Engaging Youth and Communities

Promoting the recognition of Mobile Youth Centre initiatives

BEST PRACTICES

Mobile Youth Work
Engaging Youth and Communities.
Promoting the recognition of Mobile Youth Centre initiatives.

Learn more about the project:
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This publication was developed by the Mobile Youth Work project team, a collaboration between Roter Baum Berlin (Germany), Curba de Cultură (Romania), Strauss APS (Italy), and Le Fagotin (Belgium).

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Credits

01 Roter Baum Berlin

Roter Baum Berlin is the Berlin branch of Roter Baum e.V., focused on inclusive youth work and supporting young people with fewer opportunities through school, social, and cultural activities. Inspired by mobile initiatives like the **Langer See Mobile Youth Centre**, it builds trust through regular presence in schools and local areas, using informal activities to reduce barriers and create connections. Through consistent meetings and opportunities for involvement, young people are encouraged to share ideas, gain confidence, and take responsibility. This approach strengthens participation, fosters ownership, and empowers young people to actively shape projects and their communities.

1.1 Presence at school

→ Establishing trust and visibility among young people by regularly engaging with them in their school environment, introducing the project, and building lasting connections that encourage their participation.

1.2 Crew meetings

→ Creating a safe and structured space where young people can regularly express their ideas, build confidence, and actively shape the project through meaningful participation.

1.3 Active participation

→ Empowering young people to become active co-creators of activities by giving them real responsibility, supporting their ideas with resources, and fostering learning through experience and collaboration.

1.1 Presence at school

This activity focuses on building first contact and trust with young people by establishing a regular and visible presence in local schools. Through consistent visits, informal interactions, and simple shared activities, the project introduces itself in an approachable way while creating the foundation for long-term relationships, partnerships with schools, and increased youth engagement.

Objectives

- Get to know potential participants and visitors
- Present the project and the people involved
- Build connections with local schools and create sustainable networks

How

- Reach out to schools or school social workers and introduce the idea of regular visits (e.g., once a week)
- Bring simple, engaging materials like balls, games, and small snacks or tea — offering something to eat or drink helps create a welcoming atmosphere
- Be consistent and reliable by showing up regularly
- Schedule visits on afternoons when you are already present in the area

Results

- Initial barriers to contact are quickly reduced
- Young people begin to recognize you as a familiar and “normal” presence in their environment
- This familiarity sparks curiosity, making them more likely to engage with and eventually visit your project

1.2 Crew Meetings

This approach focuses on creating a space where young people can actively participate and express their ideas. Through regular, open meetings with a simple structure, they are encouraged to share their perspectives and contribute to shaping the project. Over time, this strengthens their confidence, sense of belonging, and ownership.

Objectives

- Create an atmosphere where participation is encouraged and valued
- Understand the needs and interests of young people to make the project meaningful
- Give a voice to those who are not often asked for their opinions

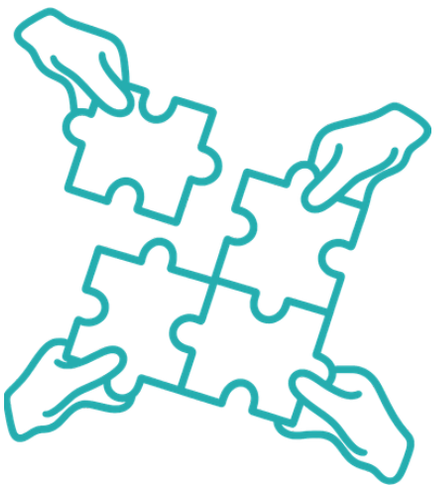
How

- Hold regular meetings at a fixed day and time, open to anyone who wants to join
- Keep the format simple and consistent: reflect on the past week, share updates, and invite ideas or topics from participants

Results

- Young people gain confidence speaking in a group
- They experience that their opinions matter and can influence outcomes
- They develop a sense of ownership by actively shaping the project

1.3 Active participation



This approach focuses on empowering young people to take responsibility and actively shape activities themselves. By providing resources and support while leaving planning and decision-making to them, they gain practical experience, build confidence, and develop important social and organizational skills.

Objectives

- Encourage young people to actively co-create the project rather than just participate in it
- Help them discover their own skills and understand the value of involvement
- Position facilitators as supporters who provide guidance, not entertainment

How

- Create opportunities where young people take responsibility (e.g., organizing an event)
- Provide the basic resources (space, small budget, equipment), while they handle planning and roles
- Accept that the process does not need to be perfect

Effect

- Young people learn through experience, including making and reflecting on mistakes
- Their self-confidence grows as they see their contributions matter
- They develop teamwork skills and learn to negotiate and compromise

02 Curba de Cultura

Curba de Cultura is a Romanian NGO dedicated to non-formal education, cultural activities, and youth participation, with a strong focus on supporting young people in rural and isolated communities. Through initiatives like Tinemobil, their mobile youth centre, the organisation brings activities directly to villages, offering accessible opportunities for learning, intercultural exchange, and community engagement. By combining regular outreach, collaboration with local partners, and the involvement of international volunteers, Curba de Cultură creates inclusive spaces where young people can connect, express themselves, and develop new skills.

2.1 Tinemobil

→ Bringing accessible youth services and meaningful activities to isolated communities through mobile outreach, fostering inclusion, intercultural exchange, and personal development among young people.

2.2 Be Mobile

→ Improving the quality and impact of Mobile Youth Work by strengthening international cooperation, sharing good practices, and developing tools based on the needs and interests of young people in rural and isolated communities.

2.3 Mobile Youth Work in the Communale Library

→ Creating an inclusive local space for regular activities that foster intercultural exchange, community connection, and personal development through volunteer-led non-formal learning.

2.1 Tinemobil

Founded in 2020, this initiative is the first Mobile Youth Centre in Romania, bringing youth work directly to isolated rural communities. It offers a variety of free-time activities and creates opportunities for learning, exchange, and participation, especially for young people with limited access to such services.

Objectives

- Young people in isolated communities often lack access to structured activities and youth services
- There is a strong need for meaningful ways to spend free time and connect with others
- Creating opportunities for intercultural exchange and personal development

How

- Organize regular visits to villages with a planned schedule
- Offer diverse activities such as sports, board games, PlayStation, crafts, cooking, and movie nights
- Work with international volunteers through the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) alongside local volunteers
- Use non-formal learning methods to encourage participation and engagement
- Collaborate with local authorities and schools
- Maintain active communication with young people in the communities

Effect

- Young people in rural areas gain access to youth services and new opportunities
- Increased intercultural exchange through contact with international volunteers
- Development of expertise and good practices in Mobile Youth Work
- Strengthened international collaboration with similar organizations
- Tangible impact: 60 activities across 10 villages, 400+ participants, 50+ volunteers, and over 2500 km traveled
- Extended impact through initiatives like a youth exchange in Berlin

2.2 Be Mobile

This KA2 small-scale project brought together two organizations from Latvia and two from Romania to explore and improve practices in Mobile Youth Work. The collaboration focused on finding effective ways to engage young people in isolated areas.

Objectives

- Strengthen cooperation between organizations working with young people in rural and isolated communities
- Identify effective methods to reach and engage young people
- Better understand the interests and needs of young people in different contexts

How

- Organize two study visits, one in Latvia and one in Romania
- Deliver an online training course on Mobile Youth Work
- Facilitate meetings to exchange experiences and share good practices
- Conduct research on young people's interests and preferred activities

Effect

- Clear insights into the types of activities and locations preferred by young people
- Improved knowledge and shared practices in Mobile Youth Work
- Development of the "Be Mobile Kit" — a practical set of tools in card format to support youth workers in the field
- Strengthened international collaboration and capacity building among partner organizations

2.3 Mobile Youth Work in the Communale Library

This initiative brings international volunteers into the communal library of Măneciu to organize regular activities for children and young people. It creates a local space for learning, interaction, and community engagement through non-formal education.

Objectives

- Provide accessible activities for young people in a small community
- Encourage intercultural exchange and broaden perspectives
- Strengthen connections between young people, volunteers, and the local community

How

- Train international volunteers in basic youth work and non-formal learning methods
- Organize weekly activities in the communal library (around one hour each)
- Adapt activities based on feedback and previous interactions with participants
- Ensure support through collaboration: staff provide materials, the library hosts and invites participants, volunteers facilitate the activities

Effect

- Development of language skills and intercultural understanding among young people
- Increased openness and “internationalization” of the local community
- Stronger ties between the project and the community
- Consistent engagement: weekly activities with 3–18 participants and at least 4 trained volunteers per session
- Growing interest of young people in further youth centre activities

03 Le Fagotin

Le Fagotin is an environmental education centre based in the Belgian Ardennes, combining youth work, non-formal learning, and community engagement through a strong connection with nature. Recognised as a Youth Centre, Nature Centre, and Educational Farm, it offers activities that foster creativity, critical thinking, and participation among young people. Through its Mobile Youth Centre initiatives, Le Fagotin reaches local communities with accessible activities, using personalized invitations to engage youth directly and inclusively. By encouraging shared responsibility through groups like the "Team Caravan" and maintaining a visible presence at public events, the organisation empowers young people to actively participate, build ownership, and strengthen their connection to both community and environment.

3.1 Personalized invitations

→ Increasing youth participation by using personalized and direct invitations that clearly inform and engage young people who might otherwise be difficult to reach.

3.2 Team Caravan

→ Empowering young people to take shared responsibility and actively co-manage the project, fostering ownership, long-term engagement, and leadership development.

3.3 Use during events

→ Increasing the visibility and reach of the Mobile Youth Centre by engaging diverse audiences through its presence at public events and community activities.

3.1 Personalized invitations

This outreach method uses personalized invitations to inform and engage young people in upcoming activities, creating a direct and welcoming connection before each event.

Objectives

- Ensure young people are clearly informed about activities
- Create a personal and inviting approach to increase participation
- Reach those who might not be connected through other communication channels

How

- Deliver personalized postcards to young people aged 12–18 about one week before each activity
- Include their name to make the invitation more engaging
- Provide clear information about the project, as well as the time and location of the next activity
- Distribute approximately 35 postcards per village

Effect

- Increased awareness and participation in activities
- Young people feel personally invited and more motivated to join
- Stronger connection between the project and the local community

3.2 Team Caravan

Following the youth exchange in Berlin, the “Team Caravan” was established as a permanent youth coordination group, enabling young people to actively co-manage and develop the project.

Objectives

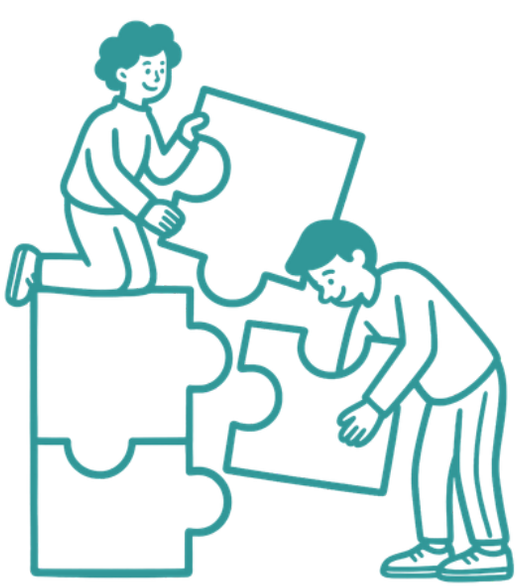
- Move from simple participation to shared responsibility and decision-making
- Strengthen young people’s sense of ownership and long-term engagement
- Empower them to shape the project according to their ideas and needs

How

- Create a stable group of committed young people (“Team Caravan”)
- Involve them in concrete decisions such as equipment for the caravan, outreach strategies, and activity planning
- Give them real responsibility and influence over how the project is developed and run

Effect

- Transformation of young people from participants into co-managers
- Stronger identification with the project and increased continuity
- Greater sense of ownership, responsibility, and engagement
- Development of leadership, organizational, and decision-making skills



3.3 Use during events

The Mobile Youth Centre caravan is also used as a visibility and outreach tool during public events and wider activities, helping to connect with different age groups and promote youth work in the community.

Objectives

- Increase visibility of the Mobile Youth Centre among the wider public
- Reach different age groups beyond regular participants
- Promote youth work and community engagement in informal settings

How

- Use the caravan at public events such as school parties, village fairs, and sports events
- Integrate it into other activities (e.g. wheelbarrow races, bike tours, open days, Saint-Hubert celebrations)
- Participate in broader organizational events, including the first Belgian MYC meeting in Stoumont (2022)

Effect

- Greater awareness of the Mobile Youth Centre in local communities
- Increased contact with new young people and families
- Stronger integration of the project into local and regional activities
- Enhanced recognition of youth work through visible presence in public spaces

04 Strauss APS

Strauss APS is a non-profit organisation based in Mussomeli and part of ARCI, active in youth mobility, non-formal education, and European projects. With a strong focus on inclusion and rural development, it promotes learning opportunities for young people through international cooperation and local engagement. Its mobile approach is reflected in initiatives like the H3 project, an itinerant experience along the Via Francigena Siciliane that connects urban and rural communities through volunteering, cultural exchange, and environmental actions. By combining mobility, education, and community involvement, Strauss APS empowers young people to develop skills, strengthen social connections, and actively contribute to sustainable and inclusive local development.

4.1 H3 project

→ Connecting diverse communities through an itinerant, non-formal learning experience that promotes inclusion, sustainability, and personal development while creating a lasting social and cultural impact.

4.1 H3 project

This project is an example of good practice in mobile, non-formal education. It brought together European volunteers for a 59-day journey along the Via Francigena Siciliane, connecting urban and rural communities in Sicily while combining learning, community engagement, and cultural exchange.

Objectives

- Strengthen connections between urban and rural communities in Sicily
- Provide meaningful learning and volunteering opportunities for young people
- Promote health, cultural heritage, and sustainable living practices
- Support inclusion by reaching communities with limited access to such initiatives

How

- Implement a mobile, itinerant format along the Via Francigena Siciliane
- Combine non-formal education (NFE) with eco-coaching and hands-on activities
- Engage volunteers in hiking, environmental actions, public outreach, and community work
- Work across more than 20 cities and villages, involving diverse local contexts
- Collaborate directly with local residents through shared activities and initiatives

Effect

- Improved health awareness, environmental responsibility, and cultural appreciation in local communities
- Stronger social inclusion and community empowerment across urban and rural areas
- Development of key skills among volunteers, including leadership, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving
- Increased solidarity between participants and local populations
- Long-lasting impact through environmental actions, education, and community engagement
- Creation of a sustainable model of itinerant youth work that combines mobility, learning, and social impact

4.2 Mystery Box: Tactile Exploration

This sensory activity engages young learners in an active exploration session set within the classroom or early learning spaces. Using only their sense of touch, participants reach inside a concealed box to identify hidden objects of various textures, shapes, and materials. The exercise leverages natural curiosity to transform physical exploration into a playful investigation. It strengthens critical thinking and helps children bridge the gap between tactile sensations and descriptive vocabulary within a supportive, interactive environment.

Objectives

- Develop tactile perception and fine motor coordination.
- Expand descriptive vocabulary related to textures, shapes, and materials.
- Enhance deductive reasoning and hypothesis-making skills.
- Promote focus, patience, and turn-taking behavior.

How

- Prepare a cardboard box with side hand-holes covered by fabric flaps to block visibility.
- Insert various everyday or natural objects featuring contrasting textures (e.g., soft, rough, cold, smooth).
- Invite one child at a time to reach into the box and explore the object using only their hands.
- Prompt the participant to describe the sensory traits aloud to the group before guessing and revealing the item.

Results

- Increased willingness among children to share observations and collaborate with peers.
- Measurable growth in the use of specific adjectives during oral communication.
- Enhanced confidence when encountering unfamiliar sensory experiences through play.

4.3 Street Trivia: The Pop-Up Quiz

This energetic educational activity takes place directly in public parks, plazas, or street corners during mobile youth work outreach. Youth workers set up a portable whiteboard or handheld quiz cards to host a fast-paced, interactive trivia game on topics that matter to young people (e.g., pop culture, local history, digital safety, money management, or sports). The practice uses friendly competition to engage local adolescents in a fun, lighthearted way, sparking curiosity, sharing useful everyday knowledge, and creating a natural bridge for youth workers to connect with participants.

Objectives

- Share practical, everyday knowledge in an engaging and accessible format.
- Stimulate team cooperation, quick thinking, and healthy competition.
- Break the ice and build positive rapport between outreach workers and local youth.
- Encourage active participation and group learning in informal outdoor spaces.

How

- Set up a portable trivia board or step into a hangout spot with a set of dynamic quiz cards.
- Invite present young people to form small teams or play individually in a quick 10-minute challenge.
- Ask a series of multiple-choice or true-and-false questions, offering small prizes or bragging rights for top scores.
- Use interesting answers as brief, natural conversation starters to share useful facts and tips without lecturing.

Results

- Immediate high participation from youth attracted by the fun, low-pressure game format.
- Improved peer interaction and spontaneous teamwork among groups gathering in public spaces.
- Increased awareness of practical facts and resources while strengthening trust with youth workers.

CREDITS

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