

# Youth Centre Grabrik

## Name of the organisation

Carpe Diem udruga za poticanje i razvoj kreativnih i socijalnih potencijala djece, mladih i odraslih

## Website of the organisation

<https://www.carpediem.hr>

## Location of the organisation

Vrbanicev perivoj 4, 47000 Karlovac, Croatia

## E-mail address of the organisation

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## Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Recognition/validation of learning
- Human rights
- Discrimination
- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Active citizenship/activism
- Intercultural understanding
- Employability
- Arts and culture
- Youth information and counselling
- European/International cooperation/projects
- Volunteering/voluntarism
- Administration
- Organisation
- Planning
- Documentation
- Follow up/evaluation
- Research
- Policymaking
- Lobbying/advocacy for youth work

## Good practice category

## **Good practice aim & purpose**

Main goals of the Youth centre Grabrik (YCG) project are: Enhance the quality of life of young people in Karlovac by organising different leisure time and educative activities. For young people to develop a healthy lifestyle, to gain new competences and to empower young people to become more active in the local community, through YCG we offer organised leisure time activities. Also, YCG offers networking space between young people and empowers their social skills. YCG serves as a place for personal growth as young people often discover their interests and aspirations and as a place for developing tolerance towards „different“. Raise availability of information relevant to young people through individual, group and online activities. Part of YCG is oriented towards spreading information to young people through Youth portal, radio show „Youth in the centre“, social networks, mobile info spots and other means of promotion. Through different activities, we inform young people about rights and opportunities, programs and activities they can use in the local community. Support young people in active participation in the local community – through spreading information and giving support in the form of activities, counselling and mentorship we empower young people for active participation in the community.

## **Good practice description**

*Please describe your good practice based on the above given information (Explain your practice as such, in 'technical' terms and as clear and simple as possible.)*

The Youth Centre Grabrik (YCG) is an example of good practice at the national level in Croatia and is the first youth centre whose founding is initiated by a municipality. During 2007. workshops, the youth independently defined the goals, vision, mission and working hours of the YCG in front of youth organizations, the city districts, the Student Council and the student body. Representatives of our association participated in these workshops. All YCG activities aim to educate and inform young people for active participation in society, social inclusion, networking and cooperation among young people and youth organizations, acquiring additional competences through non-formal learning and developing youth culture, as well as the quality organization of youth leisure time. Most of the activities are carried out by youth for young people, and all these activities are encouraged by young people based on perceived needs. The YCG is open every working day from 9 am to 10 pm and on weekends as needed. During this period, activities are carried out according to a pre-determined schedule, which is adopted at the beginning of the season (end of August), when the largest number of regular activities begins. The schedule is adopted by the Program Council of the Youth Centre, which is made up of all the leaders of regular activities at the YCG. In addition to regular activities, various activities are also organized, which are also organized by different youth organizations and for young people but which have a shorter duration or are part of a specific project. These are, for example, various workshops, press conferences, meetings of project teams, councils of high school graduates and the Youth Council of the City of Karlovac, an information workshop, etc. In the first part of the YCG, there is a Youth Info Centre providing information services daily from 10 am to 6 pm. In addition to information services, users can use the Internet for free, work on a computer, which is often used by students and students when they need to work together (poster, presentation, etc.) The YCG is a place for informing and educating young people and developing active youth participation in their local community, and many youth initiatives have been launched from here. For this reason, all planned activities will be directed towards achieving this goal. Also, one of the important activities is the European Union Dialogue with Youth and Public Policy for Youth. The YCG is the seat of the Youth Council of the City of Karlovac where members of the Council regularly hold their sessions and at the same time promote their work to young people. The YCG has an activity monitoring list and the leaders of each activity are enrolled upon completion of the activity. In this way, activities, as well as

the number of users, are monitored, and twice a year the activity managers at YCG fill in evaluation questionnaires in order to monitor the quality of activities, users as well as suggest new activities, working methods, etc. We also use a tablet-based survey available at the YCG and on mobile info points to assess the needs of our city's youth.

*Please describe eventual challenges and problems related to the creation, implementation, and/or running of your good practice? (Explain the eventual difficulties that you have come across, so that others know what to think about if they want to implement your practice.)*

The biggest challenge may be the fact that more and more young people are leaving, that is one big problem of a complete state. The challenge is always the issue of sustainability, that is, financial security and continuity of activities. We have been successfully tackling this challenge for 10 years, and I hope we will in the future. The needs of young people are met they are changing, and we are developing the Centre's program precisely to meet these needs which are also challenging because we have to be very flexible and up to date. Also, it is a challenge to find quality staff for implementation of YCG activities considering the proximity of city capital – experts tend to navigate to Zagreb and search for better professional opportunities there. One big challenge is connected with the concept of shrinking spaces for civil society. Considering that youth work is mainly in the domain of civil society and whole over Europe there is the trend to shrink a scope of civil society through the cut of financing, administrative burden, demanding project management that turns youth workers into a bureaucrat, uncooperativeness of institution and decision-makers and ignoring values of quality youth policies.

*Please give the names, roles and tasks of eventual partners involved in the creation, implementation and/or running of your good practice.*

The City of Karlovac established the YCG and, through a public grant, gave it to associations to manage them. In the competitions so far our association has been selected each time to run the Youth Centre. Therefore, we are partners with the City of Karlovac in the implementation of the current Local Programs for Youth of the City of Karlovac, and we are currently partners in the development of the 3rd Local Program for Youth as well as the City of Karlovac Prevention Program. With the association Izvan fokusa, in partnership, we have been running the Grabrik Youth Center since 2016. and this is a logical continuation of cooperation. The association Izvan fokusa was created from the photo section of the Carpe Diem association, so we have been working with them for many years on various projects and they are a valuable partner on YCG. Also, we have support from the Network of NGOs for solving certain youth problems – KAoperativa. KAoperativa is a network of 11 youth associations and associations for youth initiated a dialogue with the City Government on allocating space to the associations and is currently implementing a joint project of the social and cultural centre.

*Please give an overview of the resources needed in order to establish and run your good practice. (Please describe the human, financial and other resources that are needed. Please also explain if you have got external financing from sources available for others, and if so, from what funding scheme(s).)*

The City of Karlovac has leased the space and is responsible for 30% of the overhead and maintenance costs of the YCG, as well as part of the salary costs. The total annual allocations of the City of Karlovac is HRK 155,000.00, and besides that, the work of the YCG is regularly supported by

the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, contracting authorities ESF, the European Commission through the Erasmus + program, Karlovac County, and the business sector. We have received institutional support for the stabilization of the association from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development and have 4 part-time people on it. We regularly apply for tenders from different donors (Ministries, National Agency, National Foundation, etc.) and all the projects that we are implementing have a goal to support young people on different levels and in different fields. Within other projects, we have youth workers employed and they support activities in YCG by their project activities and active engagement in grassroots youth work.

### **Good practice result & concrete effects**

#### *For young people:*

All project activities aim to educate and inform young people for active participation in society, social inclusion, networking and cooperation among young people and youth organizations, acquiring additional competences through non-formal learning and developing youth culture, as well as the quality organization of youth leisure. Most of the activities are carried out by youth for young people, and all these activities are encouraged by young people based on perceived needs. Through the organization of various workshops, young people acquire additional competences and become active citizens who influence community and society problems, become more employable and competitive in the labour market, through networking and volunteering, strengthen the community's social capital, and through information they gain new knowledge about the opportunities provided through different mobility programs. YCG has a great influence on the youth in our city as they become aware of their role in society, become aware of the need for active action and respond to all problems and needs of the youth in the city. As a consequence, the number of activities is increasing, young people are increasingly spending time in quality activities, and the number of registered addicts in Karlovac County is stagnant. The YCG is particularly conducive to improving the quality of life for rural youth by offering them a range of activities that they do not have in their places of residence. About 15% of YCG users are students from the Student Centre (young people from rural areas of Karlovac County and other counties in the Republic of Croatia), and the feedback from their educators is extremely positive because they are organized to provide additional activities that they do not have in the Student Centre. Collaboration with alternative care homes has resulted in greater involvement of young people from the social welfare system (marginalized groups) as we regularly involve them in volunteer activities and other activities at the youth centre.

#### *For youth workers:*

In YCG, there is a strong focus on young people and their needs and interests. A variety of different methods are considered in order to get the attention of young people. Standardised approaches are becoming problematic and our experience points out that young people need to identify themselves with the project. So, youth workers connected to the YCG should and do empower and understand young people, as well as respect their choices. They learn and develop this approach as well as share it and promote it in the youth sector in Croatia. In order to do so, through participation in this project they developed specific competences such as facilitation of individual and group learning in an enriching environment, designing educational programmes, organising and managing resources, collaborating in teams, building positive relationships, networking and advocating, evaluating and improving everyday practice, project managing, managing social networks and community work. Also, other youth workers have an opportunity to learn from their extensive experience.

*For your organisation as such:*

The Youth Center Grabrik is the core of our organization. The activities we carry out on individual projects and programs are built on the needs identified through the work of the YCG and they are building capacities of YCG. Because of the YCG, our organization is recognized as an example of good youth work practice, advocacy for youth work on the municipal level, and the establishment of a youth centre management model. With the YCG, we connect most of our activities and the organization is recognized nationally and internationally because of the centre. Also, given that we are recognized as an example of good practice, our organization is a desirable place to recruit quality staff, and we can more easily come up with funding for all our activities.

*For youth work in general:*

The quality of the YCG has been recognized by many NGOs in the Republic of Croatia, as well as by institutions, youth organizations and youth, as they regularly invite us as panellists to conferences and round tables to present our youth centre as an example of good practice in the Republic of Croatia. Regularly, we are hosting study visits of organisations from whole over Croatia and even from abroad. In this year alone, 4 organizations came to the study visit to the YCG: IKS Petrinja, Volunteer Centre Istria, Sunflower Association, SMART Rijeka. We were recognised as an example of good practice on the national level and we were hosting study visit within Europe Goes Local project for municipality representatives from Slovenia and Lithuania.

*For society/your community in general:*

Long-term changes are evident in the overall improvement of life in the local community. For example, in Karlovac, there are more and more events (festivals, concerts, etc.) organized by young people, whether as individuals, informal groups or two or more associations. As the Center is jointly run by 2 NGOs and 7 of them carry out their regular programs at the Center, the Youth Center has become a focal point of local community activities and cooperation with other institutions in Karlovac. The activities of the Center include all relevant institutions working with young people such as high schools, Karlovac Polytechnic, Center for Social Welfare – Family Center of Karlovac County, Institute for Public Health – Outpatient Treatment, Mental Health and Addiction Prevention Service, General Hospital – Counseling Center Center for Family Planning and Reproductive Health, Karlovac Police Department – Prevention Department, Alternative Care Institutions, Ka Hunting County, Karlovac County Youth Council, Karlovac County Youth Council, festivals, conducting volunteer activities and are some of the important drivers of civil society development in our city. Through the Youth Info Centre, we are connected and networked with all relevant institutions, the Library for Youth, youth associations, schools and the Polytechnic and Student Center in Karlovac. Through the Portal for youth, we cooperate with cultural, educational and sports organizations as well as with clubs, thus linking all events in the city that are aimed at young people. From 15.03.2012. we have become the County Info Centre for Youth, and some of the information and activities provided are organized in other cities of Karlovac County. This year, the KAOS Youth Initiative, created precisely at the YCG, made up of young people from several associations and members of the Youth Council, organized the Karlovac Carnival, which has not been organized for the last 17 years.

*Other, please specify:*

The impact of the project is also evident in educational institutions because with all the schools we

have excellent cooperation, but also with other institutions and institutions that work with young people, they often recommend us to their beneficiaries and speak very positively about us in the local community. It also contributes to the upgrading of the educational system since we put non-formal learning in the formal education system.

### **Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work**