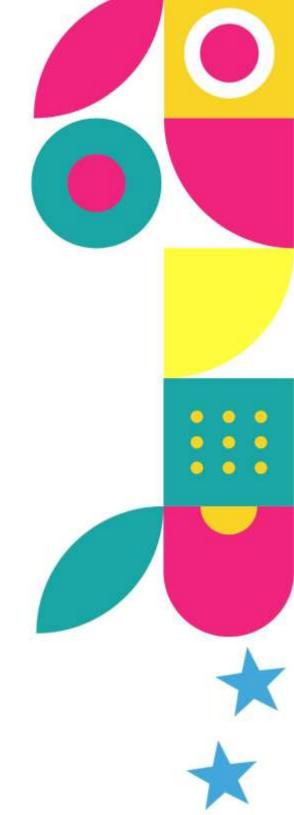


AGENCIJA LOKALNE DEMOKRACIJE SISAK Local Democracy Agency Sisak

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





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LDA Sisak: Our Story and Strategic Impact

Local Democracy Agency Sisak (LDA Sisak) is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation, established in 1996 as a pilot project of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. Its aim is to support local democratic processes, promote human rights, active citizenship, and international cooperation.

We apply a specific methodology of multilateral decentralised cooperation, working in partnership with local and regional self-governments, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders.

Since 2006, LDA Sisak has been registered as a national organisation, continuing to pursue the same objectives while responding to the evolving social context, community needs, and trends in social innovation.

Guided by our mission, values, and strategic objectives, LDA Sisak has consistently worked to strengthen local communities and foster solidarity, inclusivity, and sustainable development, creating tangible and lasting impact in the region.

Our vision

A society in which citizens actively, equally, and responsibly build solidaristic, resilient, and sustainable communities.

Our values

- Respect for human rights
- Respect for diversity
- Culture of peace
- Interculturalism
- Active citizenship

Our mission

LDA Sisak contributes to strengthening social capital by developing the capacities of civil society, public administration, individuals, and the wider community.

Our principles

- Building partnerships
- Connecting communities
- Democracy
- Promoting positive social change through innovative methods
- Sustainable development
- Inclusivity

Partners:

European Association for Local Democracy – ALDA (France, lead partner); City of Sisak, City of Petrinja, Municipality of Dvor (Croatia); association "Going to Europe" (Italy) and association "International School for Peace Studies" (Northern Ireland).





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Networks and Programme Cooperation



Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Strategic Objective 1: Contribution to the building of a pluralistic, inclusive, solidaristic, and intercultural society. **Programme 1: LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

Results:

- 1. Strengthened capacities of 14 CSOs and public institutions in Sisak-Moslavina County for advocating the needs of migrants and citizens, promoting integration based on a culture of peace, solidarity, and inclusiveness.
- 2. 17,135 citizens of Sisak-Moslavina County were informed about the work of CSOs and their role in building a solidary and inclusive community.
- 3. Advocacy document developed and dialogue initiated with local authorities to support the declaration of a Diversity Day in the City of Sisak.
- 4. Research conducted on the needs of young people in Sisak-Moslavina County.
- 5. Participatory planning of the County Youth Programme implemented, resulting in the development and official adoption of the Sisak-Moslavina County Youth Programme 2024–2028 by the County Assembly.
- 6. Programme developed and implemented to prevent institutionalisation and support independent living, reaching 127 elderly people and adults with disabilities.

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Strategic Objective 2: Promoting, fostering, and organising volunteerism within the community.

Programme 2: VOLUNTEER CENTRE SISAK

Results:

- 1. 77 volunteer organisers from Sisak-Moslavina County and surrounding areas empowered and engaged in a volunteerism development programme.
- 2. Support provided to 86 individuals for inclusion in community-based volunteer activities.
- 3. Volunteer tutoring programme launched in two schools in Sisak.
- 4. City of Sisak Volunteer Awards for 2024 presented.
- 5. Citizens of Sisak-Moslavina County informed about the impact of volunteering on personal and community development through public events, the award ceremony, and an educational campaign.
- 6. Volunteer Centre Sisak awarded the Quality Label for local volunteer centres for a four-year period.

Strategic Objective 3: Strengthening the community in developing solidarity, responsibility, and a proactive approach to sustainable development. **Programme 3: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Results:

- 1. Continuation of the advocacy Platform for the development of school volunteering, with 8 schools from Sisak-Moslavina County involved.
- 2. Three meetings held with decision-makers at the national, regional, and local levels to advocate for school volunteering as a tool for education on social justice.
- 3. Handbook with examples of lesson plans for educating children and youth on social justice through volunteering produced, presented, and disseminated.

Strategic Objective 4: Revitalisation of social and cultural life and raising the level of social capital in communities following the recovery from the earthquake. **Programme 4: SOCIAL-CULTURAL CENTRE**

Results:

1. Advocacy partnership of 10 CSOs for the establishment of the Sisak Social and Cultural Centre through the Initiative for declaring the Diversity Day of the City of Sisak.



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Our Work in 2024

In 2024, we focused on advancing our mission by implementing a series of strategic projects aimed at fostering community development, enhancing social inclusion, and supporting local democracy. This year, we have worked closely with our partners to achieve measurable outcomes that contribute to a more inclusive and resilient society

1. LDA Sisak Institutional support

National Foundation for the Development of Civil Society



<u>Timespan:</u> 1.1.2023. – 31.12.2025.

The institutional support will strengthen our organisation and the local community, facilitating structural changes. Over the next three years, we aim to enhance the capacity of our staff, ensuring the retention of skilled employees and empowering new recruits to take on responsibilities. This will contribute to organisational sustainability and effective service delivery to our target groups.

By investing in local community development, we aim to support the recovery of Sisak-Moslavina County, which is dealing with population decline after the earthquake. Our activities will focus on improving services and developing new initiatives for vulnerable groups, including refugees, the elderly, those with intellectual disabilities, and young people. We will strengthen local authorities and CSOs by introducing new tools and practices for crisis response.

We plan to continue collaboration with schools, expanding educational programmes focused on sustainable development and social cohesion. A key initiative will be the Platform for Development of School Volunteering, for capacity-building, innovation, and teacher training in sustainable development and participatory democracy. This platform will foster civil-public partnerships and create new collaborative practices.

Additionally, we will advocate the establishment a Social-Cultural Centre, a space for social and cultural initiatives, promoting community relationships and contributing to area revitalisation. The centre will foster cultural engagement and social cohesion.

At the national level, our work will contribute to societal development by promoting youth engagement, creating new educational and social policies, and transferring best practices. Our efforts will strengthen CSOs' capacity to advocate for changes in education, focusing on civic education and active citizenship.



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Main achievement

In 2024, our organisation achieved significant milestones, including the successful continuation of the advocacy *Platform for School Volunteering Development* and the launch of the *Diversity Day initiative in Sisak*, which united multi-sectoral stakeholders and positioned civil society organisations as key actors in driving social change. Through this initiative, we strengthened networks, including the *Local Integration Coordination, inclusive volunteering promotion*, and advocacy for a *Social-cultural Centre in Sisak*.

Additionally, we developed the Youth Programme for Sisak-Moslavina County (2024-2028) through a participatory process and successfully delivered a new social service aimed at preventing institutionalisation for older adults and people with disabilities, ensuring three years of funding. The growth of our staff allowed for the expansion of services, though it also posed challenges in organisational restructuring. Furthermore, we continued to implement the Volunteering Centre programme, earning a four-year Quality Label.

In 2024, we directly engaged with **over 1500 beneficiaries and stakeholders**, making strides in building partnerships and successfully managing complex projects.



18th "Sajam udruga i institucija" – Fair of NGOs and Institutions in

2024 was a pivotal year for our association, marked by significant progress in strengthening volunteer and advocacy initiatives, as well as improving social services for vulnerable groups. Through collaboration with partners and collective efforts on key projects such as the Platform for the Development of School Volunteering and the Initiative for Diversity Day in the City of Sisak – the first such initiative in Europe – we further enhanced our recognition and impact in the community. Our commitment to creating long-term change is now being recognised in a broader societal context as a best practice example, driving further steps towards inclusivity and social cohesion.

Paula Raužan, LDA Sisak President



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2. Live equality, celebrate diversity!

Funded by the EU program Citizens, Equality, Rights, Values (CERV) of the European Executive Agency for Education and Culture (EACEA) through the Impact4Values Program. Co-funded by the Croatian Government Office for Cooperation with the NGOs.







Program Impact4Values is co-funded by the Croatian Government Office for Cooperation with the NGOs

Lead partner: Local Democracy Agency Sisak

Partner: CROSOL - Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity

<u>Timespan:</u> 1.11.2023. – 31.3.2025.

The project addresses lack of civil society organisations (CSOs) able to be force of change in the promotion and protection of the human rights in Sisak and Sisak-Moslavina County (SMC) area. Lack of recognition and sustainability of the CSOs working on integration, leads to discontinuity of the migrants' integration programs, lack of understating of the European values and the CSOs' role in democratic society development, and fewer opportunities of citizens' participation and civil society development. Small number of the CSOs in the SMC active in peace culture development and human rights protection, additionally makes promotion and protection of these values in the local community even harder.

The project brings solutions at the three interconnected levels:

1) Strengthening CSOs and public initiations advocacy capacities on the European values, democracy and the role of the civil society in the society;

2) Public campaign on the CSOs work in SMC and their importance in building solidary and inclusive community, by which the citizens will be introduced with concrete activities of the CSOs active in advocating human rights, European values and migrants' integration in the community life; and

3) Advocacy campaign directed to the Sisak City Council on declaring official the Sisak Diversity Day.



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Press conference – CSOs impact online campaign launch



The project strengthened the 14 local CSOs for capacities of advocating European values, reached over 30,000 citizens through an online campaign on the impact of CSOs on citizens' lives, organised an NGO and institution Fair with 37 exhibitors and over 300 visitors, and created the first Europe' ever Diversity Day Initiative document for Sisak with concrete measures for improving CSOs' working conditions, migrant integration, support for people with disabilities, and equal opportunities for their families. The initiative was presented to local decisionmakers who promised support for adoption by the city council.



I would do all in my power to assure that the Diversity Day Initiative comes to the City of Sisak Council agenda and to get it voted!

It is a fantastic Initiative on which Sisak should be proud of!

Bojan Dadasovic, Sisak City Council President





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3. Youth Programme of Sisak-Moslavina County Funded by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of the Republic of Croatia





Lead partner: Local Democracy Agency Sisak

Partner: Sisak-Moslavina County, Regional Coordinator of Sisak-Moslavina County

<u>Timespan:</u> 1.1.2024. – 31.12.2024.

Following the expiry of the Youth Programme of Sisak-Moslavina County for 2019-2023, it is necessary to develop a new programme to ensure continuous systematic support for the youth in the county. The Youth Programme represents a strategic overarching document that guides youth policy, making it crucial for the new Youth Programme of Sisak-Moslavina County for the period from 2024 to 2028 to come into effect.

The LDA Sisak, along with partners and collaborators, worked together during the 12-month project implementation to develop a proposal for the Youth Programme of Sisak-Moslavina County for 2024-2028 through public-civil partnerships and a dialogue between youth and decision-makers. The project placed youth at the forefront of programme development, actively involving them in the conceptualisation and creation of the new programme.





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Research on the needs of the youth in the county is conducted, and a Working Group for the development of the programme formed, involving youth representatives, decision-makers, and individuals working with youth. The Working Group, through collaborative learning about the processes of creating strategic documents and the impact of climate change, drafted a proposal for the Youth Programme, which was presented in public discussions and during public consultation.

The project contributed to creating a conducive environment for active youth engagement in democratic processes and community life in Sisak-Moslavina County, through public-civil partnerships in the development of youth policies based on the principles of participation, inclusivity, and sustainable development.



Youth Programme Public Debate

Main achievement

Development and official adoption of the Youth Programme 2024–2028 by the **County Assembly**, setting strategic priorities for youth policies in Sisak-Moslavina County (Programme).

Comprehensive research on youth needs, providing valuable insights for evidence-based policymaking (<u>Report</u>).

□ **Collaborative planning process**, engaging young representatives, educators, local authorities, and civil society organisations.

□ Integration of climate change adaptation into youth policies through expert-led workshops.

□ **Public consultation**, ensuring youth and stakeholder participation in shaping the final Programme.

Young people highlighted a lack of information about the effects and consequences of climate change, as well as a lack of knowledge about actions individuals can take to mitigate its negative impact. While they are aware of the issue and concerned about the future, they feel uninformed about practical solutions.

- from the Research on the needs of young people in Sisak-Moslavina County





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4. Weaving Solidarity

Funded by the European Social Fund+ and national co-financing from the Croatian State Budget



Projekt: Tkanje solidarnosti

Kodni broj Ugovora: SF.3.4.11.01.0484





Sufinancira Europska unija

Sadržaj ovog materijala isključiva je odgovornost Agencije lokalne demokracije Sisak. Izneseni stavovi i mišljenja samo su autorova i ne odražavaju nužno službena stajališta Europske unije ili Europske komisije. Ni Europska unija ni Europska komisija ne mogu se smatrati odgovornima za njih. Više informacija na <u>https://eufondovi.gov.hr/</u> i <u>www.esf.hr</u>

Lead partner: Local Democracy Agency Sisak

Partner: City of Sisak

<u>Timespan</u>: 30.1.2024. – 30.1.2027.

This project aims to provide support services to individuals aged 65 and over and adults with disabilities (18 years and older), contributing to their increased social inclusion, prevention of institutionalisation, enabling them to remain in their homes, and ensuring their right to live in the community.

The provision of support services will be implemented in the area of the City of Sisak, including urban and rural parts, and will start on 1 April 2024. A public call for expressions of interest from the target groups, including eligibility criteria for users, will be published on our website.

The project will be implemented over 36 months, with support services being provided for 33 months.

Project Activities:

- 1. Employment of 16 service providers for at least 96 members of the target group to:
 - a. Organise food provision,
 - b. Perform household chores,
 - c. Maintain personal hygiene,
 - d. Meet other daily needs.
- 2. Monitoring and controlling the delivery of services;
- 3. Procurement and distribution of household and basic hygiene supplies, in accordance with donor rules;
- 4. Communication and visibility;
- 5. Project management and administration.





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Main achievement

The project enabled the provision of a new social service for the **prevention** of **institutionalization** for elderly people and adults with disabilities, with secured threeyear funding. Services were **provided to 127 beneficiaries**, improving their quality of life and social inclusion.

The project also contributed to the development of **social services** at the local level and achieved long-term positive changes for vulnerable groups.

I don't know how I would manage without this help. I recently came out of hospital and couldn't believe how much extra support I needed. I don't know how I would cope if it wasn't for this service, which allows me to stay in my own home without being alone. Who would have thought that such help could be so invaluable? Honestly, I don't know how to thank you, as I wouldn't have made it without you. With every visit and every bit of assistance, I feel safer and less lonely.

- a beneficiary of the social service





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5. Platform for development of school volunteering

Funded by the Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway within the European Economic Area and Active citizens fund



Lead partner: Local Democracy Sisak

Partners: Vocational School Sisak, Human Rights House Zagreb, Norsensus Mediaforum, Norway

Timespan: 1.10.2022. - 31.3.2024.

The project systematizes the long-term practice and efforts of the LDA Sisak and educational institutions in the Sisak-Moslavina County (SMC) for the development of school volunteer clubs through the establishment of the Platform for development of school volunteering, as a place of education, exchange and advocacy towards the decision makers.

The project aims to create a precondition for the systematic support to schools in SMC by strengthening their capacities for development and implementation of practical and engaging contents on topics such as active citizenship, social justice and social inclusion.

The platform consists of schools in which volunteer clubs exist and those schools that are interested in developing this type of extracurricular activities. The backbone of the work of school volunteer clubs is collaborative (co-creative) work of teachers and students in detecting the needs and problems of the community, finding the best solutions, and implementing concrete actions.





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Social Justice-themed Volunteering Action



We have learned that, although we are all different, we all share the same needs and emotions.

- primary school student

Main achievement

- ✓ Established nonformal advocacy network the Platform for development of school volunteering, gathering schools and CSOs in Sisak-Moslavina County,
- Conducted the first research in Croatia on practices and needs of schools and students in the field of volunteering and civic education – available in Croatian language here,
- Implemented educational program on social justice and civic education for educational workers,
- Established the Vocational school Sisak volunteer' club based on in depth needs analysis and education on volunteer' club management,
- Developed and implemented 7 school volunteers' actions on the social justice topics – videos available <u>here</u>
- Dedicated web page on school volunteering, including advocacy positions here
- Produced the handbook "School Volunteering Clubs as a Platform for Education on Social Justice", designed for primary and secondary school educators to develop educational content on social justice through school volunteering clubs – here
- ✓ Conducted an advocacy campaign to improve conditions for school volunteering and the recognition of volunteer work, targeting the Ministry of Science and Education, the Education and Teacher Training Agency, and cities in the Sisak-Moslavina County.

The project has fully achieved its set goals and tasks, proving to be meaningful, effective, and bringing significant value to the wider community. As a school pedagogue, it is important to me that my students have the opportunity to participate in their environment in such a highquality way.

- representative of the school involved in the work of the Platform for the Development of School Volunteering



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Members of the Platform meeting Ministry of education

The presentation of the Platform's results was very motivating for us to start encouraging school volunteering again. All the examples presented truly give us 'wind in our sails' as they are exceptionally good, interesting, and beneficial for local communities.

- project participant





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6. Volunteering Network

Funded by the Croatian Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and City of Sisak







Lead partner: Local Democracy Sisak

<u>Partners</u>: City of Sisak, Elementary school "Budaševo-Topolovac-Gušće" Sisak, Gymnasium Sisak, Croatian Social Welfare Centre - Sisak Regional Office, Municipality of Lekenik, Municipality of Majur

<u>Time span</u>: 1.5.2023. - 30.4.2025.

Through the program, the LDA Sisak continues its long-standing practice of providing systematic support to citizens, volunteers, and volunteer organisers. By providing education, networking, and information exchange, we assist volunteer organisers in developing high-quality and diverse volunteer programs, contributing to an increase in the number of citizens, particularly young people and those in disadvantaged positions, who engage in volunteering. By promoting less common forms of volunteering (school volunteering, inclusive volunteering, and volunteering in rural areas), we aim to ensure that volunteering expands across various segments of the community and that everyone has equal opportunities to participate.

Volunteering action – high school students clay modelling with elderly





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The contribution of volunteer support to academic success and the socialisation of students will be assessed through research on the impact of volunteer assistance in learning on students' academic performance and personal growth. The purpose of the research is to encourage other schools in Sisak-Moslavina County to introduce similar programs and promote the good practices and values of school volunteering.

The program will contribute to community development and the promotion of social inclusion among the rural populations of the Municipalities of Lekenik and Majur, which are sparsely populated and thus further socially excluded.

Through a promotional campaign, we aim to ensure that volunteer work is recognised and valued at the institutional level and to inform citizens and relevant stakeholders about the benefits of volunteering and its positive impact on the development of a more humane and equitable society.

Main achievement

- ✓ 362 direct beneficiaries involved in the project activities, whereof 68% children and youth.
- Developed and implemented educational program for rural volunteers on volunteering in social services sector.
- ✓ 136 legal entities involved in the project activities and/or received support in development of their voluntary activities.
- ✓ 95 volunteers received support in volunteering engagement.
- ✓ Rural school organised a volunteer' action on the topic of social justice.
- ✓ 61 elementary and high school pupils educated on volunteering and organised 5 voluntary actions on social justice topics.
- ✓ Developed new voluntary program for providing learning assistance to elementary and high school pupils from socially disadvantaged and migrant families.



Creating a Study Corner – School Volunteering Action

The training provided me with many new ideas and practical tools for engaging volunteers, and I now feel more confident in applying what I've learned in future work. The interactive exercises and concrete examples were extremely useful, and the trainer was very knowledgeable and approachable.

- participant of the volunteer management training

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7. Volunteer Centre Sisak

Funded by the City of Sisak and own resources



Volunteers' Centre Sisak (VCS), operating since 2011, is a social infrastructure available to all community' stakeholders, providing free-of-charge educational and networking services to citizens wanted to volunteer and legal entities needing volunteers, in accordance to legal framework and voluntary programs standards.

The objective is to contribute to strengthening democratic society through development of local partnerships and active involvement of citizens, children and youth u public community life by building resources of potential and existing volunteering organisers and advocating positive impact of volunteering in Sisak area.

Receiving the Quality Label for the second time for our Volunteer Centre Sisak is a significant recognition of the quality of our work and the dedication we put into the volunteering sector. This label not only acknowledges our past successes but also motivates us to further develop volunteering at the local level, contributing to the strengthening of the community and enhancing our services. Our goal has always been to provide high-quality support to volunteers and all stakeholders, and this prestigious certification further affirms our commitment in this direction.

Paula Raužan, President of the Local Democracy Agency Sisak



Main achievement

- ✓ Volunteer Centre Sisak has been awarded the **Quality Label** for the next four years.
- Monitoring and promotion of the City of Sisak Volunteering Development Program 2023-2027.
- ✓ 7 individuals and legal entities awarded with the Sisak Volunteer Awards 2024.
- ✓ Personal volunteer stories are available on the <u>dedicated website</u> which has 105.748 registered visits.
- ✓ 9th Annual photo exhibitions of voluntary programs opened with 20 photos of 15 organisations all over the Sisak-Moslavina County.
- ✓ 18th Annual Sisak Fair of NGOs and Institutions gathered 37 organisations <u>see</u> <u>dedicated video here</u>
- ✓ 77 legal entities supported in development of voluntary programs and in engaging volunteers.
- ✓ 86 citizens received support in informing and/ or finding suitable voluntary placement. →



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Annual Volunteer Award Ceremony



9th Volunteer Programme Photo Exhibition







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Beneficiaries and Visibility





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Donors

LDA Sisak partners National Foundation for the Development of Civil Society European Union – Programmes: European Social Fund, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values through the Impact4Values Programme Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway within the EEA and Norwegian Grants Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy Ministry of Science, Education and Sports City of Sisak

LDA Sisak team

Governing board:

Josipa Drvodelić – GB President Branka Paškuljević-Turniški Mirela Grubić Dovranić

Support Assistants for Vulnerable Groups:

Andreja Abramović, Josipa Bamburač, Gordana Čavlović, Jasna Zebić, Đurđica Dužić, Verica Hrg-Nogić, Ankica Jakobašić, Mirjana Kalak, Neda Katušić, Darija Lang-Marjanović (until 14.7.2024.), Ljubica Legek, Maja Martinović, Slađana Menićanin, Jelena Polak, Zorka Sudar, Željka Šuman (until 30.9.2024.), Tanja Jerković (until 31.8.2024.), Suzana Milunić, Dilana Čeak-Toth

Program team:

Paula Raužan – LDA Sisak President Jasmin Mahmić – Program Manager Martina Kovačević – Head of Finance and Administration (until 31.8.2024.) Nenad Čizmić - Head of Finance and Administration Barbara Marjanović – Program Assistant and Volunteer Coordinator Mirna Makovac – Program Assistant (until 31.8.2024.) Tila Kesner - Program Assistant Anamaria Franceschi - Program Assistant Fin Lab d.o.o. – bookkeeping



We would like to **thank** the 19 volunteers of LDA Sisak who dedicated 236 volunteer hours to us and the community.

Without you, most of our activities would not have been possible. ⁽²⁾

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Contacts

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