

Young People from Ghent X Young People from Vila Cruzeiro

Name of the organisation

Avansa Gent

Website of the organisation

<https://avansa-regiogent.be/>

Location of the organisation

Visserij 106/1, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

E-mail address of the organisation

info@avansa-regiogent.be

Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Intercultural understanding
- European/International cooperation/projects
- Youth work in urban areas
- Segregation/integration

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Exchange of young people from Ghent and Vila Cruzeiro:

(Re)connecting young people to our society. Re-empowering young people with their own situation and personal life goals. The young people gain a better self-understanding of the barriers and levers for their personal goals. This by learning from each other through storytelling. Young people realize that the (deviant) behavior is a normal reaction to the abnormal situation they find themselves in. Young people gain insight into the inequality in society and their own situation. And they take an active role (again) to get their lives on track.

Good practice description

By bringing together extreme situations, young people learn to reflect on their own situation in a safe way. The youth from Vila Cruzeiro, one of the most dangerous favelas in Rio De Janeiro, tell their story and reflect on it with the Ghent youth.

What preceded: In function of a documentary, five young people from Brazil created a piece of slam poetry about their childhood in the favelas. These young people made the trip to Belgium in late 2022. They brought the voice of the favelas to the Belgian public through an afterword linked to the screening of the documentary, but also through their rap music. This caused a lot of reflection among the audience – also about our own Ghent society.

In addition, the young people went to “New Ghent” (a district in Ghent), where they engaged in dialogue with the youth of the youth house. In order to create a bond between both groups of young people, we first organized some leisure activities. The click between the two groups was immediately there. And the Ghent youth were extremely curious about the lives of young people in the violent favelas of Rio de Janeiro. After these activities, we screened the docu. Both groups engaged in dialogue with each other after the screening. The heavy life story of the Brazilians made a strong impression on the Ghent youth. It made the Ghent youth reflect on their own lives.

By gaining more insight into why they are in the situation they are in, and that it is not all their fault, they can feel empowered again, instead of wallowing in powerlessness. It is the frustrations and powerlessness that causes them to drift into socially unacceptable lifestyles; such as dealing, gambling addiction. Or causes them to flee from their difficult reality such as screen addiction, drug, and other addictions. These behaviors are a sense of having control over their lives. Taking these things away only causes the raw reality to resurface. And so we want to provide valuable alternatives through the above methodology of peer-to-peer and storytelling. We want to encourage young people to bring their own story, with all their difficulties and opportunities. Through which they are on their way to and gain faith in their own future.

Youth workers take a supporting and facilitating role in this. Rather than the organizing and coordinating role. Young people are encouraged to take hold of things themselves and do their thing, together with their peers.

Since this project has left such a strong impression on Ghent’s youth and anyone who has seen the docu and heard the young people engaged, we are inviting the Brazilian youth back to Ghent during ‘Ghent European Youth Capital 2024’, from mid-January to mid-March 2024. The project will take six months – preparation to follow-up and evaluation (center of gravity mid-January to mid-March). This time the exchange is being opened up to the multiple (outer) districts from Ghent to increase the impact on local youth.

Good practice result & concrete effects

Young people reflect on their personal situation and life goals. They gain insight and with it energy to deal with the situation again. Young people do not take the step to dealing because they realize that this is not the life they actually had in mind. Young people no longer flee “blindly” into distractions, but look their situation in the eye together with peers and deal with it more. They delve into their own talents and start working with them.

We also see Brazilian youth re-energized to get their lives on track. For example, some have started studying again to get their high school diploma, they are studying English to better tell their story, ... others are now active in human rights activism. The exchange between Rio and Ghent has already created a wind in Vila Cruzeiro and New Ghent. Now we want that wind to blow in the sails of Rabot and Dampoort (other districts) as well.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Core principles of youth work