

Žilina Youth Council

14/08/2023 - Actions in EGL



In this new EGL in Action we've interviewed Ivana Gabrišova from the [Žilina Youth Council](#) in Slovakia. Ivana tells us about what the organisation does, how they involve young people, how they increase youth participation in rural areas, and their strategic document, the **Concept of Youth Work in the Municipality**.

What is the main focus of local youth work and field of activity for Žilina Youth Council?

Youth work in Žilina is working to engage and empower young people by providing opportunities to learn, grow, and participate in community activities. Our work involves a range of initiatives to support the social, educational, and emotional needs of young people. This also includes all sorts of community services. If we could summarize the activities of our office, they would include the following:

- Activities to support participation, volunteering, and inclusion.
- Activities aimed at identifying young people's needs and collecting data (focus groups, surveys, structured dialogue, e-consultations, etc.).
- Workshops, round tables, and negotiations with youth policy actors.
- Training activities, workshops, and seminars.
- Information seminars, webinars, public debates, and conferences.
- Activities aimed at developing communication and promotional tools.
- Campaigns and media projects aimed at communicating with young people.
- International activities (like partnership projects).



Which issues and challenges in local youth work is the Žilina Youth Council addressing?

Like in many similar settings, our challenges are around getting the stakeholders together to address the needs and increase the levels of participation and engagement. For a start, we facilitate meetings. Young people can then express the good things in their communities and the needs and issues to solve. These discussions are about change. So we start from understanding the reality first. The typical challenges are:

- How to motivate young people to take an interest in public affairs.
- How to guide local and regional politicians to take young people as partners – and not just use them when planning to write a project to get financial support – while not genuinely working with them.
- To look for ways of guiding public and local government officials so they don't make decisions about young people without young people.
- Expanding the staffing of the executive branch of the organization.

From this process of outlining the challenges together with the youngsters, the young people are invited to work towards the aims of change. They define priorities, end goals, and measures, which can be done to increase the quality of life for young people in their communities. This process serves to create a roadmap to help young people see how they want their community to look like in the near future. In our case, in 7 years' time.



What are your methods for increasing youth participation in rural areas?

We've been leading the process of creating a strategic document, the **Concept of Youth Work in the Municipality**, in rural municipalities that are interested for a period of seven years. That includes a series of meetings with young people, local politicians, municipal leadership and also the general public.

We gather information about the issues that need to be addressed in the lives of young people in face-to-face meetings. After this analysis, we set goals and activities together for two years in an action plan.

We then accompany young people and local politicians in implementing activities that eliminate the problems and challenges in the respective municipality. After two years, we set the next plan of activities together with them.

We've been in contact with the local youth and politicians for several years this way, following the newly appointed people after the elections. This encourages youth participation in public affairs. The process of establishing rural community management is in the process of developing and implementing a strategic document for promoting the livelihoods of young people: the Concept of Youth Work in the community.



What tools and resources are used for the quality development of rural youth work?

We use a range of tools, such as roundtables, discussions, sometimes online questionnaires, and consultations on produced draft documents. The [European Charter on Local Youth Work](#) is also used as a motivational tool.



How do you ensure the quality development of youth work in rural areas?

Young people in the countryside set up their own Youth Councils. These are groups where they organize their own activities. Sometimes they are also involved in the challenges of the municipal leadership.

As an organization, we offer these groups training. Some of the trainings we offer are methods and non-formal education aimed at personal development, knowledge of current legislation concerning young people, and the possibility of obtaining grants to support their activities, including Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. We also offer regular consultations if young people need them.



In your opinion, what is the impact of the programs you run and support so far on the rural youth, municipality, and broader?

It's motivational, especially when young people manage to get financial support from a program. In that case, they can stir up the lives of young people in the local and broader communities. Because young people living in the countryside have a keen sense of the local community and of their contribution to it. They are happy to carry out activities that involve not only young people but also other age groups.

What interesting activities are coming up for Žilina Youth Council this year?

We plan to focus on training in the project development process and how to write a good project, especially in the Erasmus+ program. They will also be able to implement their own small project in the village.



- We plan to motivate young people in a similar way in participation on the school grounds in school parliaments.
- A national exchange of ideas and activities of school parliaments in the school territory.
- A **national conference** of youth parliaments of towns and villages.
- Appreciation of **active citizenship** by young people, local politicians, and engaged citizens in local communities.
- **Regional conference** - How to raise the profile of youth work and participation in the Žilina region.

All these activities are aimed at promoting the participation of young people in the different environments where they are active, networking with them and making examples of good practice visible.

Read more:

- Get to know Ivana better in [our interview for Faces of EGL](#)
- Website of the [Žilina Youth Council](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)