New skate and basketpark made with participation of young people and started through questions from young skaters

Name of the organisation
Jeugddienst Zwijndrecht

Website of the organisation
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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work
- Array

Good practice category
A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose
– The first goal was to purchase equipment with input from skaters, and listen to a long-term dream they had.
– Second goal: how could we achieve with lobbying and budgets to realize a bigger skatepark and basketpark.
– Third goal: how we involve skaters en basketplayers to realize a design for the new park.
– Fourth goal: how to involve skaters and basketteam for the big opening.

Good practice description
It all started with a question from some teenagers and a letter to the mayor from a 9-year-old. Initially, both groups wanted some new skate equipment at the skate park and some defects were fixed. As a youth service, we started looking for equipment to install with a little bit of money. We got in touch with the skaters and browsed through a catalogue. However, during our consultation moment on the square, they did mention that they would like to have a larger skate park because the square was small and there were many skaters. **So the first goal was to purchase equipment with input from skaters, and listen to a long-term dream they had.**

But then came Covid. Everyone was only allowed to be outside and not inside, which overwhelmed our skate park and the park around the town hall: skaters, cyclists, athletes, walkers, children playing, etc. Everyone made it clear that open public space was important. And there was an opportunity in the municipality’s multi-year plan to expand the park around the town hall. So the youth service also started thinking. The skaters wanted a larger skate park, **how could we achieve that if the**

municipality was going to enlarge the park, perhaps this could be achieved with some lobbying and shifting budgets.

The youth service reviewed its budgets for the following year and drew up a proposal for the aldermen of youth. We had conducted a study in the context of a child-friendly municipality. It emerged that children and young people mainly wanted a cross-district playground and liked to be involved. As a youth service we had two budgets for smaller playgrounds. We proposed to the aldermen to use these two budgets together to finance the skatepark. Our argumentation had a positive outcome and the alderman agreed. **A good argumentation, finding fundraising and budgets were the keys for a good lobbying process with our alderman.**

Skaters were informed that their dream could become reality. As youthservice, we think participation is very important, so we got back to the first skaters. We agreed that the skaters would set up an Instagramgroup to gather as many skaters as possible. A survey was drawn up asking what obstacles they dreamed of, examples were provided and, after the survey, a small group wrote the specifications for the tender itself. Then the designs came in. The skaters came to explain these to the youthcouncil and the sportscouncil, gave points on the designs, looked with primary school children to the designs and finally we chose together a design. They worked with the designer in more detail on the final design. A skatepark for and by skaters. It soon became apparent that the skatepark took up the entire old square, including the old basketballcourt. That was of course not to the liking of the basketball players. The sports department lobbied their aldermen and ultimately received a positive response. The same process was then started with the basketballteams. So the stakeholders are politicians and mayor, skateboarders, steppers, inline skaters, basketball movements, children from the primary schools, youth council, different services from the municipality (green, projects, finance, youth, sport, communication, maintenance, environment), landscape-architects, skateparkbuilder, inhabitants.

Zwijndrecht is an Antwerp municipality in Belgium with approximately 19,000 inhabitants. The municipality is located on the left bank of the Scheldt and borders East Flanders. Of the 19,146 inhabitants in Zwijndrecht, 4,025 are between 0 and 18 years (21% of the total population) and 2,346 between 19 and 30 years (12% of the total population). In other words, one third of the population falls under the category ‘youth’, if we use the demarcation of the Flemish decree on a renewed youth and children’s rights policy (2012). Zwijndrecht has a youth service where 4 full-time people work substantively around youth, 2 supporting administrative staff and 1 head of department. On 26/10/2023 it was decided that Zwijndrecht will merge with 2 other municipalities, Beveren and Kruibeke, and from 2025 it will be a municipality with 90,000 inhabitants.

Good practice result & concrete effects
The participants feel part of the project and help raise awareness among others.

They also get the opportunity to get involved and get to know the bigger picture. Not only was the design selected by them, but they also presented at various municipal meetings, co-wrote official documents, came into contact with politicians, helped organize the opening and looked for sponsorship… Participation took place in various ways, not only inform them, but they also advised us, decided and help to build.

At the end they see the municipality services as a contact that’s closer with them. And the service has also nice new contacts from groups they somethings find difficult to reach.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work
Youth work policy