



# HOW TO OVERCOME PARTICIPATION BARRIERS IN ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A case study on life quality improvement through integrated measures including awareness raising, training, targeted counselling, engagement of local authorities and social partners.

**INVOLVE  
STAKEHOLDERS IN  
PLANNING, PROMOTION,  
RECRUITMENT, DELIVERY  
OF ADULT EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING  
PROGRAMS AND  
COUNSELLING  
SERVICES, ALONG WITH  
SUPPORT MEASURES TO  
OVERCOME  
CIRCUMSTANTIAL  
PARTICIPATION  
BARRIERS**

Petricani is a rural community with a total population slightly above 5000 inhabitants, formed of 5 villages (Petricani, Târpești, Răbâia, Țolici, Boiștea) situated in NE Romania, Neamt county. The main economic activities are agriculture-related (farming, pomiculture, apiculture). The population of Țolici village has been considered the most at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

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Between 14.08.2017 and 27.10.2020, Petricani Local Council implemented under the Operational Programme Human Capital the project titled *Increasing life quality through socio-economic support measures within the marginalized Tolici community, Petricani – Neamt county*, with an approximate value of 3.2 million euro.

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*The main aim of the project was to improve the quality of human resources by developing active employment and training measures to sustainably (re)integrate them on the labor market, in non-agricultural activities, and to facilitate development of new independent activities and businesses.*

## ACTIVITIES

The project was a response to a series of problems and needs identified at local level such as long-term poverty (approximately 20% of the target group being confronted to severe deprivation), low levels of employment, limited access to information, counselling, training.

The activities were implemented at multiple levels (including house rehabilitations, infrastructure improvements, childcare, juridical, psychological, medical counselling), but remained focused on increasing employment opportunities by developing integrated active measures for sustainable development, facilitating access to employment in non-agricultural domains. The project had a strong training component, and therefore a significant number of the community members directly benefitted from the adult education activities and complementary measures, respectively:

- awareness raising campaign on participation benefits and expected impact;
- 3 authorized professional training programmes, through which 144 persons obtained a certified professional qualification within fields such as constructions, carpentry, commerce and basic ICT;



- 56 Job-Club seminars, educating people on job search techniques, CV writing, interview participation, 30 seminars regarding undeclared work prevention;
- 132 persons attended individual and group basic entrepreneurial training and counselling sessions;
- counselling and professional orientation services for 276 unoccupied persons who improved their skills related to job market, occupational analysis, instruction and training possibilities;
- 2 certified entrepreneurial competence courses for 24 people and 2 workshops on good practices from the entrepreneurial field and self-employment benefits;
- parental training and counselling to prevent early school leaving;
- concrete support measures to encourage participation within the offered trainings and qualification programmes: children supervision services for parents, legal support to obtain and actualize study documents;
- health education and support (including medical services), psychological evaluation and counselling;
- follow-up and incentives: a business plan contest has been organized, and 13 business ideas were awarded approximately 20.000 Eur/business; out of the winners, 3 were within the field of furniture manufacturing, 2 in carpentry and other wood products manufacturing, 5 – vehicle maintenance, including mechanics and detailing, 2 – bread and pastry production, and 1 - textiles and upholstery maintenance services; the new entrepreneurs benefitted from further entrepreneurial and legal counselling during the launch of their start-ups;

## STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The project has been implemented by Petricani Local Council in partnership with 3 other stakeholders who were involved in all stages, from planning, needs analysis, implementation and delivery of trainings;

- Petricani Technological Highschool (providing complementary measures for participant's children, including after-school and supervision while parents attended trainings, has also supported identification of the target group and their needs, provided parental education and counselling programs, physical spaces for the awareness raising campaigns and workshops);
- Asociația Educație și Viitor (social partner, NGO, training and counselling services provider, involved in target group identification and needs analysis, visibility actions, awareness campaign);
- Pluri Consulting Group SRL (private company, training and counselling services provider, management services provider, involved in target group identification and needs analysis, visibility actions, awareness campaign);

## LESSONS LEARNED

Although partly implemented during a difficult period marked by the COVID19 restrictions and uncertainty, the project was a success and a number of 552 people from the target group (out of which 442 people at risk of poverty and 110 confronted to severe deprivation) benefitted from educational, occupational, social and support measures. Involving stakeholders with different backgrounds to identify and directly tackle the target groups, offering personalized counselling, adapted activities, and opportunities for people to actually apply the competences they gained through trainings, addressign community issues as a whole, were the most important success factors.