

Mobile Youth Center in Toila Municipality

Name of the organisation

Toila valla Spordi- ja Kultuurikeskus

Website of the organisation

<https://www.facebook.com/Toilavallanoortekeskused>

Location of the organisation

Metsa 2, 41701 Voka, Estonia

E-mail address of the organisation

Maarjaliisa.lepsalu@toila.ee

Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Youth work in rural areas
- Inclusion
- Safe/secure youth work environment

Good practice category

Concrete tool

Good practice aim & purpose

The specificity of Toila Municipality is that geographically it is located in a rural area and the settlements within it are dispersed. Stationary youth centers are located only in a few bigger settlements, thus revealing the problem of unequal accessibility of youth work services for young people depending on their place of living. In order to solve this problem the direct objective of the youth centers in Toila municipality was to create and implement a mobile youth center model in Toila Municipality. The broader aim was to provide an innovative and sustainable approach to youth services for young people aged 7-26 in Toila Municipality, thereby empowering and supporting the development of independent, proactive, entrepreneurial and socially contributing young people. Also to provide the service in places where young people actually congregate and thereby increase the involvement of the young people benefiting from the service.

Good practice description

In order to achieve the set goal, young people aged 13-15 from Toila municipality and master students of product design from the Estonian Academy of Arts created a 3D model of a mobile youth center. This was followed by the search for funding and then for a builder to bring the model to life. The model involved the construction of a youth center in a sea container so that it could be transported between the different areas of the municipality by a forklift truck.

As a result of the project, a 20-foot sea container has been converted into a mobile youth center, which will be located in different areas of Toila municipality during the summer periods, providing young people with a safe, socialized environment in a public space that encourages initiative and active citizenship.

With the implementation of the Mobile Youth Centre:

- the range of youth work services in Toila municipality has become more diverse and the continuity of the field is ensured;
- a more diverse range of services has been expanded and a wider range of opportunities for young people has been provided;
- an attractive environment for young people has been created in the public space, based on young people's interests and needs;
- the quality of youth work services in Toila municipality has been standardized;
- the involvement of young people aged 7-26 in the youth field in Toila municipality, including young people who are currently excluded from youth work, has increased by at least 20%.
- the young people participating in the project team have acquired practical knowledge and experience of the project planning and implementation process and have had a sense of achievement - this creates the conditions for new youth initiatives.

The innovative aspect of the project lies in the mobility of the Youth Centre, which has been designed with the involvement of young people and based on their opinions, needs and interests. Innovation is ensured by the willingness and capacity to move the Youth Centre to different areas where young people gather, including the attractive design. Today, youth mobility has not yet been approached in this way in the youth field in Estonia, and the current project could become a model for national, if not European, youth work.

Pictures of the mobile youth center:
bit.ly/3PfHqTn

Good practice result & concrete effects

The youth center, built in a sea container, became operational on 1 June 2023 and this summer has been stopping at the Toila pump track, the Kohtla-Nõmme skatepark, the Toila harbor and beach area and in the Voka village. Unfortunately, the opening of the doors of the summer center is largely dependent on weather conditions, which is why the mobile youth center was open for a total of 44 days over three months, with 191 young people aged 7-19 taking advantage of the facilities on offer. It is particularly pleasing that 34 young people with whom youth workers had no previous contact were reached by the model.

An important focus is on supporting and empowering young people's ideas and self-determination – thus the sea container has hosted board and movement game days, BBQ evenings and ice-cream parties, a youth café and workshops, a language café with the support of foreign volunteers, provided an environment for generating project ideas and much more.

The Mobile Youth Centre has attracted a lot of interest in Estonia – it has been visited by the Minister of Education and Research, Kristina Kallas, as well as various youth representatives from all over Estonia.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Quality development