

The Romanian National Agency: Meet EGL's Newest Member

09/05/2022 - Actions in EGL



At the beginning of 2020, the family of Europe Goes Local officially welcomed its newest member – the Romanian National Agency. Despite a year marked by uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Romanian NA managed to set up the National Working Group, identify EGL tasks and responsibilities, and build a working plan.

To commemorate the launch of this new strategic partnership, members of Romania's National Working Group (NWG) and EGL Project Coordinator Judit Balogh got together for a special celebratory online event. "We believe in the power of networks and EGL is one of the most powerful youth-related networks in Europe. Among the reasons to join EGL, were to increase the quality of local youth work at the local level in Romania, achieve more recognition of local youth work activities and strengthen cooperation between the public and private sectors", Simona Musteata, an expert at the Mobility Projects Department at Romania's National Agency said during the launch event.



Today, one year into its membership, we sat down with Ms. Musteada and Andrei Popescu, the coordinator of the Youth Department to discuss in detail the NA's vision, intentions, and action plan, as well as the upcoming 4th European Event of EGL, starting on 17th of May 2022 in Romania.

Q: Can you tell us a bit more about your motivation to join Europe Goes Local?

A: Our story with EGL dates back to the summer of 2019 when we met Project Coordinator Judit Balogh at a conference in Cluj-Napoca city. During the conference, the main outcomes of the project were presented – the Charter, the community of practice already built in EGL, all the events that had happened, the cooperation in the EGL family as well as its future plans – development of the Changemakers Toolkit, further extending the network, etc. We immediately thought it is a big opportunity for Romania and our National Agency (NA) to be part of EGL and to bring to our youth work community these innovative outcomes, the Charter and the Toolkit, and all the opportunities for cooperation and sharing good practices at the European level. Thus, the motivation came from the desire to increase the quality of youth work at a local level in Romania, to better support the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps applicants and beneficiaries, as well as to put the spotlight on the municipal youth work and the importance of cooperation between private and public sector in the local youth work offer.

Q: What would you like to achieve as a member of Europe Goes Local?

A: The first thing we wanted to achieve was to establish a stable national structure for Europe Goes Local in Romania and we managed to do this through the National Working Group that we set up and is now functioning as a network itself. In order to do the latter, we invested time and passion to create a sense of ownership among the members on the two main outcomes – the Charter and the Toolkit, as well as connect with the values of EGL. Secondly, we wanted to integrate ourselves into the international family of EGL that had already been functioning for several years – we managed this with the support of JINT and all the European partners.

Regarding our aims for the future in EGL, we have a special focus on the year 2022 being the European Year of Youth and the year when we will host the 4th EGL international event in Cluj-Napoca with over 200 international participants. We are honored to have the spotlight on local youth work offers and youth-friendly ecosystems in this challenging conference happening in Romania, which we aim to be a turning point in the way quality of youth work is seen both at the national and international level. The event will be a good opportunity for all National Working Groups to assess and redesign their national strategies of action, especially coming right after 2 years of a global pandemic with little or no chances to meet physically.

In the long term, through EGL we aim to achieve the set-up of a network of municipalities and local actors effectively using the Charter, benefiting from the EGL national and international opportunities – including effective use of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programs and with a strong focus on the quality of youth work in their current activities.

Q: Who are the members of your National Working Group?

A: Our National Working Group is currently composed of nine members. Five members represent municipalities – being either city managers or directly responsible for the youth work policy in their institution. Two members come from NGOs that are closely working with municipalities in implementing the local youth strategies and the other two members come from public institutions in charge of providing local youth work in the territory – a territorial agency for sports and youth and a cultural institution for students. The members joined the EGL National Working Group based on an invitation extended by the National Agency.



Q: Talk about municipal youth work in Romania

A: In Romania, the responsibility for the youth policy at a municipal level lies upon the local authorities under the framework of the Law on Youth (initiated in 2006 and currently under revision) as well as the National Youth Policy coming from the central authorities. In practice, the local authorities have the freedom and are strongly recommended to develop local youth strategies and youth initiatives, which leads to significant differences between counties and regions. There are municipalities where youth work is a real concern, both in terms of local strategy and recognition and we can see new emerging initiatives towards youth-friendly cities (e.g. participatory budgeting on youth, smart youth centers, municipalities supporting innovation, and the work of NGOs, etc.). In all such cases, the role and involvement of NGOs are extremely important as we need to emphasize that youth work is still mainly performed by the private sector, namely NGOs and most of the good practices in terms of municipal youth work actually rely on a model of good cooperation between NGOs and local authorities.

Q: What are some of the Romanian National Working Group's long-term plans?

A: The EGL 4th International Event in Cluj-Napoca in May 2022, hosted by our NA, will also be a good opportunity for our National Working Group to revisit and redesign its working plan given that the initial one was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Mainly, what the members are aiming at is an increase in the number of municipalities that improve their youth work offer and strategies based on the EGL framework, and also embrace international cooperation through the EGL events and Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps opportunities. Three of our National Working Group members have recently returned from the Training for Charter Ambassadors organized by EGL in Brussels and their newly gained competencies will benefit the entire team in order to redesign the working plan for the coming years.

This year we also plan to expand the National Working Group bringing in fresh energy from youth workers involved in rural areas.