

Hear My Voice

Name of the organisation

Asociatia TAO

Website of the organisation

asociatiatao.ro

Location 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
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Youth work in rural areas

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

More than half a million Romanians have grown up in child care institutions, and today over 47,000 children and young people still live in such centers. Despite progress in care and education, numerous studies show persistent cognitive and social delays. This remains one of Romania's most pressing challenges, and the country is still internationally associated with the long-term effects of institutional care. Since 2020, the European Union, the World Bank, and UNICEF have emphasized that more must be done to support these children. Although reforms have been underway for more than 20 years, many institutions remain overcrowded, and young people leaving the system still face major barriers to integration. They often have limited opportunities to discover and develop their talents and face a high risk of social exclusion. Without parents or mentors to guide, encourage, and respond to their individual needs, expressing their passions and abilities becomes much harder.

Our project was created to change this reality by offering 30 young people in our community an additional opportunity to grow. We focused on strengthening essential social skills (clear communication, empathy, problem-solving, and collaboration) helping them gain confidence and build a future where they can actively participate in society.

Good practice description

The project was designed for young people living in family-style homes in the village of Teaca, with the aim of providing them with the support they need to understand what it means to be an active and engaged citizen.

During the project, 10 interactive workshops were held where the young people explored topics such as individual rights, freedom of expression, civic responsibility, and dialogue with authorities. It was a participatory and sincere process that emphasized listening, expression, and mutual trust. At the end of the 10 workshops, a public event was held where the young people interacted with local government officials.

“Hear My Voice” aimed to educate, through informal and non-formal experiences, and to impart to the target group an understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the civic sphere. It provided guidance and practical ways to build self-esteem and the ability to express oneself, including engaging in dialogue with public officials, and to learn how to make their voices heard in the community.

The project was implemented through a structured series of 10 workshops, combining non-formal and informal learning methods, gradually building from knowledge to practice and real-life application.

The first phase focused on civic and legal awareness, where participants explored fundamental rights, institutions, and responsibilities through role-play, simulations, and creative exercises such as “Create Your Own Country.” These activities helped them understand abstract concepts in a concrete and engaging way.

The second phase focused on active participation and everyday civic engagement, with a strong emphasis on creativity, expression, and experiential learning. Rather than approaching civic responsibility as a theoretical concept, young people explored their role in society through interactive, playful, and artistic methods.

Activities such as the “Wheel of Needs” encouraged personal reflection and dialogue on values, responsibility, and social awareness. The “Challenge Box” transformed civic behavior into small, creative real-life actions, inviting participants to engage with their environment in meaningful and unexpected ways. Improvisation games, mimed proverbs, and expressive exercises stimulated imagination, spontaneity, and group connection. Artistic elements (such as gesture, movement, and role-play) were used as tools for understanding social dynamics, empathy, and communication beyond words. These methods created a safe and engaging space where participants could experiment, express themselves freely, and learn through experience.

The project concluded with a public event held on 27 September 2025 in Teaca, designed as a real-life platform for youth participation and dialogue with local authorities.

This event marked the transition from learning to active civic engagement at municipal level. Young participants directly interacted with key stakeholders, including representatives of the local administration (mayor, vice-mayor, local council).

The programme combined art-based expression and civic dialogue. Participants opened the event by presenting the project's purpose, followed by a theatre performance they created, illustrating, through humor and storytelling, the functioning of public institutions and citizens' rights. The core moment was a public debate between young people and local authorities, addressing topics such as the role of citizens, public responsibility, and fundamental rights. This created a safe and structured space for dialogue, where young people could express opinions, ask questions, and be heard.

The event concluded with reflection and informal discussions, strengthening mutual understanding and connection.

Good practice result & concrete effects

The main impact we achieved was to make them aware of their rights and of the channels and ways through which they can exercise them.

We improved their social skills and ability to express themselves by engaging them in a progressive, engaging, and effective process.

Another intended impact was their inclusion in society. Every right they learned more about—and of which they were previously unaware—and every positive interaction with public administration was part of the results we sought to achieve.

We wanted to instill in them a sense of belonging to a larger community, the European Union, so that they could become informed, responsible, and active citizens.

The final public event provided a real-world setting where the young people could apply what they had learned, speaking before the community and engaging in dialogue with local authorities. This experience had a powerful impact on their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice