

Valongo's Participatory Youth Budgeting

Name of the organisation

Município de Valongo

Website of the organisation

www.cm-valongo.pt

Location of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making

Good practice category

Concrete tool

Good practice aim & purpose

Valongo's Participatory Youth Budget (VPYB) is aimed at young people living or studying in the municipality, aged between 6 and 35, who have the power to decide how part of the municipal budget will be allocated. In the 11th edition, the amount allocated was €250,000, distributed among 25 winning projects, which corresponds to €10,000 for each project.

There are four categories in which you can take part: School, Generations, Community and Green. The aim of this tool was to encourage and foster the involvement of young people in the community so that they feel heard and take advantage of the opportunities resulting from a project of this nature.

Good practice description

The VPYB is one of the participatory mechanisms that aims to encourage participation from an early age. The aim of the tool is to encourage involvement in the community, so that young people feel heard and take advantage of the opportunities arising from projects of this scale.

The VPYB cycle is divided into 2 phases:

1. Decision cycle - involves preparing, publicizing, submitting proposals, evaluating the applications submitted, recording a pitch to support the campaign process and appeal for votes, the vote itself and publicizing the results.
2. Implementation cycle: involves the implementation of the most voted projects according to the previously defined budget allocation.

This cycle culminates with the inauguration of the project, one of the moments most cherished by all those involved: a unique plaque is created for each project, with the name of the person proposing it and the OPJV project. This plaque is unveiled in the presence of a politician, honoring the effort and dedication of young people.

The VPYB has completed ten voting cycles and is starting its 12th, with progressively more ambitious budget allocations, adaptation of rules and the method of participation.

Participation is the key word in all this process. We highlight some of the participatory aspects of the project:

. **Public Call for Ideas:** Young residents are invited to submit project proposals, ensuring a wide range of ideas are considered.

. **Workshops and Meetings:** The municipality organizes workshops and meetings to help young people develop their proposals, ensuring that all voices are heard and that participants understand the process.

. **Educational Support:** Schools participate by incorporating the participatory budget into their curriculum, encouraging students to get involved and providing a platform for them to develop their ideas. They help mobilize young people and raise awareness about the participatory budget process.

Parents also encourage and support their children's participation in the process, ensuring that younger participants have the guidance they need.

. **Open Voting Process:** The selection of projects is done through a public voting process, allowing the community to choose the projects they believe are most beneficial.

. **Clear Criteria:** The criteria for project selection is transparent, ensuring that participants understand how decisions are made.

. **Public Announcements:** Results of the voting and the selection of projects are publicly announced, reinforcing transparency and accountability.

. **Involvement in Implementation:** Young volunteers are often involved in the implementation of the projects, providing hands-on experience.

Bearing in mind the years of experience of the VPYB and the need for continuous improvement of the process (so that it is an effective instrument for promoting youth participation, but also a school of participation for young people), the municipality has been investing in an impact assessment study.

Good practice result & concrete effects

Some Quantitative Results:

- 12 editions of VPYB conducted without interruption
- 100% implementation rate
- 380 projects submitted for voting
- 119 winning projects
- 95,153 votes in all editions
- €1,190,000 invested directly and €500,000 invested indirectly by replicating highly relevant VPYB projects throughout the territory. Examples include 28 Future Classrooms in primary schools; Outdoor gym parks distributed across parishes.

Some qualitative conclusions of the impact assessment study made by Aveiro University:

The creation of a functional structure dedicated to supporting Youth and Citizenship reflects a political commitment of the municipality to promote a culture of citizenship, associated with the beginning of the implementation of the VPYB.

It does not result from a previous experience with PB, and therefore, it is not a “derivation” or “specialization” of other PB practices.

It is not an isolated initiative. It is part of a broader citizenship project and has been used as a seminal instrument for change in municipal practices and policies.

Gradual increase in the number of implemented projects allowed for more proposals to be addressed, accompanied the thematic evolution of the entire process, and provided greater territorial coverage.

Sustainability of the mobilization process for participation in voting and demonstration of its resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

VPYB has served as an inspiration for other participatory budgets, nationally and internationally.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Core principles of youth work