

# ‘City incubator’: helping make the ideas of young people happen in Ljubljana, Slovenia

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As a strategic partnership that supports municipal level local youth work, Europe Goes Local (EGL) not only aims to raise the quality of youth work development but also create and influence a multiplier effect through identifying and promoting diverse activities of and to its members, partners and stakeholders. Thanks to the quality of its cooperation, EGL has become a rich platform of activities and practices that showcase the diversity and success of local youth work in various local settings and contexts.

As we are counting down the days to the official launch of the Changemaker Toolkit, which is designed to support working with the European Charter on Local Youth Work, we have decided to select and present to you 5 good practices that highlight the importance, creativity and impact of local youth work and look at the ways they align to the Charter’s principles and promote its values across Europe.

**In the hope that you might get inspired to implement a similar approach in your own country or learn more about what others are doing successfully, today we present to you the Young Dragons - a public institution founded by the City of Ljubljana with their good example of how to make the ideas of young people happen through collaboration, support, knowledge and trust.**

<https://youtu.be/FR7Ob1FVM0g>

- **Name of the good practice:** ‘City Incubator - Helping Make the Ideas of Youth Happen’
- **Location:** Ljubljana, Slovenia
- **Organization:** ‘Young Dragons’
- **Organization Profile:** The Public Institution ‘Young Dragons’ was founded in 2009 by the City of Ljubljana. The aim of the institution is to provide programs for young people to enjoy their **quality leisure time**. The institute’s role is to ensure the possibility of development and offer support for young people and their families by helping them on their way to **independence**.

‘Young Dragons’ aims to provide a youth programme in all of Ljubljana’s districts and become the indispensable voice of youth and co-creator of the life of the local communities. It also openly welcome **international cooperation** by organising an environment where the colourful voices of different cultures of the world will be spoken on a daily basis in the future. The ‘Young Dragons’ are also the main coordinator of Ljubljana’s association of youth centres. The ‘Young Dragons’ values include **transparency, reliability** and **responsiveness** as well as effective **communication**.



- **Purpose of the activity:** Making young people’s ideas happen

How to approach young people who have ideas? That was the challenge that the City of Ljubljana wanted to address. Young Dragons tackled the challenge with a customised program ‘What works



well, and what could be even better?' in the city, in one's neighbourhood, at one's school? The program started-off in 2016 as the **first activity of City Incubator**, a platform for the implementation of the ideas of young people in Ljubljana. The program supports youth on their path of making their ideas happen. **The 'Young Dragons' provides infrastructure, financial support and reach to youth, while partner organisation TiPovej!, NGO, provides workshops and a mentorship scheme with professionals from diverse industries.** City Incubator stimulates and supports activities that are based on the active engagement of youth on the local level. We enable an environment where mistakes are allowed, where learning by doing is the norm and where community-developed projects are bringing together youth, organisations supporting youth (public institutes, NGOs, business) and the City of Ljubljana. **The change we strive for is a real inclusion of youth. We empower youth to actively participate in making the quality of life in Ljubljana better for them and for what they care about.**

- **Challenges in implementation: Identifying the appropriate channels of communication and multilateral engagement**

Partly, solutions were found in the promotion **through the Network of Youth Centres of Ljubljana** and through **street youth workers**. Young Dragons also promoted City Incubator through a **monthly newsletter Ljubljana, Youth Information Network L'mit and among NGOs**. The second challenge is how to involve more companies and NGOs and how to make them see the projects of young people as opportunities and not just as additional work. Young Dragons would like to achieve that young people are recognised as agents of change and solution. The next challenge is the crucial need of some young people to get more intensive personal and professional support for realisation and sustainability of their project. Necessary for the success of innovation as such is - recognition and support of city administration, human and financial resources (pool of mentors, finances for longer support), the motivation of the organisational team. 'Young Dragons' believes in young people and their potential for developing solutions for challenges of the local communities and city nowadays. They just need to get a space, knowledge and trust.



- **Impact:**

**Young people:** New knowledge of how to move the wish and ideas further and process them into the

project. An experience of what is needed for a successful project, a social network and opportunity for working with innovative youth and learning from a different perspective.

**Youth workers:** The opportunity to develop as mentors and to support young people.

**Youth work:** It is an example of good practice and positive impact in a participatory approach to work with young people. It is a positive example of collaboration between youth organisations, municipality and business.

**On 'Young Dragons':** insight into the lives of youth and ideas for a better city.

**Society/Community:** Showcase a successful project to inspire and pass forward an idea that works and can be applied to different environments of social development through youth support.

**Applying the European Charter on Local Youth Work\*:** All principles inscribed in each section of the Charter that the Good Practice applies in the design and implementation of this activity:

# European Charter on Local Youth Work Good Practice Profile Card

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- **Further references and contact:** <https://www.mladizmaji.si/mestni-inkubator/>