

strategy childfriendly city

Name of the organisation

Jeugddienst Zwijndrecht

Website of the organisation

www.zwijndrecht.be

Location of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making
- Active citizenship/activism
- Lobbying/advocacy for youth work

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Zwijndrecht wants to further develop a sustainable child-friendly policy, a policy that continually evolves with its residents, with a special focus on its most vulnerable residents, namely children, young people and their networks. After all, children and young people do not have the right to vote, but they are represented for 1/3 within our resident population. They have an opinion and are the experts in their own world.

We want children and young people to be able to be themselves in Zwijndrecht, to receive maximum opportunities and support to grow and develop into the best version of themselves. These opportunities or support may be different from support for adults: in a different form or with a different approach. Zwijndrecht therefore wants to work demand-oriented by putting children and young people at the center of policy. In this way, Zwijndrecht shows that we have confidence in them, want to work together and recognize them as active citizens.

To reach this vision, we made a childfriendly strategy for the next 6 years. Making this strategy was a process of 3 years, where we involved a lot of children, young people, youth work, adults residents and municipality services.

Good practice description

Making our strategy was based on 3 phases

- getting results by questionnaires from adults, young people and children in our municipality.
- based on the questionnaire, the youth service, alderman of youth and the youth council decided to pick three themes. Those 3 themes will be further examined in in-depth interviews and interactive methods by children and young people.
- we carried out 29 in-depth research. Every group used a method that fit their group. For example with toddlers we did an emotion drawing game, with the sports club we made a questionnaire in an active sport training, in a classroom we gave an interactive workshop...
- after all those deep interviews, a report was made with conclusions. These conclusions we used in a meeting where we gather different services from the municipality and we decided which service has to take which goals and actions.
- All the actions and goals from the different services we wrote down in a strategy for the next 6 years.
- Every year, we have 2 times a meeting with internal services to check of all the actions and goals will be achieved.
- For every action the youth service made a point that there has to be participation and input of young people.

At the end we presented this strategy for a national jury and we got the label of child-friendly city from the Flemish minister of Youth.

Good practice result & concrete effects

children and young people get to know who is working at the municipality services.

the municipality workers are getting closer to the world of children and young people.

children and young people get recognition from the policy makers.

children and young people can give input on all the themes their belong to.

the municipality listens to young people and get their advice.

The youth service workers are kind of Robin Hood in a shiny world of policy makers/politicians. They are the lobbying factor to get the voice from children and young people in the shiny world of policy. They are trying to connect these to worlds. They are creating chances for young people to have conversations with politicians.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Youth work policy