

# THE WAY FORWARD:

## Best Practices and Policy Recommendations for Enhancing the Cooperation amongst Local Authorities, Youth Organizations and Social Enterprises



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# Introduction

This report aims at providing a series of policy recommendations to strengthen communication between municipalities, youth organizations and social enterprises. The report is the result of lessons learnt and insights gained through the implementation of LOCAL-Y-MPACT project's activities in all 5 countries. The results reveal that in local communities there are mechanisms in place to ensure cooperation and close relation between local authorities, youth organizations and social enterprises, (see Toolbox for case studies and best practices). Through the interaction with their respective local authorities, youth organizations and social enterprises, the partners recorded a series of best practices and examples where cooperation leads to great initiatives and impactful results. In some countries those best practices were similar or even the same and this reveals that there is great potential for these practices to be implemented in other countries.

For the purpose of identifying best practices and providing policy recommendations where gaps were traced, all partners were asked to fill in an initial desk research for determining the existing policies-or the lack of them- in their countries/communities that regulate the relations of local authorities, youth organizations and social enterprises, and existing gaps. As a complementary step and a necessary one to involve the other stakeholders to be affected by policy recommendations, questionnaires were prepared and handed out to representatives of youth organizations and/or social entrepreneurs to get their opinion on the subject. Added to this, the insights gained from the previous activities of the project, were also included to offer a more rounded approach to policy recommendations per partner country. The best practices identified can be summed up as follows:

- Local strategies on the development of youth entrepreneurship including youth social entrepreneurship and local strategies, plans and internal action plans for youth organizations are effective since they are informed by the local community's needs and young people's needs.
- Local authorities choose to buy services from enterprises that focus on improving the life of youngsters within their community.
- Local authorities/municipalities offer support to youth organizations that reach out to them. The support takes various forms such as consultation, legal support, project development support and practical support.
- There can be two distinct granting/funding mechanisms for youth organizations and for social enterprises respectively which guarantees that both youth organizations and social enterprises can benefit from funding.

- Local authorities/municipalities take on the role of “Social Investor”, where they invest in projects with social impact. In that way, local authorities provide the necessary funds to youth organizations and/or social enterprises, they become “investors” and in return youth organizations and/or social enterprises offer their services for the social welfare of their community. Under this framework, youth organizations and social enterprises are not “forced” to seek funding from the private sector, something that requires a lot of time and effort and does not guarantee that funding will be granted when needed.
- Various formal and informal groups or bodies are formed with the participation of local authorities, youth organizations and social enterprises which open up the space for young people to be heard and taken into consideration. Even though these groups or bodies take on various forms depending on the country, they however all work towards the same goal of young people participating in processes of exchanging ideas and promoting their own ideas and views. Those bodies or groups vary from a formal body such as the Council of Youth Affairs or informal groups for brainstorming.
- Appointment of a person (by the local authority/municipality) who takes on the role of Youth Coordinator / Coordinator for Social Enterprises. This person acts as the liaison, intermediary contact between the local authority and the municipality. In doing so, the local authority ensures that youth organizations and social enterprises know where to turn to for help, questions, clarifications relating to granting and funding opportunities as well as for requesting the support of the local authority for organizing events or applying for funding. This person is also in charge of promoting the local authorities’ policies and ensuring that local authorities have access to youth organizations and social enterprises. On the overall, such a person safeguards that there is constant exchange of information amongst local authorities, youth organizations and social enterprises and that there is an open channel of communication that works towards both directions.

The above best practices were identified through the process of constant cooperation amongst the partners of the consortium and their respective national contexts. Those best practices can be used as a basis for further cooperation and impactful, lasting relations amongst local authorities, youth organizations and social enterprises.

What is the context within which those best practices are implemented? In the following sections, an analysis of the background in Latvia, Portugal, Sweden, Lithuania and Cyprus is attempted, in order to establish the current framework of cooperation and identify the gaps that call for further actions through a series of policy reforms.

In Latvia, municipalities offer support to youth organisations in the following levels:

- Resources (transport/venues/office premises)
- Expertise (trained youth workers and experts/internships)
- Financial support (youth initiative grants, hackathons, participatory events)
- Strategic support (delegation to NGOs of a management task)
- Other way of supporting the organisations

Regarding the existing legislation, in Latvia, a series of legislations and policies and strategies are in place which regulate the relationships between local authorities and youth organisations. Among them are The Youth Policy Guidelines 2021-2027, The Youth Policy Action, and the implementation of the European Charter for Youth Work at a Local Level. In addition to the above, each municipality has its own local strategies, plans and internal action plans which are informed by the local community's needs, as well as a dedicated youth worker specifically working with local youngsters. It is an obligation of a municipality to implement the work with youth, the municipalities can create an institutional system for working with youth by following means: determining the responsible institution or determining the responsible employees for the implementation of work with youth; hiring a youth affairs specialist who plans, carries out and coordinates work with youth; establishing a youth centre and a youth council to promote youth initiatives, cooperation, exchange of experiences and other youth activities; providing for other procedures for the implementation of work with youth. As for the social enterprises, according to the Social enterprise law municipalities can support them more than any other enterprise by providing real estate tax cuts or granting their resources for use free of charge.

There is also a procedure in place that enables youth organisations and enterprises to participate in tenders for the assignment of tasks/management tasks. Municipalities in Latvia have the authority to take such a decision and then establish a procedure for selecting the successful tenderer who will be executing the task. The municipal council then adopts that decision, and a public law contract is then compiled based on that decision. Based on the procedure, municipalities in Latvia have an easy and efficient means to delegate administration tasks or other tasks to organisations and /or natural persons, which helps young people and youth organisations to participate in the process on equal grounds.

When it comes to the cooperation between municipalities and youth organisations, it appears that when organisations prove to be trustworthy and capable and their services are of high quality, municipalities are willing to cooperate and give youth organisations the space and opportunity to provide their services for the good of the community.

Organisation You+ and its cooperation with Liepaja municipality, is such an example. The organisation is currently selling their services to the municipality of Liepaja since it has proved its ability to deliver services as expected.

Despite the central and local legislative framework and strategies, there are areas that still need to be improved. Based on the findings from the desk research and the interviews, there are two major issues that are brought up which impede or hinder the cooperation between local authorities, youth organisations and social enterprises. One of them lies in the way information is exchanged amongst interested parties.

For example, available information is not always openly accessible resulting in youth organisations and social enterprises to miss out on information about planned or ongoing activities that concern them and opportunities for participation.

Another important impediment mentioned is that of the participation of NGOs in municipal work and in meetings with the authorities. The same applies to giving voice to the needs, ideas and wishes of young people. It sometimes appears that communication between those in charge and the young people is lost and the voice of young people or their representatives does not reach those who have the power to make decisions and change the status quo. It is also interesting to note that there are those who support the idea that more policies are not necessary since policies are often connected to unnecessary bureaucracy which dissuades young people from pursuing cooperation with local authorities.

Even if, however, the cooperation between youth organisations, social enterprises and local authorities is reinforced, a heavy burden also falls on the shoulders of youth organisations and young people to prove their worth and their ability to work for promoting the social welfare of their communities. Before reaching out to local authorities, youth organisations and young people should have their plans straightened out and, if and where possible, have proof of the quality of the service they offer. Trust is not offered freely and both receiving ends of the relationship should be ready to offer proof they can be trusted, especially when a community's welfare is at stake.



In Portugal, more specifically in the Municipality of Braga, there are no formal policies that regulate the relation between youth, social enterprises, and local authorities. There, however, exists a set of resources which are available and offer the opportunity of cooperation. Those resources take the form of knowledge, financial resources, strategic and planning support for the implementation of initiatives, training, and capacity building. As in Latvia, local authorities in Portugal can offer their spaces or transportation means to youth organisations and social enterprises.

There are, however, other means of support that the local authority of Braga has in place to ensure that youth organisations and social enterprises can be facilitated in their social work. There is for youth organisations the possibility to participate in the decision-making processes through the Youth Council and for social enterprises through the Social Network of Braga or through the Local Council for Social Action. What is more, Youth and Social Technicians of the municipality offer consultation support, legal support, project development support and logistic/practical support to those who reach out to them.

The Municipality of Braga appears to have found the mechanisms to support youth organisations and social enterprises in their entrepreneurial ventures through a series of grants for the creation or continuity of specific actions. Youth organisations can acquire funds through the Youth Participatory Budget while social enterprises can request funding from the social mechanisms promoted by the Portuguese government and managed locally. There are also cases where the municipality can act as a "Social Investor" on a particular social initiative.

Based on the initial desk research and the interviews with interested parties, the cooperation mechanisms that are in place in the municipality of Braga often lead to successful projects and collaboration. An example of successful cooperation is that of the organisation Cidade Curiosa which has managed to establish and maintain a good collaboration and relationship with the Municipality. The Municipality has even provided them a space for the last four years, where they can implement their activities focusing on education and learning activities through educational board-games, hence the support of the cultural and youth departments of the municipality towards this initiative.

However, a series of problems can be traced that reveal the need for further investment in policy reforms. It was highlighted that the mechanisms currently in place mostly support well established organisations leaving newcomers on the margins and start-uppers are often struggling to get a chance. Others have drawn attention to the fact that the Municipality has, in some cases, decided to terminate an ongoing partnership and acquire full control over activities under implementation or even decide to alter the terms of the partnership and abandon the initial purpose to better suit their interests.

Additionally, other respondents have mentioned that youth policy should be proposed by the youth instead of being decided and imposed by the Municipality, which is the current case. Same happens for the yearly Youth Budget which is shown to the youth organisations for commenting and feedback when it has already been voted and approved by the municipality council, thus not giving opportunity for changes even if the feedback asks so.

## Sweden

In Sweden, an example of cooperation with youth organisations can be found in the Region of Dalarna where there is a clear determination for the local authority to be Sweden's best region for young people. Local authorities aspire to establish Dalarna as a region where young people can thrive, feel included and empowered, and find good opportunities that will encourage them to stay in the region as they get older.

For this reason, the Region of Dalarna has taken the initiative of launching a strategy for youth for the period of 2021-2024, which promotes youth involvement in all municipalities in the region. This strategy was devised with the participation of seven young people who were hired to act as advisors. There are four key goals outlined in the strategy that should be taken into consideration across all policy and activities:

- Young people should be able to influence their own lives, the development of the municipality they live in, and young people's perspectives should be taken into consideration in all matters that affect them.
- Young people should have good opportunities for good and equal physical, mental and social health.
- Young people should have good opportunities to live, study and do work based on their passions and strengths, wherever they live in the region.
- Young people should have good opportunities to actively engage in the transition towards a climate friendly region.

In addition to the youth strategy - that is also informed by the overarching strategy for sustainable development in Region Dalarna - policy is also based on the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child that, since 2020, is a law in Sweden.

Regarding social entrepreneurship, in the Region of Dalarna there is a 'Programme for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in Dalarna' which sets the foundation of how the Region can contribute towards the development of social enterprises. This strategy encloses the vision of the region to provide opportunities for new social entrepreneurial ventures to take place without clearly setting frameworks for collaboration or support towards those ventures.

Even though the above-mentioned parameters create a positive environment for fostering cooperation amongst local authorities, youth organisations and social enterprises, there are certain factors that require policy intervention which will enable a more robust and effective cooperation. Public procurement documents and other granting mechanisms could include clauses that enable social enterprises and youth organisations to participate in procurement procedures that concern their areas of expertise. This will open the space for collaboration amongst local authorities and youth organisations and/or social enterprises. One-off or short-term funding of initiatives/activities by youth organisations or social enterprises often leads to uncertainty as the organisations need to reapply for the same project every year, which could also work as a deterring factor. Instead, making updates to policy that can encourage long-term funding of initiatives that have proven positive results could improve cooperation and long-term effect.





In Lithuania, the municipality of Trakai aims to become more #youth-friendly, as the motto of the Municipality reveals. Trakai aspires to create opportunities for young people to act in the area and strengthen the local identity. Young people and municipal stakeholders are in cooperation, since the Council for Youth Affairs consists of 10 members, half of which are representatives of the municipal administration and the council, and the other half are representatives of the youth while, there is even a network of interdepartmental cooperation in the field of youth policy currently under formation in the municipality of Trakai district.

What is more, in Lithuania, there is a position of the Youth coordinator who is a municipal coordinator for youth affairs responsible for facilitating municipal institutions in the formulation and implementation of municipal youth policies. The coordinator is responsible for creating and maintaining a cooperative relation between municipality politicians, servants, youth, and organisations working with youth, seeking to involve young people in relevant decision-making, as well as plans and implements municipal programmes and measures targeted at youth.

Focusing on the cooperation amongst local authorities and organisations, in Trakai, the Council of Municipal Community-Based Organizations is a public body operating with the purpose of ensuring and promoting the participation of community-based organisations in determining, forming, and implementing the development policy. This body is responsible for submitting proposals regarding the promotion of activities from various local organisations as well as making proposals about funding needs and initiatives for the well-being of the local community.

As mentioned in the interviews performed on a local level, in Lithuania, the municipality of Trakai has a permanent partnership with umbrella youth non-governmental organizations (JNVO) - the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organizations (LiJOT) and the World Lithuanian Youth Union. This partnership takes the form of consultation during the implementation of various youth policy measures. Additionally, there is also mention that NGOs have a close relationship with the municipality and that those NGOs implement projects in which they involve the youth. From its part, the Municipality of Trakai also mentions that cooperation is made easier when young people belong to organizations and communicate their needs as a structured body rather than individually.



In Cyprus, in opposition to the rest of the partner countries, policy proposals are drafted by the Ministries, discussed in the Ministerial Board, and are approved or rejected by the Parliament of Representatives with local authorities being execution bodies rather than policy reform or recommendation bodies. Youth organisations and youth bodies can only proceed with suggestions and initiatives on local level with the hope that local communities will be even more enabling for young locals.

The organisation responsible for the youth strategy and policy reforms regarding young people in the country is the Youth Board of Cyprus (ONEK). ONEK is a public legal entity pursuant to the Youth Board's Law of 1994 (N33(I)94). Since 2017, ONEK has been responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Cyprus National Youth Strategy 2017-2022, which is the first youth policy document for young people. Amongst the thematic areas of the Cyprus National Youth Strategy there is the thematic of cultivating entrepreneurial culture amongst youth. With provision such as a) to promote and cultivate entrepreneurial culture, creativity and innovation through non formal learning; b) to promote plans for developing an entrepreneurial mindset through cross-sectoral synergies; and c) to make plans for supporting and funding youth entrepreneurship, the Strategy highlighted the need for not only supporting entrepreneurial ventures but also to create the necessary infrastructure for the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindset amongst the youth. Even though this was a step towards the right direction, there is still a long way to go for other policies to be implemented in areas such as education, administration, and financial support. The Strategy focuses on young entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, however, there is no mention of social entrepreneurship as a means to tackle social inequalities and achieve social inclusion.

Based on the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, the Youth Board of Cyprus, in collaboration with the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and Communities, are working towards the promotion of the creation and operation of the Community Youth Councils. Municipal and Community Youth Councils' role is to provide advisory support to local authorities since their purpose is to record and promote the suggestions of young people on what concerns and affects them, to the local authorities. Their role is to contribute towards a constant and substantial connection and dialogue between local authorities and the youth, to enable municipalities and communities to identify young people's interests and problems and deal with them in the best way.

The Municipal and Community Youth Councils are required to prepare an annual action plan and budget, focusing on youth issues, and propose policies relevant to youth issues in relation to local authorities. They can also give suggestions and proposals regarding the implementation of infrastructure projects, as well as other projects and actions that will benefit young people in each municipality or community. In April 2021, there were 28 municipal youth councils and 10 community

youth councils in Cyprus. However, there is no proven record that these councils have affected any youth policies or even that they have the power to affect local authorities when deciding on issues that affect the youth. What is more, there is no involvement of these local bodies when decisions are being taken on a central government level and when Municipalities are called on offering their views on a higher level, they do not confer with these councils before even when the matter directly affects the youth.

A successful example of cooperation amongst youth and local authorities is that of the Young Cities which again is an initiative undertaken by ONEK with the purpose of developing and implementing multiplier effect policy recommendations. The programme is based on the methodological approach of "Think and Do Tank" which focuses on the formation of brainstorming groups composed of young people from various Cyprus communities who have an active role in participatory bodies. Under the supervision of experienced mentors, young people are invited to exchange ideas and concerns, propose concrete solutions to various problems and create synergies for joint action within their communities. Through these local consultations, young people can realise their ideas and organise activities and events with the help of local actors and stakeholders. The programme brings together local municipalities and/or community councils with the local youth giving them the opportunity to propose action plans with suggestions and proposals for enhancing the active involvement of young people in local communities.

On the overall, even if youth organisations or even young people are active members of a local community, and seek for funding, municipalities beyond the offering of space and small amounts of money, do not have the authority or the budget to directly employ youth organisations for their services.

An example of cooperation between a Municipality and a youth organization is the one of Agios Dometios and the municipal youth council. The president of the youth council is also a member of the municipal board and is in direct contact with the board communicating their needs and initiatives. Through this process, the Municipality supports the events implemented by the youth council and can help with financial support. The Municipality also offers municipal spaces for the events of the youth council free of rent and invites the youth council to participate in its activities.



## The way forward: Policy Recommendations

The communities of tomorrow are those based on the cooperation amongst local stakeholders and the people forming them. For communities to thrive, they need to ensure that their people thrive as well and that social welfare is high on their agendas and priorities. Young people are an intrinsic part in this process and through them communities set the foundations for their future and their prosperity. As it is evident from the analysis above, local authorities are well aware of the important contribution of youth organisations and social enterprises in their future ventures and the importance of giving the space and opportunity to young people to participate in them. Towards that direction, local authorities in all partner countries have devised their own mechanisms and channels of cooperation, based on their local contexts and needs.

There is however room for further strengthening of this cooperation, and for this reason, after the analysis of local contexts in partner countries, the following policy recommendations were formed as a means to further enhance existing cooperation among local authorities, youth organisations and social enterprises.

It is recommended that:

- An appointed person or group of people within the municipality can oversee all communication with youth organisations and social enterprises and help them prepare necessary information, documentation and other legal obligations in tendering procedures. That person or group of people can also be responsible for clarifying and explaining legal terms and clauses within tendering documents to ensure that all interested parties can fully comprehend the tendering procedures.
- Granting and funding procedures involving youth organisations and social enterprises could be simplified to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. This might entail less paperwork to be filled, fewer guarantees to be provided, and minimization of information required.
- The participation of youth organisations and social enterprises in local decision bodies and high-level discussions, as well as non-formal groups for exchange of ideas and opinions, can be safeguarded and sought after, when the issues under discussion concern the youth or the community's social welfare. Local authorities can provide a series of incentives to youth organisations and social enterprises for ensuring their participation with one of them being providing them with evidence that their voices are heard and their ideas are taken into consideration.

- Policies can be created to set a number of official Key Performance Indicators to be employed by local authorities in order to account for the impact of projects undertaken by youth organisations and social enterprises. This will lead to the building up of trust to successful projects, services provided by youth organisations and social enterprises and pave the way for future cooperation. These indicators can be the number of young people involved, the overall impact of the project or service, the degree of satisfaction amongst end users, the number of young people benefiting from the project/service etc. These indicators will also serve for safeguarding the impartiality of the tendering procedures.
- Municipalities can have an allocated budget for capacity building and informal learning workshops for both municipality employees and young people for exchange of knowledge, good practices, and ideas. Other informal learning events and workshops like hackathons, forums etc can be organised with that budget to ensure that numerous young people and potential entrepreneurs can benefit from them.
- Municipalities can dedicate an amount of money in their budget for supporting social enterprises or young people in their effort to start their own entrepreneurial ventures. Municipalities can create a competition where the most innovative ideas will be funded based on the available budget.
- Frequent meetings can be planned between municipalities, youth organizations and/or social enterprises for exchanging ideas, and share their visions for the future, their needs and current problems. This channel of communication could be maintained and scheduled on a regular basis. In this way municipalities will be able to witness the work done by the organizations and have a prove of the quality of their work and understand their real problems and needs.

All above policy recommendations are indicative of the various means through which the cooperation between local authorities, youth organisations and social enterprises can be enhanced and maintained in spite of the challenges each local authority faces. Based on the findings of the project, the existing cooperation amongst the parties gives rise to opportunities for further development of that cooperation and collaboration in the future with the support of policies that will be informed by the above characteristics.



# The project

LOCAL-Y-MPACT is a project aiming to strengthen the social inclusion and social integration in regional, local communities in post-COVID19 situation by strengthening the cooperation between community based youth organizations, social enterprises and local municipalities, and promoting social entrepreneurship as an effective tool for reducing economic inequality, promoting social inclusion and integration, creating resilient society and fostering active participation, within local communities. Within the framework of the project, the partners had reached out to local authorities in their countries as well as youth organizations and social enterprises for gaining insight as to how cooperation is fostered and what can be further done for enhancing this cooperation. It was indeed noted that local authorities take into consideration and respect the wants, needs and dreams of young people in their communities and give them space to flourish. What is more, local authorities are open to new tools and new mechanisms that will enhance their cooperation with youth organizations and social enterprises.

The consortium of the project, comprising partners coming from various geographical, political, social, and economic contexts (Latvia, Portugal, Lithuania, Sweden, and Cyprus), aims at providing the tools that will further enhance the existing cooperation between municipalities and youth organizations / social enterprises. Towards that direction, the project team has worked towards the creation of a valuable toolbox for municipalities and youth organizations/social enterprises aiming to strengthen cooperation amongst the social actors (Building the Communities of Tomorrow: Tools for enhancing cooperation between local governments and community-based youth organisations). Additionally, partners work towards a roadmap which will serve as a practical action plan for reinforcing and strengthening the cooperation amongst local authorities, youth organizations and social enterprises and enhance their capacity for better serving the purpose of promoting social entrepreneurship to reduce social and economic inequalities and achieve social inclusion and integration (Roadmap for Establishment of Collaboration/Partnership between Municipalities and Youth Organizations/Enterprises).

