

European Week of Regions and Cities 2022

Workshop organized by Eurotowns (the network of medium-sized cities in Europe), Reggio Emilia (vice president of the network), and other city of the network

Title: “Youth empowerment and recovery in a closer way”

Short description of workshop:

In the framework of the European Year of Youth Eurotowns - the network of medium-sized cities in Europe – in collaboration with the city of Reggio Emilia, Vice-President of the network and together with other cities members aims at hosting a workshop about the empowerment of youth in medium-sized cities during and after Covid. By discussing projects from different Eurotowns Members, we wish to showcase innovative and sustainable ways of supporting youth participation in medium-sized cities. The presented projects will highlight participatory approaches from different policy and geographical areas. Throughout the workshop, Eurotowns wishes to discuss the distinct role of medium-sized cities in being closer to their citizens with a particular focus on youth empowerment.

Agenda

1. Opening the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Vice-President of Eurotowns (Italy)
2. Input by Hannah-Lea Braun spokesperson of Young Elected Representatives of CEMR and Municipal Councillor of Sindelfingen (Germany) on how local authorities and in particular the younger generation shall contribute to the local debate on the European way of life of solidarity, peace and security
3. Presentation of projects

3.1 Reggio Emilia (Italy) – “Young People as European Ambassadors for a new beginning”

The Municipality of Reggio Emilia has strongly believed in the need to train young people in an international multicultural environment, so as to create a next generation of European citizens open to confrontation and diversity, capable of facing the challenges of an ever-changing job market, and solidly rooted in the common European values. It has been promoting a series of initiatives at both local and European level to deepen young people’ understanding and knowledge of the opportunity that the European Union offers to its youngest citizens also during the pandemic. The promotion of international training opportunities for students and young people in the framework of the EU programmes has been, over the years, high on the Reggio Emilia agenda. Reggio Emilia is among the Italian cities with the highest number of students taking part in internships abroad in the framework of the ERASMUS+ programme. From 2009, almost 4500 students have participated in international exchanges towards different destinations participating in Erasmus+ VET and student exchange with twinned cities and international partners have been the cornerstone to youth exchanges and motilities offering more and more possibilities both at European and extra EU level.

3.2 “Empowering and Engaging Youth in the SDGs” - Examples from Manresa (Spain) and Solingen (Germany)

We will briefly present our local initiatives in order to empower youth in **Manresa** and engage them in local policies, mainly through the Youth Council and the Youth Office. After that, we'll focus on the work done with students of primary and secondary schools and universities in order to raise awareness on SDGs among youth and engage them in the design and implementation of the sustainability strategy of the city by 2030. Specifically, we'll show how we addressed to them with specific awareness campaigns, and how they participated in the proposal and prioritisation of local targets and actions needed to achieve the global goals during the pandemic, through online and later face-to-face workshops in class, and through individual surveys via app and pollsters.

In **Solingen** a new project is established for more climate protection and sustainability education in day-care centres, youth centres and sports facilities in order to foster education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as an instrument to empower children and youth.

The project is presented by Sonia Puyol European Projects Manager of the City of Manresa and student from Presentation about how the City of Manresa involved young people and children in the prioritisation of the SDGs and the establishment of our local targets of sustainability (during the pandemic and after covid-restrictions). Then Manresa will give the floor to a few students and a teacher from a school which have been involved in the process, to briefly explain their experience and projects done with collaboration of the city council, and their participation in the Urbact Local Group. (<https://urbact.eu/global-goals-cities>)

The project is presented by Manja Gahbler from the City of Solingen.

3.3 Sindelfingen (Germany) – “Queer Time - Talk to young people about queer topics!”

The project „Queer Time“ is funded as a part of the federal program "Demokratie leben! (Live Democracy!)". Social workers organize workshops and mutual exchange about LGBTQIA+ topics. "Queer Time" offers space for diversity. This project got particularly important during the pandemic, when young people in homeschooling could not meet face to face. Communicating with each other was largely only possible in the virtual world. Young people were confronted with a flood of information and their own sensitivities and personal relationships took a back seat. This exchange of experiences especially dealing with queer topics serves as a pilot project in the district. The project will be presented by Jana Kastner, Youth Officer of the City of Sindelfingen.

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Final round and lessons learned

Moderator: Carol Thomas, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (TBC)