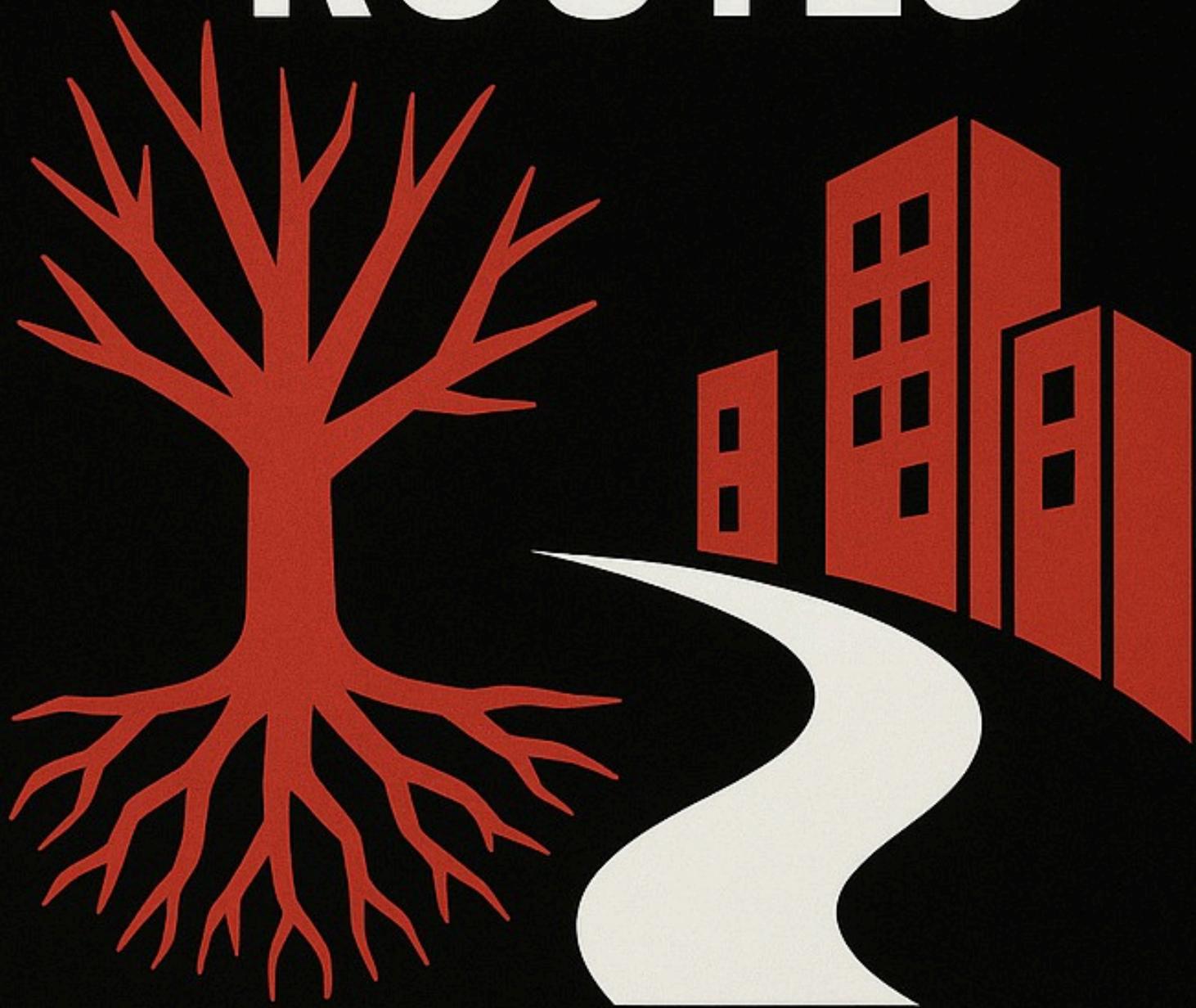


ROOTS & ROUTES



**CULTURAL TRANSMISSION
IN THE RURAL-URBAN SHIFT**

Roots & Routes: Cultural Transmission in the Rural-Urban Shift

2025-1-RO01-KA152-YOU-000303379



Project type:

Mobility of Young People (KA152-YOU)

Location:

Timisoara, Romania

Period:

08 – 13 September 2025

25 young people (aged 16–30)
5 group leaders (one per country)

Working language: English



**Funded by
the European Union**



About us:

Asociația Culturală Contrasens is a cultural NGO based in Timișoara, Romania, primarily active in artistic and educational projects in the fields of cinema, literature, and visual arts. The organization runs festivals, workshops, and cultural exchange programs that foster intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, and active youth participation.

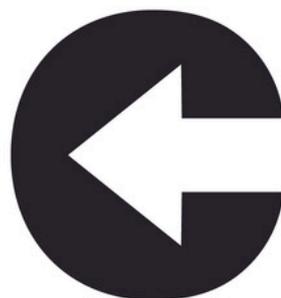
Contrasens specializes in cultural education, using creative tools such as short films to explore themes related to culture, identity, and social change. It collaborates with schools, NGOs, local institutions, and international partners to expand its educational and cultural impact. The organization believes in the power of film as a tool for learning, connection, and transformation.

About Timisoara:

Timișoara is a city in **western Romania**, located in the Banat region, near the borders with Hungary and Serbia. It is often called The Little Vienna due to its rich architectural heritage and vibrant cultural life. Timișoara is the third largest city in Romania, with a population of over 300,000 inhabitants. It was designated European Capital of Culture in 2023, a recognition of its dynamic cultural scene and historical diversity.

The city is home to numerous theaters, museums, and art galleries, as well as innovative cultural spaces that support contemporary art and youth initiatives. A landmark of local culture is the Victory Square, surrounded by historical buildings and a symbol of the 1989 Romanian Revolution.

Timișoara blends Central European influences with Romanian and minority traditions, offering a unique space where heritage, modernity, and creativity meet through music, visual arts, cinema, festivals, and intercultural dialogue.

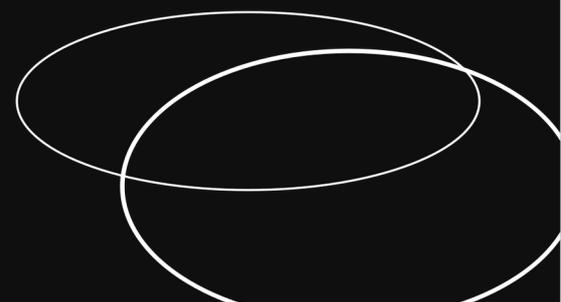


**ASOCIAȚIA
CULTURALĂ
CONTRASENS**

Project summary:

“Roots & Routes: Cultural Transmission in the Rural–Urban Shift” was an Erasmus+ Youth Exchange implemented in Timișoara, Romania, between 8 and 13 September 2025. The project gathered 25 young participants and 5 group leaders from Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Moldova, and Romania, in order to explore the processes of cultural transmission in communities affected by rural-urban transformation.

The exchange focused on identity, belonging, social inclusion, and the use of participatory filmmaking as a tool for reflection and dialogue. Through non-formal education methods, field research, and creative production, participants analysed how cultural heritage is preserved, adapted, or transformed in urban spaces with rural origins. The project aimed to strengthen intercultural dialogue and European cooperation among young people, to increase awareness of rural-urban dynamics and social inclusion issues, and to develop practical competences in visual storytelling, interviewing, teamwork, and digital content creation. It also sought to promote active citizenship and encourage participants to engage with their local communities after the mobility.



Partner organisations:

Romania – Asociația Culturală Contrasens

A cultural organization based in Timișoara, active in the field of contemporary art and cultural education, and serving as the coordinating partner of the project.

Republic of Moldova – ProActive Group Moldova

A non-governmental organization that empowers young people in their personal and professional development through non-formal education, entrepreneurship, and leadership initiatives.

Portugal – Casa da Horta, Associação Cultural

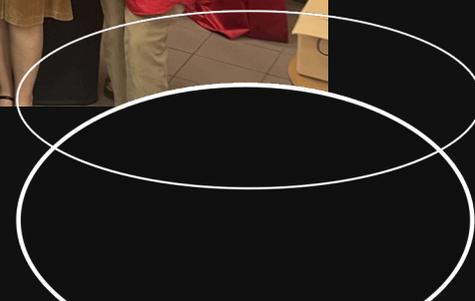
An association based in Porto that promotes sustainable lifestyles, ethical consumption, and intercultural exchange, with a strong focus on ecology and the arts.

Lithuania – Laisvės Kompasas

A Lithuanian organization dedicated to promoting civic engagement, and youth development through cultural projects.

Latvia – Kefirstudio

A Latvian artistic collective that supports emerging creators and promotes contemporary art in alternative spaces, including rural areas.

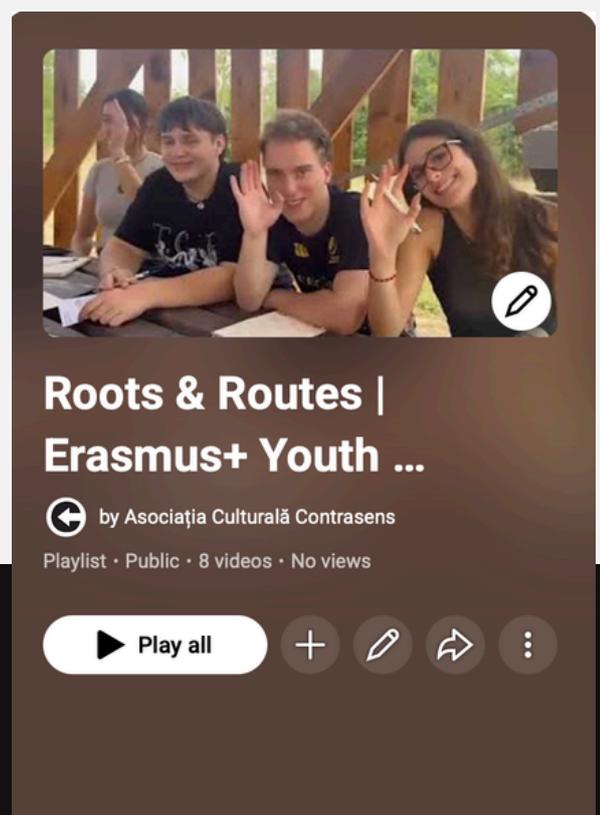
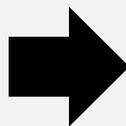


Impact and Results:

Young people gained a **deeper awareness of cultural identity**, developing a **better understanding of their cultural heritage** and how migration influences traditions. They reflected on **the role of youth in preserving and reinterpreting cultural identity** in a modern European context. Practical storytelling and filmmaking activities contributed to the **development of visual communication and teamwork skills**, as well as strengthening competences that can be applied in future creative or professional projects.

The primary tangible outcome of the project was the production of short documentary films addressing identity, belonging, and rural-urban transformation. The young participants documented both their visits to different neighbourhoods of the city and their overall experience within the youth exchange. They were encouraged to observe and capture meaningful visual details – architecture, markets, people – and to reflect on how the past intertwines with contemporary urban life. They also explored the intersections between nature and the city, as well as the ways in which rural traditions continue to shape urban spaces. .

Here is the selection of short videos that presents both the urban exploration and the participants' personal experiences



Roots & Routes | Erasmus+ Youth ...

by Asociația Culturală Contrasens

Playlist · Public · 8 videos · No views

▶ Play all

Learning Activities and Methods



Thematic workshops

Rural–Urban Cultural Transmission: Reflection on Personal Cultural Identity

Working in national groups, participants reflected on rural traditions that have been adapted and reinterpreted over time.

They were guided by questions such as:

- Which rural traditions from your country are still present today?
- How have these traditions been adapted to urban or contemporary contexts?
- What elements have been preserved, and what has changed?
- Why do you think certain traditions survive while others fade away?

Participants presented examples from their respective countries and explained how these traditions have evolved. They analyzed cases from music, dance, and film, identifying the ways in which traditional motifs have been reimagined and integrated into modern cultural expressions. They were also encouraged to reflect on:

- How do these reinterpretations influence your personal cultural identity?
- Do you feel more connected to tradition or to its modern adaptations?

Finding Common Traditions: Connecting Cultures Across Borders

The second group activity brought together international teams composed of at least one member from each of the five participating countries.

To stimulate dialogue, participants considered questions such as:

- Are there similar myths, symbols, or rituals across your cultures?
- What common values do these traditions express?
- How do gestures, celebrations, or stories differ in form but share similar meanings?
- What surprised you when comparing your traditions with others?

In these mixed groups, participants identified shared traditions, myths, or symbolic gestures across cultures, fostering intercultural dialogue and highlighting both diversity and common ground.





Thematic workshops

Rural–Urban Cultural Transmission: Reflection on Personal Cultural Identity

Working in national groups, participants reflected on rural traditions that have

Rural-to-Urban Migration: Youth Perspectives and National Contexts

In this session, participants worked in international groups to discuss the national contexts of rural-to-urban migration.

They explored guiding questions such as:

- What are the current trends in rural-to-urban migration in your country?
- What motivates young people to move to cities?
- What challenges do they face during this transition?
- Are there institutional or university support systems that help them integrate?
- How does migration affect their sense of belonging and identity?

After gathering their key insights, each group presented the socio-cultural realities of their countries, focusing on migration patterns—particularly the transition from rural to urban life—and describing the challenges and opportunities encountered by young people during this process.



Field-based Learning



Exploring intergenerational transmission in a multicultural setting: Mehala Neighbourhood

In a youth-centered learning approach, we organized a guided tour through the Mehala neighborhood, allowing participants to explore the transition from rural to urban life. Mehala is known as a symbolic neighborhood of diversity and reinvention, where the rural past intertwines with urban dynamism. Participants explored the rich history of the area and observed how it evolved into a residential district. They discovered a layered history of coexistence among Hungarian, German, and Romanian communities, tracing the marks of their heritage throughout the neighborhood.

With a focus on architecture, participants engaged in an exercise analyzing building styles and imagining the historical periods they originated from. Later, they visited the flea market and the vegetable market in Mehala, where they encountered the ROD initiative—a contemporary art festival held in the flea market square. During their free time, they documented the vibrant life of the market and had the opportunity to try traditional Romanian snacks such as langoș and mici.



Greenfeel Urban Gardens

We organized a guided tour of the Greenfeel urban gardens, which were established on previously abandoned plots of land. These gardens are managed by young people who are passionate about agriculture. Before being transformed into gardens, the area was simply neglected land. This is a powerful example of how overlooked spaces can be repurposed and given new life.

During the visit, the participants walked through the garden plots, observed how the community is implementing sustainable practices, and reflected on how such green initiatives can reshape the urban landscape. Guiding questions included: What challenges did these people overcome in starting the gardens? How do these spaces foster a sense of community? And what lessons can we take from their success to other neglected urban areas? This change reflects a global model of migration and adaptation, in which young people play a central role in redefining cities, bringing with them rural values and transforming them into urban resources.



Field-based Learning

ARCHA Studio

The next visit took place at the ARCHA Studio, a space managed by the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism in Timișoara. There, participants met with the Dean of the Faculty, who spoke about contemporary urbanization models, emerging trends toward more sustainable living, and architectural designs inspired by rural traditions.

The discussion also addressed the faculty itself, focusing on the integration of students from rural areas and the support services available to facilitate their academic and social adaptation.

Dan Perjovschi. Romania. Exhibition

During their stay, the group visited the exhibition "Dan Perjovschi. România — O retrospectivă 1985–2025" at the Muzeul „Corneliu Mikloși” in Timișoara. The retrospective presented four decades of Perjovschi's work, including bold black-and-white drawings, installations, and civic art interventions.

The artworks reflected Romania's cultural and political transformations, offering the group a powerful lens through which to explore the themes of rural-to-urban transition. The exhibition illustrated how spaces evolve over time while preserving memory and layered histories.



Field-based Learning

Kuncz: Stories of Exclusion and Resilience

The final visit took the participants to the Kuncz neighborhood, a historic area originally developed around a factory, where Roma people were brought to work approximately a century ago. Today, many of their descendants still live there. However, the lack of property documents has led to ongoing difficulties in accessing public services and has contributed to persistent marginalization.

During the visit, participants observed how urban planning decisions can significantly shape community life and long-term social realities. They met local children and, together, explored the neighborhood through a guided tour. This experience highlighted that the rural-to-urban transition is not solely about physical relocation, but also about access to rights, social inclusion, and the long-term impact of urban policies on marginalized communities.



After the guided tour, participants took part in a reflection exercise. They were asked to close their eyes and quietly think about their experiences during the visit. Then, sitting together in a circle, they shared their thoughts aloud, allowing the group to collect and listen to different perspectives.

To conclude the exercise, each participant wrote down a single word that best expressed their personal experience of the day.

Leading questions guided their reflections, such as:

- What moment from the tour left the strongest impression on you?
- How did interacting with the children or the neighborhood change your perspective?
- Which feelings or ideas emerged as you observed the community and its spaces?
- How does the life and challenges of this community compare to communities in your own country?
- If you had to sum up the experience in one word, what would it be—and why?

This activity encouraged mindfulness, self-expression, and group dialogue. It also helped participants make connections between the experiences of marginalized communities in Kuncz and similar communities in their own countries, fostering empathy, cultural awareness, and a deeper understanding of shared social challenges.



Arts-based Learning: Photography and Film

Introduction to filmmaking: Framing, light, colour, angle

The first session focused on an introduction to filmmaking and basic cinematic techniques. Participants explored different types of framing, camera angles, lighting, and color. Following a theoretical overview, they drew slips of paper containing specific concepts they were required to capture in their photographs—for example, a close-up shot, the color red, and a tilted camera angle.

Working in groups, they then took photographs that incorporated these elements. This practical exercise strengthened their understanding of visual composition and technical terminology, while also fostering cross-cultural exchange and teamwork.

RESOURCES



Arts-based Learning: Photography and Film

Polaroid

In the Kuncz neighborhood, participants were given Polaroid cameras and, together with local children, photographed the children's favorite places during a guided tour. These locations were chosen by the children themselves. After gathering all the photos, participants sat down with the children to discuss their chosen places, deepening their understanding of the children's daily experiences and perspectives.



Arts-based Learning: Photography and Film

Filmmaking exercise- Documenting the urban

In this activity, participants are asked to create a short film that documents the relationship between nature and the urban environment. They must observe how natural elements, like trees, rivers, or gardens, interact with architecture—buildings, streets, and public squares—and how people move through these spaces. The exercise encourages long, observational shots—wide frames that capture the mood, rhythm, and subtle exchanges of the urban landscape. By focusing on these long takes, participants learn to see and convey the layered dialogue between nature, people, and the city, deepening their observational skills and storytelling through film.

Filmmaking exercise- Documenting the experience

Alongside the urban documentation, participants also had the option to document the entire mobility experience. They were encouraged to film all of the organized visits, and in the end, they presented a project journal—a video diary that captured their reflections, insights, and personal growth throughout the entire mobility journey.



Arts-based Learning: Creative Writing

In Medias Res Urban Stories

In this exercise, participants begin their stories in the middle of an action—right at a pivotal moment in an urban setting. They must describe a scene set in the city—perhaps a crowded street, a public square, or a transit hub—but they must plunge the reader directly into the action, without any prior explanation. After starting in the middle of the event, they unfold the backstory gradually, using sensory details, dialogue, and inner thoughts. This technique immerses the writer—and the reader—into the heartbeat of the city, fostering immediacy, tension, and vivid, cinematic description.

From a picture to a story

Participants were able to choose a favorite photograph from a selection. Starting with that image, they wrote short stories inspired by what they saw, using the photo as a starting point to build mood, characters, and plot.

Five Senses, One Story

Pick a place, moment, or experience you want to write about. This could be real (a memory, a neighborhood, a daily moment) or imagined. Close your eyes and imagine the scene. Notice the details using your senses:

Sight: What do you see? Colors, shapes, movement, light?

Sound: What do you hear? Voices, music, nature, city noise?

Smell: Are there any scents? Food, flowers, smoke, rain?

Taste: Can you taste anything in the scene? Drinks, food, air?

Touch: What can you feel? Textures, temperature, wind, surfaces?

Write a short story incorporating all senses. Focus on showing through sensory details rather than just telling.



Testimonials

I had the privilege of participating in the program which provided a valuable platform to learn and share ideas about the similarities, differences, and connections between rural and urban life. The program highlighted the unique strengths of both rural and urban communities. Rural areas were shown to be rich in natural resources, cultural traditions, and community cooperation, while urban areas stood out for their modern infrastructure, opportunities for education, and advanced healthcare facilities. Together, they complement each other and form the backbone of balanced national growth. I found the discussions and activities in the program to be very engaging and eye-opening. The sessions not only improved my knowledge but also helped me appreciate the importance of harmony and mutual support between rural and urban societies. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate and believe such initiatives are essential in creating awareness and promoting sustainable development.

Moqadasa, Portugal

The Youth Exchange created a dynamic environment where participants combined creative learning with intercultural dialogue and community engagement. On the positive side, the structured progression of activities – from icebreakers and filmmaking workshops to field visits in Mehala and Kuncz – allowed participants to gradually build self-confidence, teamwork, and practical media skills. Encounters with local communities offered meaningful insights into social inclusion, multiculturalism, and the challenges faced by marginalized groups. This direct interaction not only strengthened participants' empathy and tolerance but also inspired them to reflect critically on broader social and political issues.

Lucian, România



The project supported us in reflecting on our own identity, collaborating within a team and adapting the new contexts. The intercultural dialogue and expiration of shared values strengthened our sense of belonging to the European community. We learned to promote inclusion, mutual respect, and active civic engagement in society. We explored the connection between roots and modern transformations through art, dialogue, and cultural experiences. This helped us to express our identity, appreciate cultural diversity, and transmit our shared heritage further.

Victor, Moldova

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Could each of you share a word or phrase that describes your experience during the exchange?

amazing
theoretical entertaining language
experience culture bridging
friends creativity fun cultural fresh
magic editing community connections
family energetic experimental
socially engaging





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