

Exit/Entrance report: Foreword

As the UK's international cultural relations organization, the British Council is committed to building long-term relationships and trust between people in the UK and other countries. Empowering Communities in Europe (ECE), a project we were delivering with a committed network of European partners, is right at the heart of our guiding principles. Through the ECE project, which was co-funded by the European Commission (Europe for Citizens Programme), we aim at starting a deconstruction process of migrant stigmatization to help target communities overcome stereotypes and develop counter narratives to promote more accurate perceptions of migrants and refugees. We believe that this is essential if Europeans of all ages and cultures are to develop a broader international outlook promoting tolerance and respect towards people of different backgrounds.

Since it was founded in 1934, the British Council has supported initiatives and activities responding to the growing threat of racist ideologies with the mandate to build trust and mutual respect among diverse communities through education, community development, English and the arts. ECE is part of our commitment as an organization to supporting intercultural dialogue and diversity in Europe, a diversity which manifests itself in the huge variety and richness of civil society in Europe and beyond.

We are completing the formal stage of the project with the publication of the Exit/Entrance Report, presenting findings from the Give Me Voice research, and lessons learnt from organizing the Me-You-We local workshops and subsequent social actions. While we formally exit the project framework, we are embarking on an entrance stage in which all project partners, participants, formal and informal networks of activists and leaders of the communities will continue to build narratives to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding in order to actively combat the stigmatization of immigrants beyond the life of the project.

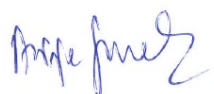
We believe that thanks to the Empowering Communities in Europe project more and more people will become ambassadors of tolerance able to mutually support each other and build on each other's efforts to bridge divisions between communities with the confidence to tackle ever more challenging instances of intolerance and migrant stigmatization.

The work we have done would not have been possible without our consortium of partners from seven countries – Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia – whom I would like to thank for their commitment, expertise and enthusiasm.

Finally, we extend our full and heartfelt appreciation to the networks of facilitators and the wide collective of project participants, including social action leaders, who all shared their passion, detailed knowledge, and also dedicated time and resources to reaching the people in their communities to finally produce the data and good practices which this report is based on.

We hope that you will find these findings stimulating and that they contribute to intercultural dialogue in your country. We certainly do have a challenge to foster mutual understanding among diverse groups at local, national and international level.

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