

AUSTRIA

Local development

Location

Römerland Carnuntum

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 100 000

EAFRD 56 000

National/Regional 14 000

Private 30 000

Project duration

2021 – 2022

Project promoter

Regionalentwicklungsverein
Römerland Carnuntum

Contact

g.taferner@roemerland-carnuntum.at

Website

www.roemerland-carnuntum.at/Jugend

An example of innovative youth work to support young people to plan and implement their own local development ideas.

Summary

The Local Action Group (LAG) Römerland Carnuntum, in Eastern Austria has a long tradition of developing and testing novel solutions through pilot projects and then creating sustainable support structures. This approach has been successfully applied to youth work.



Young people are actively involved in decision-making processes as early as possible. This begins with offers that the LAG implements together with young people in the regional youth centres. In addition, the youth workers involved in “mobile youth work” are on the move in public spaces and can respond to the needs and interests of young people there. Other activities organised by the LAG include networking and coordination meetings, a regional job and youth information fair, discussions with parents, and a regional youth festival.

Results

- Thanks to the project, counselling and support services for young people are available in all municipalities (online, mobile youth work, in youth centres). Mobile youth workers are active in all larger municipalities of the region.
- A permanent team of 12 youth workers has been built up in the region. The team receives training on a regular basis and, in addition, the youth workers support each other through regular supervision and peer counselling.
- Increasing participation: the number of young people participating in youth work activities is increasing every year. The use of counselling services by young people, parents and schools has increased significantly.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ While at least one person needs to be fully dedicated to the “youth issue” to push it forward, it is also important to ensure that the responsibility for supporting and sustaining youth actions is shared among all relevant parties.
- ❑ The successful implementation and sufficient resourcing of regional youth work was a result of strategic prioritising within the LAG’s local development strategy and a broad regional commitment to long-term and continuous engagement with this topic.

Context

In the area of the LEADER LAG Römerland Carnuntum, eastern Austria near the border with Slovakia, there is a strong emphasis on incorporating youth work into regional development efforts. In rural areas, young people very often have limited opportunities for leisure and cultural participation. Social services for young people, such as counselling, are rarely available and this has a negative impact on their quality of life and contributes to any decision to leave ‘their’ region. Where youth offers do exist, they are frequently developed in a top-down manner, without due consultation, and therefore fail to meet the real needs of those they are targeted at.

Objectives

The aim of this initiative is to improve the quality of life for young people in rural areas and create empowered and vibrant local communities where young people feel valued and cared for.

Activities

The following activities were developed and implemented by the LAG as part of this project:

- The development of counselling services and projects to address addiction and mental illness (resulting from pandemic restrictions) in children, adolescents, parents, teachers, and other caregivers.
- Strengthening the provision of mindfulness-based violence prevention actions (e.g. in schools and youth centres).
- Increasing the provision of training opportunities for young people concerning topics such as: the uses of public space, digital youth work, psychological disorders in young people and their parents.
- Networking and community cohesion actions for young people and adults affected by the above-mentioned issues.
- Establishing regional youth forums that provide networking, education, and project development for young people in cooperation with local partners.
- Organising regular casework discussions / addiction coordination meetings between medical officers, school representatives, social services and the police. The meetings currently take place in the district capital, but the ambition is to hold similar discussions at a broader range of locations in the future.
- Setting up a regional working group for youth associations and youth community councils to discuss the development of youth work projects at municipal level.
- Commencing in 2020, organising a regional job and

youth information fair. This major event attracts more than 1 000 visitors every year.

- Supporting families via “parents talk” meetings, where parents and guardians can meet youth experts and receive advice and support.
- Organising a regional youth festival to promote and connect youth culture over several days. Young people, youth clubs and community groups are actively involved in organizing and running the event.
- Developing socio-cultural projects in cooperation with young people, e.g. art projects, sports events, photo challenges, etc.

Main results

- Thanks to the project, counselling and support services for young people are available in all municipalities (online, mobile youth work, in youth centres). A permanent team of 12 youth workers has been built up in the region
- The number of young people participating in youth work activities is increasing every year. The use of counselling services by young people, parents and schools has also increased significantly.
- The project increased networking between all local actors that are involved in youth work, who now work jointly to develop strategies and activities for young people.
- In contrast to most other rural regions, Römerland Carnuntum now has a positive population trend. It is believed this is in part a result of the permanent anchoring of the topic of youth and its importance in the regional population.

Key lessons

At least one person in the region should be fully dedicated to overseeing the “youth issue”; working on it continuously and pushing it forward.

Another important aspect is the establishment of permanent and diverse structures for youth work, strategic anchoring of the topic within the LAG’s local development strategy alongside a broad regional commitment to long-term and continuous engagement with the topic of youth. This is the essential prerequisite for providing sufficient financial and human resources for regional youth work.

“For many years - and in the last two years especially - we have been working together with the youth social workers from Römerland Carnuntum. I appreciate your professionalism, your reliability and your huge heart for our pupils. Thank you for this cooperation. I could not imagine it without you.” A teacher