



## INNOVATION JOURNEY

Born and raised in the commune of Saschiz, Florentina Călugăr pursued a university degree in journalism and public relations in the city of Sibiu. After a brief stint as a teacher, Florentina transitioned into the media. Her journey took a significant turn when she returned to Saschiz to work at the local municipality, where she spearheaded various community projects. Her pivotal role emerged as she became the manager of the Local Action Group Dealurile Târnavelor, focusing on rural development. In 2015, to meet one of the selection criteria for the Local Development Strategy of the LAG, she established the Saschiz Women's Neighborhood Association.



The association was born out of a need to formalize the already strong informal networks among women in Saschiz. Traditionally, women played significant but often unrecognized roles in the community, organizing social gatherings and supporting local traditions. The association aims to empower women economically and socially, providing

them with the resources and support needed to develop sustainable small businesses and engage more actively in community life.

The association focuses on various sustainable initiatives, from promoting local crafts and gastronomy to organizing community events and educational programs, while also developing tourism. The initiative is instrumental in organizing the annual Rhubarb Fest, supporting local artisans, and creating educational opportunities for both children and adults, while increasing the visibility of the rural community at a regional, national and international level.

## THE INNOVATION IMPACT

Florentina's initiatives have significantly increased volunteerism and community engagement in Saschiz. The Rhubarb Fest, for instance, attracts tourists and promotes local heritage. This festival has become a symbol of the pride and unity of the community, drawing participation from residents and tourists alike.

Economically, Florentina's model empowers women by supporting sustainable small businesses led by women. Women in Saschiz have gained financial autonomy, contributing to the local economy by producing, selling traditional foods and handmade crafts and providing services. This economic empowerment reinforces their role as vital contributors to sustainable community development.

## USEFUL LINKS

[Saschiz Volunteering Center](#)  
[Saschiz Women's Neighborhood Association](#)  
[Local Action Group Dealurile Târnavelor](#)