

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE QUALITY LABEL FOR YOUTH CENTRES

Good practices in youth centres



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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PREFACE

■ The process of implementing a Council of Europe quality label for youth centres was launched more than a decade ago. Today, about 20 centres have joined this initiative. Participating centres strive to reach a common understanding of what they represent, what they should deliver and what their potential impact on youth and society is. A series of publications has been developed under the heading “The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres”, which give a comprehensive overview of the quality standards in youth centres.

The brochure entitled ‘The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres – Criteria and Indicators’ (2015) describes the principles that a youth centre should fulfil in order to obtain the Label. It suggests a set of indicators and helps to map minimum quality standards in youth centres.

The brochure entitled ‘The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres – Role, Value and Impact of Youth Centres’ (2018) describes the function of youth centres and their potential contribution to youth work and youth policy.

As a compliment to the above-mentioned publications, this brochure, ‘The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres – Good Practices in Youth Centres’, aims to complement existing publications and provide concrete examples of successful practices implemented in quality-labelled youth centres which can illustrate how a centre can fulfil the quality criteria effectively.

The choice of practices presented in the brochure is based on the assessments of

the Council of Europe expert team from visits to youth centres where specific areas of expertise and strengths were identified. The collection of practices in the brochure were also finalised thanks to interviews with staff members of labelled youth centres: sincere thanks to all participating centres for their valuable contributions.



UNIQUE SPACES FOR YOUTH AND YOUTH WORK

UNIQUE SPACES FOR YOUTH AND YOUTH WORK

Offering an enabling environment for young people

WannseeFORUM, Berlin, Germany

With its specific history and location, the WannseeFORUM in Berlin offers a unique environment for civic and cultural youth education. The centre was set up in the aftermath of the Second World War to instil democratic values and structures in young Germans through arts and culture. To this day, the historic villa with two adjacent buildings and a large garden bordering a small lake (Pohlesee) welcomes young people to experience living and working together as part of an educational process.

Young people take an active role in filling the space with life and creativity. A wide range of activities such as training courses, artistic workshops and seminars can be held in the centre's multifunctional rooms and, thanks to an extensive network of partner organisations and schools, the centre reaches out to a very diverse target group. Activities are organised according to the workshop principle ("Werkstatt-Prinzip") where participants work in small arts- and media-based groups on a common topic. Five to six artistic workshops can be organised simultaneously, so that participants can choose from a variety of workshops.

While the centre is far from being a sanctuary, it is part of the centre's pedagogical strategy to convey an appreciation of the materials and equipment used. Allowing young people to work with

high-quality equipment and technology – a grand piano, professional quality of paper and colours for art workshops, SLR-cameras, professional video-editing programmes – is not only a sign of trust, but a token of appreciation calling for reciprocity.

Providing unique facilities for artistic youth work

Destelheide Youth Centre, Dworp, Belgium

The Destelheide Youth Centre is a space made for the artistic expression of young people. It provides a unique infrastructure for artistic activities including, among others, dance rooms, a visual arts room, a music room and dark rooms for photography.

Located only an hour away from Brussels, the youth centre offers the necessary space and tranquillity for artistic activities, often hard to find in the Belgian capital. Thanks to an artist-in-residence programme, the young people can benefit from direct contact with professional artists during the workshops as well as during their stay. Surrounded by nature, the large building complex from the 1960s offers a safe and inspiring environment to youth organisations, schools and socio-cultural NGOs from Belgium and abroad.

To make the facilities more easily accessible to young people with fewer opportunities, certain organisations can use the spaces at the youth centre at discounted rates. Also, in an effort to engage young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, mainly from the suburbs of Brussels, in the centre's

activities, some spaces have been specifically adapted to urban arts such as hip-hop dancing. The centre also encourages participants in Destelheide to discover the many cultural venues that Brussels has to offer.

Being a hub for youth-related activities

Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal

Working on the same premises with other youth organisations allows the Lisbon Youth Centre to create synergies and to co-operate successfully on common youth projects. The staff of the centre, employees of the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ) and the resident NGOs benefit from this spatial proximity to exchange ideas and working practices on a regular basis, and to discuss their programmes and common priorities, thus adding value to their work with and for young people.

The diversity of actors present in the facility attracts young people with different interests and needs, leading often to natural synergies between activities of the organisations and youth groups present. The youth centre also runs the “House of Associations”, which offers temporary spaces to organisations and informal groups active in the youth field, ranging from gender equality advocates to theatre groups and student support associations. External youth groups are also welcome to use the meeting and training facilities at the centre, making the venue centre an important hub for local youth organisations.

The Lisbon Youth Centre is well connected at the local, national and European levels. As a regional centre of the IPDJ, it participates in national programmes and is an important resource centre for the National Youth Council and the National Federation of Youth Associations. Its participation in the Council of Europe Quality Label network adds an international perspective to its work with young people from Lisbon and beyond.



INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Educational offers for youth groups

WannseeFORUM, Berlin, Germany

■ The WannseeFORUM encourages active citizenship and awareness of democratic values in various ways. Two of its main annual events successfully gather diverse groups of young people from across Germany to participate in the “Pentecost Academy” and thematic workshops for pupils’ representatives.

The “Pentecost Academy” gives young people from across Germany the opportunity to discuss topics that are relevant to them, e.g. feminism, identity, energy transition, rural and urban development, and to develop the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to become actors of change in their communities. Over three days, the participants discuss and present their own ideas and workshops (based on participatory methods) and are trained in subjects such as project management, graphic recording and journalism. The participants are also heavily involved in the decision making of the topics for the following years’ academy.

The thematic workshops for pupils’ representatives help the participants explore and practice methods of participation in the school environment. During the workshops, the youngsters gain new knowledge and skills through interactive simulation exercises and role play, for example, about project planning, debating and discussing in meetings, and learning about the

school law and democratic governance. Starting from primary school level, pupils experience democracy and participation positively from an early age and become equipped with effective tools for participating in school life and contributing to a democratic culture.

Supporting active citizenship and youth-led work

Timișoara Youth House, Romania

■ Timișoara Youth House is governed by the Timis County Youth Foundation (FITT) which is an umbrella organisation for youth NGOs. The work of the youth house is entirely in the hands of young people from the age of 18 to 35, who take all decisions regarding budget, infrastructure and programme priorities. In recent years, the foundation has increased the diversity of its elected board and improved the representation of young women and minorities such as Roma youth, LGBTI youth and rural youth.

At the Timișoara Youth House, FITT aims to create a framework where young people can bring forward their ideas and receive support for their implementation. The staff at the centre employ their policy-related knowledge, manpower, funds and organisational and pedagogical know-how to support NGOs and informal youth groups who work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and neighbourhoods, for example young people in alternative care. The centre also organises its own

social inclusion projects such as a street art festival, which is jointly prepared by young people living in alternative care and other youngsters from Timișoara.

Another focal point of the youth house is community involvement in youth-led processes. The project “Com’ON Timișoara” allows informal groups of young people to apply for funding to bring to life small-scale projects in the city, encouraging youngsters to take an active part in shaping their environment. A public online vote decides which projects will be funded. This requires the young people to promote their project publicly, and to present the added value to the whole community. Moreover, the project raises awareness of public budget spending and generates self-efficacy in the participants.

Empowering young people through information and volunteering

Eco Center Radulovački, Sremski Karlovci, Serbia

— The Eco Center Radulovački’s mission is to provide a safe space for young people to exchange views on values and issues of common concern and where diversity is encouraged with the support of professional youth workers. The centre also acts as a youth information centre and it provides young people with specific knowledge, for instance on how to participate and help shape local youth policy. During the revision process of the local youth strategy in Sremski Karlovci, youth workers facilitated the participation of the local youth communities and acted as an intermediary between young people and the municipal authorities.

Volunteering has been at the heart of the Eco Center’s practice since its foundation. Run by the Vojvodina Envi-

ronmental Movement (VME), an environmental NGO from the 1960s, it has a broad grassroots base and a long-standing commitment to volunteering. Thus, young people are involved in the decision-making processes, taking part in the management of the centre, in designing the programmes and in bringing their own initiatives to fruition. The youth club “Skok” (meaning ‘jump’ in Serbian) is central to the youth involvement at Eco Center. Over the years, the youth club has piloted a range of different projects, from arts and culture to health and environmental initiatives. Several generations of young people remain deeply committed to the (voluntary) work of the centre, allowing it to grow and extend its reach to the whole community.



ENSURING QUALITY YOUTH WORK

ENSURING QUALITY YOUTH WORK

Documenting pedagogical approaches

Marienthal Youth Centre, Luxembourg

Each youth centre in Luxembourg run by the National Youth Service (SNJ), has established a pedagogical concept for its particular thematic focus. This concept is based on the national reference framework provided by the SNJ. It helps the centres to set joint strategic objectives and to operate with a common terminology, while deepening knowledge and competences in their respective area of expertise. By setting the theoretical foundations, methods and objectives of the work, these concepts provide orientation to the youth workers and serve as a basis for exploring new ideas.

At the Marienthal Youth Centre, the pedagogical concept is continually adapted to progress, whether it is initiated by youth workers or in reaction to changing policy requirements of the youth sector. Each new project the centre initiates is synthesised in a concept paper and eventually incorporated into the pedagogical concept. The concept is thus in constant evolution, co-created within a participatory process under the guidance of the centre's manager.

Generally, youth workers are encouraged to reflect on their work, to actively try to innovate their activities and to seek inspiration from other projects and structures. Thorough documentation of the project's aim and objectives later provides an important basis on which to evaluate practices and activities. The documentation also makes it easier for new colleagues to understand the values and goals underpinning the work at the centre, and helps the youth work-

ers to explain the centre's (youth) work to outsiders.

Partnering with young people

Euróg Youth Centre, Killarney, Ireland

The youth projects implemented by Euróg Youth Centre are inspired by the needs of young people in the local community and developed with their participation. Local youth centres established by Kerry Diocesan Youth Service (KDSY) across the Kerry region provide an important platform where professional youth workers can engage with young people to identify their needs. Programmes and projects are often developed to address work with young people at risk who often have multiple and interconnected needs. For example, a young person who is a school drop-out might also have issues to deal with related to their family situation, alcohol or drug abuse, delinquent behaviour or mental health issues.

Euróg Youth Centre is thus dedicated to developing initiatives which will take the young person's life as a whole into account, and not only focus on one single issue. Whether the young person is in conflict with the law or is involved with drugs, the principle is always to support them and to put together a plan in a participatory manner for the young person's future. The youth workers accompany the young person closely throughout the process, keeping them engaged and helping them in particularly challenging moments – the final goal always being to find a way to a better future.



FOCAL POINTS FOR NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

FOCAL POINTS FOR NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Strengthening partnerships at the European level

Villa Elba Youth Centre, Kokkola, Finland

Over the past decades, Villa Elba Youth Centre has developed extensive experience in building sustainable international partnerships and contributing to successful international projects. The centre strongly believes in the need for and the benefits of international youth co-operation and networks. Having a strong international dimension in their daily (youth) work has helped to build trust and to develop sustainable co-operation at a European and international level.

The starting point for Villa Elba has been to choose partner organisations with similar values, goals and professional youth work ethics, those which are also closely associated to the principles of the Council of Europe. Having a shared understanding and common approach for international co-operation facilitates the implementation of projects. To benefit from a longstanding partnership founded on trust also allows the centre to undertake more significant projects – sometimes even financially risky ones – as they can rely on these partners for support.

Apart from Villa Elba's active involvement in the Council of Europe's network of quality labelled centres, the centre is active in the Platform of European Regions and the European Network of Youth Centres (ENYC). To ensure sustainability, the centre has dedicated staff specifically assigned to

liaise with these networks. While working with well-known, trusted partners certainly presents a lot of advantages, Villa Elba also makes a point of involving new organisations in their projects on a regular basis, thus allowing their international networks to grow.

Gathering and sharing knowledge

Marienthal Youth Centre, Luxembourg

The values of openness and collaboration are at the heart of the Marienthal youth centre's practice. As a resource centre for the youth sector in Luxembourg, it offers a space for learning, reflection, exchange and team building to a very diverse public. Youth organisations and schools, as well as educational policy advisors participate in activities offered by the centre, or use the space for their events, training courses and conferences. An extensive network of freelancers who work with young people on a daily basis provides the centre with insights and feedback from its main target group.

The first step in the development of every educational project consists of mapping existing initiatives and exploring potential synergies with other services or organisations. As a laboratory of innovation, the centre is also keen to develop and test new practices and activities – and to share successful projects with others. The centre regularly publishes educational material, such as manuals for trainers, and organises multiplier training courses to share its know-how. In addition, the individual

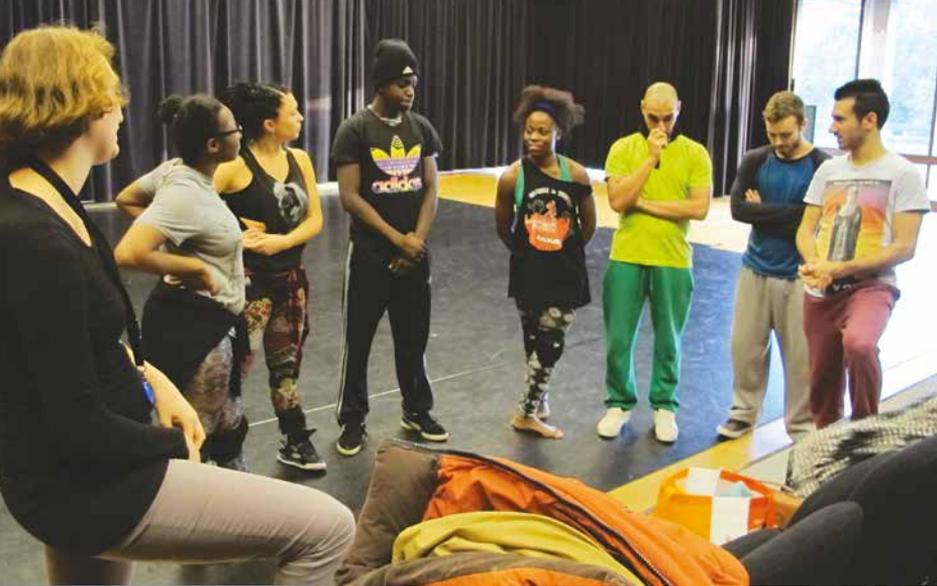
youth workers are encouraged to develop expertise in their particular field and to present it at conferences or other relevant get-togethers.

Advocating quality youth work

Eco Center Radulovački, Sremski Karlovci, Serbia

■ The Eco Center Radulovački in Sremski Karlovci advocates professional youth work through existing national networks, especially through the National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR). The relationship between the centre and the association is mutually beneficial: in its efforts to promote high quality youth work, NAPOR uses the centre as an example for good practices in complying with their and the Council of Europe's youth work standards. For instance, NAPOR holds most of its educational activities in Sremski Karlovci. The centre on the other hand benefits from its membership in NAPOR to have an outlet for the promotion of professional youth work at a national level.

NAPOR, the umbrella organisation for youth work organisations in Serbia, has been involved in promoting good practices in youth work both nationally and internationally since its foundation in 2009. Its main achievements include the development of vocational standards for professional youth work and of curricula for the training of youth leaders and youth workers. It participated in the drafting of the Serbian Law on Youth and continues to lobby for the recognition of youth work in national legislation and meaningful laws on volunteering. As a member of the governing board of the association, the Eco Center is directly involved in shaping standards, policies and practice at the national level.



ENRICHING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

ENRICHING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Share and promote the values of the Council of Europe

Villa Elba Youth Centre, Kokkola, Finland

■ The focus of Villa Elba's international projects is to promote contact and interaction between locals and foreigners in order to reduce prejudices and xenophobia. Thanks to its strong presence in the region of Central Ostrobothnia and its extensive international network, the youth centre is able to regularly send European volunteers to its local partners in Kokkola. Its aim is not only to connect young people, but also to allow the whole community to benefit from the presence of the volunteers.

With the support of Villa Elba and local youth workers, the volunteers have set up international youth clubs in the different villages, creating a space for exchange between young locals and volunteers, encouraging young people to start their own international projects. Some projects are developed to bring together locals and volunteers from Europe through a jointly executed task. Groups of volunteers take part in the implementation of local events or enterprises in remote areas, such as arranging a football tournament, organising a children's camp, safeguarding the local river or building a nature path to promote the region's natural heritage. The interaction is also encouraged during "time for tea", when volunteers take the initiative to invite a local community or village for a tasting event of food from their home region.

For some locals, the volunteers are the first foreigners they meet. In order to

extend that opportunity to as many people as possible, Villa Elba has developed the "language shower" concept, where schools and kindergartens can "borrow" a volunteer to meet and talk to children and youth in their mother tongue, giving them a unique chance to interact with a native speaker.

Involving young people in cultural activities and community work

Brežice Youth Centre, Slovenia

■ As part of the Institute for Entrepreneurship, Tourism and Youth, the Youth Centre in Brežice is actively involved in the cultural life of the municipality and offers a wide variety of cultural activities for young people. The centre strives to create opportunities for young people to engage, in theatre workshops, documentary film screenings as well as at jam sessions and regular concerts by artists of their choice. During larger events, such as the town's week-long summer festival, young people get involved on and behind the scenes. They learn about mixing, sound engineering or project management and develop skills to animate activities for younger children or to perform on stage with their bands.

An essential tool for engaging with the community are the "Live info points", groups of young volunteers who engage with the public in the streets, talking about current events, municipal affairs or spreading a campaign message. The volunteers receive training beforehand and are obliged to report back to the centre after their public engagement. The "Live info points" also allow the centre to

stay in touch with the community, to get a better understanding of young people's needs and to ensure that the centre's programme and activities respond to these wishes.

Space for intergenerational encounters

Euróg Youth Centre, Killarney Ireland

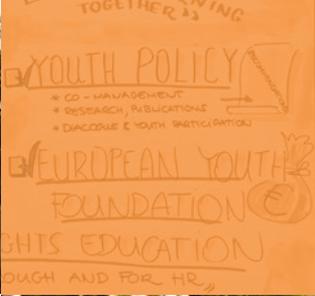
■ Euróg Youth Centre welcomes a diverse group of users on a daily basis. The centre is centrally located with good public transport infrastructure, making it easily accessible for all ages and groups of society. It offers spaces to youth and youth groups as well as spaces for rent to commercial companies. On the premises, a church, a Montessori school and a youth café can be found. The café is the heart of the centre and is used by young and older citizens alike. Informal encounters on the fringes of age-specific events facilitate intergenerational exchanges that may reduce potential prejudices about "the others".

The centre supports intergenerational activities which has resulted in the idea – coming from the young people – of organising workshops for senior citizens on technology-related subjects, such as the use of smartphones. The centre brings together different needs and activities that are of social and recreational benefit to young people. This experience allows the youngsters to discover that their own communities have many positive things to offer them.

An important advantage of Killarney Youth Centre is its openness to a large public. The centre is well known in the community for welcoming organised youth from associative life as well as youth that might come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, thus bringing together youngsters from different backgrounds and preventing stigmatisation of young

people at risk. The centre also co-operates with other stakeholders such as community leaders, policy makers and agencies to ensure coherence in available interventions and programmes for young people in need.

Besides the youth work that takes place at the youth centre in Killarney, Euróg – with its professional youth workers – also have a community outreach programme where they meet young people in their own environment, often in rural areas where there are fewer opportunities for youth.



CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH POLICY

CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH POLICY

Developing regional youth work

Marttinen Youth Centre, Finland

■ Dedicated to creating the best possible opportunities for young people in the Pirkanmaa region, Marttinen Youth Centre focuses on increasing its significance as a regional hub for youth-related issues and youth projects. A key element of the youth centre's strategy is to introduce a political dimension to youth work through capacity building of youth professionals, decision makers and young people at the local and regional level, and to advocate the issue through its participation in the Finnish Youth Centres Association.

Marttinen Youth Centre shares its extensive knowledge on youth legislation and youth work with youth workers and other actors in the region to help them argue their needs and justify their actions based on youth legislation and the principles of non-formal education and youth work. It supports training courses for young people and youth workers, enabling them to participate in decision making, while at the same time offering training courses for local decision makers.

A key actor in negotiating youth policy at the national level is the Finnish Youth Centres Association. The network collects feedback from the centres in the different regions of Finland to provide recommendations regarding young people's needs, challenges, and emerging youth trends to policy makers at central level. The association is organised in thematic working groups, such as international youth work,

pedagogy, sustainability and marketing. Marttinen Youth Centre takes an active role in this work and follows, in particular, the working group on youth policy.

Influencing local, regional and national youth policy

Timișoara Youth House, Romania

■ The youth-led Timis County Youth Foundation (FITT) that is running the Timișoara Youth House has developed substantial expertise in youth affairs, expanding its strong advocacy role in youth policy development from initially the local level to the regional level, and finally also to the national level. In 2014, the centre started to co-operate with the Municipality of Timișoara by establishing a local advisory committee on youth affairs. This committee, consisting of representatives of youth NGOs, informal groups of young people and the municipality, meets on a monthly basis to discuss current issues and the implementation of the local youth strategy.

The FITT Foundation was also instrumental in the development of a regional youth strategy in co-ordination with the regional authorities. Based on a wide youth consultation with around 1,000 young participants from Timis County and with contributions from youth NGOs and institutions, FITT submitted a draft strategy to the regional authorities. After its adoption by the regional government, a first call for projects by youth NGOs was launched in 2018 and an advisory youth council at county level was established as part of the

new regional youth strategy. Timișoara Youth House has also established sustainable co-operation with the national authorities concerning the development of new laws, youth trends and challenges, quality standards for youth centres and the development of a methodology for the accreditation of youth centres. Through its role as an expert on youth and its advocacy work, the centre's work is valued among stakeholders in the youth field. Its 2018 national report on youth, based among others on the results of FITT's involvement in the Structured Dialogue process, was discussed at the EU Youth Conference and has been used as a resource for the newly-adopted youth strategy.

Hub of expertise and know-how for youth issues

Eco Center Radulovački, Sremski Karlovci, Serbia

■ Eager to share its experience and know-how, the Eco Center has become a relevant actor in the development of youth policy. It draws on strong backing from the local community, its status as a residential educational centre and its national and international networks to gather knowledge relevant for the youth sector. Its expertise is appreciated by other youth organisations, who use the centre as a preferred space for their educational activities, as well as by policy makers.

The local youth club run by the centre plays an important role in developing local youth policy. The centre is a safe space for young people to gather and to formulate their needs and aspirations for the future. Eco Center acts as a clearing house and intermediary to ensure that the young people's voices are heard by the decision makers at local level. It has also played a key role at national level for the development of a national youth strategy

and action plan, hosting numerous youth activities in the process and providing expertise on subjects such as volunteering and environmental education.

Engaging in co-operation with local authorities

Youth Centre Plovdiv, Bulgaria

■ Youth Centre Plovdiv was established as a municipal enterprise and is managed in close co-operation with the Deputy Mayor of Plovdiv who is in charge of sports, youth and social policy in the municipality. The management of the centre regularly meets with the political leadership to present planned activities, discuss results and challenges, and to explore possible solutions.

As a result of its set up, the centre enjoys strong support from the local authorities as well as from the national authorities, which gives the centre the necessary stability to focus primarily on the development of its programme and activities for youth. The centre was set up as a result of a European Economic Area (EEA) grant co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science. When the EEA funded project ended, the municipality signed an agreement with the ministry guaranteeing the existence of the centre for the years to come.

In 2019, when Plovdiv was the European Capital of Culture, the centre strengthened its relations to the national level through its co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. It also started co-operating with the relevant ministries to develop a national standard for youth work.



PROMOTING THE VALUES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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Diversity of youth groups

Destelheide Youth Centre, Dworp, Belgium

Destelheide Youth Centre specifically designed the “Brussels Projects” to reach out to people with diverse backgrounds, in particular to immigrants, refugees and young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The centre has developed specific artistic activities and partnerships to bring different youth communities from the suburbs of Brussels to Destelheide, and to encourage interaction between the youth groups. To ensure success, the centre established contacts with art centres and organisations working with youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Brussels, and together they developed activities tailored to the needs of those young people with fewer opportunities. The activities offered empowers these young people by giving them the creative means with which they can express themselves, increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence, and promoting the understanding of the other, thus providing them with hope for the future.

The artistic activities in the project are generally carried out jointly by an artist recruited by the youth centre and a social worker from the partner organisation. During the activities, the centre encourages interaction between young people from the “Brussels projects” and other young people who are at the centre. The young people visit each other’s exhibitions and performances and interact informally during breaks and in the evenings.

In an effort to change the perception of the disadvantaged young people in the city, the educational team organises exhibitions of the youngsters’ artworks in museums or public places in Brussels, which gives them the opportunity to showcase their artwork or performances.

Translating for better practice

Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal

As part of their priorities, the Lisbon Youth Centre attaches importance to providing its users and decision makers with key materials in Portuguese. The centre has regularly published translated versions of Council of Europe standards to draw attention to the values of the Council of Europe and to make them more accessible to a wider public. Educational manuals on human rights education, youth participation and combatting hate speech online have been translated and adapted to the national context, as well as key Council of Europe standards relating to young people’s access to rights.

In collaboration with key partners, the youth centre publishes its own brochures that address subjects such as youth and equality, the integration of Roma community, and the promotion of European dialogue and co-operation in the youth field.

The publications are disseminated to partners of the Lisbon Youth Centre and contribute to promoting the values of the Council of Europe and the priorities of the centre’s work in a European context. More

recently, the centre has created a documentation centre on youth-related issues, which also collects youth publications from Portugal, the Council of Europe, and countries beyond Europe. Thanks to an on-line database, these resources are publicly available to consult.

Including youth from rural areas

Marttinen Youth Centre, Finland

■ The Marttinen Youth Centre has designed a long-term strategy for co-operating with the municipalities of the Pirkanmaa region on the inclusion of young people from rural areas. The youth centre's strategy includes the provision of local youth workers as a resource for supporting young people on their path to autonomy. The objective of this particular initiative is to empower young people and to enable them to take an informed – and therefore the best possible – decision when making their transition to adult life.

As part of a state-funded programme, young people from rural areas can take part in a “coaching programme” for the empowerment of the young individual. Using specific materials provided by the centre, participants and youth workers design the coaching programme beforehand to ensure it corresponds to the young people's needs. During their stay at the centre, the young people participate in workshops on topics such as life skills, self-management or motivation, and are supported by the local youth worker who is accompanying them in the process. A new model for social inclusion projects mixes coaching sessions with international exchanges in order to enhance young people's chances of accessing the labour market or continuing successfully with higher education studies. The youth centre offers its support before, during and after the coaching days to ensure appropriate preparation and sustainability in the process.

Including Roma youth

Youth Centre Plovdiv, Bulgaria

■ The Youth Centre Plovdiv supports the inclusion of Roma youth through its two Roma mediators and an integrated approach to sports. The centre works in the densely populated neighbourhood outside Plovdiv – Stolipinovo – which is home to one of the largest Roma minorities in the Balkans. The mediators – a Roma teacher and a former Roma youth participant – organise activities alongside the centre's youth work, and offer the Roma youth community training courses on human rights, Roma youth participation, non-discrimination and the prevention of aggressive behaviour. In its work, the centre focuses on the positive aspects of the Roma community and its culture by presenting literature and music of famous Roma people. The goal is to provide young Roma with positive role models from their own communities. In addition, the centre also conducts surveys on Roma youth to gather new knowledge, and carries out local outreach programmes where the youth workers meet Roma youth in their own environment, motivating them to participate in the activities at the centre and in society at large.

Youth Centre Plovdiv's large and modern sports infrastructure has proven to be a particularly good way to allow people with different backgrounds to interact successfully. Many young Roma lack fluency in the Bulgarian language, but on the playing field, language barriers become secondary, putting everyone on an equal footing. The centre is also collaborating with other associations, such as “Team of Hope” to promote inclusion through sports. This organisation uses sports as a means of including socially disadvantaged people, such as young Bulgarians living in alternative care or in Roma neighbourhoods.

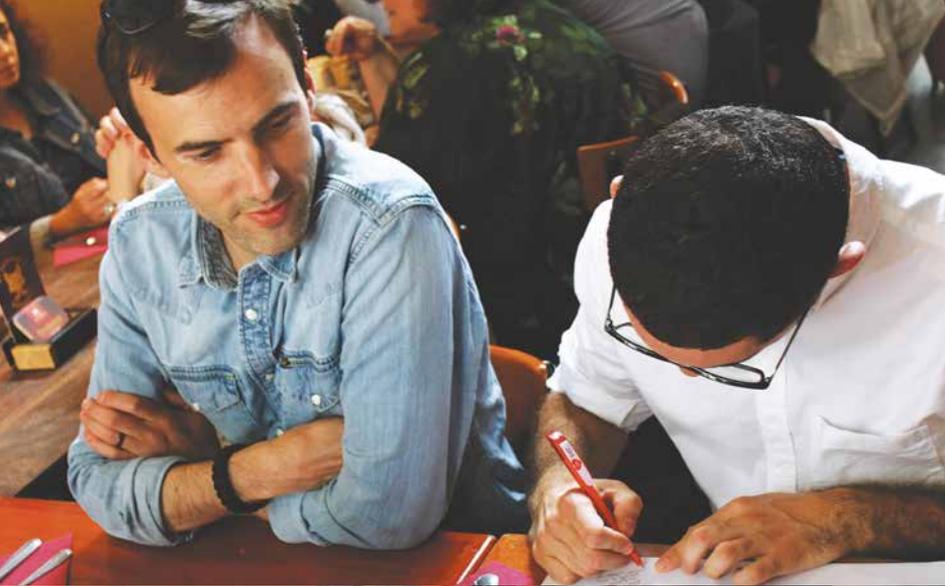
Reaching out to the Roma community

*International Youth Centre Stara Zagora,
Bulgaria*

■ The youth centre in Stara Zagora aims to help young Roma take part in a society where ethnic and cultural diversity is seen as an asset. As members of an ethnic minority, Roma youth often face discrimination, difficulties at school or when looking for a job. With the help of two Roma mediators, the centre engages with the local Roma community and empowers Roma youth to take an active role in improving their life prospects and their lives in society at large.

In their activities, the centre makes sure it mixes vulnerable and non-vulnerable populations and ensures that at least 30% of the youngsters come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The centre has also developed co-operation with the employment office who are regularly present at the centre to support young people's employment schemes, with a special focus on integrating Roma youth.

The outreach activities of the centre are based on research on the Roma community which identifies the specific needs of Roma youth and the cultural specificities of the community. The Roma mediators act as an interface between the community and the youth centre and their role is to overcome potential barriers to participation through dialogue – with individuals and groups – and build a relationship of trust with young Roma people and their families. Outreach activities take place several times per week.



ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Improving energy efficiency

European-Latin-American Centre for Youth (CEULAJ), Mollina, Spain

■ The CEULAJ, run by the Spanish National Youth Institute, follows an energy-efficiency strategy for its large building complex in rural Andalusia. Since 2014, it has been using a biomass heating system, which generates energy for hot water and heating using wooden pellets. The new system has allowed the centre to cut its energy costs by half. In the future, the installation of a solar panel system will further increase the energy efficiency of the building.

Visitors are informed of the centre's energy-saving strategy and waste management system before coming to the centre. Once the solar panels have been installed, the centre will integrate the system into its environmental education activities.

Applying a holistic approach to sustainability

Marttinen Youth Centre, Finland

■ Sustainability is firmly engrained in the Marttinen Youth Centre's mission. Every staff member shares the aspiration and contributes to the goal of making the youth centre a role model for sustainable youth work.

Each team – from reception, catering, cleaning and maintenance, to youth work and management – develops its own sustainability objectives, which are included in a master-list for the whole centre.

These objectives can include measures as specific as replacing bottled water in meetings with tap water. Every six months, the teams evaluate their performance and set new objectives for the upcoming period. Sustainability dilemmas, such as the increasing number of airline flights as a consequence of international youth work, are discussed within the team to find solutions, which are then reconcilable with the centre's sustainability goals.

All staff have been trained in how to explain, in a pedagogically meaningful way, the environmentally-conscious choices at the centre to young people. However, as far as the transmission of the values of sustainability are concerned, the centre is determined not to "preach" ecological behaviour, but rather to live by its own ecological standards and to become a role model for a sustainable life style.



Youth Centres Awarded with the Quality Label

Country	Youth Centres	Labelled
Belgium	Destelheide Youth Centre www.destelheide.be	2016
Belgium	De Hoge Rielen Youth Centre www.dehogerielen.be	2020
Bulgaria	Stara Zagora Youth Centre www.helpyouth-starazagora.com	2017
Bulgaria	Youth Centre Plovdiv www.youthcentre.plovdiv.bg	2018
Finland	Villa Elba Youth Centre www.villaelba.fi	2014
Finland	Marttinen Youth Centre www.marttinen.fi	2019
Germany	Foundation wannseeFORUM www.wannseeforum.de	2019
Ireland	EurÓg Killarney Youth Centre www.kdys.ie	2017
Luxembourg	Marienthal Youth Centre www.marienthal.snj.lu	2018
Portugal	Lisbon Youth Centre www.cjl.ipdj.pt	2015
Romania	Timisoara Youth House (FITT) www.fitt.ro	2016
Serbia	Ecocenter Radulovacki www.ekoloskicentar.org	2015
Slovenia	Brezice Youth Centre www.mc-brezice.si	2013
Spain	Euro-Latin American Youth Centre www.ceulaj.injuve.es	2016

Promoting Council of Europe values, youth policy and youth work standards in Europe

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres provides an opportunity for youth centres with a structured relationship to a public authority to benefit from the Council of Europe's approach to youth work and youth policy. It offers residential educational youth centres a framework within which to develop the quality of their offer to young people and the youth sector at their own pace.

This brochure provides concrete examples of successful practices implemented in quality-labelled youth centres. They illustrate how a youth centre can fulfil the quality criteria and serve the youth sector effectively.

The initiative 'The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres' is part of the intergovernmental cooperation programme of the Council of Europe's youth sector.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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