

Building the Communities of Tomorrow

Tools for enhancing cooperation between local governments and community-based youth organisations



2023



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Introduction

Local government and grassroots youth organisations essentially have a shared goal, to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of the local population, whilst providing new opportunities. An obvious way to work towards this goal is through strong cooperation and collaboration and the creation of meaningful synergies of value for both sides. This is especially prominent when dealing with complex social issues which must be approached in a systematic way, particularly as a lack of cooperation between local authorities and non-governmental organisations can further exacerbate difficulties in solving existing social issues.

The following document is designed to provide actionable recommendations, general directions, and case studies related to NGO / community organisation collaboration with local government municipalities. By investigating good practices and examples to be avoided, an effective approach to collaboration can be developed, leading to smoother processes and more practical outcomes, to the benefit of both youth organisations, and their collaborative counterparts in local government, as well as the stakeholders and clients of both organisations, and wider society.

The benefits of strong collaborative practices between local government municipalities and NGOs are manifold and well-recognised, and should benefit all involved parties, including community organisations, municipalities, and intermediate organisations. An outline of the benefits of collaboration can be found [here](#).

The partners involved in this project carried out a needs analysis in order to identify the needs and challenges associated with collaboration between community based organisations that work with youth or with the aim of improving the lives of youngsters, and local municipalities. In the following section these identified needs and challenges are summarised, along with further details on the benefits and potential issues when taking on a collaborative partnership. More detail on these areas can be found in the linked documents in each section.

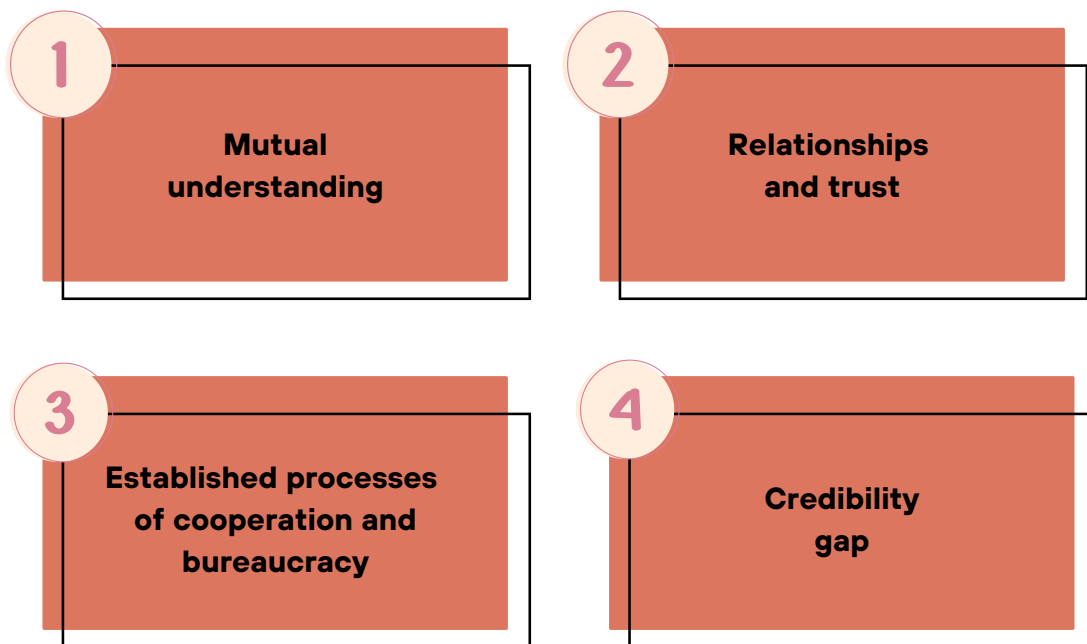
Case studies and examples: lessons learned and good practices

The following sections will outline several case studies based on the experience of our partner community organisations across five countries (Portugal, Sweden, Cyprus, Latvia and Lithuania), outlining the models and benefits of cooperation for each organisation, and the wider effects for municipalities and society. Two case studies have been provided from each country, and quotes are provided by members of each youth organisation.



Steps to address the identified problems

In the section below we outline a list of advice taken from practitioners in the NGO sector, with experience of partnerships with governmental bodies, and a wealth of knowledge in the field. Through an analysis of existing literature, several main points were highlighted, with relevance to our own findings. Below these concepts are mentioned and explained, as an additional approach to ensuring successful partnerships. These points are linked with the 4 identified problems (a table below) discussed in the report "[What are the needs and challenges to develop successful partnerships between municipalities and community based organisations?](#)", and where relevant, links are provided to helpful external tools.



How to develop a shared vision when forming a partnership

1 DEFINE AND ARTICULATE A COMMON OUTCOME

It's essential that strong and clear communication practices are carried out by those involved in any new partnership, with regular discussions and inputs from stakeholders on both sides. This allows for a well-defined common outcome to be established, which can act as a guiding framework for all steps taken by partner organisations.

This step can be facilitated using different tools, see more examples at the end of the chapter.

Through the use of such tools, both sides of a partnership can gain a clear understanding of what is expected, and this can allow for negotiation and compromise. Research demonstrates that partnerships are more likely to be successful and long-lasting, and to come across fewer serious difficulties, if both sides develop a comprehensive agreement about their cooperation. This helps to prevent unrealistic expectations from either side, or hesitation in agreeing who is responsible for a given task. It also provides both sides with an initial document to refer back to if any uncertainty occurs.

Below are several suggestions to facilitate the development of a shared vision within a partnership:

Municipalities should have the necessary resources to support youth organisations, which requires youth organisations to contact municipalities and enlighten them of the importance of their work, and ways in which they can justify the use of resources.

Both sides should get to know each other (this can be achieved through arranging common meetings, both formal and informal in nature).

It can be useful to organise an exchange of workers (this may involve 1-2 weeks of mobility per year, with workers experiencing the roles of their counterparts).

It is important to allow for collaboration between youths and municipalities in natural ways. For example, municipalities and youths might discuss Sustainable Development Goals together in an event.

Events such as, "Coffee with a deputy", which can be carried out with the following steps:

- Find a problem or idea to address,
- Create an event,
- Invite a deputy from the municipality,
- Invite youth and youth organisations to participate,
- Work in groups where each side gets to express their opinion on the topic,
- Gradually achieve understanding of the goal.

RESOURCES

✓ **Partner assessment form**

The Partnering Toolbook, International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), 2011, p.41

✓ **Building strategic partnerships**

Engaging Your Community, John Snow, 2012, p. 27

✓ **The Partnership Toolbox**

The Partnership Toolbox, Rod Sterne, Deborah Heaney and Bruce Britton

"HUB NICOSIA" CASE

"HUB Nicosia", is an educational NGO that has a vision of becoming the first incubator for social enterprises in the country. It aims at mobilising youth to fully engage in civic, political and economic life. It offers learning opportunities for strengthening skills such as soft skills for empowerment, democratic participation and active citizenship, employment skills to assist youth transition into employment, enterprise skills so they can start their own business, new skills development for professionals, particularly in the creative and cultural sector, intercultural dialogue, promotion of shared EU values and mutual understanding through arts, equipping youth and educators with skills, tools and competencies to raise awareness about global issues and build capacity around sustainable development.

HUB Nicosia cooperates closely with the municipality of Agios Dometios. This cooperation is materialised through the implementation of activities for migrants such as language lessons, mentoring workshops on employment issues, resilience skills, entrepreneurial skills etc. HUB Nicosia provides space and trainers to migrants living in the Municipality of Agios Dometios.

Through this collaboration HUB Nicosia is able to reach vulnerable groups of the population that would be difficult to identify and reach if not for the collaboration of the local authority. On the other hand, the Municipality also benefits from this collaboration. Not only does this help in the integration of vulnerable groups of the population but it also enables the Municipality to demonstrate a series of actions implemented that support vulnerable groups in their territory. This is very important for the Municipality's relationships with its citizens and the Government that provides funding to Municipalities.

The cooperation between HUB Nicosia and the Municipality of Agios Dometios, is also beneficial for the society as a whole. Citizens are offered workshops that support the upgrading of their skills, equip them with knowledge and competences to enhance their employment opportunities and personal growth. Under that prism, citizens get the chance of upskilling and becoming more competitive in the labour market.



2

ESTABLISH MUTUALLY REINFORCING OR JOINT STRATEGIES

Strategies should be developed that are mutually reinforcing, meaning that steps taken facilitate the work of one's counterparts in partner organisations, when starting a new process, consider how this will aid or benefit the work of partners.

In order to achieve a successful outcome in this area it is important to first take stock of the capacities and current projects of both sides, and to make clear the present situation before working collaboratively. Tools such as an organisational context tool, can facilitate this process, allowing both sides to outline and address issues among their organisations which might affect their partnership.

It can also be helpful to have a meeting with representatives from both organisations and seek to answer a list of questions such as the following:

- *What steps is each organisation currently taking to address the main issues?*
- *Where do these actions crossover, or duplicate between organisations, and is this an ineffective use of our resources?*
- *Do the actions of one organisation disadvantage the other in some way?*
- *How can these processes be synergised and made more effective and efficient?*
- *What are the relative strengths of each partner, and how do these fit with the strategy of their counterparts?*

Essentially it is important to establish a general outline of each partner's relevant operations to uncover the duplication or under-utilisation of the strengths and resources of each partner, and to decide how to proceed in an effective manner, utilising the strengths of both sides, and not wasting resources on redundant processes. This process will also help to address the credibility gap, as organisations will gain a better understanding of each others' operations.



Below are several suggested approaches to achieving mutually reinforcing strategies:

- Organise interactive workshops between municipalities and youth organisations for stronger strategies building, giving both sides a chance to plan and learn from each other.

- Organise occasional community meetings and information gathering from locals, giving stakeholders a chance to have an input, and allowing both sides to see the reality within their community, and which issues are most important.

- Surveys can be carried out among the general public to highlight areas they are not satisfied with, allowing a targeted approach and planning based on achieving specific goals.

- Establishing a communication calendar will aid youth organisations in keeping up with news and developments from the municipality.

- It can be helpful to assign an official, neutral person who will act as a Liaison between municipalities and youth organisations, for example someone from an incubator centre.

RESOURCES

- ✓ **Organisational Context Tool**
The Partnership Toolbox, Rod Sterne, Deborah Heaney and Bruce Britton, p. 8-9

- ✓ **Building strategic partnerships**
The Partnering Toolbook, International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), 2011, p.14

- ✓ **Goal tree**
Impact management toolbox, Stories for Impact, 2022



"COSTUMES CONVERGENTES" CASE

"Costumes Convergentes" (CC), established in 2018 by a group of young musicians, currently offering: Percussion and music educational programs, World percussion gatherings and drum camps, their very own Saint John evening with a touch of the real event from Brazil, Drum Camps and events in other countries (Brazil, Mexico, USA, UK, as well as in Australia). Every year there is an event in each of the countries where they act (they currently consist of 47 groups worldwide).

Throughout the years, Costumes Convergentes has been developing partnerships in which the municipality supports the finances of the group and their activities, to some extent. This means, whenever there is financial support for an action, there is a formal request to the municipal entity. Also, there is a yearly fund that is constantly renewed. Thanks to this partnership, CC is able to keep hosting their international events which have a clear impact on the community. This also means the possibility to increase the cultural footprint of Braga, not only with Portuguese culture but also with culture from the other countries as we have a big community of migrants establishing themselves in Braga, mainly from Brazil, which is the exact origin of the cultural sounds that Costumes Convergentes produces. "This is something that the municipality is really looking for, as they couldn't do this as well as CC does, so it makes total sense to have this work done in partnership with an organisation", as quoted by the youth representative of Braga's Municipality.

There is a clear boost for society as CC helps to improve cultural awareness, engagement and community spirit. Even though they don't measure their impact, they explain that it is felt in the streets, people speak about them, people comment, attend and participate more and more based on others' recommendations, and they receive very positive feedback.



3

AGREE ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role and responsibility of each side of the partnership must be clearly defined as early as possible to prevent misunderstandings or a breakdown in relations. This is dependent on effective communication practices and well-planned contributions from the beginning of any partnership. This can be facilitated with the use of a partnership agreement tool, as mentioned in step one.

During the process of using this tool, roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and agreed upon, during preliminary meetings between partners. This should be recorded in official written documentation to avoid problems or disagreements further down the line.

Several stages can be implemented to facilitate this process, as outlined below:

- Carry out a cooperative mapping of resources (including previous data, previous project results etc.)
- Carry out a cooperative mapping of skills and expertise within the organisations (achieved through questionnaires, interviews)
- Identify hierarchical structures which might be problematic or require a diplomatic approach (if there are any)
- Clarify a fairly precise time frame of who does what, and when (Several applications and programs can be used to aid this process, such as: time Planner, Click-up, Trello, Google Calendar)
- Agreements should be established around communication processes and methods, choose a platform such as Zoom, Slack etc.
- As far as possible, try to identify the roles of members of each organisation
- Formalise the process with signed agreements between partners, including commitments and responsibilities.

RESOURCES

- ✓ [RACI Chart](#)
- ✓ [Measurement plan](#)
Impact management toolbox, Stories for Impact, 2022
- ✓ [Roles and responsibilities](#)
Methods & Tools curated by Hyper Island
- ✓ [How to Define Team Roles and Responsibilities in four steps](#)
J.Herrity, 2023
- ✓ [How to Successfully Allocate Work to your Team](#)
Marvin, 2017

"BRĪNUMIŅŠ" CASE

NGO "Brīnumiņš" which translates as "Miracle" is an organisation offering a wide range of services, including physiotherapy and occupational therapy, salt, sensory room and psychological support for families with disabled children. Thanks to the partnership with the municipality of Talsi, the NGO has a team of more than 20 employees who can work in a profession they love, and fulfil their mission in life.

At the beginning of cooperation both partners agreed on their roles and responsibilities to ensure a successful partnership. The municipality committed to support the organisation financially and in return the "Miracle" centre provides their services to the inhabitants of the municipality free of charge. The financial support of Talsi municipality is not the only source of funding for the centre, however, it is a very significant one.

Talsi municipality has identified the lack of therapeutic services for children with disabilities and therefore the partnership with the "Miracle" organisation is beneficial for both partners as well as wider society. Such diverse and high quality services as those provided by the centre are rare in the regions, and are highly appreciated.



4

ESTABLISH COMPATIBLE POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND OTHER MEANS TO OPERATE ACROSS ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Policies, procedures and operational norms should be made compatible between both sides of a partnership. This can help to reduce inefficient or problematic administrative processes and improve understanding between organisations. It should be clearly established which point of communication is relevant to each actor within each organisation, and these networks should be clearly defined and laid out in documentation available to both sides of a partnership. Procedures of communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution should be laid out in clearly defined terms at an early stage in the partnership, streamlining communication, avoiding needless bureaucratic time-wasting, and ensuring that members of both organisations feel reassured that their concerns will be addressed by their counterparts in a timely manner.

This should also involve ensuring an equitable and fair distribution of costs and benefits between organisations. This involves striving for a balance of the benefits valued by each partner, not solely in economic terms, but areas such as time commitments, prioritisation of different tasks within a project etc., and the costs they are willing to bear, whether that be financial, time-based etc. This should be calculated and discussed as early as possible and not leave either side unsatisfied or feeling hard done by.

Ensuring this process takes place in a transparent, communicative manner is essential, and allows for the establishment of streamlined and helpful collaborative practices.

In order to overcome organisational boundaries, several factors should be considered:

- It is essential to establish common ground between partners, by comparing policies and procedures and finding what overlaps, is similar, or would be easily applicable to both sides.
- A structured dialogue process should be established (for example a regularly occurring discussion prior to policy implementation).
- NGO councils should aim to be present at municipal assembly meetings when possible (and they should have some say in outcomes, perhaps voting in these meetings).

RESOURCES

- ✓ **Recommendations for social enterprises and municipalities**
Policy Social Enterprises and Municipalities: Cooperation, Partnerships & Synergies, Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia, 2017, p.48
- ✓ **Policy recommendations**
Policy recommendations for youth organisation impact management, Geri Norai, 2022

"ŠV. JONO VAIKAI" CASE

NGO "Šv. Jono Vaikai" ("Children of Holy John" in English), provides social childcare service in Trakai district. Their mission is to provide a real home for street children. The organisation operates four houses, with 6-7 children in each for a total of 28 children in care, and more than half of the children are from Trakai district. From the beginning of the partnership with the municipality, the organisation has established common procedures and operational norms for their services, and the price of services. This has helped them to identify the main model of partnership: selling services to the municipality.

According to Lithuanian policies, each municipality has to delegate part of the social services they provide to NGOs, to prevent the self-government of its institutions. "Šv. Jono Vaikai" is useful to the municipality, because they are the only service provider in Trakai district and ensure success with the municipality's plans, whilst engaging in a helpful collaborative process. Also, the municipality has financially supported the renovation of the homestead, and in return the organisation has accepted an additional eight children from the municipality into care.

The collaboration has grown and included other municipal institutions. The main focus of the partnership is based on the child, the child's family and the child's needs. Collaboration has even spread to other Lithuanian municipalities like Vilnius city municipality, with a lot of consultation, help, and professionalism. Moreover, in Lithuania there is a severe lack of organisations focusing on social childcare, and this causes a major problem for such street children. For that reason, "Šv. Jono Vaikai" is greatly beneficial to Lithuanian society, solving a painful social problem.

Being a small municipality, the organisation faces a lack of structured dialogue with municipal authorities. Since growing into a bigger organisation over the last years, "Šv. Jono Vaikai" feels that it cannot be an independent and separate organisation, and that the easiest way to proceed would be to be attached to something, for example, leading a political party, where people rapidly change, due to there being a huge lack of continuity of work. Some of the ideas the organisation is willing to implement to overcome bureaucracy include the organisation of quarterly themed meetings and the creation of valued, useful activities that are needed in the municipalities.



5

DEVELOP MECHANISMS TO MONITOR, EVALUATE, AND REPORT ON RESULTS

Continuously monitoring and evaluating progress and the results of a partnership is an essential step, and an important focus for youth organisations and municipalities. As was mentioned in the first step, for a successful common outcome of a partnership, it is very important to set out common goals. Both parties of the partnership need to understand and know what they want to achieve. In this way it becomes clear what they want to monitor. For small organisations it's hard to do a lot of reporting so it is important that there is no extra reporting just for the sake of it. Developing a relationship built on trust can often prove to be more important, and may mean that the organisation can avoid a lot of extra admin work. An impact management analysis approach can provide guidance, and information on this can be found in the impact management toolbox in the list of resources.

Another helpful tool to monitor and evaluate results within a partnership can be found in the partnership toolbox which can be found in the resources section.

Regular reporting and planning should be carried out by, and shared between, both partners, allowing for transparency and accountability, as well as facilitating the evaluation of progress.

Below several suggestions and helpful tools are outlined which can be used to facilitate the development of mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on the results of a partnership:

Regional or national registers should be accessed, or if lacking, should be developed, allowing easy access to information around organisations working with youth.

Several tools exist for results monitoring purposes, including CRM live - a customer relationship management tool, managing your organisation's relationships and customer or partnership interactions. There are several such CRM tools, such as HubSpot, monday.com, pipedrive ect.

Reporting should be carried out in several ways (forms should be clear, easy to fill in and read, with everything kept as simple as possible)

- Both quantitative and qualitative forms of reporting are useful.
- Forms can be facilitated with well known software (e.g., Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, Google forms).
- Presentations allow for the sharing of reports, and discussion of results and impact.

Communication is vital (contact should be maintained during partnership processes)

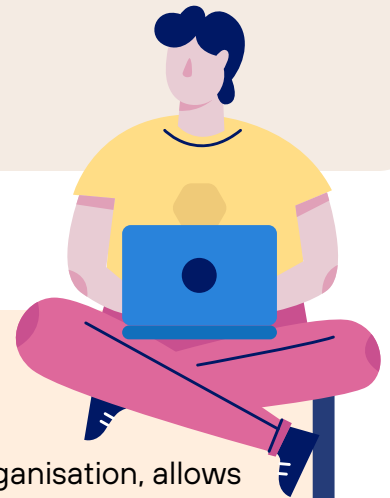
- This can take place via any communication platform, emails/ FB/Whatsapp/zoom/Skype,Google teams/, and via events (such as a business breakfast event)

Regularly keep track of data is vital (for example, how many young new entrepreneurs are appearing)

Various tools can aid in impact measurement (such as canva, surveys, interviews - see the impact management toolbox below)

RESOURCES

- ✓ [Impact management toolbox](#)
Impact management toolbox, Stories for Impact, 2022
- ✓ [Partnership monitoring tool](#)
The Partnering Toolbox, International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), 2011, p. 20-24
- ✓ [Social Impact Communication Guidelines](#)
Social Impact Communication Guidelines, Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia, 2022
- ✓ ["CRM 101: What is CRM?"](#)
- ✓ [Project Monitoring Reporting and Evaluation](#)
- ✓ [Centre on Well-Being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity \(WISE\)](#)



"UNG FÖRETAGSAMHET DALARNA" CASE

"Ung Företagsamhet Dalarna" (UF), a youth entrepreneurship organisation, allows young people in high school to explore entrepreneurship by setting up a company and running it for one school year. UF also runs competitions on a regional as well as national level and provides alumni activities for young people who have graduated from high school.

UF Dalarna collaborates with almost all of the municipalities in the Dalarna Region, with the partnership mainly being a monetary one as the municipalities provide financial support on an annual basis, while this collaboration also provides new connections, knowledge and insights to both parties. The national curriculum does not entail specific education around entrepreneurship so UF offers new perspectives to the learning experience. Increasingly, UF also provides an opportunity for teachers and students to explore social entrepreneurship, exploring both social and environmental sustainability.

The collaboration has grown over the years to include additional municipalities and schools within the Dalarna Region as UF has been able to show positive results and engagement with students and teachers. The organisation has a good relationship with the municipalities, with continued trust and good communication, which has proved essential in terms of making reporting easy.

Legal ways of cooperation

Local authorities and NGOs can enhance partnership in improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of their local municipality through some legal ways of cooperation. Local authorities can support NGOs and local SEs through financial relationships: funding, grants and subsidies or even through service contracts (public procurement), but also by providing government resources, consulting and other creative ways of cooperation.

1

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES

Local authorities are under increasing pressure to provide high quality public services to their populations. This pressure is exacerbated by decreasing resources and funding, which forces the authorities to improve their productivity and efficiency. Usually, local organisations and social enterprises, even being small, have high quality delivery services. One of the legal ways to efficiently collaborate between local government municipalities and NGOs is through transparent and competitive public procurements.

Public procurement is the purchase of works, goods and services by public institutions like local authorities. Every year, over 250 thousand public authorities across the EU spend around 14% of their budget on the purchase of services, works and supplies. In many sectors such as energy, transport, waste management, social services, and education services, local government municipalities are the main buyers. Public procurement can be used to boost jobs, growth and investment, to create a more innovative economy with efficient resources, and to be socially inclusive. High quality public services depend on modern, well-managed, sustainable and efficient procurement.

Procedures of public procurement are regulated by the national laws of EU countries and also have to respect the general principles of EU law. National legislatives usually require the procuring authority to issue public tenders if the value of the procurement exceeds a certain threshold.

Public procurement can provide significant opportunities for cooperation between local authorities and local NGOs that can deliver sustainable mutual benefits, both to the local economy and to organisations.



"SODŽIAUS MEISTRAI" CASE

"Sodžiaus meistrai", is a social enterprise selling a niche service to the local government authority. It is a vocational school for 16-35 year old students with accredited programs based around gardening, carpentry and cooking, agriculture, construction and engineering and services for individuals. Providing vocational schooling without general education for all youth experiencing social exclusion, and giving them a space to discover their way of life, to form the principles of independent living, to create conditions for acquiring a qualified and in-demand profession. They are focused on quality professional studies as an alternative to professional training in Lithuania, and making a school community.

Collaborations between the vocational school and the local Trakai municipality are achieved through public procurement. School students also get free transportation courtesy of the local municipality, and get up to 20 % of the deposit covered for winning European projects. Much more effective cooperation takes place with individual departments of the municipality, such as the infrastructure or development department. The difficulty of cooperation with the youth coordinator is caused by the fact that "Sodžiaus meistrai" is not accepted as a youth organisation and is still in competition with certain municipal schools. The vocational school takes a portion of the money that would provide more funding to other schools. It is more profitable for the state to send students to them, because of lower costs. On the other hand, the organisation has a closer relationship with the Ministry of Education than with the local municipality.

Unfortunately, the school faces big challenges in their partnership with the local authorities for bureaucracy. Inviting the Mayor, it is never known who will be delegated by the subordination process. Additionally, Trakai district is very divided between political parties. More could be done for the whole municipality, achieving a greater level of inclusion, if there were no such division. It is expected for the head of an institution to belong to a political party. For this reason, the organisation will be directly subsidised from the district budget. That is a form of cooperation. "Cooperation takes place when the municipality is legally responsible for a given sphere, for example, for children who are taken from their families - this is a social area,"- described the head of the organisation.



2

THE MUNICIPALITY PROVIDES SPACE AND RESOURCES

A collaborative partnership between NGOs and local governments can be very functional. Functional relationships lead to the production of added value for both interacting agents (NGO and local government) and are mutually beneficial. Generally, municipalities provide NGOs and community organisations with financial support, premises for rent, and other resources. Resources can include not only tangible things such as spaces, buildings, land, but also people, skills, knowledge, contacts. In fact, contacts or connections lead to stronger collaborations, lending legitimacy and credibility to organisations which might have municipalities as their partners.

In this way NGOs become dependent on the resources provided by municipalities. On the other hand, sometimes municipalities can also become dependent on an NGO's human resources (for instance, experts from NGOs may take part in municipal work groups or provide consultations to the municipalities' leaders). Although, NGO are less dependent on municipalities' support, they can cooperate with municipalities more effectively and constructively, have more independence in choosing their activities and in criticising the activities of municipalities.

The relationships are not always functional, for example, conflicting relationships between NGOs and municipalities are detrimental to both parties.

"CIDADE CURIOSA" CASE

"Cidade Curiosa": started in 2013 as an informal group and became an official body in 2014. Their work involves working with institutions to show the value of board games for cultural and educational development. In 2019 they acquired a physical space from the Municipality, an open space called "Ludoteca de Estufa" which allowed them to further develop their actions in the following areas: Board Game meetings, board games workshops, training and support on game development, "Ludoteca Portas Abertas", support in the development of youth projects, and an open space for creation.

The cooperation model is based on an annual protocol that allows Cidade Curiosa to have a municipal space for their activities, and financial support. This allows them to develop actions for the community of Braga and to reach a wider audience. This is of particular benefit to the municipality as it promotes an alternative programme for the inhabitants of Braga, while also providing an atmosphere of fun, learning, development and the promotion of education through board games. This is extended to the wider society, that is raised in the axis of culture and collaboration, which greatly impacts the city itself, especially among the youth.

"PRECIOUS PLASTIC" CASE

"Precious Plastic" is an informal group which focuses on what individuals can do to reuse plastic materials within their communities. Precious Plastic offers free online guidelines for the set-up and operation of programs based on the reuse of plastic in communities. In 2017, a community of plastic recycling and manufacturing was established in Cyprus, aiming to reduce plastic waste at its core, inviting makers, designers, and people who care about the environment and sustainability to help in the fight against plastic pollution. The group collaborates with municipalities in order to promote their work. The municipalities provide space for Precious Plastic free of charge and cover their running expenses.

The solution that Precious Plastic offers views people as the key element in the fight to contain the use of plastic and its impact on the environment, and also as a means to bring necessary change. Precious Plastic has workspaces in Cyprus and Spain with a great local impact, and aspires to share the knowledge it has gained and encourage other similar urban hubs and small businesses across the island of Cyprus and abroad. The group's aim is to create an inclusive workspace where collaboration will be the key to substituting products with recycled plastic, and further promoting this technology whilst encouraging new start-ups, employment, and cooperation between people, the community, and government. Their mission is to reduce plastic waste using precious plastic machines, which results in creating sustainable cities and communities.

For Precious Plastic, the key to change is through education, thus they want to be able to showcase alternatives to using plastic, and continue to organise educational workshops on a zero-waste lifestyle, upcycling and how responsible production can take place by collaborating and understanding the possibilities of reusing products that people so easily throw away.

As with all organisations, there is always room for improvement. As Precious Plastic members point out, political parties tend to support big organisations and ignore smaller ones, which they consider as having no power over the community. Additionally, if an organisation aligns with a political party, then that party will show interest in the organisation, support it, and contribute to its activities. What is more, there is no renewal of staff in the education department of the municipality and this approach must be changed. Cooperation is only effective if the ruling majority sits in the council and if it coincides with the party of the chairman of that NGO or community. On the other hand, Precious Plastic argues that the youth coordinator of municipalities should visit their spaces as the space they are now operating in can be a youth space for creation, and a meeting point for local youth.



3

PROJECT FUNDING

The local authorities approach towards strengthening partnership with and supporting the growth of NGOs and SEs can also take place through financing policies. Supporting organisations by funding projects builds up a continuous dialogue and longer term strategies for cooperation. Most importantly, NGOs or SEs have to match the rules and regulations of project funding and use project's resources to provide the service fully.

The issue of national local authorities funding for NGOs is one of the most significant parts of efforts to conceptualise, rationalise, and organise municipalities - NGOs sustainable cooperation. However, such financial aid can sometimes make NGOs dependent on governments for funding and service contracts.

"TJEJJOURN DALIA" CASE



"Tjejjourn Dalia" is part of a national NGO supporting women and girls who need someone to speak to about domestic violence, sexual violence and mental health issues. 'Tjejjourn Dalia' in Dalarna has been around since 2018 and supports girls and young women in the region between the ages of 10 and 30. They facilitate anonymous discussions and guidance about life, identity, bullying, mental health, relationships, consent, sexual and physical violence.

Collaboration with the Borlänge municipality provides financial support for Tjejjourn Dalia to provide education in schools through support for teachers as well as presentations and workshops for youngsters in school. Financial support from the municipality is essential to the survival of the organisation but close contact with the municipality also means that the organisation can reach out to youngsters in the region, to help young girls who need them. To improve the partnership they are looking at potential financing models that involve more long-term funding for the organisation to be able to plan their services better and to scale their work to help more young people.

Dalia provides the kind of support to girls that they often can't get anywhere else and parents are also able to reach out to learn more and to get help with how to speak to their children about tough subjects, such as mental health and abuse. The municipality also benefits because of the proactive work done by Dalia to support children and young people before they get into trouble, and the support Dalia gives to teachers and schools means they can improve the education they provide.

"ZIEMEĻKURZEME OK" CASE

Orienteering club "Ziemeļkurzeme OK" emerged from a group of enthusiasts who have been active since 1985. Currently the organisation is offering various sporting events and activities like orienteering sports, jogging and nordic walking training, Latvian orienteering nights and other events in Talsi and around Latvia, as well as hosting yearly international events.

Through project fundings offered by the municipality, the NGO can provide a wide range of services. This support allows the organisation to offer diverse sport events for the inhabitants of the municipality with an affordable participation fee. Moreover, due to the funding the organisation can practise and implement different kinds of events that foster the growth of the organisation. One of the things that can be improved is the bureaucratic path which is time consuming, however, the organisation admits that in comparison to other municipalities the reporting process has been simplified and that facilitates their work.

This partnership brings benefits to all parties - the municipality, the organisation and locals. The municipality is able to fulfil its statutory obligations to provide opportunities for local inhabitants to participate in sport activities, while the organisation is able to create and develop a wide range of activities, and the locals have a bigger choice of exciting sports events. "Everyone can find something that suits their needs - for some it's just regular exercise, for others it's a chance to compete and win." - explains the head of the organisation.



What to avoid: potential issues in forming a partnership, and how to avoid them

It is vital to be aware of what can cause a collaborative partnership to be ineffective, in order to learn from these errors and avoid potential issues.

Below 6 important factors are outlined which may explain unsatisfactory outcomes or ineffective processes within a partnership.

- One problem which may occur when starting a new partnership is based on **perceived restrictions of autonomy** that many believe come with entering such agreements. Once in a partnership, one is faced with increased pressure to follow up on given commitments, and this may intimidate or discourage partners from coming to an agreement in the first place. For this reason, clear communication and an understanding of responsibilities, commitments and division of labour are necessary, as well as an understanding of potential benefits.
- A second potential problem comes in the form of **inadequate accountability mechanisms**, which are either lacking or purposely ineffective so as to not endanger the whole idea of voluntary collaboration. Again this can be avoided with clear communication and transparency throughout.
- A third challenge is oftentimes **uncertainty about goals of the network and how individual benefits are distributed among members**. Preliminary sessions with strong goal-oriented discussions and in-depth planning can prevent this issue from occurring where both parties are sure of their shared objectives.
- A fourth issue that may affect collaboration is accidentally **incentivising an unfair division of labour**, and expectations on others to take on the required workload work, which may lead to classic collective action problems where no one ends up doing anything. Again a clear division of responsibilities, and transparency and progress monitoring throughout should prevent this.
- Fifth, **coordination fatigue** may set in when little gets achieved in the beginning. For this reason it is important to outline a clear plan from the start of a partnership, with regular check-ins to monitor and signpost progress, for example weekly or monthly meetings with clear goals, and strategies to employ if progress is too slow.
- Finally, a challenge may occur with adjusting to a situation in which **no clear hierarchy is established, and conflict resolution and task division is less clearly defined**. This may lead to unanticipated tensions, however this can be addressed with a strong focus on communication, compromise and developed personal relationships between members of both organisations.

As visible across the previous points, communication, strategic planning, and a focus on trust and transparency can be employed to avoid most of the commonly occurring issues within organisational partnerships, and a flourishing and productive relationship can be achieved when good practices are established as early as possible, with information available to all relevant members of an organisation. Prior awareness of these potential issues is valuable, allowing for both sides of a partnership to anticipate these issues and steer the partnership away from them. Regular meetings should bear these issues in mind and discuss whether either side of the partnership believes these issues have occurred, in order to take steps to address them quickly.



About project:

The aim of project "LOCAL-Y-MPACT" project is to strengthen cooperation between community-based youth organisations, social enterprises and local governments, as well as to develop social entrepreneurship as an effective tool for reducing economic inequality, promoting social inclusion and integration toward building a sustainable society, and encouraging active participation in civil society.

The project partners cooperate with several regions: the Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia established partnership with Talsi municipality in Latvia, the Swedish organisation SE-FORUM with the Dalarna region, the Portuguese youth organisation CXJV Conexão Jovem Associação cooperate with the municipality of Braga, the Cypriot education and research centre Synthesis tests the project approach in the municipality of Aglantzia, while the Lithuanian partners Geri Norai LT have chosen the municipality of Trakai district.

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