

# Turku Rock Academy

## **Name of the organisation**

Turun kaupungin nuorisopalvelut

## **Website of the organisation**

<http://www.turku.fi/en/youth>

## **Location of the organisation**

Vanha Suurtori 7, 20500 Turku, Finland

## **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.)
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Employability
- Arts and culture
- Safe/secure youth work environment
- Youth information and counselling
- Youth work in urban areas
- Volunteering/voluntarism
- Competence development of youth workers
- Administration
- Organisation
- Planning
- Documentation
- Follow up/evaluation

## **Good practice category**

## **Good practice aim & purpose**

The aim for launching Turku Rock Academy was the need and desire to update the youth band activities provided by the municipalities to meet the modern standards. Music has always been a big part of the youth services offered at the municipal level, but the activities often lack perseverance and determination. Too often the youth bands are left to work alone, without a peer-to-peer network or proper guidance from the adults and the service has mainly focused on providing the practice space for a starting band.

Through Rock Academy we wanted to bring the same organized methods and discipline to band activities that have always been present in the field of junior sports. Junior sports have a long tradition, a support network of experts in the field, systematic training from a very young age and constant feedback. The venues are up-to-date, and the parents of the children are actively involved in youth activities. Through this, development is very likely, which contributes to the enhancement of young people's self-esteem. A similar system and support structure were also needed to support the music hobby, and that is the core idea of Rock Academy: goal-oriented, systematic, and long-term work.

## **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.)*

Turku Rock Academy is based on two cornerstones: guided pre-production in the studio and clinics led by professionals. The Academy also offers the bands a chance for gigs, both local and national and a wide network of peers and music industry professionals. The band activities are addressed comprehensively with the aim of growing skilled and versatile bands that have a good and wide understanding of the music industry. Selected bands will receive regular guidance for two years.

Despite its name, Turku Rock Academy is open to all musical styles, not just rock bands. The bands get studio time every other week during the two years of operation. Every other week the bands also have guided rehearsals and get feedback not only on their music but also on their stage presence. Each band is also provided with performance opportunities appropriate to their level. Media productions are also part of the package in the form of promotional photos and eventually music videos. Where possible, support and advice will be provided also after the two-year TRA period.

In addition to guiding the actual music making, another key aspect of the Academy are various music-related clinics, i.e. lectures. These are organized twice a month during the active season (excluding summer). At these events, music professionals will give the young people presentations about their work and their role in the music industry. The events are open to all interested. The approach emphasizes professionalism and regularity, while respecting everyone's personal capabilities and limitations. The bands participating in the Turku Rock Academy have guided activities practically almost every week; guided rehearsals, studio time, gig, or a clinic. Regular meetings are held with the band to follow up on the progress of the band and to discuss the reasons why progress has been slow or fast.

The groups are moving at different speeds, and it is important to explain, especially to the bands progressing at a slower pace, why this is the case. It is crucial to set aside time for this when planning the activities. Discussions with young people are an important part of the programme and they cannot be compromised. There needs to be also time to talk to young people about things other than

music if they need it, after all the core activity is still youth work, not music business.

Turku Rock Academy also aims to provide a very realistic picture of the music industry as a whole; what it takes to make it as a recording artist. The operating model also enables other young people interested in the music industry to be involved. In addition to playing music, young people can practice performing stage techniques, making media productions (promos, gigs, music videos, social media), mixing, lighting, etc. In the best case, young people involved can provide real help in running the activities.

*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 main challenges for implementing the programme in a municipality is securing sufficient funding allocated especially to Rock Academy to ensure the continuity of the programme and finding the personnel who have the required skills and knowledge required to carry out all the activities related to the programme.

When launching Rock Academy -model in a municipality, it is important from the beginning to aim for long-term activities and to embed the model in the city / municipality's regular activities and youth work. Successful deployment requires ongoing dialogue and commitment from the executives and securing sufficient resources for the operation. Operations can be tested with external project funding, but the purpose of the operating model is to be continuous, not short-term projects.

Turku Rock Academy was originally launched with external funding but since 2017 it has been secured with its own annual budget. Added external funding might be helpful in the beginning for purchasing the required hardware and investing in marketing and making a name for the new addition to services.

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

Turku Rock Academy was created in 2011 by Tomi Arvas and Mark Bértényi. At the end of 2011, Arvas and Bértényi built the Rock Academy training model and in 2012, operations started on a practical level, when six local bands were selected to the programme from the Turku Bandstand Competition. Arvas is currently the executive director and Bértényi the executive producer of the Turku Rock Academy. With funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Turku Rock Academy's operating model was introduced 2014-2016 in Tampere, Jyväskylä, Joensuu, Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Rauma, and 2019-2020 in Rovaniemi, Kemi, Raahel, Kuopio and Kouvola. The Rock Academy Finland network is currently coordinated by project manager Outi Nurmela. In 2019 Petteri Ruotsalainen, XAMK, has compiled a thesis on the implementation of the Rock Academy operating model.

*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 organization running the Rock Academy operating model must either own or have the re-sources to purchase the following facilities:

- Training facilities for Rock Academy bands
- Stage training facilities
- pre-production studio facilities
- studio facilities for master production

In addition, employees who can commit to regular operations and coordination of the Rock Academy activities, are required to successfully run operations. The final amount of human re-sources required will be shaped by the number of bands that are selected on a yearly basis, the existing contact networks and the amount of cooperation used.

When planning to implement the operating model, it is advisable to consult the executive director and / or producer of Turku Rock Academy on the necessary resources, both in terms of premises and personnel. When planning the activities, it must be kept in mind that the activities' core is still youth work, and not only musical skills but also the ability to direct youth work is required. It is possible to run the operations completely outside the local youth centres and spaces, but it is noteworthy that in practice it has been found that the space has a strong influence on the success of the stabilization of the programme. A common, clear space where all activities can be carried out in the same space, clearly assigned to the Rock Academy will help in consolidating the activity.

In addition to the facilities, Turku Rock Academy provides youngsters with appropriate backline and PA equipment for training. Equipment is also borrowed for gigs when needed. Support and advice are provided for young people's own equipment and instrument purchases, and Turku Rock Academy also negotiates discounts with local music vendors. If needed, bands will also be offered free playing and singing lessons. Turku Rock Academy has also donated forwards instruments and other equipment. It is also good to take into account sufficient equipment purchases when it comes to resourcing as it is important that Rock Academy can provide all the equipment required for gigging so that the cost of gigging is not too high for the youngsters.

Turku Rock Academy has its own annual budget that covers the costs of equipment, fees for the speakers and other costs. TRA has its own studio, two rehearsal rooms and a bigger space for stage rehearsals in one building assigned to musical youth work. TRA employs executive director, executive producer and another producer as a purchase service. Many smaller tasks related to the day to day activities are carried out by the interns, students and persons undergoing non-military service. TRA was first launched with external funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture but has had its own budget since 2017.

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

*For young people:*

The purpose of the Rock Academy -programme is to provide young people with information and practical experience in the music industry as a whole and to present all the different employment opportunities it offers (including other than playing and performing). The youth will get practical experience from performing, studio work and/or other skills related to gigs (lights, mixing etc). At best the bands will evolve into recording/touring artists. Youth who have focused on other skills (e.g. mixing) have even better chances of securing employment in the industry and several youths have

been found employment in industry related activities after internship/ work tryout at the Academy.

The approach to all activities is always from the youth work aspect and the aim of the programme is to offer life management assistance to youth whether they are involved in band or other activities. The approach seeks to prevent social exclusion, increase friendship and provide young people with a peer-to-peer network of likeminded youth. Creating own networks and getting to know the other Rock Academy bands is also heavily encouraged. The sense of community between the bands is emphasized and the youth are encouraged to go to gigs of other Rock Academy bands.

*For youth workers:*

The structured operating model enables youth workers to plan activities well in advance and the programme is executed with the same quality standards everywhere. The Rock Academy Finland network offers all youth workers implementing the programme with a nationwide peer network and its hub, Turku Rock Academy, quality control and constant advice. The work is more meaningful with measurable outcomes, structured model and clear goals.

*For your organisation as such:*

The main activities of Turku Rock Academy are to support band hobby activities and preventive youth work. The operating model has provided new methods for preventive youth work and there are several stories that prove the positive impact the programme has had on many youths. The operating model also provides the youth workers with a structured guideline for the work done with the youth which enables more proactive and planned approach. After several years of work, a significant nationwide network of professionals in the field has been established. This network has been a great asset for Turku and widened the contacts in music youth work to cover the whole country.

*For youth work in general:*

Rock Academy operating model is a new and more organized approach to youth work done in the framework of band hobby and music in general. It offers a very disciplined approach to guiding youth and strong support to activities from the nationwide Rock Academy Finland network. The network offers also opportunities to attend gigs and clinics also in other locations.

*For society/your community in general:*

At its best, the Rock Academy operating model has a broad employment impact. In addition to the trainees and the employed, the activity provides additional revenue for local music professionals, as for example hiring music and vocal teachers to support the development of bands is a part of the activity. Cooperation with local industry professionals will also provide young people with information about the local music industry and create opportunities for longer-term cooperation. Media productions can be done in collaboration with educational institutions or as a media workshop.

In the Rock Academy model, a regional network is central. There is close cooperation with record companies, festivals, show venues, program agencies, producers, music media, industry associations, managers and individual musicians. This allows setting even bigger goals alongside recreational activity.

The programme reaches a good number of youths in danger of social exclusion and connects them with adults working in the music industry. Music as a common language makes it possible to more easily reach the youth and allows for a deeper connection. Acting as a role model, getting to share their knowledge and making an impact on youth is highly motivating for the industry professionals.

*Other, please specify:*

Turku Rock Academy has also impact and added value on music and arts in general. Labels and music industry are based on making high revenues and creating economical value. The operating model solidifies the development of musical art, no matter what the style and form. The added value is especially high for those subgenres that are neglected by the industry as financially non-lucrative. The model encourages the preservation of musical diversity and supports also musical art that is not mainstream or currently in vogue.

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