while nurturing harmonious relationships between humanity and nature.

**actors** Citizens collaborate with artists, experts, NGOs, cooperatives, and associations within this initiative. Self-organization characterizes the collective's approach to implementing diverse artistic actions. Vision and logistics remain under a coordination team that ensures co-creation processes involve all participants.

**impact** Between five and seven large-scale artistic actions take place annually, each involving around 500–600 diverse participants. Guided by radical inclusivity, these events welcome all willing to contribute. They foster social resilience, community regeneration, and collective empowerment, transforming public spaces into laboratories of inclusivity.

**transfer** *Q'ART* transforms abandoned spaces into vibrant hubs of collective action by integrating art, community engagement, and inclusivity. These participatory models are adaptable to other contexts, with media coverage amplifying the message of solidarity. The approach supports sustainable development by merging artistic practice, community activation, and therapeutic impact.

# Robin Powerhood

NOMINATED

**challenge** Energy poverty affects up to 968,000 people in Austria who cannot afford electricity or heating. Energy-poor households often spend over 20% of income on energy, while households with surplus electricity sell it at low prices. These households have no access to renewable energy or means to participate in the energy transition.

**Country**  
Austria

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Poverty, Awareness raising, Climate change

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**idea** A direct connection between energy abundance and scarcity emerges through *Robin Powerhood's* innovative model. Surplus electricity producers donate rather than sell excess energy, creating direct links between donors and recipients in need. This energy community concept helps reduce financial burden for low-income households while advancing social justice and sustainability goals.

**actors** Leadership comes from Matthias Zuser (GESA) and Ingrid Neuhauser (Verein Wohnen). ECO Neuhauser GmbH oversees project management (15 hours weekly), Verein Wohnen handles coordination (10 hours weekly), while PR requires part-time staff. Social organizations identify potential recipients and provide ongoing assistance to beneficiaries.

**impact** Social orientation distinguishes *Robin Powerhood's* energy donation framework from conventional models. Direct donations replace low-price energy sales, fostering social justice while creating new solidarity dimensions. Ecological and social objectives merge seamlessly, demonstrating how technical systems can generate tangible societal value.

**transfer** Environmental sustainability intertwines with social responsibility through this model of community cohesion. Both ecological and social advantages flow from these energy community structures, raising awareness about sustainable consumption. This solidarity-centered approach inspires stakeholders across sectors to develop initiatives addressing multiple challenges simultaneously.

# Science Picnic

NOMINATED

**challenge** Growing disinterest in STREAM education, especially in rural areas with limited access to scientific resources and hands-on learning. Science Picnic aims to make science engaging, inclusive, and accessible to all, particularly marginalized communities, inspiring long-term interest in scientific fields.

**Country**  
Croatia

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Non-formal education, Awareness raising, Community development

**Organisation**  
Association  
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**idea** Peer education transforms learning when children become educators during Science Picnic workshops. Curiosity and critical thinking develop through interactive experiences connecting science to everyday life. Active discovery replaces passive instruction. Sustainability emerges through collaborations with local governments and NGOs providing ongoing support.

**actors** Team members collaborate with educational institutions, scientists, community representatives, and volunteers. The Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports provides strategic support, while CARNET offers the digital infrastructure needed for modernizing education. Educators and volunteers lead hands-on activities. Success relies on clear roles, ongoing evaluation, and continuous improvement.

**impact** Inclusivity and adaptability distinguish *Science Picnic* from traditional education. Knowledge becomes accessible when children and marginalized groups participate as educators, creating connections between science and communities. Rural educational inequalities diminish. Interactive activities promote inclusion while building foundations for community resilience through scientific literacy.

**transfer** Other regions develop science programs based on this model. Educational institutions, volunteers, and communities collaborate effectively, bridging gaps between scientific knowledge and society. Media coverage amplifies visibility while successful implementation provides a blueprint for replication, establishing new benchmarks for inclusive education.



# Soul-Lifter

NOMINATED

**challenge** In Hungary, homeless individuals receive only basic survival services, leaving psychological needs unaddressed. The trauma of homelessness—stemming from losses and exclusion—requires long-term, individualized support, unavailable in an overburdened system. Mainstream society expects rapid recovery, further marginalizing these individuals.

**Country**  
Hungary

**Region**  
Budapest

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Homelessness,  
Awareness raising,  
Mental health

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**idea** Mental health support reaches homeless individuals through Soul-Lifter's wellbeing services and reconnection opportunities. Wellness days, self-awareness groups, and conversations with volunteer mental health professionals comprise core offerings. Dignity and self-advocacy flourish in this safe environment where all services remain free, addressing needs beyond basic survival.

**actors** Coordinators manage the project alongside social professionals and volunteers from mental health fields. Implementation occurs at a Day Care Centre with trained guides facilitating activities. Local coordinators, mentors, and a fund-raising officer handle specific operations. Partnerships with universities, businesses, and social organizations create a robust support network.

**impact** Individual support combines with community-building to enhance homeless persons' mental wellbeing. Public awareness grows regarding mental support's role in comprehensive homelessness care. Sector-wide strengthening results from partnerships, while the cooperative, low-cost model demonstrates effective resource utilization for maximum impact.

**transfer** Conference presentations and a short film have raised awareness about mental health support needs among homeless populations. Collaboration opportunities expanded while social workers gained sensitivity to homeless individuals' needs. Despite limited funding, the project showcases how quality services remain possible and spreads trauma-informed approaches throughout the sector.

# Support for criminal Prisoners and Relatives

NOMINATED

**challenge** Fundamental rights are lost when individuals enter prison, including privacy, family life, and freedom of association. For non-German speakers, accessing information about remaining rights is particularly difficult. Contact maintenance creates significant hardships for prisoners' families. Public recognition remains minimal, with voices of prisoners and their families rarely reaching broader society.

**Country**  
Austria

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Migration, Offender support, Family

**Organisation**  
Union for the Rights of Prisoners

**In cooperation with**  
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**idea** Representing their interests and defending rights becomes possible for prisoners through the Union for Prisoners' Rights. Communication barriers diminish through Café LG, a radio program connecting prisoners with families in native languages. Together, these initiatives empower prisoners and families to claim rights while raising public awareness about prison system challenges.

**actors** Robert Bogić organizes Café LG, presenting the program and managing its Facebook community. Information compilation occurs through collaboration with Monika Mokre from the Union. Full members lead the Union, supported by external coordinators. Grant funding covers interpreters and legal counseling, though financial challenges threaten these components.

**impact** Living conditions and communication opportunities for prisoners and families improve directly. Public institutions, including the Ministry of Justice, have taken notice, resulting in cooperative efforts and critical examination of prison conditions. Important platforms for prisoner voices emerge through Café LG and Union activities, raising public awareness about institutional issues.

**transfer** Awareness grows through partnerships with organizations, media outlets, and journalists Beyond Vienna, Café LG expands by collaborating with regional stations like Radio Helsinki in Graz. Global discussions about prison reform flourish through international collaborations, exemplified by the 'Out of Prison' panel discussion extending impact across borders.



# Technik für Kinder Vulkanland

NOMINATED

**challenge** Children in rural Austria have limited access to practical technical skills due to reduced emphasis in schools and families. The skilled worker shortage and increasing number of isolated seniors limits intergenerational knowledge transfer. Schools lack resources to teach these practical skills.

**Country**  
Austria

**Region**  
Styria

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Non-formal education,  
Inter-generational work,  
Regional development

**Organisation**  
Technik für Kinder  
Vulkanland

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**idea** Styria's Vulkanland region hosts a „Technikhaus“ where technical skills development occurs through intergenerational learning. Young participants work under senior citizens' guidance, creating valuable skill transfer while strengthening community bonds. Self-confidence grows alongside practical abilities, addressing worker shortages through hands-on education complementing conventional schooling.

**actors** Two project managers coordinate with local companies and mentors. Seniors form the mentorship core, guiding young participants during workshops. Educational quality maintains high standards through collaboration with local schools and businesses supporting program development.

**impact** Real-world application distinguishes this initiative from classroom learning, as participants engage with practical projects developing technical competencies. Community connections strengthen when youth learn alongside seniors and local enterprises. This approach prepares participants for future careers while preserving traditional skills.

**transfer** Technical education demonstrates community-building potential through this model. Intergenerational learning gains positive associations as youth, seniors, and businesses collaborate. Craftsmanship receives renewed recognition, while other regions observe a replicable template for addressing educational and economic challenges through similar frameworks.

# Women's Legal Aid Fund

NOMINATED

**challenge** Women in abusive relationships face economic violence, making them financially dependent on abusers. Legal costs for divorce and custody cases are often unaffordable, trapping them in dependency. Courts grant visitation to abusive ex-partners, causing financial penalties for mothers who refuse due to safety concerns.

**Country**  
Hungary

**Region**  
Implemented nationwide

**Sector**  
Civil Society  
Social Economy

**Fields of action**  
Advocacy, Law,  
Justice, Victim support

**Organisation**  
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**idea** The Women's Legal Aid Fund provides financial assistance for legal proceedings through donation-based funding. Supporting women facing prohibitive costs for divorce or custody battles, it emphasizes simplicity, accessibility, and trust—eliminating unnecessary documentation or intrusive interviews that might retraumatize applicants.

**actors** PATENT Association oversees operations through a coordinator managing communications and payments. Fundraising campaigns are handled by PATENT's team. Application assessment occurs through a collaborative review team prioritizing quick responses and supportive interactions throughout the process.

**impact** Bureaucratic barriers disappear in this trust-based funding model. Immediate financial assistance enables women to pursue legal actions without delays. Violence and dependency cycles break with timely support. Women experience dignity and empowerment through direct assistance that acknowledges their agency in pursuing justice.

**transfer** Social media and newsletters amplify fundraising while raising awareness about gender-based violence and justice access. Beneficiary stories reshape public understanding about abuse dynamics and encourage community solidarity. Other organizations can adopt this model for addressing similar needs among vulnerable populations seeking justice.

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