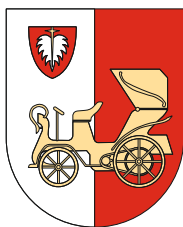


THE METHODOLOGY

Children's Council as a Tool for Joint Decision Making about our City





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INTRODUCTION

You are holding a methodology called „How to establish a Children's Council“. This methodology is the output of two Czech-French activities of the „We want to decide about our town with you“ project. The objective of the methodology is provision of a simple guide to foundation of your own children's council.

You will read about the reasons for a children's council foundation and its advantages and we will present the foundation process. Surely you will find here many good ideas and gadgets, which will assist and inspire you when getting involved into the decision making-processes in your town.

INFORMATION ABOUT A CHILDREN'S COUNCIL

HOW DOES IT WORK IN OUR TOWN?

In Kopřivnice and Trappes the members of the children's councils are the representatives of all elementary schools and representatives of the youth in the towns. The school decides about the process of the school's representative election, In Kopřivnice, also high school students are member of the Children's Municipal Council.

- Meetings of the children's councils are held once a month.
- Duration of the meeting depends on the scope and agenda of the meeting, usually it takes approximately 2 hours.
- Members of the children's council are divided into few workgroups with different topics. The individual workgroups then solve matters falling into their scope of focus.
- When solving the matters they collect and evaluate information, propose manners of solution, choose the most suitable solution and then implement the solution. After the solution implementation they evaluate its impacts.



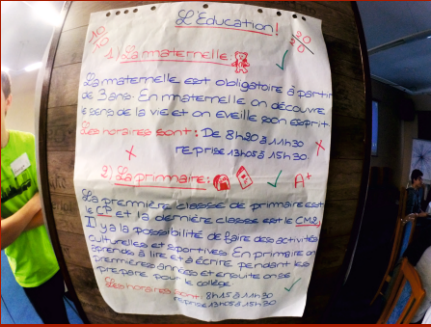
HOW TO ESTABLISH A CHILDREN'S COUNCIL?

The key factor for a council foundation and functioning are the people – the members of the children's council.

- A child councilor profile: an active young citizen, who cares about what is going on in his/her town/municipality and is interested in work for the town/municipality and is willing and able to do his/her best. A child councilor is involved into the life of the town/municipality and wants to improve the lives of others.
- Number of members: A lower number of councilors is more suitable at the beginning of the children's council activities. In this period we recommend five skilful councilors.
- Workgroups: After the startup of the children's council it is possible to increase the number of its members as needed to create workgroups focusing on particular problems in the town/municipality (one workgroup for the environment, one for traffic, one for sports and recreation and others).
- Coordinator: The children's council needs a good quality coordinator for its efficient functioning, namely in the startup stage, but also in other development stages. The coordinator is a person over 18 years of age, he/she leads children councilors during problem solving, manages and supports them. The coordinator provides the children councilors not only with moral but also with psychological support. In the children's council foundation and startup stages the coordinator communicates with the outside environment and the public. Later, when the children's council operations are more automatic, the coordinator steps back and the „rule“ of the young councilors starts.
- Mission and vision: The children's council shall describe its mission and vision stating why they shall work and what they want to achieve.

CONSULTING WITH RELEVANT PEOPLE IS NECESSARY

- When there is a group of young, active people and a skilful coordinator, it is necessary to present the initiative also to the bodies of the relevant municipality.



- In the first stage we recommend negotiating with the relevant department of the local or municipal office.
- Then, negotiations at the town/municipality management level can take place.
- After the negotiations, the children's council foundation shall be accepted by the local self-administration and it shall be included into the structure of the town/municipality. For example, it can be operated under one of the town's/municipal's allowance organizations.

TO WORK AFTER THE BEGINNING „FORMALITIES“!

- For a children's council work to be successful and fulfill its objectives it is necessary to start cooperation with the town/municipality and the relevant subjects in the town/municipality, to get to be generally known in the town/municipality and by its inhabitants.
- To start cooperation also with the neighborhood, to include the council into national structures – to contact the relevant regional and national parliaments. The regional and also national parliaments can be a great benefit for the children's council. Besides mutual exchange of experience they can also assist to local councils.
- Promotion: By its activities the council shall promote not only itself but also the supporting organization, the town/municipality.
- Project: Active cooperation on events of the supporting organization, the town/municipality.

WHAT MUST NOT BE FORGOTTEN?

- Background: It is necessary to be aware of the fact that the children's council will need certain background, where it shall meet. Local Youth House or a house of games can do.
- Money: It is good to have at least a low budget to pay the necessary expenses. The budget income can come for example from various gatherings. It is also possible to negotiate financial support from the supporting organization or directly from the town or municipality.
- Promotion: To create and administer web and Facebook pages of the children's council. Small advertising objects (pencils, pens, bags, etc.) are also sought for promotional articles.



ADVANTAGES OF THE CHILDREN'S MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

SHARE IN INFLUENCING THE TOWN'S OPERATION

- Youth cooperation in various events for the town, municipality or target groups.
- Creation and implementation of new and own events.
- Surveys – questionnaire surveys and public inquiries focused on establishing the needs of citizens.
- Existence of the children's municipal council enables submission of youth's proposals to official bodies of a town or a municipality and increases the chances of the youth's proposals implementation.
- For a municipality the children's council is one of relevant partners when addressing the youth in a town or a municipality.

DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH'S PERSONALITY

Young councilors acquire new experience and other benefits:

- increased self-confidence, they are not afraid to express their own opinions
- acquiring communication and presentation skills
- learning project thinking and management
- increasing teamwork abilities
- the skill to hold a dialog and discussion

NEW EXPERIENCE

Getting to know new projects and people.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN CHILDREN'S COUNCILS

As already mentioned, one of the objective of children's councils is organization of events for wide public and namely for the youth.

Examples of implemented projects:

- A logo of the Children's Municipal Council of Kopřivnice – a logo is one of the important presentation elements of each entity or association. The Children's Municipal Council has organized a competition for the logo selection. From many submitted designs provided by talented creative students of Kopřivnice schools we have chosen one winning logo and its author was awarded.

- Cooperation on the „Across the European Union“ regional project. Securing discussion over the EURO topic. The objective of the discussion was to inspire young people to think about our country in the framework of international structures and its role within such structures.
- In the area of environment and ecology the Children's Municipal Council organizes gatherings of old and obsolete CDs and DVDs. To support attractiveness of the gatherings they have been organized in a form of competitions among local elementary schools. Obsolete disks were then ecologically disposed of.
- Volunteering – Because children's council members are unselfish people they participate in many volunteering events. Within the „72 hours“ project young participants have been improving conditions for the local cynological club operation. Another volunteering activity is playing fairytale characters in the traditional „Fairytale Forest“.
- The best example of good practice is the cooperation with the children's council of French Trappes and the youth from Polish Myszkow on the joint project „We want to decide about our town with you“, objective of which is inclusion of young people into decision-making processes and assistance with the children's council foundation in Myszkow. This methodology forms an output from this project. The international project consists of four interconnected activities taking place in Europe.

CONCLUSION

This methodology strives to become a guide assisting to young people from towns and municipalities not having children's councils or youth councils yet. The children's councils in Czech Kopřivnice and French Trappes are beneficial for the towns, their inhabitants and also for the young members of the councils. The authors believe that they have been successful in proving the undisputable advantages of youth's participation in towns; however the success of new council projects will depend on the approach and determination of the founding members as they have to overcome uneasy beginnings or later inner crises.

THE AUTHORS STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE MUTUAL EFFORTS WILL NOT BE WASTED AND THAT DECISIONS IN YOUR TOWN WILL BE TAKEN WITH YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Children's council Kopřivnice

Children's council Trappes

We want to make decisions about our town with you
2015-2017

About the project

The project "We Want to Make Decisions about our City with You" came into existence due to the need of young people who participate or would like to participate in democratic life of their city.

Children's Council has been actively working in Kopřivnice of the Moravian-Silesian Region for 15 years. The Council has been a connecting link between students and school leaders, and at the same time, instrument for communication between the youth and city authorities. Children's Council also initiates events for their contemporaries and the public. By its engagement in public life, the Council pursues the goal of improvement in the standard and quality of living of Kopřivnice citizens.

These young people wish to discuss their activities with other young similarly active people from different social environments, they wish to pass their time-tested methods and experience, and to acquaint themselves with practice, methods and experience of others. At the same time, they wish to pass the example of good practice to young people who are strangers to such tool of engagement of the youth in public life.

Deputies of young people from the Czech city of Kopřivnice have been communicating with their contemporaries from the French city of Trappes, where Children's Council is also run, about their common project for more than a year. The main goal of the project is international cooperation in the area of engagement of young people in public life and decision-making processes. The submitted project originated after joining of the partner from the Polish city of Myszkow.

Interim project goals

- exchange of experience of Kopřivnice children's deputies with their counterparts from the French city of Trappes,
- mutual cognition of methods and working procedures of both groups in countries and cities in which they are engaged in, common processing of the "Children's Council as a Tool for Joint Decision Making about our City" methodology,
- presentation of the methodology to a third party which is involved in the project - young people from the Polish city of Myszkow,
- assistance with presentation of the methodology and initiation of its implementation in Myszkow are fully reflected in four planned activities of the project.

Two project activities were held in the Czech Republic, one in France and one in Poland. Doings which have improved the level of key competencies and skills of the engaged young people from France and Czech Republic took place in the course of the first and second activities. Tangible output of these two activities is the methodology "Children's Council as a Tool for Joint Decision Making about our City". Creators of this example of good practice handed it to the group of young people from the Polish city of Myszkow, who are not familiar with the form of Children's Council, in the course of the third activity. All participants simultaneously continued with collective dialog and learning. The fourth activity, in which the Children's Council of the Czech Republic and a group of young people from Poland participated, aims, besides participants of the project, at hundreds of young people of Myszkow, who were and will be introduced to the methodology for functioning of Children's Councils.

Using methods of informal education throughout the whole project duration, the project strives to strengthen competencies of young people in the field of project logics, project management, conceptual work and presentation. Through international dimension of the project and support of cross-cultural dialog, the project has ambitions to contribute to personality development of young people, build their confidence, strengthen their sense for initiative, their entrepreneurial spirit, support their involvement in democratic life, improve their cross-cultural awareness with emphasis on European diversities and unity, and last but not least, to contribute to their practical communication in a foreign language.

By realization of the project, we expect positive personality development of the project participants, acquisition of knowledge, betterment of competencies in the above described fields, and successively actual impact on functioning of Children's Councils in Kopřivnice and Trappes, and local public life in Myszkow. Methodology named "Children's Council as a Tool for Joint Decision Making about our City", which may serve as an example of good practice in other European cities, is a concrete outcome of the project.

One hundred and fifty seven direct participants from three European cities participate in the project, not counting the accompanying persons. The participants comprise of young people of the age of 13 to 30. The project shall, however, multiplicationally influence another thousands of young people from schools and cities which their deputies represent. Due to its mission, the project is significant for authorities of local public administration in cities, where the young participants live and are actively involved in public life.



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