



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

At the end of 2024, the Erasmus+ international youth exchange project "From Earth to the Stars and Back" took place in Molėtai, where young people from Lithuania, Spain and Slovenia met for a joint project aimed at contributing to the improvement of young people's mental health and the reduction of discrimination through experiential stress-reducing activities.

According to the World Health Organisation, the number of mental health disorders among young people, such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self-harm, is increasing every year both in Lithuania and across Europe, so during the project the young people presented the situation in each country, the research carried out, good practices, discussed the factors affecting mental health, and explored methods to reduce tension and stress through acting, walking, dance, drawing and stargazing. They learnt self-liberation and tension-reduction techniques, and created a short film and artistic performances reflecting the themes of the project. Through acting activities, the young people staged how discriminated people feel, the inner conflicts they face and how this affects their mental health.

During the project, the young people not only improved their knowledge on mental health, discrimination and LGBT issues, but also gained insight into the management aspects of an Erasmus+ project, appreciated their cultural identity, improved their cultural knowledge, and improved their communication with their international partners through different informal communication methods. The project used non-formal learning methods such as: teamwork, discussions, reflection, relaxation, creative and drama activities. The young people actively engaged in experiential activities and got to know each other better by interacting in intercultural groups. This experience helped them to develop their linguistic competences and self-confidence.

The project focused on building young people's skills, the importance of their opinions, and the strengthening of shared values, breaking down prejudices and negative stereotypes. At the end of the exchange, the participants have become more open-minded, more accepting and supportive of young people who are discriminated against, and more empathetic and tolerant towards other cultures and opinions.

The project is ongoing, with representatives from all three countries visiting Slovenia in 2023 and Molėtai in Lithuania in 2024. The youth exchange is planned to take place in Spain in 2025, thus continuing the project's tasks, ensuring the continuity of the activities and giving young people the opportunity to benefit from the full range of Erasmus+ youth opportunities.

The project applicant is the Molėtai Cultural Centre and the project partners are: the Sports and Youth Centre "Javni zavod Športni in mladinski center Piran", Slovenia, the Vocational and Higher Education Centre "Escuela de Formación Profesional Santa María de los Ángeles, S.Coop.And.", Spain.

Funded by the European Union.

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the National Agency. Neither the European Union nor National Agency can be held responsible for them.