

## **Smiltene Municipality shares experience at the SHARING project meeting in Croatia**

From 2 to 6 March 2026, partners of the international Interreg Europe project SHARING – Sharing goals, actions and resources for the mutual benefit of our communities (02C0414) gathered in *Međimurje* County, Croatia for a series of meetings, discussions and study visits. The event was hosted by the *Međimurje* County Development Agency REDEA, bringing together project partners from several European countries.

During the event, participants discussed modern approaches to local governance, focusing on participatory, smart and sustainable development of municipalities, as well as practical solutions for strengthening cooperation between local governments.

### **Expert lecture and panel discussion**

The first day of the programme featured an expert lecture and interactive workshop by Assoc. Prof. Dana Dobrić Jambrović, PhD, Vice-Dean for Professional Studies at the Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka. The lecture explored new trends in the development of local government units, highlighting participatory governance, digital solutions, and sustainable development principles.

This was followed by a panel discussion on the functional integration of municipalities, where mayors and representatives of national institutions discussed opportunities for strengthening cooperation between municipalities and improving the efficiency of local governance.

### **Good practice examples from Croatia**

Several good practice examples from Croatia were presented during the event.

The regional water utility *Međimurske vode*, represented by Director Sunčana Glavina, presented an innovative model of regional water management based on cooperation between municipalities and shared ownership of infrastructure. The presentation highlighted the use of digital technologies such as GIS and SCADA systems to improve infrastructure management and reduce water losses.

The *Međimurje* County Home Care Centre (CPUK) demonstrated a public–private partnership model for delivering social services, providing home assistance, personal care services and meal delivery for elderly and vulnerable residents.

Meanwhile, *Čakovec* Public Fire Brigade, presented by Commander Mladen Kanižaj, showcased a successful inter-municipal cooperation model where fire protection services are jointly financed and managed by the City of *Čakovec* and 14 surrounding municipalities.

### **Partner presentations and community initiatives**

During the second day, project partners presented their own good practice examples.

During the meeting, Smiltene Municipality (Latvia) presented its good practice example – online meetings between the municipal chairperson and residents.

These meetings provide residents with a convenient opportunity to communicate directly with municipal leadership, field experts, ask questions, share suggestions and receive information about current municipal issues. The initiative contributes to more open communication, strengthens civic engagement and helps the municipality better understand the needs of its community.

The Ilfov County Council (Romania) presented several initiatives in public health and social support, including the project “Ilfov, Through Your Eyes”, which provides free vision screening and glasses for vulnerable residents.

Representatives of the Croatian Red Cross – Čakovec City Society introduced the Centar PrInOs project, which offers community-based social support services including food banks, social shops, home assistance and activities for vulnerable groups.

The Nikola Zrinski Library in Čakovec presented the mobile library service (bookmobile), which ensures access to books, cultural activities and educational programmes for residents in remote areas.

### **Study visits and on-site learning**

The program also included several study visits, allowing participants to explore local initiatives in Međimurje County. Participants visited the Centre for Education and Rehabilitation in Čakovec, as well as the Municipality of Nedelišće, where local development projects, tourism initiatives and sports infrastructure development were presented.

On the final day, participants visited the mobile library service and the PrInOS Centre, and continued with visits to the Municipality of *Sveti Juraj na Bregu*, where digitalisation projects and community development initiatives were presented.

### **Exchange of experience and future cooperation**

The SHARING project meeting also included partners’ meetings, experience exchange sessions and discussions on pilot actions, project progress, financial planning and future policy improvements.

Participation in international cooperation projects allows Smiltene Municipality to exchange experience, learn from European partners and implement innovative solutions, contributing to more open, modern and citizen-oriented local governance.