

From Local Participation to European Ambition: Trnava's Youth Governance Model Towards EYC 2029

Name of the organisation

GenT

Website of the organisation

<https://www.trnava.sk/registre/449/gent-mestska-prispevkova-organizacia>

Location of the organisation

Hlavná 1, 91701 Trnava, Slovakia

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in implementing youth activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Active citizenship/activism
- Recognition of youth work

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

The City of Trnava developed an integrated youth participation ecosystem as a foundation for its candidacy for the European Youth Capital 2029. The aim was not to create temporary campaign structures, but to build a sustainable local governance model where young people are structurally involved in shaping the city.

Before this initiative, youth participation was mainly project-based and limited to formal consultation. Young people lacked continuous pathways from informal engagement to structured civic influence.

Through establishing the municipal organisation GenT, strengthening the Youth City Council, developing neighbourhood youth clubs and creating a public Study Hall (Študovňa), Trnava sought to:

- institutionalise youth participation
- connect informal youth spaces with local governance
- create safe and accessible civic environments
- embed youth voice into city decision-making
- prepare a strong participatory foundation for EYC 2029

The initiative addresses fragmentation in youth work, limited civic pathways for young people and the need for long-term youth governance beyond political cycles.

Good practice description

Trnava's Youth Governance Model is a municipally anchored system connecting youth participation, youth work infrastructure and strategic city development.

The model is coordinated by GenT, a contribution organisation established by the City of Trnava in 2025 to systemically oversee youth work and participation at the local level.

The ecosystem consists of four interconnected pillars:

1 Youth City Council (Mládežnícky parlament mesta Trnava)

The Youth City Council functions as a structured participatory body representing young people in dialogue with the municipality. It:

- discusses city-level issues
- formulates proposals
- participates in consultations
- engages with city leadership
- contributes to strategic documents

Members are supported by youth workers and receive training in leadership, civic engagement and democratic processes.

2▣ Neighbourhood Youth Clubs

Youth clubs operate as entry-level participatory spaces. They provide safe, inclusive environments where young people develop confidence, initiative and community belonging.

Participation is embedded through:

- co-created rules
- youth-led activities
- micro-projects
- volunteering
- reflection processes

Youth clubs serve as civic incubators from which young people gradually move into more formal participation structures.

3▣ Study Hall (Študovňa)

The Study Hall is a free public learning and meeting space open to students. It addresses inequality in access to quiet and supportive study environments.

Beyond academic function, it acts as:

- a low-threshold engagement space
 - a meeting point for student initiatives
 - a bridge between youth work and educational institutions
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4▣ GenT as Structural Backbone

GenT ensures:

- coordination between all structures
- strategic youth policy development
- monitoring and data collection
- international cooperation (Erasmus+, ESC)
- alignment with the EYC 2029 candidacy

The EYC 2029 process was not designed as a separate campaign, but as an accelerator for strengthening existing participation structures.

Young people are directly involved in shaping the candidacy vision, priorities and programme proposals. Participation is embedded not only in content creation but in governance design.

The model creates a participation pathway:

Safe space → Community engagement → Structured representation → Policy influence → European

dimension

It demonstrates how a mid-sized city can move from fragmented youth initiatives to a coherent youth governance ecosystem aligned with European values.

Good practice result & concrete effects

As a result of implementing this model:

- Youth participation in Trnava became systemic rather than symbolic.
- Young people are regularly involved in consultations and strategic processes.
- The Youth City Council operates with increased legitimacy and visibility.
- Youth clubs feed motivated young people into representative structures.
- The Study Hall expanded access to inclusive youth engagement spaces.
- The EYC 2029 candidacy is grounded in existing local structures rather than campaign-based mobilisation.

Young people report stronger sense of ownership over local processes. The municipality benefits from structured dialogue rather than ad hoc youth consultation.

The model strengthened trust between young people and local government and positioned Trnava as a city actively investing in sustainable youth governance aligned with European youth policy principles.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Youth work policy