

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Civil Society Solidarity Movement II - CISOMO II
Participant:	ZAVOD ZA KULTURNO DEJAVNOST PRODUKCIJO TRZENJE IN PROMOCIJO BOTER
PIC number:	907602714

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number :	8		
Event name:	EMPOWERMIGRA LIVING LAB: CITIZEN-DRIVEN EMPOWERMENT AND INTEGRATION HUB		
Type:	Living Lab		
In situ/online:	In situ		
Location:	Novo mesto, Slovenia		
Date(s):	17. 12. 2025 – 19. 12. 2025		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.cisomo.eu/thematic-events		
Participants			
Female:	25		
Male:	14		
Non-binary:	-		
From country 1 [Greece]:	4		
From country 2 [Bulgaria]:	3		
From country 3 [Poland]:	5		
From country 4 [Slovenia]:	17		
From country 5 [Sweden]:	3		
From country 6 [Denmark]:	3		
From country 7 [Germany]:	1		
From country 8 [Romania]:	3		
Total number of participants:	39	From total number of countries:	8

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The event in Novo mesto provided a comprehensive look at migration, balancing high-level state strategies with grassroots social innovation and personal human narratives. The program was designed to explore how systemic frameworks, local NGO support, and individual resilience intersect to create a pathway for successful integration.

Systemic Foundations: The State's Vision The morning session opened with a keynote address by **Primož Jamšek**, representing the **Government Office for the Republic of Slovenia for Integration and Care of Migrants**. The discussion addressed the critical "systemic level" of integration:

- **Strategic Alignment:** A focus on how Slovenia's migration policy navigates between the *Strategy on Migration* (economic focus) and the *Strategy on Integration* (social cohesion), seeking a balance between labor needs and human dignity.
- **Addressing Intolerance:** The importance of international cooperation and education as tools to combat rising xenophobia and stereotypes across Europe.
- **Lessons from Practice:** Insights into how the temporary protection model used for Ukrainian displaced persons can serve as a blueprint for more flexible and responsive integration policies in the future.
- **Humanizing the Bureaucracy:** The speaker emphasized the role of empathy within the system and the vital partnership with NGOs, which provide the "human face" and bridge the "last mile" of integration that state apparatuses often cannot reach.

Session 1: Social Activation and Gender-Specific Integration Participants visited the **Social Activation Programme** for migrant women, managed by **DRPDNM**. This segment highlighted how specific, long-term mentoring and community cooperation are essential for empowering women who are often at the highest risk of social isolation.

Session 2: The Human Library and Personal Journeys The focus shifted from systems to people through two powerful methods:

- **Living Library:** Presented as a key tool for informal learning, the "Living Library" allowed participants to "borrow" a person instead of a book. By listening to real-life stories, attendees engaged in a direct challenge to their own prejudices, proving that personal encounters are the most effective way to dismantle stereotypes.
- **Panel Discussion – Four Migration Paths:** A moderated panel featured four guests with distinct legal and personal backgrounds, illustrating the diversity of the migrant experience in Slovenia:
- **Romain Adje (Ivory Coast):** A former political advisor who arrived via the asylum system. He shared his journey from working as a forklift driver to finding stability at the Novo mesto Retirement Home, highlighting the challenge of "brain waste."
- **Daniela Hočevar (Venezuela):** A repatriate who used her passion for oriental dance to build cultural bridges, eventually becoming a national champion and demonstrating how art facilitates social inclusion.
- **Milica Tanasković (Serbia):** An economic migrant who arrived through family reunification. Despite holding a Master's degree in History, she began her path in the hospitality industry before becoming a key project coordinator at DRPDNM.
- **Kateryna Zaikina (Ukraine):** A refugee who arrived at age 17 fleeing war. With the support of DRPDNM, she completed her secondary education in record time and successfully enrolled in medical school, proving that the system works when robust support mechanisms are in place.

Interactive Workshop: The Common Denominator The working part of the day culminated in the **"Common Denominator"** workshop. Participants synthesized the day's findings into actionable guidelines:

1. **Replication:** To spread programs like Social Activation across Europe, stable funding and local community involvement are essential.
2. **Belonging:** For a foreign community to feel at home, a city must provide spaces for cultural expression and active civic participation.

3. **Policy Recommendations:** A call for decision-makers to immediately simplify bureaucratic hurdles regarding the recognition of qualifications and to treat integration as a two-way process.

Cultural Empowerment: Tastes of the World The event concluded at the Retirement Home Novo mesto with "**Tastes of the World**" culinary workshops. Attendees actively participated in preparing **Ukrainian, Turkish, Nepalese, and Palestinian** dishes. This hands-on cultural exchange served as a practical demonstration of how local institutions (like retirement homes) can become vibrant hubs for multicultural interaction.

The day ended with a communal dinner and a guided tour of the city, reinforcing the message that successful integration begins and flourishes within the local community.

Living Lab Agenda

Date: 18. 12. 2025

Venue: 3rd floor, Novi trg 9, 8000 Novo mesto, Slovenia

9:00 – 9:30

- Arrival and registration of participants, Novi trg 9, 3rd floor

9:30 – 10:00

- Opening Address, presentation of Novo mesto and Boter Institute (Zavod Boter)

10:00 – 11:15

- Migration in Slovenia – presented by the Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Integration and Care of Migrants

- Presentation of Integration Programmes – by the Association for Developing Voluntary Work Novo mesto; with the emphasis to the challenges and successes of integration programs, with collaboration of Zavod Boter; short video presentation of the programmes

- Presentation of Living Library as a mean of integration

11:15 – 11:30

- Visit to the Social Activation Programme, which is designed for migrant women. Presentation of the program, its significance for participants and the local community, and its contribution to the development of the local community.

11:30 – 11:45

- Coffee Break

11:45 – 12:30

- Presentation and Panel Discussion on the Topic of Migration, with participation of migrants from South America, Europe, and Africa

12:30 – 13:00

- Interactive Workshop: The Common Denominator - Identifying and compiling key findings and guidelines for improving integration and mutual cooperation, which represent the common denominator among the groups participating in the event.

13:00 – 13:15

- Evaluation

13:30 – 15:00

- Lunch at Gostišče na trgu, Hiša kulinarike in turizma, Glavni trg 30, 8000 Novo mesto

15:30 – 18:30

- Culinary Workshops: Tastes of the World (Ukrainian, Turkish, Nepalese, and Palestinian cuisine), at the Retirement Home Novo mesto - with active participation of the attendees, Address: Šmihel 1, 8000 Novo mesto

18:30

- Conclusion of the event

- Dinner featuring selected dishes from the culinary workshops

Dissemination Activities

On December 18th, 2025, Zavod Boter (Boter Institute) and the Association for Developing Voluntary Work Novo mesto (DRPDNM) hosted the CISOMO II study visit in Novo mesto, Slovenia, titled "EmpowerMigra Living Lab: Citizen-Driven Empowerment and Integration Hub." The event coincided with International Migrants Day and focused on the project's mission to foster inclusive, resilient, and democratic communities. Through a keynote address by the Government Office for Integration, site visits to Social Activation programmes, and a powerful panel discussion featuring four distinct migration journeys (Romain Adje, Daniela Hočevár, Milica Tanasković, and Kateryna Zaikina), participants explored the intersection of systemic policies and grassroots social innovation. The "Living Lab" format encouraged an interactive exchange on how to bridge the gap between bureaucratic frameworks and the lived reality of migrants, emphasizing bottom-up empowerment.

The event and its key takeaways were widely disseminated across various digital platforms:

- Zavod Boter Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BoterInstitute/posts/861594499950546>; <https://www.facebook.com/BoterInstitute/posts/864511349658861>
- Zavod Boter Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DSSTwaNAhFY/>; <https://www.instagram.com/p/DSci0j5AsKY/>
- NGO Portal Nevladnik.info: <https://www.nevladnik.info/si/novice/?id=19169>
- DRPD Novo mesto Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DRPDNM/posts/pfbid0igHpN8CJgAb3jWSTAYtRTQ5NkTKMATp3QfbpA3R2ebGUg9HdFRz8vy8qibeeQ4LqI>

To conclude, the EmpowerMigra Living Lab reaffirmed that successful integration is a two-way process requiring strong partnerships between state institutions, NGOs, and the local community. The Slovenian experience offered practical lessons in empathy, systemic adaptability, and the vital role of civic engagement as essential pillars for civil society in Europe.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).