

DREAMING OF A

YOUTH

Capital

**11 QUESTIONS ON
NATIONAL AND
REGIONAL YOUTH
CAPITALS IN EUROPE
AND THE WORLD**

A FRAMEWORK AND
GUIDELINE 2019

Created in the framework of the project called
National Youth Capitals in Eastern Europe



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CITIZEN Y



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What is a National or Regional Youth Capital title?

What is the general context?

A National or Regional Youth Capital title is mostly addressing cities of a specific country aiming to support them in creating urban level thematic youth programmes.

The title is either awarded through an open competition or through a direct nomination process.

The title is usually associated with a background programme which has the main role of promoting the title and organising the competition for selecting cities which organise successive editions of the title.

There are various national youth capital programmes under implementation already in several European countries.

In Eastern Europe, Moldova created the title the earliest, in 2009.

Romania has a similar title starting from 2016, while Ukraine created this title in 2018.

Bulgaria is aiming to create the title starting from 2020. Serbia aims to take leadership in creating a regional title in the Western Balkans area.

A National Youth Capital title and its background programme has a similar model at European level. The European Youth Capital title is awarded by the European Youth Forum on an annual basis.

Creating a title and a programme to govern it is a stimulus for the cities of a country or region to invest in developing youth ecosystems already by simply applying for such a title.

Who should consider creating a National Youth Capital title and programme?

A National or Regional Youth Capital programme can work in any country of the world if it has a minimum of 5 cities on its territory, irrespective of their size.

Several countries can also join forces in order to create macro-regional titles. Regions or states of big or federal countries can also consider creating regional titles.

In creating such a title, it is vital to understand the current situation of cities within that geographic unit which is an essential starting point for them when considering to take part in such a programme.

A National or Regional Youth Capital title can be created not just by the government or regional public administrations, but also by private entities which can provide a legitimacy and a clear motivation for creating this title.

In today's context, cities all over the world have a growing challenge with their young generation in the context of changes in the labour market, technological advancement and increased mobility. Hence, interest for finding solutions for these problems is high. A title can encourage testing and developing new, integrated approaches on these matters with the active involvement and participation of young people.

The title can work both as an awarding mechanism for past performances or for creating new, integrated concepts and temporary urban programmes which put the city's future vision on the table. A combination of both can also be pursued.

Who should govern a National Youth Capital Programme?

Legitimacy and efficiency should be the key principles in deciding on the governing and management structures of a National or Regional Youth Capital programme.

There are three key aspects in providing a proper management for this title. First is general and strategic management, second is the awarding process, and third is the technical management and monitoring of various editions and of the full programme.

It is up to the creators of the national or regional title to decide who should take decisions in managing the programme. Legitimacy and recognition are to be considered as vital aspects in avoiding situations of various stakeholders questioning the existence of the title

Technical management is vital from the point of view of organising awarding processes and of following-up on performances and delivered activities of cities which get nominated as youth capitals.

Not the least, the awarding process should also consider high legitimacy from a professional point of view for the decisions of awarding to be recognised by the public, by involved cities and other stakeholders.

Practical examples show that these titles are governed either within governments or outside governments, too. However, there is a general tendency of involving a larger set of actors (youth councils, professional organisations) in taking high-level decisions regarding the programme.

What are the key elements of a National Youth Capital programme?

Mission and objectives: these two aspects are not just good leads in presenting the programme but create the baseline and long-term perspective for the initiative.

Indicators for the programme and its editions: a national or regional title's performances and results need to be compared to the general mission and objectives. Indicators do just that. They also provide a thorough basis for shaping award criteria.

Award criteria: in close connection with general indicators, these criteria will also set what kind of proposals will come from city applicants. A right balance between creative and flexible approaches and the possibility for monitoring shall be pursued.

Decision makers: whoever decides on awards can also influence the general perception of the title. Experts and decision makers especially from domains such as urban development and youth can provide a high legitimacy for decisions.

Applicants and potential applicants: title-bearer cities are the ones delivering high quality actions while holding the title. In the case of open and concept-base selection processes, the number of applicants and the quality of applications is paramount. However, a too-high number of applicants can also create damage.

Highly accepted selection process. This provides a safety net against any actor who would contest the reasoning and rationale behind awarding decisions and the full programme itself.

How should cities be selected as ones holding the title? What kind of cities should apply?

An open competition for selection is usually the path taken in nominating cities to hold the title for a specific period.

The baseline approach considered in profiling the cities who could wear the title should be a broad one, allowing any city to apply and get the title.

However, depending on specific missions and objectives, the title can be tailored for specific cities based on size or specific challenges regarding the youth generation in various domains.

Different categories of the title can also be considered if there is a high interest and a possible high number of candidates (like a title for major cities and another for smaller towns).

Existing titles are mostly awarded on a yearly basis. However, a governing body can consider awarding the title only on a two, three, four or even five-year basis.

When creating a selection and awarding scheme, one shall consider and imagine the full process starting from the first moment when a city decides to get involved and through the application process, selection, preparation of the programme (if a concept base application), delivery and evaluation. In the case of the European Youth Capital title, the full process takes more than 4 years.

What are key aspects of implementing and monitoring programmes delivered by cities?

The most important principle is that local management (and not the programme level management) should be fully responsible for implementing the programme under the framework of the national or regional title. National level management can however provide national visibility and can attract events of national importance to the title-bearer city.

Local management shall be held accountable to implementing its programme based on its original concept and proposal, including events, local management structures and aspects related to co-management principles of the municipality and local youth structures.

All monitoring activities shall be put in place starting from the preparation of the local edition and up to the final evaluation activities and planning on sustainability of results.

Local monitoring shall be enhanced by national level monitoring, too. The reason for this top-level approach is that the national programme pursues its own mission and objectives while local editions of the title have a mission and objectives of their own, which might require specific monitoring activities, too.

Monitoring can be also pursued during impact periods of a local edition (up to five years after a local edition is delivered), but different aspects can be considered compared to the implementation itself.

What are the benefits of a large scale thematic urban youth programme?

A local edition of a National or Regional Youth Capital title brings a temporary increased focus on the challenges of the city and its young generations.

It is, if you like, a temporary situation created in the framework of the title which allows developing and testing new approaches, aligning various forces and trends in the city which can be put in the service of envisioning the medium and long-term future and creating new ways of reaching this vision.

The local edition usually creates an improved profile and recognition of the city at national or even international level, too, including a youthful brand of the city.

A thematic urban youth programme provides a significant empowerment of youth organisations but also informal groups of young people to think and act on the improvement of their quality of life and well-being of the city.

A successful implementation of a local edition provides the city's actors an increased capacity to deliver complex and integrated youth programmes in the future, to create evidence-based policies or strategies.

A thematic urban youth programme can have a lasting impact on financial distribution mechanisms, such.

A local edition can create local synergies between various private and public, profit and not-for-profit actors which can be pursued later in other areas, too.

What are the first steps in creating a National Youth Capital title?

Understand and empathise. One shall try to see the real needs of cities within a country or a region regarding young people and try to offer answers to these questions.

Define how a national or regional youth capital title can come to help cities earning the title to find its own answers and solve some of the issues in a more efficient way providing solutions for other peers, cities, too.

Ideate on how to deliver the title and the programme in practice, such as formats of local editions,

Prototype, or create a general framework of how a local edition could look like, including its programme, type of activities, management and coordination structures, mechanisms of cooperation and co-management. Try to see how this creates innovation through projects, processes, positioning of youth or full even changing some paradigms.

Test the framework either through a first selection process or through a pilot edition by identifying a first city which is willing to put this framework in practice.

Implement and consolidate the programme based on your experiences in the ideation, prototyping and testing phases. Correct where and when needed and improve all relevant aspects.

What are the benefits of a national youth capital programme for a country or a region?

Overall, a National or Regional Youth Capital brings focus and connects the topic of cities and young people.

However, it can also bring up topics in the public debate such as the long-term visions of cities and the long-term role of cities in regional and national development.

Such a title can create a growing interest of cities to consider the topic of youth in a broader sense and not just through the “usual suspects”, such as youth organizations, youth activism or participation. Topics such as quality of life, employment and entrepreneurship, information systems, accessibility and equal chances can also be addressed.

As more editions are implemented, a pool and network of cities are created whose leaders (mayors, members of local councils, other key stakeholders) become advocates of cities which should take a pioneering role in addressing specific challenges of today’s young people.

The title and the programme develop the ability to create bridges at national level between public and private, or profit and not-profit sectors, stimulating cooperation and co-creation.

The title and the governing programme develop the capacity of various actors at regional and national level to provide cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches.

What are the other underlying effects of a National Youth Capital programme and its editions?

The programme and its editions create a new generation of responsible leaders within the young generation which are up to take public leading roles in the life of their communities and society in general.

In general, the programme and its editions create more active citizenship and participation

The topic of youth and youth work within public administration and especially local public administration gets a higher priority.

Youth related aspects become addressed more frequently in larger projects and strategies, infrastructure project.

The dialogue between youth and decision makers gets a reshape, a modernisation and it produces viable results.

The title and its editions improve the image of public administrations significantly, not just at the level of senior decision makers and managers, but also at the level of public servants.

The title and its editions create synergies between relevant actors in the youth field and public administrations (including public servants).

Most of all, the programme and its editions create a wider sense of ownership among young people towards their cities and communities.

What additional efforts could be put in place to enhance urban youth ecosystems?

While it creates a set of positive effects at local, regional and national level, directly or indirectly, a National or Regional Youth Capital title will not solve all issues of all cities regarding their young people.

Various original and tested models of projects, processes can be scaled to other cities, too with a special focus on these methods and their adaptability. This creates a hands-on transfer of knowledge and expertise between cities.

Practices of horizontal approaches including the direct exchange of views and practices of cities can provide an alternative to the top-bottom approaches of states regarding youth-related policies and strategies.

A general approach on the youthfulness of cities (such as definitions of what this means exactly and how one can deliver on this topic), including a general quality label or specific ones on different topics. This way cities which do not get awarded with a youth capital title can be also encouraged to invest in youth.

Guidelines and tools on how to lay down the foundations of youth policies, strategies and action plans at urban level can make the work easier for municipalities regarding young people, if the interest and motivation to invest on this aspect is already created for example with an application for a youth capital title.



ABOUT THE 'National Youth Capitals in Eastern Europe' PROJECT

In a similar way to the European Youth Capital programme, national youth capital initiatives encourage cities to both continue and expand the implementation of new ideas and innovative projects with regards to the active participation of young people in society and seeks to present a role model for the further development of youth policies in other European municipalities.

The goal of the project was to develop the skills and capacities of key youth workers involved in the creation and management of national youth capital programmes from Ukraine, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova.

The general objective of the project was to enhance cooperation and policy creation in the framework of National and Regional Youth Capital titles in Eastern Europe and to provide a quality complementary tool of enforcing cities to invest in youth, in addition to the European Youth Capital title.

Specific objectives were:

01: to develop the capacity and competencies of youth workers to plan, manage and develop national level framework programmes and to provide hands-on, on-spot access of youth workers from Eastern European countries involved in youth-related movements on the national level to the experience and expertise of cities holding (European and national) youth capital titles;

02: to create a regional level policy framework and operational network of organisations involved in the development and management of specific national youth capital programmes, including the creation of a portfolio of new and enhanced social innovation projects and initiatives with a special focus on young people, which can be implemented at local and network level during 2019-2021;

03: to lay down the basis for the creation of a regional youth development index in Eastern Europe.





This project added to the professional development of youth workers by developing and consolidating their competencies. Furthermore, the project added to the capacity of partner organisations and partners of these partners in delivering quality level national youth capital programmes and a proper management of these programmes.

All partners involved in the project were entities who are actively working on national or regional youth capital initiatives, such as:

PONT Group, Romania, consortium leader, creator of the Romanian Youth Capital and of the Cluj-Napoca 2015 European Youth Capital programme,

Association " Varna - European Youth Capital", Bulgaria, managers of the Varna 2017, European Youth Capital Programme,

Novi Sad European Youth Capital- OPENS, Serbia, creators and managers of the Novi Sad 2019 European Youth Capital programme,

Ukrainian Institute for International Politics, Ukraine, creators of the Ukrainian Youth Capital programme,

National Youth Council from Moldova, partners in the Youth Capital of Moldova programme.





The project provided with the following results on the level of participants (quantitative):

3 youth worker mobility activities involving 5 partner organisations from 5 countries in Eastern Europe (2 EU, 1 EU-candidate and 2 Eastern Partnership countries),

66 participants with active involvement in 38 working sessions,

3 study case opportunities for participants in the hosting cities of Varna, Bulgaria, Baia Mare, Romania and Novi-Sad, Serbia,

1 portfolio with 10 additional level cooperation projects ideas in the framework of National Youth Capital titles and programmes,

at least 25 organisations involved through their representatives in the youth worker mobility activities including the 5 partner organisations but also another at least 20 organisations through their representatives chose to take part in the second activity of the project,

a network of 5 organisations from 5 Eastern European countries committed to youth participation in urban development, with an outreach to additional more than 20 organisations in all participating countries.

