

Participation Lab

Name of the organisation

Jász Mentorok Kft.

Website of the organisation

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Location of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making
- Cross-sectore cooperation
- Youth work in rural areas
- Recognition of youth work

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

The aim of the “Participation Lab” project is to expand youth participation practices from one functioning local model to several neighbouring rural municipalities where structured youth participation mechanisms are currently limited or absent.

The project builds on the experience of the Competence LISZT Erasmus+ youth participation initiative implemented in Jászberény, where student councils, youth programmes, community spaces and structured dialogue between young people and local decision-makers already exist. However, many of the young people participating in these initiatives live in smaller surrounding municipalities where similar participation opportunities are not available.

The project therefore addresses a territorial participation gap: youth engagement often concentrates in urban centres, while young people living in smaller settlements remain largely excluded from local decision-making processes.

Rather than transferring a fixed participation model, the project introduces participatory planning processes through which young people and municipal actors jointly design locally adapted participation mechanisms. Through workshops, dialogue forums and collaborative planning sessions, young people gain experience in advocacy, community planning and institutional dialogue, while municipalities explore practical methods for involving youth in governance.

Good practice description

“Participation Lab” is a youth participation development initiative designed to strengthen youth engagement in rural municipalities through participatory planning processes and inter-municipal cooperation.

The project builds on the experience of the Competence LISZT Erasmus+ KA154 youth participation project implemented in Jászberény. In this city, a functioning youth participation environment has developed through active student councils, youth programmes, community spaces and structured dialogue between young people and local decision-makers.

During the implementation of the earlier project, a structural territorial challenge became visible. Many of the young people involved in youth initiatives in Jászberény actually live in neighbouring municipalities within the Jászberény sub-region. In their own settlements, however, youth participation structures are often missing. Smaller municipalities frequently lack institutional frameworks, youth work capacity or methodological knowledge for involving young people in local decision-making.

As a result, youth participation tends to remain concentrated in the urban centre, while young people living in surrounding rural settlements have fewer opportunities to influence local issues that affect their everyday lives.

The “Participation Lab” project addresses this challenge by extending youth participation practices beyond the city and supporting neighbouring municipalities in developing locally adapted participation mechanisms.

A key principle of the practice is that it does not aim to transfer a fixed model from the city to rural municipalities. Instead, the project focuses on participatory planning as a method. Jászberény functions as a methodological hub where tested youth participation tools and facilitation techniques are available, while participating municipalities develop their own locally relevant solutions through dialogue with young people.

The process includes several elements:

- mapping local youth realities and participation opportunities
- workshops introducing youth participation concepts and methods
- facilitated dialogue between young people and municipal actors
- participatory planning sessions for designing local youth participation initiatives
- preparation of youth-led recommendation packages for municipalities

The concrete form of youth participation structures is not predefined. Depending on local conditions, municipalities may develop youth consultation forums, youth project initiatives, dialogue platforms or other locally appropriate participation mechanisms.

Good practice result & concrete effects

As the project is currently ongoing, its main effects can be observed in the emerging processes and initial outcomes of the participation activities.

Young people participating in the project are gaining practical experience in participatory planning, dialogue with municipal actors and the preparation of local development proposals. Through workshops and facilitated planning sessions they are developing communication, cooperation and advocacy skills, while becoming more confident in expressing their views in public and institutional contexts.

At the same time, participating municipalities are becoming familiar with new approaches to youth participation. Local decision-makers and professionals are exploring participatory planning tools that can help them involve young people more systematically in local governance and community development processes.

Another important emerging outcome is the development of locally relevant youth participation proposals in the participating municipalities. These proposals are prepared jointly by young people and local actors and are intended to inform future municipal youth policy and local community initiatives.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice