

YOUMIG - Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation
in order to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration
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WP5 Improved Local Services

Output 5.3 Local pilots for better services & inventory

MUNICIPALITY: SFÂNTU GHEORGHE

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Local pilot identity card: creating a welcoming environment for returning migrants in the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe.....	6
3. Summary of the local pilot.....	6
4. Challenges addressed in the local pilot.....	7
5. LogFrame of the local pilot	8
6. Indicators, linked to the local pilot	9
7. Planned and implemented activities	9
8. Evaluation of the local pilot	10
8.1. Problems and needs (Relevance).....	10
8.2. Achievement of purpose (Effectiveness)	10
8.3. Sound management and value for money (Efficiency).....	13
8.4. Achievement of wider effects (Impact)	13
8.5. Likely continuation of the achieved results (Sustainability)	13
8.6. The pilot's strengths/organisation.....	13
8.7. Being proud of... ..	13
8.8. Conclusions & recommendations	14

1. Introduction

In the YOUMIG project: Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration in the Danube region; 19 partners from 8 countries are working together to support the local governments of Maribor (Slovenia), Graz (Austria), Kanjiža (Serbia), the borough of Rača, Bratislava (Slovakia), Szeged (Hungary), Sfântu Gheorghe (Romania), and Burgas (Bulgaria), in exploiting the developmental potential of youth migration, leading to a better-governed and more competitive Danube region.

The YOUMIG project is aiming to boost their institutional capacities to enhance the scarce local evidence on youth migration, contributing to improved policymaking with a focus on human capital. Statistical offices & academic organisations are teaming up with local governments in a complex and tailored transnational cooperation to create local developmental strategies based on improved impact indicators of youth migration. They are also working together to introduce transnationally-tested tools to manage local challenges.

To address the challenges, obstacles, and benefits of youth migration in sending/receiving communities, a [Local Status Quo Analysis](#) (LSQA)¹ has been prepared, providing an overview of trends in youth migration and of related social phenomena, respectively. The study was based on policy-oriented research. The first objective was to synthesise the findings of the YOUMIG research activities with regard to youth migration. In this respect, the municipalities were characterised and typified according to the migration trends they experienced. The second objective was to understand the effects of youth migration, and to identify policy challenges related to it. Through applied research, a screening of responses provided by local authorities to challenges related to in- and out-migration of young people was performed. A related goal was to identify management and capacity gaps in institutional mechanisms of local authorities, with the aim of addressing youth migration and related phenomena.

To support the development of services on a local level that will assist local governments in coping with the inward, outward, and return migration of young people, a [European and global good practice collection](#) of relevant services and actions linked to youth migration² was prepared. This was the first step towards tailor-made solutions aimed at improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration at the local level. Based on the challenges and needs revealed in the LSQA and on collected good practices, the local partners prepared tailor-made solutions that assisted them in coping with immigrants, emigrants or returning youth migrants on the local level.

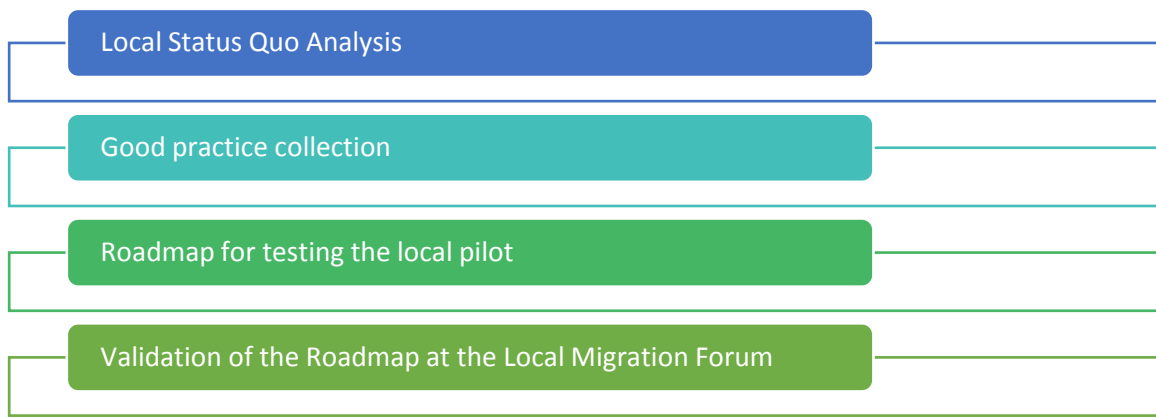
Reflecting on the local challenges and administrative capacity gaps identified and measured in the YOUMIG project, each local partner elaborated a roadmap, adapting existing practices and/or designing new ones. Different aspects were addressed, including challenges such as brain drain and care drain in the sending areas, immigrants' deskilling ("brain waste"), and difficulties accessing public services in the receiving areas. Subsequently, local pilot actions were designed and implemented in the

¹Local Status Quo Analysis can be obtained at:<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/youmig/outputs>

²The YOUMIG Good Practice Collection can be found here: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/youmig/outputs>

identified topics. In the case of already existing practices, actions were adapted to local context. The pilot actions were accompanied by local Migration Forums, which involve relevant stakeholders linked to the pilot area receiving immediate feedback and general local supervision. In addition, partners peer reviewed each other’s pilot actions as part of a study visit to increase knowledge sharing linked to the piloting, and in order to assess its transferability. The pilots were evaluated based on a common methodology.

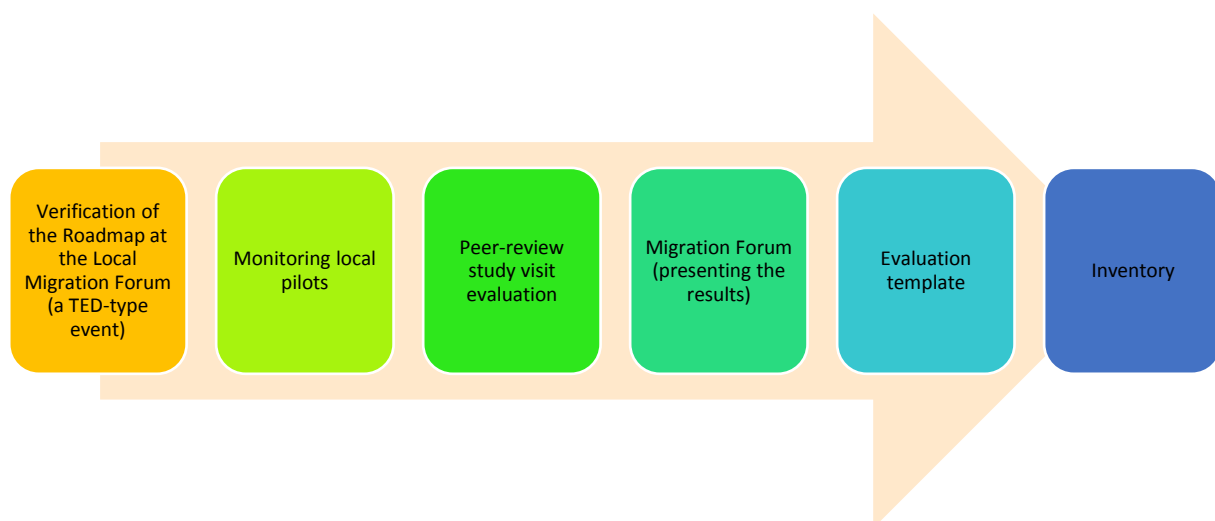
Fig. 1: Preparation of the local pilot



The local pilot’s testing phase incorporated several activities: implementation - accompanied by the monitoring-activities and presentation of the results to all 19 partners, as well as peer-review study visits in which local partners not only visited each other, but also capitalised on the lessons learned during the pilot project’s implementation.

In the figure below, the entire process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the local pilots is documented.

Fig. 2: Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the local pilots



With each of the local partners basing their pilot actions on field research and LSQA, the individual action plans are naturally distinct.

Table 1: Overview of YOUMIG pilot activity by local partners

Local partner	Name of pilot activity	Brief description of the pilot activity
Graz	M-GIST-HUB Engaging migrant girls from the Danube region in natural science and technology	<p>The city of Graz is currently witnessing a trend: its youth lack interest in obtaining an education in natural science and technology, which is especially typical of young women with a migration background. It has been found that in many cases there is little awareness of which skill sets are required or what job opportunities exist in obtaining such an education.</p> <p>The M-GIST-HUB is therefore concerned primarily with raising awareness among the target group, and above all, including family members of the target group, since young people rarely make such important decisions independently; therefore the influence of family members(who may also lack awareness of educational possibilities), is also one of the decisive factors.</p> <p>Ultimately, raising awareness of the opportunities available to the target group has an impact on their integration into society.</p>
Kanjiža	Stay, work, be happy!	<p>The Municipality of Kanjiža has opened a co-working space, providing its youth with the opportunity to gain business and language competences to further their opportunities in the Serbian labour market, since overall cooperation with the established national structures was inadequate for the specific situation of the municipality.</p> <p>Through the municipality-owned centre, the target group of young potential emigrants has been offered advice and support, thereby influencing their decision to migrate abroad or not.</p> <p>By means of this activity, the local partner is tackling the issue of youth emigration from the municipality to neighbouring Hungary, especially since the majority of the population is part of the Hungarian minority and has better language competencies in Hungarian than in the national language (Serbian).</p>

Local partner	Name of pilot activity	Brief description of the pilot activity
Maribor	CWMB YOUMIG (Co-Working Maribor)	<p>Maribor is a city facing both immigration and emigration. Therefore, the CWMB YOUMIG programme is targeting young people with a migration background or intention to migrate, as well as offering a supportive environment for return migrants.</p> <p>The co-working centre is offering support for young people on their path to self-employment, by offering free desk sharing in a stimulating environment with access to key support organizations within the city (including national SPOT points, a science park, and consultations available at the regional development agency), as well as linguistic support in the case of language barriers for migrants.</p> <p>By offering such support, CWMB YOUMIG provides a hub, staying in touch with its members even in the event of their emigration from the city. It also forms a supportive network for immigrants integrating into society through self-employment.</p> <p>During the pilot period, CWMB attracted 3 immigrants and 12 potential emigrants.</p>
Szeged	Sensitization and multicultural training (SAMU)	<p>The Municipality of Szeged identified an opportunity to facilitate the social integration of young migrants with nursery-school children (ages 3-6), through a programme provided by public pre-school childcare providers.</p> <p>Trainings on sensitisation and multiculturalism were conducted among public pre-school childcare providers and with municipal staff in order to break down the potential communication barriers between public service providers and immigrants.</p> <p>The pilot activities contributed positively to public service providers (municipality and nursery school), above all, by raising staff competencies in dealing with the issues of immigrants (mostly young parents) who do not share the same cultural background and command of the language as their native peers.</p> <p>The trainings proved successful, and provided staff with tools that could also be applied outside their immediate field of work.</p>

2. Local pilot identity card: creating a welcoming environment for returning migrants in the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe

Title	Creating a welcoming environment for returning migrants to support the homecoming of young people
Starting Date	01 June 2018
Duration	01 June 2018 – 31 March 2019
Local pilot holder	Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe
Number of municipal staff involved in the implementation of the local pilot	5
Target Group	Young emigrants from Sfântu Gheorghe, returnees, and locals
Stakeholders (list)	Work Force Agency, Educational Inspectorate, Chamber of Commerce, Incubator House, Junior Business Club, LAM Foundation
Costs (as per AF)	€5,000
Transferred Good Practice (ref. to the Roadmap)	<p>We have selected two good practices; both of them based on the principle of building relationships between emigrants and locals to facilitate mutual help both inside and outside the country. Local authorities and families are considered key factors in building this community.</p> <p>Migrants: 3.3.3. Promoting cooperation between migrant communities and local governments to facilitate development; Georgia and Latvia</p> <p>Returnees: 4.1.1. Integration of Georgian migrants into the labour market</p>

3. Summary of the local pilot

Sfântu Gheorghe's pilot project the SEPSINET webpage had been elaborated in terms of its structure and main graphic elements by October 2018. However, it was only by the end of the year that it began to be filled with content.

The target group was defined as young persons originating from Sfântu Gheorghe, both returnees and those living, working, or studying abroad.

The webpage functions as a bridge, a communication channel between communities that strengthens ties with those who are far away from their hometown. In addition, it facilitates the reintegration of returnees, or those with intentions to return home. To this end, local news and events are shared in two languages: Romanian and Hungarian. The local news provides information on the city's investment and development plans, as well as information about youth programmes and youth-related public policies supported locally. The online platform publishes video interviews with representatives of the

local institutions; these consider different aspects of a demographic challenge caused, in part, by massive outmigration. The website also features interviews with young returned migrants who recount their stories of returning home, the factors that led them to do so, the difficulties they faced during reintegration, and the steps they took when starting a business, or becoming successful in their work/careers.

Revitalising the SEPSINET website has given emigrants a realistic insight into developments in their home city through the stories of young returnees. All of these stories share a common message: each return migrant finds his/her place in the community, socially and economically; and each feels strongly connected to the local community, while acknowledging the importance of family and friends.

4. Challenges addressed in the local pilot

Major local challenges and opportunities related to youth migration, identified by the Local Status Quo Analysis (Activity 3.2) and addressed in local pilot

Migrants who had come home for a short visit and returnees who had spent a considerable time abroad both mentioned similar problems, which can be divided into seven categories: communication problems with the authorities, bureaucratic processes, the attitudes of authorities, problems regarding naturalisation, poor infrastructure, labour market problems and challenges regarding mentality. The most frequently mentioned of these relate to the problem-solving capacities of diverse Romanian public institutions, in comparison to those experienced by migrants in foreign countries where citizens' problems are not treated with mistrust and indifference, as is often the case in Romania. A lack of transparency on the part of public services is exacerbated by the slow adoption of digital solutions that if adopted, could both facilitate and speed up information provision and the problem-solving services of the authorities. In response, the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe is determined to improve the quality of local administrative services.

The creation of the SEPSINET website has given emigrants a realistic and positive image of their home city through the stories of its returned youth. These stories are mostly tell of success: the marketing manager and the sales manager who left Dubai to move home, the couple in the catering trade who moved back from the United Kingdom to open a vegetarian diner, the topographer and his wife who came home from Budapest, and so on. The message in each case was broadly the same: that each returnee found their place socially and economically, and that connection to one's local community, family and friends reaps benefits for everyone.

Given more time, the website could become a virtual meeting place for people from Sfântu Gheorghe – both emigrants and returnees, where it is hoped that returnees will talk about the opportunities and advantages of living in a shared hometown.

5. LogFrame of the local pilot

PILOT SUMMARY	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RISKS / ASSUMPTIONS
OBJECTIVE	Keep young people in the city or facilitate their return, by offering a wide range of high quality public services	Number of stakeholders, actors providing information Current: 0 Target: 5	
AIM	Create an online community platform, targeting young migrants and returnees, connecting them with their hometown, in addition to presenting possibilities of returning.	Number of emigrants, returnees registered on www.sepsinet.ro Current: 0 Target: 55	The launching of local programmes by the Municipality, the aim of which is to promote and facilitate the return of emigrants
RESULTS	Upload the platform www.sepsinet.ro with content	Number of emigrants, returnees, locals who interact weekly Current: 0 Target: 8	Update the platform regularly with relevant content, keeping in touch with young migrants.
ACTIVITIES	'Revitalise' the online platform	Means & Costs External: 5,000 EUR	Migrant youth will use the service provided by the local YOUMIG partner
			Pre-conditions Needs identified by the LSQA Mapping the stakeholders

The Logical Framework Approach was used for the preparation and validation of the pilot activities within the Local Migration Forum with the involvement of the stakeholders.

6. Indicators, linked to the local pilot

Monitoring: indicators planned and achieved within the pilot project are presented in the table below.

	Planned (April 2018)	Achieved (March 2019)
Indicator 1	Number of stakeholders, actors providing information	We have received relevant data regarding the activities of the stakeholders, e.g. contact lists, main activities, etc.
Definition	Number of stakeholders providing relevant information for the content of the site	
Baseline	0	
Target	5	
Data Collection (by whom and how)	Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe	
	Planned (April 2018)	Achieved (March 2019)
Indicator 2	Number of emigrants, returnees registered on/visiting www.sepsinet.ro	Two persons – one from the UK and the other from Hungary have contacted the Municipality through SEPSINET, asking for information regarding job opportunities with a view to returning home In less than 3 months SEPSINET received over 20,700 visits The videos are the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interesting ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one; the articles and written interviews also had many visitors.
Definition	Number of emigrants, returnees visiting the website www.sepsinet.ro	
Baseline	0	
Target	55	
Data Collection (by whom and how)	Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe	

7. Planned and implemented activities

Evaluating the www.sepsinet.ro website
 Creating the 'concept-design' of the website
 Contracting an IT company to update the webpage
 Externalising the 'content-service': entrusting someone to manage the site
 Uploading content to the site: collecting data on migrants and returnees; setting up and updating a database on them; collecting basic information about the city; writing articles; conducting interviews and presenting the YOUMIG project etc.
 Communication activities
 Migration Forum linked to the pilot
 Monitoring traffic on the web site
 Final report on the website's utilisation
 Venue: online. The physical venue will be in the Registration Office of the Municipality

8. Evaluation of the local pilot

8.1. Problems and needs (Relevance)

Please state your opinion: were the selected (or invented) good practices that you transferred adequate to the specific needs of the youth I/E/R in your local community and how?

Migrants who had come home for a short visit and returnees who had spent a considerable time abroad both mentioned similar problems, which can be divided into seven categories: communication problems with the authorities, bureaucratic processes, the attitudes of authorities, problems regarding naturalisation, poor infrastructure, labour market problems and challenges regarding mentality. The most frequently mentioned of these relate to the problem solving capacity of diverse Romanian public institutions, in comparison to those experienced by migrants in foreign countries where citizens' problems are not treated with mistrust and indifference, as often the case in Romania. A lack of transparency on the part of public services is exacerbated by the slow adoption of digital solutions that if adopted, could both facilitate and expedite information provision and problem solving services of the authorities. In response, the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe is determined to improve the quality of local administrative services.

The creation of the SEPSINET website has given emigrants a realistic and positive image of their home city through the stories of its returned youngsters. These protagonists of these stories are mostly successful: the marketing manager and sales manager who left Dubai to move home, the couple who left catering work in the United Kingdom to open a vegetarian diner, the topographer and his wife who returned home from Budapest, and so on. The message in each case was broadly the same: that each returnee found their place socially and economically, and that connection to one's local community, family and friends, reaps benefits for everyone.

Given time, the website could become a virtual meeting place for people from Sfântu Gheorghe – both emigrants and returnees, where returnees can talk about the opportunities and advantages of living in a common hometown.

8.2. Achievement of purpose (Effectiveness)

Please assess the effectiveness of the output level indicators – have the goals been reached in this regard? (see the table of indicators in Monitoring report as a reference point)

Since its launch, the website's audience has grown continuously. Visitors from around the globe can click on articles, videos, interviews, and features of the virtual OSS. In less than 3 months of activity, the site has accrued more than 20,700 visits. Although lacking a structured media campaign to promote the site, the content shared on the site's social media profiles, such as Instagram and Facebook, has helped to directly promote the recently launched website to young users. Videos are the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interesting ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one, but articles and written interviews have also received a lot of attention. Most visits come from Romania, of course, followed by countries such as Hungary, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries, but also from less expected places such as Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines and China. The virtual OSS, as part of the SEPSINET platform was designed as a practical tool for those looking for basic information in several spheres of public interest. To date, the topic section of the virtual OSS has been visited 470 times, and according to the data analytics, the number of users continues to grow. Feedback has been mostly

positive and constructive, providing further ideas for the site's improvement. The stakeholders, involved from the beginning of the project, helped to identify the needs and possible solutions required to reach the target group, in addition to sending useful data that was shared on the portal.

Please rate the usefulness of the second local event and migration forum for the implementation of local pilot?

The second local event organised on 12 March 2018, brought together project partners from Romania, academic researchers and employees of the local government, local stakeholders, and actors with an interest in the topic of youth migration. These stakeholders included organisations involved in local enterprise development as well as staff from the Regional Employment Office, the Workforce Agency and Chamber of Commerce, Incubator House, the Junior Business Club, the LAM Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Educational Inspectorate. The aim of the event was to discuss two municipality projects to be launched within the framework of YOUMIG. The two projects, namely developing the SEPSINET website and setting up a One-stop-shop service, were both dedicated to issues concerning return migration. All the forum participants welcomed the projects and provided further inputs for their improvement. Stakeholders involved in developing enterprises and financing start-up businesses for Romanian citizens living abroad, outlined some of the typical bureaucratic frustrations experienced by those intending to return and start a business. To demonstrate their involvement in the projects, members of the organisations (mentioned above) offered their expertise in addressing and reaching migrant communities.

How did the peer-review study visits influence the implementation of the local pilot?

The Sepsinet webpage's structure and main graphic elements were elaborated in October 2018, but it was only by the end of the year that content was added to the portal. At the end of September 2018, we hosted our peers from Burgas, Bulgaria, which explains why this study visit had a limited effect on SEPSINET website.

How would you rate the involvement of the stakeholders?

The stakeholders were involved from the project's outset; they helped to identify the needs and possible solutions required to reach the target group, in addition to providing valuable inputs. We encountered some delays in receiving the requested information from the stakeholders. Also, the institutions and service providers often lacked flexibility due to the rapidly changing national situation.

How well was the local pilot accepted by decision makers (e.g., the Mayor) in the municipality?

The stakeholder platform (including decision makers in the municipality), was fully supportive of the activity, and well aware of its relevance. The Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe is committed to encouraging return migration, and intends to maintain the SEPSINET platform, in the event of stakeholders being able to providing content.

What were the challenging factors in the implementation of the local pilot?

There were some challenging factors during the pilot's implementation: in the beginning, finding a content provider for the SEPSINET platform was very challenging; after this, there were some technical problems relating to the site's operation.

Although it was easy to find Hungarian youth (over 75% of the population of Sfântu Gheorghe are

ethnic Hungarians), we had some difficulties finding Romanian returnees who were willing to talk about the opportunities and advantages of living in the municipality.
We encountered some delays in receiving the requested information from the stakeholders.
We agreed with the lead partner to extend the pilot activity implementation period.

8.3. Sound management and value for money (Efficiency)

Please describe the efficiency of the local pilot regarding costs, staff engagement and time consumption. Were the results/objectives achieved within time and budget constraints?

All the set performance indicators were achieved within the proposed project budget.

8.4. Achievement of wider effects (Impact)

Please describe the impacts of the local pilots on young I/E/R in your local community. What difference would it have made had the local pilot not been implemented?

In less than 3 months of activity, there were over 20,700 visits to the site. Although lacking a professional, structured media campaign to promote the site, content shared on the site's social media profiles, such as Instagram and Facebook, helped to promote the recently launched website to young users. Videos on the portal were the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interesting ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one, though articles and written interviews also received many visitors. The stakeholders were kept informed regarding the pilot activities.

8.5. Likely continuation of the achieved results (Sustainability)

Is there a need to expand or modify the pilot activities and to incorporate them in the long-standing provision of services at the local level?

The Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe is enthusiastic about encouraging return migration, and intends to maintain the SEPSINET platform, in the event of stakeholders expressing an interest in providing content.

8.6. The pilot's strengths/organisation

Please list the strengths of the local pilot implementation (e.g., in terms of staff commitment, stakeholder participation, support of the Mayor's Office, etc.)

The SEPSINET website offers a realistic image of the city for potential return migrants through the positive stories of youth who have enjoyed success since returning home.

8.7. Being proud of...

What you are particularly proud of regarding the implementation of the local pilot?

Our biggest achievements so far are:

Two persons, one from UK and the other from Hungary, contacted the Municipality through SEPSINET, requesting information on job opportunities, with a view to returning home.

In less than 3 months, the website received more than 20,700 visits.

The popularity of the videos: the more interesting ones have received more than 1000 clicks, while the most viewed one has received almost 2,800 hits. Moreover, articles and written interviews have also been viewed many times.

8.8. Conclusions & recommendations

Summary of the conclusions and lessons learned during the local pilot's implementation.

The pilot action's main objective have been achieved; the SEPSINET website offers the town's emigrants a realistic and positive image of the city using the stories of returned youngsters as a vehicle for this purpose.

It is recommended that the SEPSINET platform be maintained beyond the pilot's testing period.

Author of the Report

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