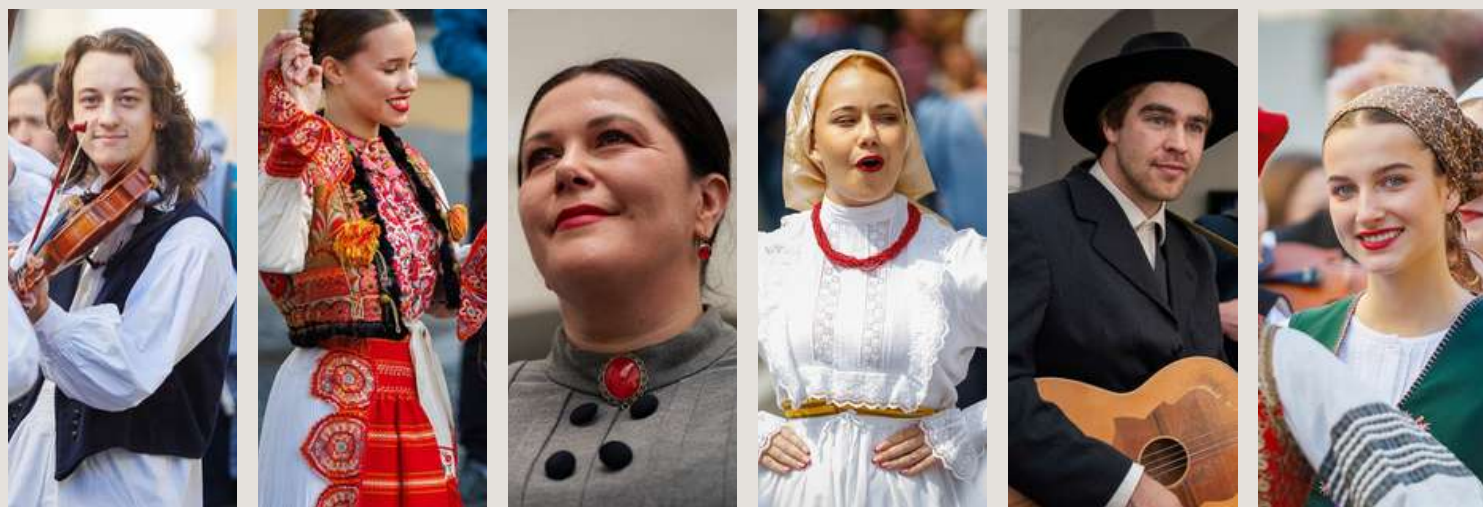


74RKA 24/25



PROJECT REPORT

JUNE, 2025

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ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE LEAD PARTNER



BARBARA PAPEŽ LAVRIČ

CEO of RIC Bela Krajina,
Lead Partner

Over the course of five inspiring events, we witnessed how folklore and cultural events can become powerful instruments for preserving our cultural heritage, fostering cross-border cooperation and building vibrant, inclusive communities.

The feedback from participants, visitors and local communities has confirmed what we deeply believe: cultural exchange brings people together and nurtures mutual respect and understanding.

Our key findings highlight the need for continued collaboration – through workshops, shared events and deeper involvement of local residents, especially youth. Events like ours create a space where traditions are not only showcased but experienced – through dance, costume, music, cuisine and storytelling.

We are especially proud of how the project promoted equal participation, cultural rights and inclusion. By reaching audiences across generations and backgrounds, we created opportunities for learning, empathy and dialogue. The workshops encouraged creative expression and helped participants gain a deeper appreciation for both their own heritage and that of their neighbours.

The Croatian-Slovenian partnership between Črnomelj and Karlovac stands as a model for European unity through culture. Through joint planning and shared vision, we have laid the foundation for long-term cooperation that extends beyond this project.

Let us carry this momentum forward. Let us keep working together to celebrate diversity, preserve heritage and ensure that culture remains a bridge – not only between regions, but also between generations.

Thank you all for being part of this meaningful journey.

ABOUT THE PROJECT JURKA 24-25



The project JURKA 24-25 is a common work of partners on the Slovenian and Croatian side. Its task is to increase partnerships, mutual relations between citizens, promote exchanges between citizens of two neighbouring countries, give them practical experience of the wealth and diversity of the common cultural heritage.

The project dealt with the following issues:

- Promote intercultural dialogue by bringing people of different nationalities and different cultures together and giving them the opportunity to participate in common activities.
- Presentation of cultural richness of the partnership, promote mutual understanding and respect.
- Ensure active participation of citizens at the local level, support for non-discrimination.
- Strengthening and encouraging cooperation between local and regional authorities after the abolition of the Schengen border.

The implementation of the project was conducted through festivals, workshops, cultural events and best practices. The mutual project was carried out with various events lasting from **July 2024 to the end of June 2025.**

Objectives:

- Promoting exchanges between citizens of different countries.
- Ensuring active participation of citizens at the local level.
- Giving citizens practical experience of the wealth and diversity of the common heritage of the European Union.
- Linking citizens and creating friendships.
- Reinforcing mutual understanding and friendship between European citizens.
- Encouraging cooperation between municipalities and the exchange of best practices.
- Strengthening the feeling of solidarity in Europe.



LEAD PARTNER AND COORDINATOR:

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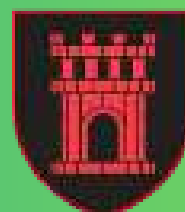
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In medias res
KARLOVAČKA ŽUPANIJA



TARGET GROUPS

The project addressed the following target groups:

Citizens and local communities. Local communities played a crucial role in shaping the social and cultural fabric of the region. By involving them in the project, we aimed to strengthen their sense of belonging and to promote understanding and solidarity. Engaging local communities also helped ensure the sustainability of project outcomes beyond its duration.

Young people. They represented the future of the region and of the European Union as a whole. By targeting youth through cultural events, workshops and creative activities, we aimed to instill in them a sense of European identity and values, fostering intercultural understanding and tolerance from an early age.

Cultural workers. Cultural workers had the ability to bridge cultural divides and promote dialogue. By involving them in the project, we were able to leverage their creative talents to foster cultural exchange and collaboration. Their participation also enriched the project by bringing diverse perspectives and innovative elements to the cultural programming.

Local authorities. Representatives of municipalities played an essential role in building partnerships. Within the project, they had the opportunity to engage in joint discussions and to exchange good practices, thus enhancing inter-municipal cooperation and fostering long-term collaboration models.

Tourists. Tourists had a unique opportunity not only to experience the cultural events, but also to actively participate and gain a deeper understanding of the richness of EU culture. They were encouraged to take part in workshops, dance lessons and interactive cultural experiences that brought them closer to local traditions and European diversity.

Total direct participants: 375



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EVENTS WITHIN THE PROJECT JURKA 24-25

1 JULY 2024

1. EVENT: DUGA RESA, CRO

- ACTIVITY FOCUSED ON THE PRESENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES REGARDING MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN FESTIVALS IN THE FIELD OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

12 OCTOBER
2024

2. EVENT: ČRNOMELJ, SLO

- ACTIVITY SUPPORTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN ČRNOMELJ / SLOVENIA

27 APRIL
2025

3. EVENT: VINICA-ČRNOMELJ, SLO

- ACTIVITY SUPPORTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE – MEETING ON THE BRIDGE

10 MAY
2025

4. EVENT: KARLOVAC, CRO

- ACTIVITY SUPPORTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN KARLOVAC/CROATIA

22 JUNE
2025

5. EVENT: ČRNOMELJ, SLO

- ACTIVITY SUPPORTING THE PRESENTATION OF CULTURE AND MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES



DUGA RESA, CROATIA

1 July 2024

ACTIVITY FOCUSED ON THE PRESENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES REGARDING MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN FESTIVALS IN THE FIELD OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

EVENT DESCRIPTION

On Monday, July 1, 2024, the first event within the JURKA 24-25 project took place in Duga Resa (Croatia).

The event began with an opening speech by the Mayor of Karlovac County, Ms. Martina Furdek Hajdin, who emphasized the crucial importance of the activities of cultural and artistic societies in preserving and strengthening national identity.

After the presentation of festivals, we conducted the workshop with the topics of discussion:

- Importance of mutual cooperation in preserving traditional culture and European cultural values,
- Significance of festivals and how they contribute to cultural cohesion and identity.

Participants shared their opinions and ideas on specific topics:

1. How can folklore festivals and events contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage?
2. What are the advantages and challenges of collaboration between folklore groups from different countries?
3. How can folklore groups assist in organizing cross-border cultural events?

During the workshop participants proposed how festivals, workshops, and cultural events can contribute to preserving cultural heritage and European cultural values, as well as foster cultural cohesion and strengthen identity.

During the workshop, we discussed about benefits and challenges of collaboration between folklore groups from different countries and how groups can assist in organizing cross-border cultural events.

All participants, including local citizens, were actively involved in the activities and debates.



KEY FINDINGS:

The participants at the workshop agreed that folklore festivals play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage. They provide various forms of interaction among people, promote cultural exchange and contribute to the awareness and appreciation of cultural values. Through festivals, a more connected community can be achieved, one that is open to diverse cultural experiences while also being proud of its own heritage.

This summary outlines the main findings and recommendations of the workshop and offers guidelines for further improvements in organizing cross-border cultural events:

- Conducting workshops that involve exchanges among event participants,
- Increasing the involvement of local residents in workshops,
- Continuing to promote cultural heritage through various channels,
- Improving logistical and financial planning for easier management of international exchanges,
- Strengthening institutional support and cooperation with local tourism organizations,
- Encouraging cross-border cooperation and exchanges between folklore groups to strengthen intercultural dialogue,
- Increasing the involvement of young people and the local community in organizing cultural events,
- Improving communication and promotion for greater visibility of cultural events,
- Supporting joint project applications to secure funding and further develop of cultural activities.





ČRNOMELJ, SLOVENIA

12 October 2024

ACTIVITY SUPPORTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN ČRNOMELJ/SLOVENIA

EVENT DESCRIPTION

The second event of the JURKA 24–25 project successfully addressed several key priorities and objectives of the European Union's CERV programme.

The main topic of the event was "The importance of preserving cultural heritage and tradition as a means of safeguarding cultural diversity and fostering community pride," based on which participants discussed specific topics related to the presentation of Karlovac County's cultural heritage.

Local citizens were actively involved in discussions throughout the JURKA 24–25 event, contributing their thoughts, insights, and personal experiences.

Their involvement helped create a dynamic, inclusive atmosphere that encouraged deeper engagement and mutual understanding.

The primary aim was to foster exchanges between citizens from Slovenia and Croatia, enriching their understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage shared on the event. The event served as valuable educational tools, including citizens, particularly the younger generation.



It allowed them to appreciate the importance of preserving traditions while also respecting and learning from those of others. By bringing together citizens, the event encouraged cross-border cooperation and the exchange of ideas, which are essential for a well-functioning democracy within the European Union. By fostering cultural exchanges and interactions, event contributed to a more integrated and cohesive European community.



Participants expressed their cultural identities through dance, music and art, contributing to a vibrant democratic culture, where all participant could participate and learn about and appreciate different cultures, fostering a sense of understanding and respect.

The dance workshop involving Croatian folklore dances gave participants, including locals, a hands-on opportunity to experience another culture. The workshop made it easy for citizens to ask questions and exchange thoughts, deepening their understanding of Croatian cultural practices.

The event promoted the equal participation of women and men in cultural activities. The event emphasised the importance of cultural rights as fundamental human rights. It promoted inclusivity.

The partnership between Črnomelj and Karlovac on implementation of joint event is a powerful means of enhancing European unity and citizen connectivity. The event fostered collaboration between the partner municipalities as well as local and regional authorities.

Survey participation and reflection

Citizens were asked to complete surveys about their experience at the event, which included questions on how they perceived Croatian cultural heritage and the workshop's impact. This feedback process allowed participants to contribute their thoughts on what they learned and how the event influenced their understanding of cultural diversity and community connection.

Key Findings from the visitor survey

The feedback from visitors to the event "Celebrating Diversity – Folklore is our cultural DNA" indicates a high level of satisfaction and engagement. Here are the key findings:

- The majority of visitors reported being very satisfied with the event, indicating a positive overall experience.
- A significant number of attendees stated that they gained a lot of new knowledge about Croatian folklore heritage, highlighting the educational value of the event.
- Visitors especially enjoyed the presentation of Croatian folklore costumes and the dance workshop. These elements of the programme were frequently mentioned as the most impressive parts of the event.

Some visitors expressed a desire for more events like this one in the future. They also suggested more activities for kids, demonstration and participation of traditional games.



VINICA, SLOVENIA

27 April 2025

ACTIVITY SUPPORTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE – MEETING ON THE BRIDGE

EVENT DESCRIPTION

The event was dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of traditional customs in the context of globalization, modernization, and cultural assimilation, with a particular focus on Zeleni Jurij (Green George)—a symbol of spring and renewal.

The program opened with a symbolic meeting on the Vinica Bridge, where representatives from Slovenia and Croatia exchanged gifts, including a green birch twig—an emblem of Zeleni Jurij. The gesture emphasized the importance of Slovenian-Croatian cross-border cooperation and celebrated the shared heritage surrounding this springtime tradition. Green George is traditionally celebrated on April 23 in Croatia and April 24 in Slovenia, so the event was held on the Sunday following these dates to honor both customs.

The gathering continued at the Oton Župančič Memorial House with a warm performance by the women's choir Viniške Cure.



Ethnologist Gregor Jevšček delivered the main lecture titled “The Mythological Heritage of Zeleni Jurij,” explaining the mythological foundations, legends, and traditions connected with Green George. He also highlighted how mythology can inspire tourism development.

The event concluded on Vinica’s main square, where the local cultural association KUD Oton Župančič reenacted the Green George ritual. Croatian folklore groups KUD Frankopan and KUD Netretić added to the vibrant atmosphere with traditional dances and a dance workshop. Live demonstrations of basket weaving allowed visitors to engage with traditional crafts.



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KEY FINDINGS

Following the lecture, a workshop was held where participants collaboratively developed ideas for cultural tourism products inspired by Green George. Key proposals included:

- Thematic Trail “In the Footsteps of Green George” – A cross-border hiking route linking rural areas that still uphold Green George traditions, with guided tours, folklore performances, local food tastings, and craft workshops.
- Educational Workshops – Interactive sessions for schools and communities focused on traditional songs and customs, involving cultural associations from both countries.
- Natural sculpture landmark – A large sculpture made of vegetation symbolizing Green George, located near the border and serving as a site for seasonal events and photo opportunities.
- Revival of caroling tradition – Reintroducing the custom of children or youth singing Green George songs door-to-door in exchange for small gifts, promoting intergenerational exchange.
- Annual Green George Festival – A rotating festival held alternately in Slovenia and Croatia, featuring processions, folk dances, markets, concerts, and storytelling.

Participants stressed the importance of authenticity, local involvement and sustained cooperation in bringing these ideas to life.



This summary outlines the main findings and recommendations of the event:

- Cross-border collaboration: the workshop successfully connected Slovenian and Croatian participants, reinforcing shared cultural identity and cooperation.
- Creative tourism concepts: participants proposed innovative, experience-based tourism products rooted in the Green George tradition.
- Heritage preservation: ideas focused on preserving intangible cultural heritage through events, education and intergenerational exchange.
- Engaging diverse audiences: activities were designed to engage local communities, promoting inclusivity.
- Support for rural development: concepts like thematic events aim to boost tourism in crossborder rural areas.
- Strong community involvement: Local cultural associations play a central role, ensuring authenticity and sustainability.





KARLOVAC, CROATIA

10 May 2025

ACTIVITY SUPPORTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN KARLOVAC/CROATIA

EVENT DESCRIPTION

On Saturday, May 10, 2025, the fourth event within the JURKA 24–25 project took place at the Atrium of Science in Karlovac. Scheduled on the Saturday following Europe Day (May 9), it aimed to emphasize the importance of peace and unity in Europe.

The programme opened with welcome speeches highlighting the significance of cultural cooperation between Slovenia and Croatia and the role of CERV-funded initiatives in strengthening cross-border understanding and collaboration.

Cultural heritage was presented as a unifying force and an essential element in building long-term partnerships.

The event focused on the importance of preserving cultural heritage as a way to protect diversity and strengthen community pride. Participants explored the historical, geographical and cultural background of Bela Krajina, including its rich folklore traditions - dance, music, costumes and storytelling.

Discussions highlighted the need to pass folklore on to younger generations as a living tradition, not just a staged performance, preserving identity and values in a changing world. The event featured a lively presentation on traditional folklore. A demonstration of traditional instruments, including the gudalo, offered visitors a hands-on experience during the workshop segment. A cultural heritage exhibition showcased handcrafted items such as bobbin lace, crocheted goods and woven textiles made from sheep's wool.



Key Findings from the Visitor Survey

The feedback from visitors to the event indicates a high level of satisfaction and engagement.

Participants expressed satisfaction with their experience at the event.

75% respondents stated that they had acquired new knowledge about Slovenian folklore heritage, while 25% said they had gained some knowledge.

The most impressive aspects for them were the presentation of Slovenian folklore heritage and traditional costumes (22,4%), Slovenian dance workshop and the label "all listed activities" (each selected by 19% participants), the demonstration of playing characteristic instruments and the presentation of typical Slovenian cuisine (15,5% participants), and the presentation of traditional crafts (8,6% participants).



All survey participants indicated that the presentation of Slovenian heritage at the event helped them gain a better understanding of Slovenian culture.

88,9% of them stated that they would like to participate in similar events in the future, while 11,1% answered "maybe."



ČRNOMELJ, SLOVENIA

22 June 2025

ACTIVITY SUPPORTING THE PRESENTATION OF CULTURE AND MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES

The JURKA 24–25 project successfully concluded with a final event during the renowned international folklore festival *Jurjevanje v Beli krajini* in Črnomelj. This closing event provided an ideal platform to highlight the project's key messages and share its outcomes with a broad and diverse audience.

The central activity of the event was a roundtable titled "Cultural Diversity and Inclusion through Folklore Festivals." It brought together experts, organizers, cultural workers and representatives from participating municipalities.

The discussion focused on the importance of maintaining the authenticity of folklore festivals while adapting to contemporary challenges. Emphasis was placed on the role of intergenerational cooperation and the active inclusion of vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Speakers exchanged best practices and reflected on the challenges of organizing traditional festivals in a modern, often globalized context. They agreed that cultural events should remain rooted in local heritage while also being open to innovation and inclusivity.

KEY FINDINGS

The final event of the JURKA 24-25 project highlighted several important outcomes:

Strengthened cross-border cooperation

The event reinforced the value of collaboration between Slovenian and Croatian cultural institutions. The presence of representatives from Črnomelj and Karlovac, along with shared programming, demonstrated how culture can serve as a bridge for long-term cooperation. The roundtable encouraged further joint planning beyond the project's scope.

Promotion of inclusion and diversity

Special attention was given to including vulnerable groups and all age categories. Good practices such as performances in schools, kindergartens and retirement homes showed how cultural events can be accessible to everyone, fostering belonging and respect for cultural differences.

Exchange of best practices

Panellists shared useful examples from their own festivals, including performances by participants from occupational activity centers and international folklore groups visiting retirement homes. These examples illustrated how to maintain tradition while adapting to modern social needs.



Interdisciplinary and community collaboration

The discussions stressed the importance of connecting academic expertise, local communities and cultural organizers. This collaboration increases the educational and cultural value of festivals and ensures their long-term impact.

Sustainability and transferability

The roundtable format proved to be a sustainable model that combines expert input, local experience and public involvement. Its inclusive approach serves as a good-practice example for other European regions looking to promote cultural dialogue and cooperation through similar initiatives.



CONCLUSION



JURKA 24-25 project organized five major events across different municipalities, promoting cross-border cooperation, cultural exchange, and community involvement. Activities included workshops, dance and music performances, educational events, and a roundtable that involved young people, cultural workers, local communities, and tourists.

The project created an open, interactive space where participants could exchange experiences and best practices. Honest dialogue and shared goals helped strengthen interpersonal and cross-cultural bonds between attendees from different regions. The project addressed non-discrimination. It promoted inclusivity. The project promoted equal participation of women and men in all activities. The project emphasised the importance of cultural rights as fundamental human rights.

The project significantly contributed to strengthening cultural ties between participating regions and promoting European values such as solidarity, diversity and inclusion. By encouraging active participation and intergenerational transmission of tradition, JURKA 24-25 helped ensure that cultural heritage remains a living and evolving part of community life.

CONCLUSION



Alignment with EU CERV Programme Objectives

The JURKA 24-25 project successfully addressed several key priorities and objectives of the European Union's CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values) programme.

To promote exchanges between citizens

The primary aim was to foster exchanges between citizens from Slovenia and Croatia, enriching their understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage shared on the event.

To allow citizens to discover the cultural diversity of the European Union and to make them aware that European values and cultural heritage constitute the foundation for a common future

The project served as a valuable educational tool for citizens. It allowed them to appreciate the importance of preserving traditions while also respecting and learning from those of others. Cultural events provided opportunities for individuals to meet and build friendships with people from other countries.

To guarantee peaceful relations between Europeans and to ensure their active participation at the local level

By bringing together citizens, the project encouraged cross-border cooperation and the exchange of ideas, which are essential for a well-functioning democracy within the European Union.

To reinforce mutual understanding and friendship between European citizens

The project promoted opportunities for civic engagement. Events provided a platform for citizens to actively participate in the workshop. Participants expressed their cultural identities through dance, music, and art, contributing to a vibrant democratic culture, where all participants could participate and learn about and appreciate different cultures, fostering a sense of understanding and respect.

To encourage cooperation between municipalities and the exchange of best practices

The partnership between Črnomelj and Karlovac on the implementation of joint events is a powerful means of enhancing European unity and citizen connectivity. The events fostered collaboration between the partner municipalities as well as local and regional authorities.

Local citizens were actively involved in discussions throughout the JURKA 24-25 events, contributing their thoughts, insights and personal experiences. Their involvement helped create a dynamic, inclusive atmosphere that encouraged deeper engagement and mutual understanding.



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