

PRESS RELEASE

6th and 7th May 2025, Slovenia

ELEVATE Project Launches with Successful Kick-Off Meeting

2.2 M€ to Elevate multi-level governance for inclusive communities

We are proud to announce that ELEVATE project was officially **launched with a two-day kick-off meeting on 6 and 7 May 2025 in Sevnica**, Slovenia. It brings together 17 project partners and 13 associated strategic partners from Danube Region and is coordinated by Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia. The 3-year project (April 2025 - March 2028) was approved within the **Interreg Danube Programme**.

Mr. **Srečko Ocvirk**, Mayor of the Municipality of Sevnica, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and introducing the municipality and its current initiatives, particularly those focused on supporting vulnerable groups. Ms. **Mojca Štepic**, Director of Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia, then greeted the partnership and expressed her enthusiasm for the journey ahead.

The ELEVATE project **aims to foster collaboration between public, civil, and private sectors to create an inclusive governance model in the Danube Region**. The project will engage older people and individuals with disabilities in **building local resilience and improving social inclusion**. Through a co-design process, the model will be tested in pilot areas, promoting better access to services and social cohesion. Additionally, the project will explore innovative financial solutions to support sustainable, inclusive development, and ensure that the green transition benefits everyone, **leaving no one behind**.

Mr. **Aleš Kenda**, Secretary at the Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future of Slovenia, addressed the group with a compelling reflection on the challenges of an ageing society. He emphasized the importance of such initiatives in combating social isolation and digital exclusion, and reminded participants that ageing is a reality we all share.

During the meeting, moderated by Ms. **Anita Molka**, each project partner introduced their organisation, and working sessions were dedicated to clarifying roles and outlining the next activities.

In the afternoon, the Municipality of Sevnica organized a study visit that showcased several inspiring local good practices to the project partners. The first stop was Youth Centre Sevnica, where Ms. **Mojca Pernovšek**, Director of Public Institute for Culture, Sports, Tourism and Youth Activities Sevnica and her colleague Ms. **Nataša Rupnik**, presented the work of the **Intergenerational Centre Posavje+**. This centre offers a variety of activities aimed at supporting the mental and physical well-being of older adults in the community.

The visit continued with presentations by Ms. **Mojca Sešlar**, Head of the Department for Social Affairs at the Municipality of Sevnica, Ms. **Irena Colner**, coordinator, and Ms. **Marjetka Smolič**, Assistant Director of the Sevnica unit of the Centre for Social Work Posavje. Together, they introduced the “**Sopotniki**” programme, which provides free transportation for older citizens living in remote areas—an initiative that has been warmly welcomed and widely appreciated by the local population.

The study visit concluded with a tour of **Ciciban Kindergarten Sevnica** and the **Ana Gale Primary School** for children with special needs, offering a glimpse into the inclusive educational support in municipality of Sevnica.

On the second day, a training and capacity building workshop on inclusive territorial development was moderated by Ms. **Irina Panait** from Urbasofia. She opened with a session on community communication strategies, followed by Mr. **Simon Renner** from Institute Oreli, who presented Slovenian good practice from Kamnik “Point for Older People” programme and its coordination platform »Volunteer«. Mr. **Roman Renner** from the Geodetic Institute of Slovenia introduced “The Story of Five Spaces,” a spatial planning strategy to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The session concluded with Ms. **Damjana Pangerčič** from ISG Amabilis, who discussed targeted communication approaches for socially activating older adults.

In the final workshop session, partners pitched good practices from their regions, focusing on how to effectively communicate successful initiatives. This exchange promoted mutual learning and strengthened cooperation. The two-day meeting reinforced the project’s commitment to inclusive territorial development and improving the lives of vulnerable groups across the Danube Region. It offered valuable insights and fostering a solid foundation for collaboration as the ELEVATE project moves forward.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ELEVATE PROJECT:

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List of partners in ELEVATE project:

- Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia, Lead Partner
- Municipality of Sevnica, Project Partner (Slovenia)
- ISG, Amabilis (Slovenia)
- Osijek-Barnaja County (Croatia)
- Zagreb Innovation Centre Ltd. (Croatia)

- Municipality of Irig (Serbia)
- City of Cazin (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Chamber of Commerce of Una - Sana Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Táj - Kapocs Foundation for Collaborative Communities (Hungary)
- Ideas Factory Association (Bulgaria)
- General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection of 6th District of Bucharest (Romania)
- Urbasofia S.R.L. (Romania)
- Banska Bystrica Self-governing Region (Slovakia)
- Kozodoj registered association (Czech Republic)
- CoWorkLand eG (Germany)
- Insitute for virtual and face-to-face learning in the area of adult education (ILEU) e.V. (Germany)
- General Directorate of Medical and Social Assistance of Chişinău Municipality Council (Moldova)

More information about the ELEVATE project:

<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/elevate>

More information about the Interreg Danube Region:

<https://interreg-danube.eu/>