

# Regional Youth Network Meetjesman

## Name of the organisation

Meetjesman

## Website of the organisation

[www.meetjesman.be](http://www.meetjesman.be)

## Location of the organisation

Kerkstraat 121, 9900 Eeklo, Belgium

## E-mail address of the organisation

[info@meetjesman.be](mailto:info@meetjesman.be)

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## Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Lobbying/advocacy for youth work
- Competence development of youth workers
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Youth work in rural areas

## Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

## Good practice aim & purpose

The aim of this practice is to strengthen the cooperation within the regional youth network Meetjesman.

Meetesman is a youth(policy) network in the rural area in East-Flanders. By empowering the network of local youth workers and youth policymakers we want to develop better conditions for children and youngster to grow up and to claim their rights as important inhabitants of the rural region. Because children and youngster are living now and not only in the future.

In our actions and activities we have a triple target approach:

We focus on local youth(policy)workers, local policy makers and young people living in the villages in the rural area Meetjesland.

## Good practice description

Meetjesland is a rural region in the north-west of Flanders between the cities of Ghent and Bruges.

Meetjesman was founded in 2003 out of a need of youth services of 13 small municipalities to make more innovative practices in the youthfield possible and to share more expertise and good practices within the region.

Meetjesman has a board with political representatives of each member municipalities, each municipality has to appoint one Politian of the political majority and one of the political opposition from

the municipality council. Each municipality also select one youth officer who is appointed as an advisor to the board of the organization.

Our organization is co-financed by the member municipalities (50%) and the youth department of Flanders(50%).

The youth region is specificity is that the member communities are mostly an assemblance of small and smaller villages, together in the municipalities there are 36 villages in a rural area. There is one railway trough our region, so mobility for young people is an issue a specialy once they want to go out and to go study. There also a big concern how to keep this area attractive for young people to grow up, to find work and to start families in the future. I see some similarities with other rural areas in Europe. The focus on stronger youth policies is one of the actions to tackle these specific issues of this mostly rural area.

The regional youth network Meetjesman has 3 targetgroups:

#### 1. Children and youngsters

- Regional trainings for members of 8 youth councils in the rural areas.
- Facilitate and organise trainings for volunteers in youth workers (between 16y-24y old) according to local needs.
- Project-based surveys which strengthening of the voice of children and young people:
  - Jong Geweld in het Meetjesland 2018, about free time, living and mobility in rural areas (1656 young people reached)
  - Weldoeners 2021-2022, about well-being of youngster in the covid pandemic (755 young people reached)

#### 2. Local policymakers, mayors and alderman of youth.

- Helpdesk and on-demand advice on broad scale of youth policy themes.
- Support to apply for funding/subsidy possibilities on national and European level.
- Regional seminars about relevant and actual youth policy themes, with regional stakeholders.

#### 3. Local youth officers and prof. youth workers

- Monthly in house consultancy about the 8 youth services of all the member municipalities of the youth network Meetjesman
- Study visit and intervision with youth workers who organise summer activities for children and youngsters.
- Intersivision groups for youth officers who are supporting the local youth councils.
- Bottom-up organised network events to tackle the local challenges of youth policy and youthwork.

### **Good practice result & concrete effects**

The youth network helps to make a stronger youth policy in each of the 8 member municipalities. New policymakers, youth workers and youth officers don't have to start from scratch but can rely on the expertise of the youth region to tackle the challenge of local youthwork in the rural area Meetjesland.

The biggest impact is learning together with and for a better place for children and youngsters to create better areas to grow up and to develop the talents of children and youngsters.

### **Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work**

Youth workers