

The Czech Experience - EGL in the Czech Republic

05/06/2020 - Actions in EGL



As a continuation of our conversation on the activities and cooperation between the Slovak and Czech National Agencies, today we introduce to you **Veronika Malantová** who, together with **Pavλίna Slavičková**, coordinate EGL in the Czech NA. Veronika shares insights on the EGL partnership, their cooperation with the Slovak NA and the importance of quality youth work on a local level.



Q: Within the EGL partnership, what are some highlights in the NA plan and strategy for 2020?

A: In its annual plan, the Czech NA included a number of **training sessions** that were scheduled throughout the year. However, due to the current health crisis and pandemic, we had to, unfortunately, postpone the activities that were planned for the autumn of this year until further notice.

Q: What do you hope to achieve with these activities?

A: We only recently joined the network, so we entered this partnership and membership with the hope, initially to learn a lot from our partners' experiences and good practices. The ultimate aim is for **sustainable youth work** to be set up in the **five selected Czech municipalities** and that **young people also become part of the decision-making processes**. We also hope that some partnerships will be established between the participating Czech and Slovak municipalities despite the current circumstances.

Q: What does a municipality need in order to be ‘youth-friendly’?

A: There are a few prerequisites and practices that guarantee a **municipality is using a youth-friendly approach** in its work. We need **regular communication with youth people** who take active participation in the decision-making process within a municipality and are inspired and motivated to get involved in local youth work. On the other hand, we need **competent, caring individuals** who recognize the potential that supporting young people carries, the ability to involve all stakeholders and regular and thorough analysis of the situations and needs of young people. Another important aspect of adopting a youth-friendly approach is **striving for inclusion, an open and friendly environment** and providing **support for the independence of young people**. This support could also manifest in many other forms, including a ready-to-launch program, system and space to support young people based on meaningful communication between decision-makers and youth people, rewarding young people’s activities and creating a functional youth parliament as a platform to nurture and ensure young people’s involvement.

Q: You are closely collaborating with the Slovak NA. What values does this cooperation bring and how does it enhance local youth work in the region?

A: Youth participation is essential for creating a **healthy civil society**. It is important that young people are involved in decision-making processes at all levels of the political system. A **society that creates space for young people to interact and takes into account the needs of young people is truly inclusive**. Thanks to our Czech and Slovak NA cooperation, young people from selected municipalities also have more opportunities to get involved in the decision process on a municipal level that concern and directly involves them. **In such a society, young people are not passive, but active participants**.

Many cities have **cross-border partnerships** and the tradition in our countries is often based on the close cooperation of our partner cities. By supporting EGL training, we create space to stimulate not only this cooperation, but also important aspects such as the **mutual exchange of experiences, opportunities and inspiration through good examples of practice**. These are related to an environment with very similar conditions and background for the development of youth work. Implemented initiatives and projects in both countries can easily be adapted to the conditions in the neighbouring country.

Q: How do you think your plan and strategy will advance youth work in 2020 in your country?

A: Even if we are just at the start, the **young people involved in our project have the ambition to become more involved in local politics** and, together with decision-makers, to **create a youth strategy in five selected municipalities**. We believe that our results will serve as examples of good practice for other municipalities and inspire other young people. Through our planning and work, we are focusing on and hoping to contribute to the development of **personal and social competencies of young people**, the improvement of their communication skills, aid critical thinking and creativity.

At the national level, the topic of youth work support is currently marginal. If further examples of good practice can be created through this initiative, there is a greater chance that this topic will get the attention it deserves. Mutual support and inspiration in the field of youth work can also change and **influence the views and perspectives of politicians, decision-makers** who in turn can be valuable promoters and advocates of youth work.

Q: How do you use the European Charter to create good practices and standards for quality local youth work in your country?

A: The **EGL Charter** can be applied on many levels. It is used not only in EGL training within the Czech and the Slovak Republic but also in the training of representatives of municipalities who develop youth work on a local level. The most important part of the Charter, which we use in our practice are the **principles and rules**. The latter provides a **clear path to establishing high-quality youth work on a local level**. The Charter Guidelines can be used by representatives of municipalities, as well as youth workers and youth work coordinators. Many municipalities already rely on this document while creating strategies and conceptual materials in the field of youth work on a local level, or in youth work itself to increase its quality development and delivery.

It is necessary to mention with regards to the division of competences within the EGL Charter, there are some areas in the Slovak and Czech Republic that are not fully aligned. Nevertheless, it is a complex document and thorough guide on how we can approach youth work. It **sets valuable principles, responsibilities and recommendations for municipalities and youth workers**.

If you'd like to read more about the first meeting between the 5 participating municipalities within the EGL framework in the Czech Republic, please follow the link: <https://bit.ly/32eO6rN>