

# The Ladies' Dowry

## **Name of the organisation**

Biblioteca Publică Locală Pietrari

## **Website of the organisation**

<https://bibliotecapietrari-crina.blogspot.com/>

## **Location of the organisation**

Principala, 192, 247510 Pietrari, 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.)
- Inclusion
- Arts and culture
- Youth work in rural areas

## **Good practice category**

A practice of processes and methods

## **Good practice aim & purpose**

The project “The Ladies’ Dowry” addressed two major challenges specific to rural communities: the declining interest of young people in local traditions and cultural heritage, and the lack of opportunities for their active engagement and participation in community life.

Our main goals were to involve rural youth in cultural and volunteer activities, strengthen their sense of belonging to their community, develop their digital skills, and preserve and promote local cultural heritage through modern means. By combining traditional heritage with digital storytelling, creative workshops, and community events, the project encouraged young people to rediscover the value of their roots while using contemporary tools and platforms to share them.

Through this approach, we aimed to transform the way rural youth interact with their cultural identity—from passive observers to active ambassadors of tradition and innovation. The project demonstrated that youth work can be a powerful catalyst for community participation and sustainable rural development.

Ultimately, “The Ladies’ Dowry” exemplifies how initiatives rooted in local culture can foster inclusion, creativity, and active citizenship among young people from rural or less-developed areas, aligning closely with the core theme of the Europe Goes Local 2026 Conference.

## Good practice description

“The Ladies’ Dowry” (Zestrea domnițelor) is a cultural and educational initiative that brings together tradition, creativity, and youth engagement in the rural community of Pietrari, Vâlcea County. Implemented by the Pietrari Local Public Library, the project seeks to empower rural youth by providing meaningful opportunities to rediscover and reinterpret local cultural heritage while developing both social and digital skills.

The project emerged from a real need — in Pietrari and many other rural settlements, young people often face limited cultural opportunities, low involvement in community life, and a gradual loss of connection with their traditional roots. Through “Zestrea domnițelor”, the library became an active community hub, engaging youth in cultural volunteering, non-formal learning, and digital innovation.

Its central activity focused on documenting and digitizing 70 traditional embroidery motifs and folk costume patterns originating from Pietrari, Brașov, and Bucharest regions. Young participants attended 15 embroidery workshops and 4 traditional gatherings (șezători) where they learned directly from local craftswomen about textile patterns, symbolism, and techniques. The motifs were carefully digitized and included in a physical and online open-access collection, connecting cultural preservation with technology and accessibility for future generations.

Beyond research and crafts, the project had a strong educational and social dimension. Through field visits to Râmnicu Vâlcea, Brașov, and Bucharest, youth participants interacted with museums, cultural centers, and urban volunteers, understanding how tradition can gain new life through creative industries and digital storytelling. The Facebook page documents this process through rich photo albums, short videos, and stories highlighting the transformation of participants—from curious learners to proud promoters of their heritage.

The project’s visibility and recognition extend beyond the local community. In 2023, “The Ladies Dowry” was a finalist in the “Projects with Impact” category at the Rural Youth Gala. It was showcased in international professional settings, such as the IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) in Rotterdam and the “Let’s Go GREEN!” International Green Libraries Conference in Zagreb, Croatia. These appearances emphasized how libraries can integrate sustainability, digitization, and heritage promotion into youth work. In 2025, the project expanded its cultural outreach through collaborations with other institutions, including the Christian Tell County Library in Gorj, where a special event titled “Zestrea Domnițelor – An Original Cultural Performance” celebrated Romanian traditional costumes and rituals and a festival was also organized between the libraries. tradu in romana

Through innovative use of social media, local partnerships, and community-based research, “The Ladies’ Dowry” proves that even small rural libraries can generate impactful youth initiatives. The project combines traditional craftsmanship, digital culture, and community pride—transforming embroidery patterns into symbols of intergenerational connection and modern identity.

Ultimately, this good practice illustrates how youth work rooted in cultural heritage can foster participation, creativity, and sustainability in rural areas. By aligning local action with European values of inclusion, active citizenship, and digital transformation, “Zestrea domnițelor” offers an inspiring model for cultural preservation through community engagement and modern storytelling.

### **Good practice result & concrete effects**

“The Ladies’ Dowry” (Zestrea Domnițelor) is a community-based cultural and educational initiative implemented by the Pietrari Local Public Library in Vâlcea County, Romania, and funded through the European Solidarity Corps, a European Union programme supporting youth participation and volunteering.

The project addressed challenges common to rural communities, such as limited cultural opportunities for young people, low civic engagement, and a gradual disconnection from local heritage. By transforming the public library into an active hub for youth work, the initiative created opportunities for young people to engage in cultural volunteering, non-formal learning, and community-based research.

The project initially involved 15 young volunteers, who participated in documenting and digitizing local cultural heritage. Thanks to its inclusive youth engagement approach, the volunteer network expanded now to 35 active young people currently involved in community projects and programmes coordinated by the library, demonstrating the initiative’s sustainable impact.

A key outcome was the documentation and digitization now of around 100 traditional embroidery motifs and folk costume patterns from Pietrari and other Romanian regions. Activities included finally 20 embroidery workshops and six traditional gatherings (șezători) where participants learned directly from local craftswomen.

The project also created a digital and physical collection of traditional motifs and proved highly replicable: over 10 libraries in Romania have adopted similar youth engagement activities inspired by this model. Recognized as a finalist at the Rural Youth Gala (2023), the project highlights how youth work rooted in cultural heritage can strengthen participation, creativity, and community development in rural areas.

### **Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work**

Organisation and practice