

Zemlja bez granica (Land without Borders)

Name of the organisation

Udruga Breza

Website of the organisation

<https://breza.hr/>

Location of the organisation

Krbavska ulica 1, 31000 Osijek, Croatia

E-mail address of the organisation

udruga.breza@gmail.com

Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Non-formal education/-learning
- Arts and culture
- Volunteering/voluntarism
- Inclusion

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Since 2004, Breza has been organising the largest continental international and pedagogical family festival Land without Borders in Croatia with local, national and international artists and trainers who teach young people different skills in culture, heritage, and sustainable development (www.zemljabezgranica.com). The main reason why the festival was established is because the girls without adequate parental care from Breza's Socio-therapeutic community were ashamed to admit they were living there. The festival's purpose was to promote inclusion, active involvement of girls in the local community, and encourage skill acquisition. The festival has evolved into a platform for non-formal and informal learning of artistic and creative skills, ecology, and sustainable practices over the years, while establishing a network of cooperation that spans both international and intercultural boundaries. Special emphasis is placed on integrating vulnerable and marginalized groups into society by providing opportunities for self-expression and creativity. The festival is held in the city of Osijek, and as of this year, in a few other cities in the county.

Good practice description

The festival was established to respond to the needs of non-formal education of children and youth, inclusion of all vulnerable groups, intercultural community dialogue and generational integration. The intention is to bring together both foreign and local artists, performers, educational experts, athletes, children, young people, and their families, with an emphasis on the exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences. The festival activities are free, which makes them accessible to all the groups mentioned. Young participants are given the chance to participate in activities that are tailored to their needs and interests, which are not accessible to them in their everyday lives. Activities include workshops, performances and concerts that promote the acquisition of skills in the areas of art, literature, music, theatre, ecology, sport, pedagogy, dance, culture, design and so on, with a focus on creativity, exceptionality and originality. The festival is recognized as a platform for promoting important topics in the fields of education, sustainability, equality, and creativity both locally and internationally. Our underlying objective is always to encourage a healthy lifestyle, recycling, green thinking, and art, while also presenting various cultural and educational practices. It is traditionally held one week before the beginning of the new school year, lasting up to 5 days. The activities are being implemented continuously over the course of 5 days, in the morning and afternoon. In this manner, the participants have enough time, support, and resources to acquire new skills and develop their own artistic expression to showcase publicly on the final day of the festival. The methodology is based upon experiential learning which is the process of learning by doing. Through hands-on experiences and reflection, participants can connect theory and practice to real-life situations. The participants are guided through this process by experts in their own fields who not only transfer their knowledge and skills, but also encourage independence and boost their self-confidence. The festival is educational, pedagogical, and work-experiential because it directly aids in the development of self-confidence and self-esteem among young people, empowering them to create and execute programs that are intended for their peers and the wider community. The festival's greatest value lies in the participation of young people in its creation. Festival programs are not of a consumerist nature and are not carried out for the sake of visibility, but rather include a cyclical, creative, and program-project aspect. The phases of program and project cycles, as well as the organization of public events, can be taught to young people through experiential learning to enable them to apply the acquired knowledge independently or with partial support in the future. We believe that festivals for children and young people should be co-created by those for whom they are intended, rather than just professional organizations and individuals who organize events. In this way, the festival develops a methodical approach to working with young people, which must be up-to-date with modern technologies and the needs of young people in the modern age. The City of Osijek and Osijek-Baranja County are partners in organizing and implementing the festival. The County is dedicated to reaching out and including young people from rural communities as it is acknowledged that they do not have any activities available to them. Intersectional cooperation is supported by local authorities by inviting various institutions and the non-governmental sector to cooperate, and granting letters of support to festival activities. Logistics is provided by city companies to enable the use of all necessary connections, such as electricity, water, approval for locations, lighting, municipal waste removal, and more. Additionally, the local authorities support the inclusion of Friend cities like Pécs, Maribor, Ploiești, Pforzheim, and Vicenza. The City of Osijek and Osijek-Baranja County have helped to establish international cooperation and enhance cooperation with local stakeholders, which resulted in the development of collaborative networks that led to the inclusion of young people who not only participate in the implementation of the festival, but are also co-creators themselves.

Good practice result & concrete effects

Throughout the years, the festival focused on different topics and brought together more than 400 artists, pedagogical leaders, 200 creators, 700 volunteers and 30,000 children and young people. Young people are given more opportunities to participate in festival activities during the ten months of preparation. Public calls that promote artistic, cultural, and creative activities are open to them for application so that their installations, paintings, performances, and other works of art can be displayed at the festival. On the other hand, students studying psychology, culture, media, management, sociology, pedagogy, primary and secondary education are involved in various areas of festival implementation as part of their professional practice at the university, such as: fundraising, management, media monitoring, designing the visual identity, researching the needs of young people in the implementation of free time and so on. This is accomplished by concluding cooperation agreements with universities. The festival's implementation involves young people, not just as volunteers, but also as workshop leaders, exhibitors, performers, researchers in the local community, and more. The festival is also a platform where young entrepreneurs are encouraged to patent products and services that they can exhibit, thus expanding their reach and recognition within the community. The festival's most valuable effect is that the children who took part in the workshops develop a bond with it and return as volunteers in their later years. By volunteering at a large festival in the field of their interest, they develop a sense of responsibility, usefulness to the community and establish new personal and professional connections. They have support from the coordinators in conducting and completing their tasks, as well as the recognition of their work in a written form if it's necessary for future references. Attached is the [video link](#) from the latest event that took place in the city of Osijek under the name 'Blue universe', which was completely independently recorded and edited by a 16-year-old boy who is passionate about video production, as an example of good practice of working with youth. He has had trouble socializing, which is a problem that many young people have faced since the pandemic. They find it hard to make friends and rarely engage in activities. His involvement demonstrates that young people's self-confidence and desire to engage actively in social life increase when they are given opportunities, trust, financial support, and visibility.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Core principles of youth work