

Youth-Led Civic Engagement in Alba Iulia

Name of the organisation

Municipiul Alba Iulia

Website of the organisation

www.apulum.ro

Location of the organisation

Alba Iulia, Str. Calea Motilor, 5a, Alba, 510134 Alba Iulia, Romania

E-mail address of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in implementing youth activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Youth work in urban areas
- Volunteering/voluntarism

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

This initiative aims to actively involve young people in the local community life of Alba Iulia, focusing on transforming the city into a sustainable ecosystem for youth, as promoted by the #yoUthNITED program – the core of Alba Iulia’s candidacy for Romania’s Youth Capital 2026.

The “Alba Iulia – Youth Capital 2026” program builds on five key pillars: health, professional development, community involvement, non-formal education, and infrastructure. It fosters sustainable partnerships among youth, local administration, educational institutions, and the private sector, ensuring accessible resources and a safe environment.

The “Voluntari de Alba” group, active both online and locally, has evolved into a pilot volunteer center of over 30 engaged youth volunteers. They participate in organizing cultural events, urban regeneration projects, workshops, and educational sessions on project management, communication, and social entrepreneurship.

Supported by funding including a 50,000 EUR grant from Banca Comercială Română, Alba Iulia hosts national youth events, develops youth-focused infrastructure, and implements policies enhancing youth civic engagement.

This initiative promotes structured youth participation as equal partners, nurtures a replicable urban volunteering culture, improves relevant infrastructure, and combats depopulation by making the city more attractive through innovative youth-centered projects.

Alba Iulia thus harnesses youth potential to become a national example of social innovation, civic engagement, and vibrant community life.

Good practice description

This initiative exemplifies a comprehensive and sustainable approach to youth engagement at the local level, combining structured volunteering with inclusive urban development, capacity building, and civic participation. Centered around Alba Iulia’s successful candidacy and designation as Romania’s Youth Capital 2026, the practice leverages community strengths and collaborations to create a vibrant, youth-friendly ecosystem.

Core Elements of the Good Practice

1. Active, Real-World Youth Involvement

The initiative prioritizes genuine and effective participation by young people not just as beneficiaries, but as active drivers of community projects. Youth are integrated as equal partners in decision-making processes, program design, and implementation. This shifts the traditional model from passive reception to active ownership, empowering youth to shape their environment.

2. Structured Volunteering Framework

The “Voluntari de Alba” group is a cornerstone, transforming from an informal network into a pilot volunteer center with clear roles, ongoing training, and leadership opportunities. Over 30 young volunteers are organized systematically to participate in planning, organizing, and running various community activities. This professionalization of volunteering fosters commitment, responsibility, and skill development.

3. Multidimensional Capacity Building

The initiative provides practical training in project management, communication, event organization, and social entrepreneurship. These skills equip youth to take on meaningful roles and help build their future career potential. By offering continuous mentoring and networking opportunities with professionals across sectors, the program nurtures both competencies and confidence.

4. **Integrated Urban and Cultural Engagement**

Youth take active roles in organizing cultural events, urban regeneration, and public space animation initiatives. They contribute creatively to shaping their city's social and physical landscape, enhancing the visibility and relevance of young voices in broader urban development and community renewal efforts.

5. **Collaborative Partnerships and Support Systems**

The program is built on strategic partnerships involving local government, educational institutions, NGOs, and private sector sponsors (e.g., Banca Comercială Română). These partnerships secure funding, resources, and infrastructural support, ensuring sustainability and scalability.

6. **Alignment with Strategic Priorities via #yoUthNITED Program**

By addressing five pillars—health, professional development, community involvement, non-formal education, and infrastructure—the initiative aligns youth engagement with holistic development goals. This focused approach addresses the diverse needs of young people, fostering well-rounded growth.

7. **Visibility and Replicability**

As Romania's Youth Capital 2026, Alba Iulia hosts national summit events and galas that showcase best practices and encourage knowledge exchange. The practice serves as a replicable urban model encouraging other communities to adopt similar strategies for youth empowerment.

Impact and Lessons for Others

- **Youth as Equal Stakeholders:** Entrusting youth with real responsibilities generates motivation, accountability, and authentic engagement.
- **Structured yet Flexible Volunteerism:** A formal volunteer framework combined with accessible entry points allows broad inclusion while fostering deeper commitment by those ready to take leadership.
- **Building Skills Through Practice:** Practical training and real-world opportunities convert abstract learning into tangible competencies.
- **Inclusive Urban Renewal:** Linking youth participation to urban development projects ensures their contributions have visible, lasting impacts on their environment.
- **Cross-sectoral Partnerships:** Diverse actor collaboration is crucial to resource mobilization, sustainability, and program scaling.

By embracing these principles, other communities can inspire, mobilize, and support their youth in becoming active agents of social innovation, capable of shaping vibrant and inclusive futures. Alba Iulia's approach demonstrates that youth involvement, when thoughtfully organized and adequately supported, builds stronger, healthier communities responsive to the needs and aspirations of their younger generation.

Good practice result & concrete effects

During the development of the application for “Alba Iulia – Youth Capital of Romania 2026,” around 40 young people were involved, representing local youth organizations, informal groups, community members, and students who had moved to other cities but wished to stay connected with Alba Iulia. This diverse group ensured an inclusive vision that reflected the real needs and aspirations of both local youth and the urban diaspora.

Their involvement included frequent consultations, thematic workshops, and collaborative sessions to define strategic priorities and shape the program’s philosophy and structure.

A crucial role was played by the active volunteer group “Voluntari de Alba,” already engaged in local youth projects and events. This group served as a key driver for mobilization and logistical support. They organized meetings, facilitated dialogue between youth and local authorities, and mentored new volunteers. Their presence strengthened team cohesion, motivation, and supported consultation, communication, and documentation activities.

This collaborative approach fostered a strong sense of belonging and active youth engagement in Alba Iulia’s future. The active volunteer group remains a central pillar of the program, supporting project implementation and building a committed, inspired community of young people.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Core principles of youth work