

# Summary of Study Visit in Istanbul, Türkiye

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The report aims to present the knowledge, skills, methods, tools, and insights gained from Estonia, Türkiye, Poland and Italy during the Study Visit in Istanbul, organized by Istanbul Culture and Sport Association (IKOS), Türkiye, from March 15 to 22, 2024. The study visit had three main objectives:

- **Exchange of experiences:** The primary focus was on exchanging experiences, stories, and ideas among participants. This collaborative effort aimed to create a comprehensive set of knowledge useful for the remaining stages of the project and future work.
- **Inspiration and learning from innovation:** Participants visited local cultural and youth institutions to see and learn about innovative digital solutions and tools. This exploration was intended to inspire and enhance the digital capabilities of the project.
- **Expert engagement and knowledge sharing:** The visit included meetings with experts, educators, youth and culture workers, and authors of local solutions related to the project's topic. This engagement aimed to gain practical insights and foster a deeper understanding of effective local solutions.

The study visit primarily included six elements focusing on the approaches and methods used in the program: study visits, presentations, workshops, conferences, cultural visits, intercultural evenings and free time, and reflection sessions.

The study visit therefore successfully integrated experiential learning principles and accommodated diverse learning styles, enhancing participants' understanding of cultural heritage while nurturing essential learning competences.



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## Preparation and key topics

Before their study visit to Istanbul, participants from each country took steps to prepare and ensure a productive and enriching experience. After the study visit, they mapped out their learning points and key topics that arose during the study visit.

### Soro Tori, Italy

The Italian team met online due to geographical dispersion, discussing the study visit agenda, Turkish culture, and local habits, especially as four Italy participants were visiting Türkiye for the first time.

During the study visit, Italian participants focused on learning about Turkish culture, habits, and methodologies. They gained understanding through direct experiences and interactions, broadening their perspectives on cultural diversity and intercultural communication.

### Rõuge Noorsootöö Keskus, Estonia

The Estonian team, although not extensively preparing beforehand, still gathered all the participants together to form a group. Coordinators shared important information about the study visit, ensuring all details were communicated and understood. They held a meeting before departure to answer questions, assign tasks, and finalize arrangements, ensuring participants were ready and well-informed.

Estonian participants encountered significant cultural differences between Estonia and Türkiye during their visit, particularly highlighted by challenges related to Ramadan. This experience caused reflections on the importance of openness and empathy in cross-cultural interactions. Visits to places like the Silence Museum and interactions with refugees deepened their awareness of diverse social challenges, fostering empathy and understanding.



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## Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Kultury Ludowej FOLKIER, Poland

Understanding the importance of preparation, the Polish team started with a virtual meeting to share key details like the schedule, logistics, cultural tips, and what to prepare. This helped everyone understand what to expect. They also used a messaging group to keep everyone connected, sharing updates and resources. This collaborative approach fostered a supportive environment where participants could voice expectations, address concerns and prepare for the study visit.

During the study visit, the Polish felt like they were provided with a diverse array of experiences ranging from cultural immersion to experiential learning and dialogue with experts. They learned a lot about Turkish society, history, and current issues through cultural activities and discussions with experts. This visit inspired them to bring their new knowledge and experiences back home to help their communities understand different cultures better and work towards sustainable development.

## Knowledge transfer

The study visit provided a platform for participants from Italy, Estonia, and Poland to gain and expand a wide range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Based on these acquired traits, participants are given a chance to improve their work with young people in cultural heritage by trying to integrate those new insights and approaches. Following gives a summary of each country's gained insights and how they decide to implement them.

### Soro Tori, Italy

- **Cultural heritage and historical awareness:** Exploring cultural sites and learning about heritage initiatives, along with insights gained from presentations on architectural and historical preservation, deepened participants' appreciation and understanding of cultural preservation.



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- **Innovative community engagement:** The innovative approaches showcased by different organizations inspired the participants with new methods for community engagement and social impact.
- **Local interaction and cultural exchange:** Engaging with local students and participating in activities offered meaningful opportunities to connect with the local community, exchange best practices, and understand local perspectives.

Participants from Italy, being part of a small NGO, plan to adapt the activities and ideas to their specific context and capabilities. They recognize the common challenges in involving young people across different countries and are inspired to find ways to address these within their own cultural and operational framework. They also intend to compare what they observed during the visit with their current practices to identify areas for improvement and innovation.

## Rõuge Noorsootöö Keskus, Estonia

- **Learning from diverse experiences:** The visit facilitated the exchange of experiences in youth work, education, and cultural work, with visits to various institutions providing new inspirations and ideas.
- **Cultural awareness and open-mindedness:** Participants faced and overcame challenges related to cultural differences, learning to appreciate and adapt to diverse cultural contexts.
- **Language development and communication skills:** Project activities offered significant opportunities for language development and improved communication skills, despite initial difficulties.

The Estonian team noted the self-sufficiency of Turkish organizations, which operate without state support. They are considering ways to reduce their dependency on municipal support by thinking more strategically and calculating their steps to ensure sustainability and independence.



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Additionally, participants from Estonia (and similarly from Poland) plan to incorporate experiential learning methods into their daily activities, inspired by the Experimental Learning workshop and cultural experiences. This includes designing innovative educational programs that engage young people through interactive exhibits and experiential learning opportunities, similar to those experienced at the Toy Museum and Dialogue in Darkness in Istanbul.

## **Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Kultury Ludowej FOLKIER, Poland**

- **Interpersonal and team-building skills:** Group discussions, team-building activities, and interactions with local experts enhanced participants' abilities to collaborate, negotiate, and express themselves effectively.
- **Critical thinking and problem-solving:** Activities such as city hunting and attending conferences sharpened participants' analytical and problem-solving skills, helping them tackle complex issues and adapt to new challenges.
- **Civic engagement and social responsibility:** Visits to organizations emphasized the importance of civic engagement and social responsibility, inspiring participants to contribute positively to their communities.

Participants from Poland are enhancing their cross-cultural competence to create initiatives that promote cultural diversity among young people. They plan to organize events like cultural exchanges, workshops, and heritage walks to foster dialogue and understanding within diverse youth communities.

Moreover, they aim to empower youth by involving them in leadership roles focused on preserving cultural heritage through forums, advocacy campaigns, and community projects. Additionally, they seek to establish partnerships and mentorship programs connecting young people with cultural experts and resources, such as guest lectures and internships, to further enrich their understanding and involvement in cultural heritage initiatives.



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