

To make strategy, takes strategy

Name of the organisation

Piiriveere Liider MTÜ

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Not all young people have enough information on where, how and to whom to express their ideas about participation in the decision process. The proposals of young people do not always reach decision-makers. It's not always easy for decision-makers to have a dialogue with the youth, because of lack of experience with the youth. The youth and decision-makers need to gain the common interest about this dialogue and youth need support to take part in this.

The aim of the project was to involve young people in the decision-making processes (to introduce the decision making processes to the youth, to establish the contacts between the youth and the decision-makers, to teach young people how to express their proposals so that they can feel self-confident when having this dialog). More general aim of the project was to teach young people to learn, to analyze their learning outcomes and how to become aware of the whole learning process. Our purpose was that young people would become more aware of the opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. The objective of the project was dialogue between the youth and deciders, improving active decision making, informal learning, sustainability of our organization and region.

Good practice description

Our project was made for the youth (in age 13-18). We have 10 000 inhabitants in our region. It's being characterized by cultural specifics. It's a rural, sparsely populated area.

Our goal was to involve the youth in the decision processes. We (the project team) planned this process by steps. At first we learned to know each other, the project team and youth. Although our region is not large, the kids from our region didn't all know each other. So we had to build up the network and trust for this project. It was also essential, to whom we contacted first in this project.

In the project we discussed the expressions and meanings of decision making process. We saw that our youth is more educated in this than we expected. We also had some training for youth (e.g public speaking, teamwork). The theory was supported by meetings with decision-makers (representatives of municipality and also an youth counsel). At the end of our project the youth formulated the ideas, how they can participate in the decision-making process. During the project we met with youth in different locations. To moderate our workshops, we had a consultant to help us. Despite the Covid period, we still managed to meet with the youth directly. The direct and constant communication was the basis of mutual trust and cooperation. An important part of activities was to involve the youth in every step of the project. We used a FB messenger group, to discuss upcoming events and technical questions of the project.

As we locate in sparsely populated areas, then our youth has transportation problems. So we organized a bus to pick them up every time from their local youth center and later the bus took them back there. If we wouldn't have done it, many kids couldn't have participated. We had to take into consideration local specificities. We were in open and direct contact with youth, their parents, schools and youth workers. We used trust instead of control. In this project the youth wasn't a target, but they were our partners. To involve youth in decision-making was not only the aim of our project events, but it was also the content of the project preparations and events planning. We tried to be role models of what we had set as a goal of the project.

Our project worked a bit as a sieve. At first we had participants from different areas of our region. But finally the ones, who stayed on the sieve, were the kids from the area, which had the bigger need to involve the youth and to work with youth. (Other areas in our region had worked on youth participation themselves). Our practice helped us to find the problem, more precisely, the location of the problem. We learned from this project, how to build up an environment of trust and support for the youth. We also discovered the obstacles that may occur, when looking for dialog between youth and decision-makers.

Good practice result & concrete effects

As a result of the project we have received many international cooperation offers. It means more opportunities for our youth and for our partners. Our organization has become known as an organization, who is cooperating with youth. It's a good ground to start new projects.

The result of this project is the dialog between the youth and the decision-makers. One of our municipalities invited our participants to meet them for a dialogue.

The participants of our project feel more confident to talk to strangers, to adults, to deciders. They understand the process of making decisions. They are interested in taking part in it. The kids, who were too shy in our first meeting, spoke loud and clear in the last focus group interview about making decisions and about the importance of being active. They admit themselves they have more courage.

As a result of the project we have good connections with Youth, with their parents, with schools. (It was like making a safety net for kids. We managed to create a safe environment for them, so that they had courage to say their word). Many participants have left our region to bigger cities for school. But they have a connection to each other thanks to this project. We know that for some kids our project was the first experience to be involved in a project. They have said, that it has made them realize, that it's possible to do something actively themselves by projects.

As a follow-up to our project, we are planning a next project with the youth from our region. Some kids participated in our first project. But the word is spreading and we also see new interested participants. After the project has ended, we can say that it was an activating and sustainable project.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice