

emPOWER YOUth: youth-led municipality strategy

Name of the organisation

Asociatia GEYC

Website of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making
- Participation of young people in activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Active citizenship/activism
- Research

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

“emPOWER YOUth” is a transformative initiative aimed at fostering active participation of young people in the government process in the town of Campina, Romania, while drafting a comprehensive youth strategy to be embraced by the municipality. The project is centered around empowering the youth to become co-creators of their community’s future, instilling a sense of ownership, and strengthening democratic values. Through surveys, consultations, interviews, focus groups and collaborative workshops, all with the young people at the core, the project aspires to bridge the gap between the aspirations of the youth and the decisions taken at the municipal level. This initiative is also a case study for our organization, as we are trying to develop a model of including young people in the decision-making process that can be replicated in other communities as well.

The local issue that we addressed through this project is the lack of participation of young people to the decision-making processes in their local communities, an issue which stems from many different factors, among which being the lack of trust in local authorities and lack of communication.

Good practice description

The project was driven by the belief that young people hold valuable perspectives and insights that can positively shape policies and strategies that affect their lives. It followed a multi-step process that engaged both the youth and local authorities in a participatory approach:

- youth empowerment phase: through an intensive workshop, 20 selected young people gained knowledge in areas such as democracy, participation, activism, research, social media communication, to prepare them for the following stages;
- community research phase: it was done through a number of instruments and stretched for a period of 7 months, with the 20 young people being the main “actors”. We organized focus groups, interviews with locals (not just young people), consultations in all the high schools in town and we gathered opinions on a wide range of topics, from education and employment to environment and social issues;
- municipality meetings: periodically, we had meetings with the local authorities, keeping them updated on the findings and learning more about the current initiatives in the city, in order to create synergies in the upcoming youth strategy;
- youth strategy development: based on the data collected and insights gained from the surveys and consultations, a dedicated team of youth and experts collaboratively drafted a comprehensive Youth Strategy. This strategy outlines the mission, beneficiaries, context (at international, national and local levels), methodology, analysis of the results, objectives, actionable steps and policy recommendations to address the identified needs and concerns and possible sources to finance the proposed actions;
- municipal adoption: the drafted Youth Strategy was formally presented to the municipality for review and adoption. The strategy is currently being integrated into the municipal planning process, ensuring that the youth’s perspectives are considered in the decision-making and policy formulation.

emPOWER YOUTH wishes to serve as a blueprint for involving young people in the government process and harnessing their creativity, energy, and insights to shape a more inclusive and prosperous community. Through its participatory approach and collaborative spirit, the project sets an inspiring example for other communities seeking to engage their youth population in governance and policy-making.

Good practice result & concrete effects

Besides the **youth-municipality collaboration** that was fostered throughout the duration of the project, **empowering** young individuals to actively engage in civic matters and contribute to the development of their community and **promoting inclusivity in governance**, this good practice has produced several tangible effects, one of them being the organization of a Youth Festival, which is going to take place between 15-17 September in Campina, Romania (Câmpina YOUTHart Festival). This is a concrete response to the need of promoting sports, creative, and cultural activities, as well as community dialogue that was identified in the research stage of the project.

The Festival will bring together a diverse range of activities, creative workshops, concerts by local bands, theater performances, film screenings, handmade crafts fair, escape room, city hunt, various board game competitions, chess, bridge, literary events, and general culture competitions.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice