

# SUBLIME SDGs LOCAL MAPPING

## Stakeholders, Challenges & Opportunities

### Tulcea

### Border town, Romania



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# PART I

## Mapping the 2030 Agenda



## Fiche 1: Mapping the progresses of Romania in implementing the 2030 Agenda

Romania joined the leaders of the 193 UN member states at the Development Summit in September 2015, adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Since then, Romania underscores its unwavering commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and assumed its role as a proactive partner and regional hub. The Department of Sustainable Development, created in 2017 under the Prime Minister's authority, acts as a key entity for coordinating the national implementation of the 17 SDGs.

In support of achieving the SDGs, Romania has contextualized the 2030 Agenda through the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030 (SNDDR 2030), whose implementation is facilitated by the National Action Plan and has established the set of National Sustainable Development Indicators.

In 2022, Romania elaborated the first National Action Plan to implement the Strategy, offering a 2030 roadmap in this sense. The plan prioritizes the enhancement and improvement of the governance framework, raising awareness through education and training, promoting sustainable development principles, and monitoring and evaluating progress. The Annual International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance Plan is the planning document for Romania's activities within the framework of the international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance policy for the respective financial year. The plan includes the annual objectives for international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, as well as the implementation methods.

The highest level of decision-making is represented by the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, comprising all ministers and presided over by the Prime Minister, inter-institutional structure overseeing the implementation, monitoring, and review of the Strategy.

At the same time, local authorities have been repeatedly recognized for their importance in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Changing mind-sets, digital government transformation and innovation in public institutions to accelerate SDGs progress is one of the priorities of Romania since the beginning.

In recognition of innovation and excellence in public administration as well as for a significant contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the UN-Department of Economic and Social Affairs nominated the Government of Romania, through the Department of Sustainable Development, as the 2021 winner in the category Enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions to reach the SDGs.

Since May 2022, following the legislative changes, public administration officials can become experts in sustainable development. This is a key pillar of the efforts of the Department for Sustainable Development, which aims to develop the human capital needed to support sustainable development initiatives. Through the SIPOCA 613 Project, "Sustainable Romania - Development of the Strategic and Institutional Framework for the Implementation of SNDDR 2030," 150 specialists from the central public administration as have been trained "sustainable development experts." Moreover, this initiative is supplemented by the commitment made through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) to train a total of 2000 experts in the field of sustainable development by 2025.



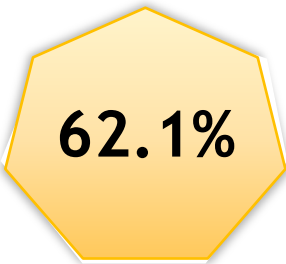
77.7%

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*Globally, Romania holds the 30th place out of 163 countries in the global SDG ranking, with a score of 77.7%. (Sustainable Development Solution Network report, 2022)*






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According to the National Institute of Statistics' evaluation, Romania has achieved 62.1% of the SDGs, however significant challenges still remaining. If better results are registered especially in terms of the decrease in the poverty rate, the increase in the share of renewable energy in total energy consumption, simultaneously with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, Romania needs to accelerate its efforts to succeed in changing the current trend and reach some targets regarding SDG 4, SDG 6 or SDG 12.



The Voluntary National Review 2023 (VNR) offers an overview regarding Romania' progress in terms of the accomplishments of all 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides an accurate assessment of the national context. Overall, Romania data show achievement for SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) and moderate improvement for SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 14 (Life below water), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). At the same time, Romania registered a decline for SDG 4 (Quality Education) and stagnation for SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on land).



Legend of graphical representations	
	Indicators whose level and trend are above the 2030 target level
	Indicators that have not reached the 2030 target and whose evolution is increasing towards the 2030 target with an average annual growth rate greater than or equal to the required annual growth rate to reach the 2030 target
	Indicators that have not reached the 2030 target and whose evolution is increasing towards the 2030 target with an average annual growth rate between 50% and 100% of the annual growth rate needed to reach the 2030 target
	Indicators that have not reached the 2030 target and whose evolution stagnates or increases towards the 2030 target at an average annual growth rate lower than 50% of the annual growth rate required to reach the 2030 target
	Indicators that have not reached the 2030 target and an evolution is in the opposite direction to the 2030 target
<p>Source: Progress Report 2030 HORIZON, National Institute of Statistics, 2023,  <a href="http://romania-durabila.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ProgressReport-2030HORIZON-Summary.pdf">http://romania-durabila.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ProgressReport-2030HORIZON-Summary.pdf</a></p>	

In addition to the VNR 2023, Romania included for the first time the position of young people in support of the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development at community, regional and national levels, reflected by the *Youth Statement on Romania’s VNR* and the voice of children on SDGs implementation, with a focus on those issues that are important for them, through *Children’s Report for Romania’s VNR*.

Moreover, the Romanian Municipalities Association and the Association of Communes of Romania, under the coordination of representatives of United Cities and Local Governments and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe, conducted the *Voluntary Sub-National Review (VSR) - Localizing of the UN 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals in Romanian municipalities and communes* to reflect the contribution of local authorities to selected SDGs (1, 3 to 7, 9 to 13, and 16) through local initiatives. It analyses the national strategy and the institutional framework for sustainable development in Romania (NSDSR 2030) and the degree of localisation of these strategies.

According to the VSR the understanding of the SDGs, the national NSDSR 2030, and European sustainable development strategies is still relatively low among local administrations (more than half of respondents). Significant differences exist in the integration of the SDGs in strategic planning at the local level (SDL or SIDU). A large portion of communes and municipalities do not have SDL/SIDU in place—almost two out of five communes and over a quarter of municipalities. Conversely, about a fifth of the municipalities and communes have fully integrated the SDGs into their SIDU/SDL. These discrepancies are likely due to low administrative capacity and bureaucracy. The report also highlights that municipalities and communes prioritize SDG 6, SDG 7 and SDG 9. Surprisingly, SDG 11, which is a primary responsibility of municipalities and communes, ranks only fourth.

## Fiche 2: Tulcea and Romania profile: data & statistics



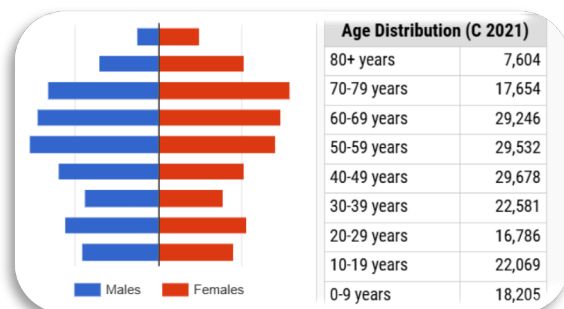
Romania is a medium-sized country compared to the other EU Member States, with a surface area of 238,391 square kilometres and a population of 19,053,815 people according to the National census conducted in 2021. Romania is located in the catchment basins of the Danube river and the Black Sea and encompasses a large portion of the Carpathian mountain range.



Tulcea county is located in the extreme Southeast of Romania, in the Central-Northern part of the historical region Dobrogea, at flow of the Danube into Black Sea, bordering the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine with an area of 8,499 square kilometres. The Danube Delta is the largest wetland area of Europe covering an area of 5,050 square kilometres (of which 4,340 sq km in Romanian territory), and it has acquired the status of Biosphere Reserve in recognition of its global importance, and it is subject to special attention and monitoring from UNESCO and the Ramsar Convention.

Name of the Mayor: Stefan ILIE, male, the National Liberal Party. Period in office: October 2020-Present. Number of councilors: 21 people, 40% women

The total population of Tulcea County is 193,355 (95,481 males, representing 49.38% of the total population, and 97,874 females, representing 50.62% of the total inhabitants). In Tulcea County, the average age of the population is 43.7 years, compared to the national average of 42.4 years. In Tulcea County, 89,611 people live in urban areas, representing 46.35% of the county’s population, while 103,744 people live in rural areas (53.65%).



Tulcea County is known for its multicultural and ethnic diversity gathering Romanians, Russian-Lipovans, Roma, Turkish, Ukrainians, Greeks, Tatars, Germans, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Italians, Jews, Albanians, other ethnicity.



The current economy is characterized by a diversified industry, agriculture increasingly based on private ownership, commerce facilitated by the existence of all types of transportation (road, rail, river, maritime, and air), as well as a heightened tourism activity that takes advantage of the beauty of the Danube Delta. In the economy of Tulcea County, fishing and aquaculture stand out, with production sourced from the waters of the Danube, deltaic and coastal lakes, the Black Sea, as well as from fish hatcheries. The economic activity is largely monopolized by the city of Tulcea, which generates over 81% of the turnover of fiscally registered companies in Tulcea County and employs 72% of the total workforce.

Tulcea County has shown a genuine interest in developing its cultural life, with an increasing number of cultural events being organized at the local level. The main cultural institutions include the Panait Cerna County Library, the Eco-Museum Research Institute, the House of Culture of Trade Unions, the Jean Bart Cultural Center of Tulcea, the Tulcea County School Inspectorate, the Tulcea County Council, and others.

The educational system is structured into multiple levels to ensure the coherence of education with a total number of 148 accredited and authorized educational institutions. Tulcea County has 18 high schools and starting from the fall of 2019, the city of Tulcea offer higher education as a Territorial Center that operate within the "Danubius Delta" Economic College of Tulcea. At the same time, in Tulcea county the educational infrastructure include around 35 kindergardens and nurseries and schools for primary and gimnasium in all territory.

The unemployment rate in Tulcea County at the end of August 2024 was 3.1% overall (3.2% for women and 2.9% for men), placing Tulcea County in 23rd place in the ranking of counties ordered in descending order. This is 0.4 percentage points higher than the national unemployment rate.

From the national network of protected natural areas, the Danube Delta stands out both in terms of its size (580,000 ha) and its level of biological diversity, having triple international status: Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve; Ramsar Site (a wetland of international importance); Natural and Cultural World Heritage Site.

### Fiche 3: Global Citizenship & Development Education in Tulcea



#### Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG4/Target 4.7 at local level

The Department of Sustainable Development has developed various tools to promote the concept of Global Citizenship and SDGs in Romania, many of which are aimed at young people, students, pupils, schools, and higher education institutions, organizations, and experts in the field of education, teachers, and parents. These tools, actions, experiments, ideas, and products improved awareness of sustainable development and attract various local stakeholders to their own actions for explaining and promoting the SDGs.

In this context, in June 2024, 21 teachers from schools from Tulcea county had the opportunity to participate in the training "Education and Sustainable Development - Learning and Transformation". The course was conducted online and includes 30 hours with three thematic modules: "Sustainable Development - Framework and Specific Areas", "Education for Sustainable Development through Learning Activities in Formal/Subject-Specific Contexts" and "Designing and Implementing Educational Projects for Sustainable Development in a Non-Formal Context."

Moreover, another initiative regarding Global citizenship and development education in Tulcea is the workshops conducted by Tulcea County School Inspectorate for directors of schools in period 2022-2023 with the aim of providing the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Also, the local authorities such as Tulcea Municipality and the Tulcea County Council organize annually or provide support and funds for different events, festivals, artistic events, educational programs, etc. raising awareness and promoting sustainable lifestyle, environment education, cultural diversity and traditions,



recycling and respect for the nature. The majority of the activities and projects are developed by or in partnership with local actors - local actions groups (GALs), students' clubs, sport or culture institutions.

At the same time, according to the national education system, every year in May, all schools have one week called "Green Week", where the majority of the educational activities are dedicated to sustainable development, environment protection, respect for human rights and civic education.

#### Fiche 4: Achieving gender equality at local level



##### Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG5/Target 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 at local level

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls in Tulcea County is stated among the objectives targeted by the "Development Strategy of Tulcea Municipality 2021-203". The Strategy comprise the goals that should be achieved but it does not provide specific actions and activities or punctual funding in this sense.

According to this document the local authorities from Tulcea are committed to monitoring the implementation of legal provisions regarding sexual and reproductive health and organizing information campaigns to prevent and combat sexual abuse and respect for non-discrimination and identity rights. Moreover, the Strategy underline the importance of the strict application of existing legal provisions regarding the combat and condemnation of any acts of violence, abuse, exploitation, human trafficking, or discrimination of any kind, especially concerning children, women, or persons with disabilities, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

At the same time, promotion and consolidation of multicultural values by including the perspectives and contributions of minorities in Romanian history and culture, preserving traditions that contribute to cultural richness, and combating all forms of discrimination, racism, and anti-Semitism through law enforcement, education in the spirit of multiculturalism, and raising awareness of issues related to the discrimination of indigenous minorities are seen as priorities.

Based on the provisions of Law 202/2002 regarding equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, since 2005, all administrative territorial units in Romania (42 counties and the municipality of Bucharest) have, under the coordination of National Agency for Equality Between men and Women (ANES), the County Committees for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (COJES).

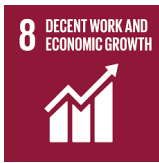
COJES Tulcea is the informative and consultative structure with the main responsibility of promoting and implementing at the local level the values and principles of non-discrimination based on gender. COJES is composed of representatives from deconcentrated public services and other specialized bodies of local public administration or local administrative authorities, trade union organizations, employers' associations, as well as representatives from local non-governmental organizations designated by them.

At the national level, Tulcea County is in the top 5 counties with the lowest number of domestic violence victims (17 victims reported, 9 women and 8 men) and with the lowest number of domestic violence perpetrators (5 people), according to the ANES National Study conducted in 2019.

Tulcea County is involved in different national awareness campaign on different topics like for example on "zero tolerance" on domestic violence, anti-trafficking, bullying and non-discrimination at school or at workplace. Also, local events such as conferences, workshops, music and literature festivals, celebrations of traditions of the minorities from Tulcea, campaigns in schools and institutions are the main activities organized by the local actors for developing non-violent attitudes and behaviours to achieve gender equality and empowering women and girls in Tulcea County.



## Fiche 5: Decent work for migrant workers and fighting all forms of inequalities: mapping vulnerable groups



**Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG8/Target 8.8 at local level**

**Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG10/Target 10.3 and 10.7 at local level**

In the context of an increasingly acute labour shortage in Romania, employers from Tulcea county decided to hire migrant workers for example from Vietnam or India. The main areas of activity in which non-EU citizens working in Tulcea county are hospitality, residential and non-residential building construction, shipbuilding, textiles, and trade. For example, in January 2024, 10 employers requested certificates from Tulcea County Employment Agency for hiring people from outside the European Union.

In 2021, a local support team was established at the level of Tulcea County for the social integration of foreigners who have obtained international protection or the right to stay in Romania, as well as for citizens of the member states of the European Union, the European Economic Area, and the citizens of the Swiss Confederation. The local support team is under the coordination of the Prefect and comprise representatives of all local authorities and NGOs, with the goal of taking needed measures and monitoring the integration of migrants in Romania, including migrant participation on the labour market, the protection of labour rights and promotion of safe and secure working environments.

In 2021, the officers of the Immigration Service of Tulcea County managed the stay and residence on the territory of Romania for 3,147 people, of which 1,945 were from third countries and 1,202 were citizens of the European Union/EEA/CH. During the same period, 467 applications for work permits as permanent workers were registered, with 441 applications being approved.

One particular situation that worth to be mentioned is the one generated by the recent situation regarding the Ukrainian crisis. Tulcea, respectively Issacea Border Point became a Humanitarian Logistics Hub designed to streamline aid donations and ensure the supply of essential items like medical supplies, clothes, and food. Also local actors and community mobilize and provided free lodging and resources, transfer and support the transit or stay of Ukrainian refugees.

## Fiche 6: Building a sustainable community



**Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG11/ Target 11.3, 11.4, 11.6, 11.7 at local level**

It is worth to be noted that 31% of the administrative territory of Tulcea Municipality is included in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. According to the law, this area is also designated as a natural site of world heritage value and a wetland of international importance. The county has 49 nationally protected natural areas, including 34 nature reservations, one national park, one biosphere reservation, and 17 Natura 2000 sites, making it the leading county in Romania in terms of the number of protected areas.

Moreover, Tulcea County's position in the border area offers socio-economic development opportunities through territorial and cross-border cooperation programs to which it has access. This positional potential is challenging to capitalize on in a difficult geopolitical context, neighbouring military conflict zones, which leads to a certain underutilization of the Danube as a means of economic transport or to use all the advantages for the local community.

In this context, Tulcea is quite actively pursuing the SDGs through various initiatives and strategies aimed at promoting building a sustainable community.



The "Development Strategy of the Municipality of Tulcea for the period 2021-2030" outlines the plans and goals for the development of Tulcea focusing on various aspects such as economic growth, infrastructure improvement, social development and setting local targets. The document was elaborated through a consultative mechanism that invited and involved the citizens of Tulcea, the civil society organizations, the representatives of political institutions, public administration, non-governmental organizations, and the business community. The Strategy highlights the local development potential, aiming for socio-economic growth, environmental protection, and an improved quality of life for the benefit of citizens, the business community, and local administrations and points out the main projects and activities undertaken regarding inclusive and sustainable urbanization, efforts to protect and safeguard the Danube world's cultural and natural heritage, air quality and waste management, inclusive and green public spaces.

According to the County Waste Management Plan, selective collection is carried out for paper/cardboard, plastic, glass/metal; there are fixed collection points for WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment), but the targets imposed by the current legislation are not yet met.

In Tulcea County, there are three automated air quality monitoring stations, which are part of the National Air Quality Monitoring Network. These stations are located in accordance with the criteria established by European air quality directives. Additionally, there is laboratory equipment used to measure concentrations of heavy metals: lead, cadmium, arsenic, nickel, and from deposits. The monitoring actions are based on improving living conditions at all levels and ensuring sustainable development under conditions that allow for data exchange compatibility.

There are several projects underway aimed at rehabilitating blocks and buildings in Tulcea. These initiatives are part of broader efforts to improve energy efficiency and living conditions in the area. Also the number of developed urban parks in Tulcea Municipality is 10. In Tulcea County, the area of green spaces significantly increased in 2019, being 170.13% larger than in 2015 - from 77 ha to 208 ha. Regionally, the increase is 22.53%, while at the national level, it is 4.58% compared to 2015. According to European standards, 26 m<sup>2</sup> per inhabitant are necessary. Therefore, despite the increases, they are still insufficient. In the South-East Region and Tulcea County, the green area per capita is 11.87 m<sup>2</sup> and 10.70 m<sup>2</sup>, respectively.

Another relevant document for Tulcea County's efforts in building sustainable community is the "Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of the Danube Delta" (2016-2030), a comprehensive plan aimed at promoting sustainable development in the Danube Delta region, the largest natural delta in Europe and among the largest in the world. This strategy outlines priorities for investment and development, focusing on both ecological conservation and improving the quality of life for local residents (environmental protection, economic development, and social well-being). The strategic objectives derived from this vision are:

- SO 1 - "Preserving unique natural values through science-guided environmental management and strengthening local communities in their role as proactive protectors of this unique world heritage."
- SO 2 - "Developing a green, inclusive local economy based on sustainable consumption and protection, resource efficiency, capitalizing on the area's comparative advantages, and benefiting from improved public services."

Some environmental conservation and renewable energy initiatives also reflect Tulcea's commitment to achieving and promoting a sustainable future for the region. Efforts are being made to enhance urban planning and management to create inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and communities.



## Fiche 7: Environmental responsibility and local climate actions



**Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG12/Target 12.8 at local level**

**Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG13/Target 13.3 at local level**

Being home to the Danube Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage site, Tulcea County offers few notable examples, particularly, regarding local climate actions and environmental responsibility, but not only. The majority of projects and actions include sustainable tourism, biodiversity conservation, and habitat restoration activities that aim to protect this unique ecosystem while promoting eco-friendly tourism and a lifestyle in harmony with nature.

Efforts to protect and preserve the Danube Delta and its unique biodiversity are extensive and multifaceted ranging from local awareness activities and campaigning to large projects to tracking species populations, assessing the impact of human activities, and developing strategies to mitigate different threats.

Local communities play a vital role in conservation efforts and initiatives often involve educating and engaging residents in sustainable practices, such as eco-tourism and responsible fishing. Legislation and regulations are in place to protect the Danube Delta and it can refer to restrictions on navigation, fishing, and development activities to minimize environmental impact. These efforts collectively aim to maintain the ecological balance of the Danube Delta, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

Moreover, the transformation of Tulcea into a green and smart city is an ambitious and exciting project developed and put in place by local authorities and local actors. The concept of a SMART CITY involves the integration of technology, sustainability, and innovation to improve the quality of life for its residents. In Tulcea, this transformation includes initiatives like planting the largest urban forest in Romania, improving energy efficiency, and reducing pollution. The city aims to create a sustainable environment that supports both the community and the natural ecosystem.

Nevertheless, challenges regarding responsible consumption and production at local level are still in place, mainly connected to the economic profile of the area - tourism and fishing and its unique context.

In the Danube Delta area, climate change impacts is influenced for example by the increase in average annual temperature and changes in the seasonal distribution of precipitation. Additionally, the impact of the rising Black Sea level may lead to changes too. All together are translated in risks and challenges such as floods in the region, drought and water scarcity, water resources affected and small communities being isolated, coastal erosion and flooding affecting shorelines, flora and fauna are also issues depending on the salinization of the water or the availability of food supply for animals. All the above mentioned can have severe environmental and socio-economic impacts, necessitating effective management and mitigation strategies.

The Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan for Tulcea Municipality includes a comprehensive analysis of risks and vulnerabilities to climate change and it involves identifying and describing feasible measures to address these challenges. The plan aims to enhance the municipality's resilience to climate impacts while promoting sustainable development.

The Plan focuses on the long-term effects of climate change on the local community and it emphasizes the importance of energy efficiency and sets measurable goals and outcomes related to reducing energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Several projects co-funded by the European Union aim to support low-carbon economy initiatives in Tulcea. Investments in renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and wind turbines, are being made to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Public infrastructure is being modernized to improve energy efficiency. This includes renovating buildings to meet new energy standards, enhancing insulation, and upgrading heating and cooling systems. At the same time, educational campaigns are being conducted to raise awareness about energy conservation and the benefits of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These campaigns encourage residents and businesses to adopt more sustainable practices.



## Fiche 8: Multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development



### Mapping local challenges, priorities, opportunities and resources related to SDG17/ Target 17.14 and 17.16 at local level

Taking into account the particularities of Tulcea county and the Danube Delta, sustainable development is addressed at local, national and regional/European level through many strategic documents related to climate, energy, and sustainable development. The "Development Strategy of the Municipality of Tulcea for the period 2021-2030" and the "Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of the Danube Delta" (2016-2030) remain the most comprehensive and important ones.

Tulcea benefits from various European Union-funded projects aimed at promoting sustainable development. These projects support initiatives in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture, contributing to the region's overall sustainability prospects.

Moreover, for the period 2014-2020, Tulcea county took the opportunity to develop around several projects financed by the European Union' Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine, through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). The program addresses the border area between Romania and Ukraine and contributed to the overall objective of the European Neighbourhood Instrument: evolution towards a region of prosperity and good neighborliness, achieved through cross border cooperation actions to the benefit of neighboring EU Member and Non-member States.

One specific example is the project Clean River that allowed the rehabilitation of the waste water and sewerage networks of the city of Izmail and of the Tulcea County Hospital, the modernisation of two treatment plants for the wastewater and one wastewater pumping station in Izmail. Professionals from both states were trained in the prevention, intervention and citizens' education regarding the man-made emergency situations.

Another project aimed at facilitating the access of 360 highschool students and students from Tulcea County and the Odessa region to 24 professional training courses on the labor market and specialized counseling and professional guidance services to improve the insertion process by involving them in innovative activities of complementary and virtually entrepreneurial education within 35 practice firms. The project objectives include also the prevention of socio-professional marginalization and increase the transition from school to active life for 100 high school students and students from Tulcea county and the Odessa region through cross-border educational actions aimed at organizing 2 Cross-border Fairs of Practice Firms, 2 Experience Exchanges in the field of entrepreneurship and the operationalization of 2 CBC-FeRoUa bilateral online platforms for simulation of economic and e-CPO operations for counseling and professional guidance; increasing the quality and diversity of educational programs in Tulcea county and the Odessa region by strengthening and promoting a bilateral partnership network of 10 educational units, endowing 3 laboratories and 3 workshops and the specialization of 40 teachers through 2 innovative courses and 4 transboundary methodical meetings.

At the same time, local businesses and government agencies collaborate on renewable energy projects and many environmental NGOs work with local communities to create and maintain urban green spaces, promote eco-tourism, and implement sustainable agricultural practices. These collaborations ensure that conservation efforts are community-driven and locally relevant.

These collaborative efforts help Tulcea move towards a more sustainable and resilient future.



## **PART II**

# **Let's Change! Voices from Tulcea**

- **Report of key informants' interviews**
- **Survey Report**



## Fiche 9: Report of key informants' interviews

The report of key informants' interviews provide information collected from a wide range of actors who have first-hand knowledge about Tulcea county and local community.

The research identified several challenges that Tulcea faces to sustainable development, among the most important being the following: climate change, poverty, access to education, social services, and healthcare, lack of economic opportunities for youth and low engagement of youth and local communities, the demographic decline and the population movement - people seeking better opportunities elsewhere.

The majority of the respondents considered that Tulcea is situated in a region highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, particularly flooding. The results shows that given the significant number of protected areas in Tulcea county, it is essential to implement adaptive strategies and effective natural resource management to safeguard the environment. Additionally, providing compensation and alternatives to local communities is crucial for mitigating the effects of these changes.

Moreover, the impact of climate change on the local communities in Tulcea is even more important taking into account that, in this case, the effects of climate change and environmental factors has great relevance when it comes to the poverty rate and the vulnerabilities of the residents, especially in small or isolated villages. A spill-over effect, if we may say, as significant issues in Tulcea include a high (real) unemployment rate, an aging population with very low income levels, and difficulties in meeting minimal food requirements due to dependence on subsistence agriculture. Therefore, supporting local economic development, creating jobs, and promoting entrepreneurship are essential to address these problems but at the same time it is challenging to put them to place.

The availability of essential services, such as quality education, medical care, and social assistance, remains limited and it was pointed out as another challenge. This is especially the case of rural areas, particularly in isolated communities, like the Delta and villages far from main roads.

Moreover, in Tulcea, fluctuations in human capital are significantly influenced by migration towards major economic hubs near urban areas or to other countries, and there is a need to align the employment demands with the available local labor market supply. Revitalizing rural and urban communities by developing proper socio-economic policies aimed at retaining and actively engaging young people within the community is another challenge identified by the respondents. Additionally, investing in infrastructure, professional training, and partnerships with non-governmental organizations can help retain young people in these communities and enhance the quality of life and well-being.

The local authorities in Tulcea have put in place multiple programs and action plans to support sustainable development in the region such as:

- the "Development Strategy of the Municipality of Tulcea for the period 2021-2030" a comprehensive plan aimed at fostering sustainable growth and improving the quality of life for residents by promoting local businesses, attracting investments, and creating job opportunities to boost the economy, by enhancing public services such as transportation, water supply, and sanitation to meet the needs of the community, by promoting renewable energy and reducing gas emissions, by improving access to education, healthcare, and social assistance, by encouraging active participation of residents in local decision-making processes and community projects and by integrating advanced technologies to improve urban living, such as smart transportation and energy-efficient buildings.
- the "Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy" through which are foreseen actions and projects to balance the conservation of the Danube Delta's ecological assets with improving the quality of life for its residents. It includes measures for sustainable tourism, ecological rehabilitation, and improving access to essential services.
- Renewable Energy Development Strategy and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan for Tulcea Municipality used to promote the use of renewable energy sources to reduce the environmental impact and ensure sustainable energy supply for the region. This includes the development of wind, solar, and biomass energy projects. The strategy aims to reduce the county's reliance on fossil fuels, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and create green jobs. By harnessing the



region's natural resources, Tulcea can contribute to national and global efforts to combat climate change.

- other plans and documents that shows that Tulcea's local authorities are committed to upgrading infrastructure and expanding services, particularly in rural and isolated areas. This includes building new schools and healthcare facilities, improving water and sanitation systems, and enhancing transportation networks and efficiency of buildings, administration facilities, human capital investments.

Tulcea's commitment to localisation of sustainable development is evident in its comprehensive approach, which combines economic, social, and environmental strategies and planning, but still are a lot of things to be done. The county's programs and action plans are designed to address its unique challenges while leveraging its strengths. The active participation of local communities and partnerships with NGOs further strengthen these efforts, ensuring that sustainable development goals are achieved for the benefit of all residents.

At the level of Tulcea County, there are numerous public-private partnerships, including urban and rural Local Action Groups (GALs)), which implement sustainable development strategies for disadvantaged areas through national, European, or international programs. These initiatives focus on various areas of intervention, from community-led rural development to urban regeneration and social policies aimed at disadvantaged groups and children.

The "agents of change" in Tulcea include Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Local Public Authorities, Entrepreneurs and Local Businesses, Local Communities, and Academic Institutions, each playing a unique role in addressing the region's challenges and opportunities. By providing targeted support to these groups—such as funding, resources, technical expertise, and collaboration opportunities—the region can enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

Despite underlying the need of action and continuous efforts to address the problems that Tulcea is facing at the moment, the respondents provided a wide range of successful projects and practices that have been carried out by the local community in the field of sustainable development, and/or protection of human rights and/or inclusion.

One example refer to the projects for integrating marginalized communities such as those conducted by NGOs aimed at integrating Roma communities and other vulnerable groups by offering vocational training courses, counseling, and job search support. These projects address issues of access to education, discrimination, and social exclusion and they are generally funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) through national programs (POSDRU, POCU, etc.).

Programs designed for young people from disadvantaged communities, focusing on non-formal education, the development of social and entrepreneurial skills, and combating school dropout, predominantly funded by the ESF, represent other examples. Additionally, cultural and educational programs and organization of cultural events, workshops, and educational activities that encourage community participation and interethnic and intercultural dialogue were discussed by the people involved in the research.

Multifunctional centers and sustainable development and environmental conservation initiatives such as involving communities in actions for environmental cleanup, protection efforts, and promoting sustainable tourism, funded either by the Environmental Fund Administration or GALs, through LEADER one pilot project per each LAG territory constitute important instruments and tools to tackle local needs and challenges.

Overall, these projects play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion, economic resilience, and environmental sustainability. They address the immediate needs of marginalized communities in Tulcea county while also fostering long-term development and integration. By supporting these initiatives, the region can work towards a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Tulcea was described as region rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage, diverse and tolerant, but an area that faces unique challenges and opportunities in its quest for sustainable development. The interviews in Tulcea brought to the light various initiatives of local actors (Tulcea County School Inspectorate, the GALs, the Municipality of Tulcea, the sport clubs and youth, the local community center and church) like



workshops and seminars on civic rights and responsibilities, discrimination, gender equality, inclusive education, local governance, cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and heritage tours that celebrate Tulcea's diverse traditions and promote intercultural dialogue, sports competitions and recreational activities, event to celebrate and recognize performance and outstanding results, tree planting, clean-up, and wildlife protection actions and more.

Main obstacles and difficulties identified by the respondents were related to the citizens' distrust in state authorities, their lack of representation in civil society, and civic disengagement, along with problems in accessing financial resources and ensuring the durability of the projects once the financial support ends, bureaucracy and unfavorable legislation, the lack or low information for citizens about their rights and responsibilities, about the advantages to participate in decision-making processes and ensure their voices are heard.

In this context, effectively communicating sustainable development initiatives and engaging the community are essential for fostering positive change. The key informants agreed that social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Tik tok are powerful tools for reaching a wide audience and facilitating rapid message dissemination. They allow to interact directly with citizens and youth, while responding to their concerns, and mobilize community support. By sharing engaging content, such as infographics, videos, and success stories, these platforms can effectively raise awareness about sustainable development issues and encourage community involvement. On the other hand, dedicated websites and blogs provides a central hub for information on sustainable development and they have been used before in Tulcea county to reach the citizens and youth. These platforms can offer detailed explanations of issues, showcase local resources, and highlight the benefits of the community. They serve as valuable educational tools as well, enabling users to delve deeper into topics of interest and access resources to support their own efforts. Additionally, it can feature guest posts from experts and community leaders, fostering a sense of collaboration and shared knowledge while get close by offering a personal touch, building a sense of connection.

Organizing community events, such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and fairs, offers citizens and youth the opportunity to interact and learn more about sustainable development. The repondents consider that these events can facilitate knowledge sharing, networking, and collaborative problem-solving for youth and citizens. Additionally, the events can be easilytailored to different audiences, ensuring inclusive participation.

Volunteering and collaborating with the educational institutions from Tulcea to integrate sustainable development topics into school curricula was also mentioned as successful tool of communication used before and the reasearch pointed out how essential is for fostering a culture of sustainability from a young age.

Printed materials, such as leaflets, brochures, and posters, remain effective tools for disseminating information. These materials can be distributed in public spaces, community centers, and schools, ensuring they reach a broad audience. They provide concise and easy-to-understand information about environmental issues, human rights, and local initiatives, making sustainability concepts accessible to everyone, regardless of their digital literacy.

Media partnerships, by promoting sustainable development stories and events through local media, help also reach diverse audiences, including those who may not be active on digital platforms.



## Fiche 10: Survey Report

The survey in Tulcea county included 54 respondents, out of which almost 60% male and 40% women. The majority of them have university degree or master (84.9%) and 63% of the respondent stated that they member or they are involved in a public institution, school, NGO or informal group. At the same 17.6% of the respondents indicated that they are active members organizing activities or events, taking part in the association or group life while almost 15% stated that they are the president of their organization.

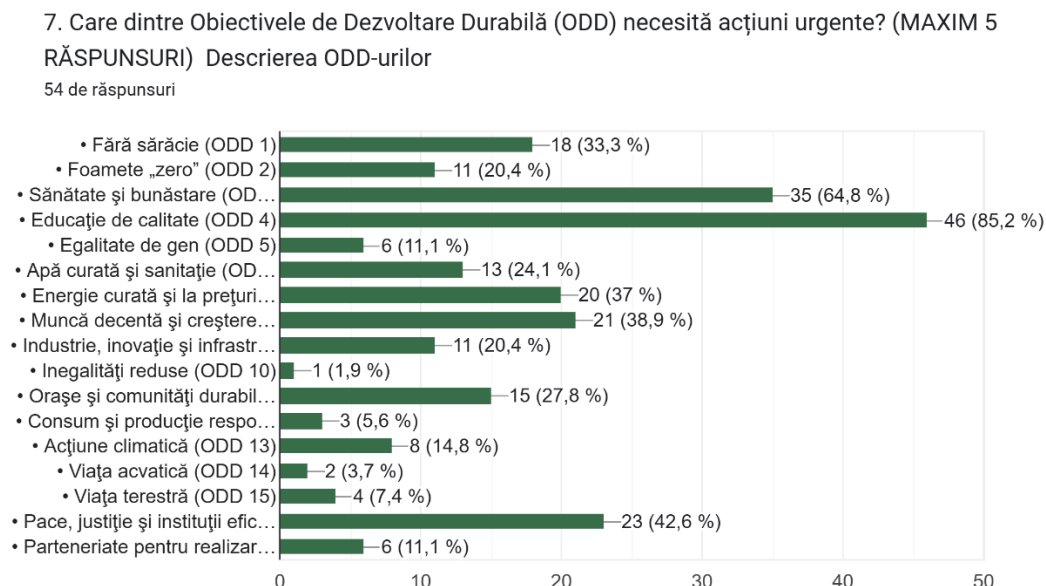
As regards the target groups that they are working for, youth gathered 73.5%, women reached 52.9% and vulnerable people (disabled, refugees/minorities/gender-based discriminated people) 58.8%.

Among the three most important issues that Tulcea is confronted, the survey pointed out 68.5% for health services, 53.7% for road infrastructure and 44.4% for education and training. More than half of the respondents (57.4%) answered that it is very easy for them to access nature and green spaces. Only a small percentage (14,8%) consider themselves very exposed to environmental and climate related risks, and threats (e.g. fires, floods, pollution, extreme weather conditions, etc.) while similar percentages consider them somewhat or not very exposed.

Sexual harassment against women in Tulcea is perceived as not very common for almost 60% of the respondents while 38.9% of the publicly defended someone who was victim of discrimination. On other hand 70.4% noted that they have not joined an association or campaign that defends people against discrimination in the last 12 months. Also, there is high agreement that foreigners are well integrated in Tulcea.

More than half of the people, participated in the survey, naming 64.8%, that are aware of the Sustainable Development Goals or 'Global Goals' signed by 193 world leaders at the UN in 2015. With a value of 85.2%, SDG 4 holds the first position when it comes to Sustainable Development Goals that require the most urgent action, followed by SDG 3 with 64.8%, SDG 16 with 42.6%, SDG 8 with 38.9% and SDG 7 with 37% (see Chart 1).

Chart 1



The implementation of the SDGs is mainly seen as the responsibility of the Government and local authorities with a total 90.7% while civic society register only 9.3%. Academic institutions or business sector are not perceived as responsible in this field.

Climate change is serious a problem for a large share of the interviewed people and almost 50% of them got involved in actions to change society by, for example, signing a petition, participating in a rally, or sending



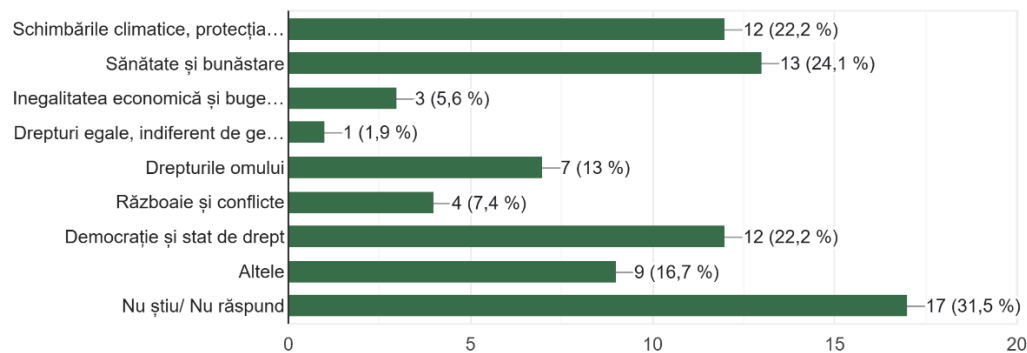
a letter to a politician. They also consider that women are well represented in politics at local level and they expressed a moderate opinion about discussing local political matters with friends or relatives.

The survey (see Chart 2) showed that the respondents tried to change society by, for example, signing a petition, participating in a rally, or sending a letter to a politician in the following areas: health and well-being (24.1%), climate change and environmental protection (22.2%), democracy and rule of law (22.2%) and others (16.7%).

Chart 2

17. În ce domenii ați încercat să schimbați societatea (de exemplu, semnând o petiție, participând la un miting sau trimițând o scrisoare unui politician)?

54 de răspunsuri



The geographic position of Tulcea at the border of Ukraine and taking into account the proximity of the war between Ukraine and Russia are also factors that influenced the respondents' opinions in some areas of the research. Main concerns and interests focus on health and well being, education and climate change.

Despite the fact that climate change is recognized as a significant issue by a large portion of the population, the responsibility for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is predominantly viewed as resting with the government and local authorities while civic society plays a minimal role. Academic institutions and the business sector are not widely perceived as key players in this domain and this is an issue that should be addressed.

Overall, the active involvement of citizens in advocating for various social and environmental issues highlights a robust civic spirit and a commitment to driving positive change at the grassroots level.

Public awareness of sustainable development, SDGs and climate change in Tulcea, like in many other regions, can still be improved. Efforts from local authorities and civic society like educational programs, and community projects can enhance the knowledge and engagement among residents.



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SDGs

## **PART III**

**Good practices**

**Communication  
strategies**

**Measuring  
local change**



## Fiche 11: Changing Practices

When it comes to best practices of transformative change for sustainability in Tulcea, there are several areas where the region offers many examples that can inspire other border towns and islands across the EU.

### Best practice/Case study #1

Management of Ukrainian Refugees Crisis in Tulcea County that involved several coordinated efforts to provide support and resources to those fleeing the conflict with Russia. The Isaccea border point has become a crucial transit point for thousands of Ukrainian refugees, particularly mothers and children. Many have been on the road for days, often without sleep, and arrive at the border exhausted and in need of assistance.

At the Isaccea border point, there has been a significant mobilization of the local authorities and local community, as well of the NGOs from all over Romania, an effort aimed to support Ukrainian refugees since the conflict began and effectively meant:

- Organizations of the Romanian authorities to expedite the processing of documents, provide medical assistance, and arrange travel and accommodation for those in need
- Establishing a Humanitarian Logistics Hub designed to streamline aid donations and ensure the supply of essential items like medical supplies, clothes, and food for Ukrainian refugees
- Offering Community and Volunteer Support: providing free lodging and resources & various NGOs have mobilized volunteers to support refugees at transit point by providing clear and accessible information about their rights, available services, and legal procedures and how to navigate the asylum process and understand their options for residency and relocation
- Effective Government and NGO Collaboration: the Romanian government, along with civil society organizations has been working to transfer and support the transit or stay of Ukrainian refugees. Children were given special attention, with safe spaces and regular meetings and information sharing ensured that resources are used efficiently and that refugees receive comprehensive support.
- International organizations like the Red Cross, UNHCR, and UNICEF work alongside local governments and NGOs to address the needs of refugees

These actions at the Isaccea border point are proofs of the solidarity and compassion of the Romanian people and the international community in supporting Ukrainian refugees. All the measures played a crucial role in providing immediate support and comfort to those in need.

### Best practice/Case study #2

During the school year 2022-2023, Tulcea County School Inspectorate and 78 schools from Tulcea county organized various activities and programs aimed at enhancing the educational experience and competences on topics such as: diverse society, interculturality, civic education and human rights, democratic governance in schools, tolerance, the importance of cooperation between students, teachers and parents. A total number of 120 school inspectors, school principals, teachers, and 2 students from the Student Council of the National College "Spiru Haret" Tulcea were involved and benefited from trainings, organized debates and dissemination activities.

The initiative goals was the development of an inclusive and democratic learning environment in the educational units from Tulcea county and improvement of teaching facilities and resources. Developing an inclusive and democratic learning environment involves creating a space where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate actively in their education. This includes differentiated instruction, where teachers adapt their teaching strategies to meet the varying abilities and learning styles of students. Cooperative learning encourages students to work together in small groups to achieve common goals. This approach fosters positive relationships, improves social skills, and promotes a sense of community within the classroom. By focusing on these elements, schools create an environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed and feel a sense of belonging.



## Fiche 12: Creating local communication strategies for sustainable development

Among the effective communication tools used for Tulcea county for reaching citizens and raising awareness SDGs we encounter:

- **Social Networks:** Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are effective for reaching a wide audience, allowing rapid message distribution and direct interaction with citizens (the official pages of the Tulcea Municipality and others local authorities and stakeholders)
- **Posters and electronic information display on public transportation**
- **Contracting advertising spaces in local publications to announce specific events, both in written, online, radio, and local TV formats**
- **Community Events:** Organizing workshops, seminars, conferences, or fairs that give citizens the opportunity to interact
- **Collaborating with educational institutions to promote the activities and information on sustainable development topics**
- **Printed Information Materials:** Leaflets, brochures, posters, and other printed materials
- **Partnerships with Local Media:** Collaborating with local publications and radio stations to promote and disseminate awareness campaigns and the initiatives.



## Fiche 13: Measuring the local change

1. How many local policies or practices exist in the area of sustainable development?

In Tulcea, there are several local policies and practices focused on sustainable development. These include initiatives related to environmental protection, renewable energy, water management, and community engagement.

2. How many policies or practices include Green Deal topics?

The majority of them includes Green Deal topics.

3. N. of schools (all types) present in the local area - available at <https://isjtulcea.ro/2023/02/07/lista-si-date-de-contact-unitati-din-subordine/>

The educational system is structured into multiple levels to ensure the coherence of education with a total number of 148 accredited and authorized educational institutions. Tulcea County has 18 high schools and starting from the fall of 2019, the city of Tulcea offer higher education as a Territorial Center that operate within the "Danubius Delta" Economic College of Tulcea. At the same time, in Tulcea county the educational infrastructure include around 35 kindergardens and nurseries and schools for primary and gimnasium in all territory.

4. N. of CSOs (all types) present in the local area - available at <https://data.gov.ro/dataset/registrul-de-evidenta-a-asociatiilor-si-fundatiilor-din-judetul-tulcea-ianuarie-2023>

According to the National Registration in the local are are registered a large number of CSOs, but little are active in the field.



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## **PART IV**

# **Map of potential '*Change Makers*'**



## Fiche 14: Map of ‘Change Makers’

**The Local Action Group Association (GAL)** - is a type of organization that brings together public, private, and civil society stakeholders to work on local development projects. They aim to reduce poverty, social exclusion, and improve the quality of life in rural and marginalized areas. LAGs often focus on sustainable development, environmental protection, and community engagement.

### List of GALs:

1. DELTA DUNĂRII
2. RAZIM
3. MUNȚII MĂCINULUI-DUNĂREA VECHE
4. OAMENII DELTEI
5. VIITOR PENTRU TULCEA
6. RESTART - NEPTUN TULCEA
7. DOBROGEA DE NORD

**Maini Intinse Tulcea Association** focuses on charitable and community support activities within the region, aiming to help those in need through various programs and initiatives

**Fundația Județeană pentru Tineret Tulcea [Tulcea County Youth Foundation]** is an organization dedicated to supporting and empowering young people in the region. They focus on various initiatives aimed at promoting youth development, education, and community engagement.

**Asociația Grupurilor Locale de Tineret - local branches**, created within the framework of a Flemish-Romanian collaboration project, the Association of Local Youth Groups (AGLT) functions as an umbrella organization that brings together over 30 Local Youth Groups spread across the entire country, both in rural and urban areas. Main goal is the involvement of young volunteers in offering alternatives for children and young people to spend their free time through: different types of activities - creative, sports, theater, dance, fantasy, ecological, adventure, social, health, etc., play days that help in the development of children, specifically their integration into society, experience exchanges between groups from different localities, initiation courses in volunteering for young people in the community.



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