

Summary of Study Visits in COOLTOUR project

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The report aims to present the knowledge, skills, methods, tools, and insights gained by participants from Estonia, Türkiye, Poland, and Italy during their study visits to partner countries as part of the COOLTOUR project. The study visits took place between September 4 to September 11, 2023, in Rome, Italy; March 15 to March 22, 2024, in Istanbul, Türkiye; and June 26 to July 3, 2024, in Zgierz/Łódź, Poland. In total, over 70 participants attended the study visits, during which more than 50 activities were conducted to enrich the experience and deepen their connection with cultural heritage, both at local and national level.

Though with slightly different approaches, all study visits had same objectives, shared as follows:

- **Exchanging and sharing knowledge:** To facilitate the exchange of experiences, ideas, and expertise among participants, creating a valuable knowledge base for the project's future stages and ongoing work in the cultural heritage field.
- **Inspiring and developing competency:** To engage with local institutions, experts, and innovative solutions and to inspire participants, enhance competencies, particularly in digital tools, cultural heritage and youth work.
- **Strengthening collaborations and networking:** To foster and strengthen networks among partner organizations, promoting collaboration and the development of shared initiatives for cultural heritage and youth engagement.

The four partners of the project and the participants of the study visits are:

Rõuge Noorsootöö Keskus, Rõuge, Estonia

Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Kultury Ludowej FOLKIER, Zgierz, Poland

Istanbul Kultur ve Spor Derneği, Istanbul, Türkiye

Soro, Tori, Tagliacozzo, Italy



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Overview of Study Visits

Each partner had the opportunity to participate in two study visits and one social hackathon, as previously mentioned. To attend the study visits, partners were required to complete preparation and be introduced to the key topics that would be presented. The organizer of the study visit also conducted an online meeting to discuss and present the timetable and activities to the partner countries. After finalizing the logistics and preparations, the study visit typically lasted seven days, during which participants followed the scheduled activities.

Upon completion, participants had time to reflect and evaluate the study visit experiences and were later asked to submit reports detailing their learning points, knowledge, skills and attitudes they gained or expanded, the places they visited, and their ideas for improvement. The following pages reflect the conclusions of each country regarding the two study visits they attended, with the exception of Estonia, which attended three visits, as they did not host a study visit.



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Rõuge Noorsootöö Keskus, Rõuge, Estonia

The preparation for the study visit was thorough, with Estonian participants engaging in individual discussions to align objectives and utilizing a Facebook chat group to share relevant information. The team ensured that all participants were well-informed and ready through a final meeting before departure. These final meetings allowed for task assignments, answered any remaining questions, and finalized arrangements, ensuring that the group was cohesive and well-prepared for the visit.

During the study visit, the Estonian team encountered significant cultural differences, particularly during Ramadan in Türkiye, which deepened their understanding of the importance of openness and empathy in cross-cultural interactions. They also learned valuable lessons on integrating traditional crafts into cultural heritage education and observed effective community engagement strategies. Visits to places like the museums and interactions with refugees in different countries enhanced their awareness of social challenges, fostering empathy and a broader understanding of global issues.

The participants gained a diverse set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, including insights into community renovation projects that boost local engagement and tourism, innovative youth education methods, and practical culinary traditions. They also developed a deeper appreciation for regional culture through hands-on activities like gold leaf application and making folk costume belts. Additionally, they explored scouting practices and outdoor activities, gaining ideas for adapting these initiatives in Estonia while expanding their language and communication skills through project activities.

The new ideas and knowledge gained will be applied to improve their work by incorporating experiential learning methods and reducing dependency on municipal support. Estonian participants plan to design innovative educational programs, blending social projects with cultural heritage, and organizing museum events where young people can engage with local traditions. They aim to develop the competencies of the future in youth by fostering cultural exchange through activities like DIY cooking,



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modern and traditional music, and workshops on folk costumes. Additionally, they intend to encourage youth involvement in producing their own news and participating in reflective practices to deepen cultural understanding.



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Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Kultury Ludowej FOLKIER, Zgierz, Poland

The Polish team always began their preparations with a virtual meeting to ensure everyone was well-prepared for the study visit. They often discussed the schedules, logistics, cultural insights, and necessary providence. The team used a messaging group to stay connected, share updates, and maintain an open channel for communication. This collaborative preparation allowed participants to address any concerns, share expectations, and feel more confident and supported as they got ready for the study visit.

During their study visits they gained a deeper understanding of partner countries' society, history, and modern challenges through cultural activities and discussions with local experts. They learned the value of cultural immersion and dialogue, which provided them with new perspectives and inspiration. Those visits highlighted the importance of cultural exchange in fostering mutual understanding and sustainable development, motivating them to share their knowledge back home.

As the study visits took place, the Polish participants managed to enhance their interpersonal and team-building skills through group discussions and activities, improving their collaboration, negotiation, and communication abilities. They developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills during different engaging activities depending on the study visit destination. Civic engagement and social responsibility were also key takeaways, especially with visits to local organizations that emphasized the importance of contributing to community development and promoting positive social change.



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As the study visits were designed with a goal where participants take their knowledge into everyday work life, the Polish participants, for one example, were planning to apply their new cross-cultural competence by creating initiatives that promote cultural diversity among youth, such as cultural exchanges, workshops, and heritage walks. They also aim to empower young people by involving them in leadership roles centered on preserving cultural heritage through forums and community projects. Additionally, they will foster partnerships and mentorship programs to connect youth with cultural experts and resources, enriching their involvement in cultural heritage initiatives. Moreover, they recognize the importance of developing competencies of the future in youth by integrating digital literacy, critical thinking, and adaptability into their cultural projects. This approach ensures that young people are not only connected to their heritage but also equipped with the skills needed to navigate and contribute to an increasingly complex world.



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Istanbul Kultur ve Spor Dernegi, Istanbul, Türkiye

The Turkish team completed its selection of participants for the Study Visits on time, choosing the individuals that met the project's criteria. Despite facing significant challenges due to natural disasters, which made participant selection and ticket booking more difficult, the team remained well-prepared following a briefing before their departure to Italy and Poland.

During the study visit in Italy, the Turkish participants gained valuable insights into how an NGO in Rome conducts cultural heritage education, observing best practices in youth work and preservation. They visited key cultures while learning how Italy preserves its rich heritage. Additionally, the team enhanced their capacity to engage with young people through creative techniques observed during visits to schools and workplaces. These experiences were complemented by their subsequent visit to Poland, where they learned about incorporating traditional crafts into youth education and observed successful community engagement strategies.

The participants expanded their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in various areas, including map reading, history, architecture, and interactive workshops for youth. They noted the importance of engaging activities in youth development and the positive impact of live music on cultural expression. Additionally, they acquired new culinary skills, learned art-based learning methodologies, and gained experience in radio broadcasting. The exposure to city dynamics, cultural elements, and media activities further broadened their understanding and appreciation of cultural engagement.

The Turkish participants plan to apply these new ideas by adapting orienteering activities to suit different target groups and incorporating museum visits in smaller cities to enhance local historical awareness. Inspired by the sense of ownership they observed through visits, they would like to create culturally connected activities like dance and cooking workshops. Additionally, they aim to develop adventure-based activities in natural settings to promote teamwork and problem-solving among youth.



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Plans also include implementing radio broadcasting activities, creative drama techniques, and music-related workshops to deepen cultural understanding, alongside city tours and innovative uses of comics in youth work. The Turkish team will focus on developing future competencies in youth by enhancing their communication skills, cultural engagement, and ability to work collaboratively within diverse community settings. These competencies will prepare young people to engage effectively in their communities and contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.



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Soro, Tori, Tagliacozzo, Italy

The Italian participants held online meetings to discuss the study visit agenda and destination culture, particularly since some members were visiting Türkiye for the first time, ensuring everyone was informed and ready for the cultural exchange. As their second study visit approached, they also held said meetings through online methods to discuss the project in detail. Since they were already familiar with the project and had previously participated in international activities related to it, they were well-prepared for the experience.

During the study visit, the Italian participants focused on deepening their understanding of Turkish culture and methodologies through direct experiences and interactions. This hands-on approach broadened their perspectives on cultural diversity and intercultural communication, highlighting the value of engaging with local culture without prior assumptions. The Italian team also recognized the importance of experiential learning, especially in Poland, where "learning by doing" became a central takeaway from their experiences.

The participants gained valuable knowledge and skills in various areas, including cultural heritage preservation, youth support, and experiential learning through arts and crafts. Visits to museums and cultural centers deepened their understanding of community engagement, historical relevance, and youth development. Workshops in theater, weaving, and culinary traditions enriched their competencies in emotional intelligence, creativity, and teamwork. Additionally, they learned traditional woodworking techniques, enhancing their appreciation for craftsmanship and sustainability in heritage conservation.

To improve their work, the Italian participants, as part of a small NGO, plan to adapt the activities and ideas to fit their specific context and capabilities. They are inspired to address common challenges in engaging young people by integrating the innovative approaches they observed during the visit. By comparing these new insights with their



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current practices, they aim to identify areas for improvement and innovation within their own cultural and operational framework, fostering better community engagement and social impact. Additionally, they recognize the importance of developing competencies for the future in youth by focusing on creative education, critical engagement with cultural heritage, and innovative problem-solving strategies. These skills will help young people navigate cultural complexities and actively contribute to their communities' cultural and social development.



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