

SLOVENIA | GOLDEN YEARS: A Healthy Mind and Green Fingers for Sustainable Living

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwX2WC0eino> (video in Slovenian)

The international project GOLDEN YEARS, implemented by partner libraries, Slovenian green library Franc Ksaver Meško Ormož Library and Croatian "Nikola Zrinski" Čakovec Library, took place in the form of two cross-border events from 1 April to 30 July 2025. The project was part of the Interreg programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027, aiming to improve the quality of life of the elderly, helping to maintain mental and physical health, social inclusion, teaching healthy habits and obtaining new skills.



Project manager Željka Hatvalić Strahija, director of the "Nikola Zrinski" Library in Čakovec, Ljiljana Križan, director of the Ormož Library, Milica Šavora, and project manager, Marijana Korotaj. Photo credit: Ciril Ambrož

The first part of the project was delivered on May 7, with the Rhythm of Knitting event organized by the "Nikola Zrinski" Čakovec Library. Slovenian readers traveled to nearby Čakovec, where they learned about the benefits of therapeutic knitting, and a practical knitting workshop was also organized. Cross-border cooperation continued on May 27 in Ormož with the event Healthy Mind and Green Fingers for Sustainable Living, when more than a hundred participants from Croatia and Slovenia visited the library.



Morning workout with School of Health – Book

The School of Health organized a morning workout called 1,000 movements, which is held on the library's summer terrace every weekday morning, and was open to all visitors. This was followed by three lectures on the topic of health and healthy living: *Caring for plants is caring for yourself: the positive effects of putting in the soil* by social gerontologist Dr. Tanja Žmauc, *Healthy nutrition for the golden years*, which was delivered together with short physical exercises by dietitians Valerija Rotar and Maruša Motaln from the Ormož Health Promotion Center, and *Miracle plants that we all need*, by Ddr. Ana Vovk. The lectures were held in Slovenian, but the lecturers also provided Croatian translations of the material they presented.



Green Fingers Corner. Photo credit: Ciril Ambrož



Green Fingers of Čakovec and Ormož. Photo credit: Ciril Ambrož

Lectures were followed by workshops in the library garden. In the Green Fingers corner the golden donor of the Ormož Seed Library presented the participants with numerous plants and a set of seeds from his garden, which the participants took home and sowed in their own gardens. Numerous seedlings grown in the library beds also planted in Slovenian and Croatian gardens. Visitors transplanted the seedlings into pots with the help of librarians.

In the Health and Wellbeing corner, employees of the Ormož Health Promotion Center measured the motor and physical abilities of visitors, performed memory training exercises and provided numerous useful information about health care. A corner for Living with Dementia and related lecture were delivered by the Ormož Forget-me-not Association; the Ormož library is a dementia-friendly location, and it hosts monthly expert-led self-help groups for relatives. Participants also visited the library apiary and learned about bees and the work of a beekeeper with the president of the Ormož Beekeeping Association.

As part of the cross-border project, a Recipe Booklet was created based on the recommendations of the Ormož Health Promotion Center and the TKD Kog Farmers' Women's Association, which we translated into Croatian. We wanted the contacts between Čakovec and Ormož to continue even after the end of the project, so a Facebook group called *Zeleni prsti Čakovca in Ormoža* was created for this purpose, to build a better future for all. The event ended with a guided tour of the city of Ormož, where Croatian colleagues learned about the beauty and sustainable practices of the city.



Franc Ksaver Meško Ormož Library Team.
Photo credit: Ciril Ambrož

The project perfectly demonstrated the power of cooperation and networking between public libraries. It proved that borders are not an obstacle – they can often be an advantage, a challenge, and an opportunity for the creation of something bigger and better.