

# City Incubator = Helping make the ideas of youth happen

## Name of the organisation

Javni zavod Mladi zmaji

## Website of the organisation

<https://www.mladizmaji.si>

## Location 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.)
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Employability
- Entrepreneurship
- Community work

## Good practice category

### Good practice aim & purpose

How to approach young people who have ideas? That was the challenge that the City of Ljubljana wanted to address. We tackled the challenge with a customised program 'What works well, and what could be even better?' in the city, in your neighbourhood, at your school? The program started-off in 2016 as the first activity of City Incubator, a platform for the implementation of the ideas of young people in Ljubljana. The program supports youth on their path of making their ideas happen. The 'Young Dragons' provides infrastructure, financial support and reach to youth, while partner organisation TiPovej!, NGO, provides workshops and a mentorship scheme with professionals from diverse industries. City Incubator stimulates and support activities that are based on an active engagement of youth on the local level. We enable an environment where mistakes are allowed, where learning by doing is the walk of talk and where community developed projects are bringing together youth, organisations supporting youth (public institutes, NGOs, business) and the City of Ljubljana. The change we strive for is a real inclusion of youth. We empower youth to actively participate in making the quality of life in Ljubljana better for them and for what they care about.

### 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.)*

City Incubator is designed as a sustainable tool for implementation of local youth initiatives, in the age range of 18 to 29.

We started the first module of City Incubator with the program 'What works well, and what could be even better?'. The innovation addresses young people who have their own ideas on how to improve the quality of life in the city and who wish to be actively involved in the life of the city. Individuals or groups may put ideas forward.

In the program they receive professional support for the fine-tuning of ideas, financial and mentor support for the implementation. City Incubator's initial purpose is to provide opportunities and to support initiatives suggested by young people who are active in the youth centres and those who were not (yet) visitors of the youth centres. In this way youth centres become spaces that offer to youth the resources for creation, an experience of 'learning by doing', opportunities to prove themselves and a chance to lead their own project. All of this develops competencies for the youth that increase employment opportunities.

City Incubator = Workshops + Mentorship + Financial Support Program "What is working well, and what could be even better?" as the program of City Incubator includes:

- 4x3 hours workshops with professionals for the realisation of ideas;
- 5 individual hours with experienced mentors;
- From 200 € to 1.000 € for the realisation of the idea for selected projects at the end of the workshops.

Currently young people are invited to propose their ideas that address the following challenges:

- Creative Ljubljana
- Solidarity Ljubljana
- Green Ljubljana

Program process:

1. Young people submit their ideas in a simple online form.
2. Up to 15 ideas participate in workshops to clarify and fine-tune their ideas.
3. Participants submit their ideas in a form of project application.
4. A committee of experts selects projects for implementation.
5. Selected projects receive mentorship and financial support.
6. Implementation of projects is conducted in collaboration with other public institutions, NGOs and local businesses.

Our criteria for the selection of participants in the workshops are:

- feasibility of the proposed project;
- positive effects for the city;
- applicability of the project;
- motivation of the applicant.

Selection criteria for financial support and mentorship by a committee are: positive impact on the city (environment, sustainability, quality of living, relationships) and feasibility (time schedule, financial plan, human resources, general impression). There have been 35 ideas turned into projects through our program so far, which include

- a pocket map for the promotion of Ljubljana districts,

- a non-competitive and creative street football,
- an informative card game for fun and for learning,
- connecting personal interests with the city,
- cultivating empowerment skills for youth LGBTIQ+ persons,
- formalisation of pedagogical processes within the cultural and artistic disciplines of hip-hop,
- a series of philosophical workshops for non-philosophers,
- a community and online platform for connecting young artists,
- a technological development for the future of food through fermentation,
- research workshops on mental health and psychological functioning of the individual,
- a recycled circus performance, etc.

*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.)*

Today young people are bombarded with too much information making it challenging to find the right channels to address young people with ideas. Partly we found solutions in the promotion through the Network of Youth Centres of Ljubljana and through street youth workers. We also promoted City Incubator through a monthly newsletter Ljubljana, Youth Information Network L'mit and among NGOs.

The second challenge is how to involve more companies and NGOs and how to make them see the projects of young people as opportunities and not just as additional work. We would like to achieve that young people are recognised as agents of changes and solutions.

The next challenge is the crucial need of some young people to get more intensive personal and professional support for realisation and sustainability of their project. Necessary for the success of an innovation as such is:

- recognition and support of city administration;
- human and financial resources (pool of mentors, finances for longer support);
- motivation of the organisational team.

We believe in young people and their potential for developing solutions for challenges of the local communities and city nowadays. They just need to get a space, knowledge and trust.

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

We approached young people with a thoughtfully designed program that supports them on the path of making their ideas happen. Young Dragons provided infrastructure, financial support and reach to the young people while TiPovej! provides a customised training program (based on decades of experience with young people education programs) and mentorship scheme (based on variety of professionals that can fit ideas from very diverse fields). Roles: KSENJA PERKO, Director, Young Dragons Public Institution; Combining managerial and trainers skills bring effective results. SONJA ČANDEK, Director, TiPovej! – Institute for Creative Society; Working with methods and techniques of non-formal learning. TADEJA BUČAR ATKINS, co-founder of Creative Nomads; A specialist in creativity, communications and branding. KAJA VUK, coordinator and assistant, Young Dragons Public Institution; Young coworker for peer to peer approach, assistance on the program.

*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).)*

Human resources KSENJA PERKO, Director, Young Dragons Public Institution SONJA ČANDEK, Director, TiPove! – Institute for Creative Society TADEJA BUČAR ATKINS, co-founder of Creative Nomads – business and communications consultancy KAJA VUK, coordinator and assistant, Young Dragons Public Institution Other employees of Young Dragons as mentors – we provide as many as we need, usually for around 5 projects. Employees of other support organisations as mentors – they provide mentorship for the project that young person applies Space, equipment, materials All youth centres of Young Dragons and also youth centres from The Network of youth centres of Ljubljana. All other spaces can be rented if they are approved in the project application. The same goes for equipment and materials for projects. Financial resources The Public Institute Young Dragons provides funding for communication and financial support for the realisation of the idea. NGO TiPovej! provides funding for the educational process. The City of Ljubljana reserved funds for the implementation of the program in the frame of public institute of Young Dragons which was founded with an aim to develop and run activities for young people.

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

*For young people:*

New knowledge of how to move the wish and ideas further and process them into the project. An experience of what is needed for a successful project, a social network and opportunity for working with innovative youth and learning from a different perspective.

*For youth workers:*

The opportunity to develop as mentors and to support young people.

*For your organisation as such:*

The insight into the lives of youth and ideas for better city.

*For youth work in general:*

It is an example of good practice and positive impact in participatory approach to work with young people. It is a positive example of collaboration between youth organisations, municipality and business.

*For society/your community in general:*

We want to showcase a successful project to inspire and pass forward an idea that works and can be applied to different environments of social development through youth support.

*Other, please specify:*

For the city: This is a new community participation tool for Ljubljana. The project allows the development and the realisation of the ideas of young people, who are not organised in the frame of organisations, associations or other formal groups. The need for such a tool was identified by a proposal of young people engaged in the process of creating the Strategy of the City of Ljubljana 2016 – 2025.

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