

Helsinki Youth Budget - Participatory Budgeting with Youth

Name of the organisation

Helsingin kaupunki, City of Helsinki

Website of the organisation

<https://www.hel.fi/en>, <https://nuortenbudjetti.hel.fi/?locale=en>

Location of the organisation

Konepajankuja 1, 00099 Helsinki, Finland

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making

Good practice category

Concrete tool

Good practice aim & purpose

With the Youth Budget, Helsinki tackles the issue of youth participation in municipal co-planning and decision making. Since the beginning, in 2013, the main goal of the Youth Budget has been to offer possibilities to participate for as many young people, as possible.

The Youth Budget is an annual process in which young people in Helsinki come up with ideas, vote and negotiate on what kinds of activities and services young people need and how the City Youth Services' budget is to be spent. In order to give everyone the opportunity to participate, ideas are collected and refined throughout the city in several stages.

The Youth Budget enables the planning of services and leisure activities that genuinely cater to the needs of young people. At the same time, it serves as a way to implement democracy education and enhance young people's sense of belonging to their community. Although the process has scaled up significantly during 10 years, the main goal has remained the same: creating low-threshold, easy and solution-oriented, meaningful interaction with youth and the city.

Good practice description

The Youth Budget is participatory budgeting for all the young people from 12 to 17 years in Helsinki.

It's an annual process, in which young people in Helsinki participate on planning and deciding how the City Youth Services' budget is to be spent. The youth budget is a tool to co-design the everyday activities in Youth Centers and the use of the resources of Youth Services in Helsinki. More than 10,000 young people participate in the various stages of the Youth Budget every year.

The budgeting cycle starts with data-gathering. The young people answer an online survey during the school day. Both the gathering and analyzing of the data have been digitalized: we use AI text analysis to make sense of the rich, open-ended data. In 2023 we had more than 10 000 participants from 86 schools taking the survey, resulting more than 98 000 open comments on variety of themes.

The next stage of the process are the workshops, that are usually organized in the youth centers. In the workshops the groups of young people get to know the themes and challenges emerging from the survey and create proposals together, based on the data. By using the data, we encourage the participants to think what is important for other young people in their neighborhood, not only for themselves.

The following stage is voting. The young people vote on the proposals online. Usually they do it during the schooldays, with a help from the teachers or youth workers. After the voting young people negotiate with each other and with the decision-makers of the Youth Department on how the ideas, that have been successful in the voting, should be implemented.

The projects are also implemented together with the young people. The projects can be for instance camps, campaigns, courses, festivals or other activities that can be carried out by the budget of youth services of the City of Helsinki. Small scale projects are funded from the budgets of the 15 regional youth work units of the city. Larger projects compete annually over the common 150 000€ budget of the youth services of the city.

Good practice result & concrete effects

More than 10,000 young people participate in the various stages of the Youth Budget every year. All 12-17-year-old Helsinki residents are welcome to participate not only in the planning, voting and negotiating but also implementing the projects.

At 2023 the Youth Budget celebrates its 10th year anniversary. During these years, the process has scaled up significantly. We have gone from youth voting at one of the local youth centers between ideas with made-up 100 euro notes to reaching more than 10 000 young citizens annually via all of our youth centers and close to all junior high schools of the city. Each year, 50-80 projects formulated in the Youth Budget process are executed. For example this year, 2023, there are 79 ongoing projects that received funding the previous year. Follow-up takes place on the website <https://nuortenbudjetti.hel.fi/?locale=en>.

After 2022 the data gathered in Youth Budget has been available for all parties working with the youth – both inside and outside of the city organisation. This strengthens the broader visibility of young people's voices beyond just within youth services in City of Helsinki.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice