

Municipality of Kardzhali is preparing a proposal for establishing youth centre in the city under “Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups” Programme, under a Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of EEA FM 2014 – 2021 signed on 16.12.2016.

In this regard Municipality of Kardzhali is looking for a partner with experience in youth activities.

According to the application guidelines **Eligible foreign partners are:** Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations established as a legal person either in the Donor States /Republic of Iceland, Principality of Liechtenstein and Kingdom of Norway/.

In addition, the program allows funding activities performed by partners without requiring financial commitment from them.

The main objective of the project is to improve the quality of life of young people in the municipality of Kardzhali and the conditions for their development by mobilizing their potential and creating mechanisms to encourage their active participation in public life. The purpose of the project will be achieved by building a YC that will function in accordance with international standards for youth work and will provide a variety of services and activities for young people, incl. international activities in accordance with the needs and wishes of young people, incl. ones from VG. In order to achieve this purpose, the project includes planned activities that support the multicultural approach, protect democratic values, encourage the active participation of the public and young people in the activities of the center, in particular:

- activities for informal education in the fields of democratic values, human rights, youth participation and social rights of young people;
- activities for educational support of young people still in formal education but at risk of dropping out;
- activities for social inclusion of young people from vulnerable groups;
- activities to reduce poverty and improve employment opportunities for young people in the labor market, including activities with stakeholders and local public authorities to develop coordinated policies and actions for young people;
- national and international exchanges and joint events with other youth centers.

The implementation of the project objectives will be supported by 5 youth workers and 2 educational mediators who will be appointed at the youth center. They, along with three other staff members of the center's main team, will be trained by qualified trainers in accordance with the requirements for quality youth work and educational mediation. Lecturers, a psychologist and support staff (doormen / security guards, janitors, receptionists, support staff, IT experts) will also be recruited as part of the center's team. The total number of staff members at the center will be at least 20 full-time equivalent employees.

Main activities related to the functioning of the center and aimed at young people

Functioning of the Youth Center

The activity envisages the creation of:

- Youth Smart Hub: an attractive youth space for communication that will be used to share social, educational and cultural ideas.
- a Youth Radio club, which will air broadcasts prepared by young people in individual schools, and later on a local radio station. The club will help to develop in young people skills to work with the relevant equipment, to host various broadcasts, to conduct interviews, to comment on different events, etc.
- a Young Actor club, which will involve young people with an interest in the acting profession. With the help of a professional director, the club will stage performances for children and young people which can be presented on the professional stage of the Kardzhali Home of Culture.
- the Debates club will support the development of public speaking skills and skills for defending a thesis in children and young people. It will include debates on current public issues; active cooperation with local authorities to increase the social activity of young people and their involvement in improving the quality of life in the community, both through proposals and through specific activities.
- Trainings for developing social skills in young people such as respect for others' opinions, tolerance, skills for communication in a multicultural environment, joint games and group work skills, conflict resolution and decision-making skills.
- Educational activities, such as courses for the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills to help young people, especially ones from vulnerable groups, to find a "first job" (e.g. hairdressing, cooking, etc.) more quickly; preparing young people to draw up CVs / cover letters and successfully present them in job interviews; improvement of communication and presentation skills, etc.
- Art Workshops – dance / music and applied arts activities to overcome their cultural differences.
- a Computer Lab – a workshop for creation of digital skills, participation in IT competitions, CoderDojo mentoring initiatives, etc.
- a Healthy Lifestyle Workshop aimed at improving the physical and mental health of young people, such as lectures on healthy lifestyles, healthy food preparation courses, etc.
- a Young Parents' School: conduction of various courses for young parents from vulnerable groups to acquire basic child-rearing skills and to better integrate their families into the social and cultural life of the municipality. During the courses, their children will be entertained by an animator – a youth volunteer, in a space in the Center specifically designed for that purpose.
- Activities to motivate and keep in school children and young people at risk of dropping out, as well as for early school leavers to return to school, including through activities to involve NGOs in the work of the center and the municipality: organizing charity initiatives, developing volunteering, conducting activities for the more successful integration / reintegration of young people from vulnerable groups, various social cohesion activities, incl. outdoor activities,
- Organization of outdoor youth sports (along the alleys of the park around the youth center and the nearby stadium) such as: races with scooters, skate boards, roller skates, etc.

- Conducting a summer school for entrepreneurship to provide young people with basic knowledge and skills to develop their own small business, incl. meetings with representatives of local businesses to share experience in dealing with difficulties and “lessons learned”.
- Youth Volunteer Academy – to increase young people's interest in volunteering to support vulnerable groups and prevention of various addictions of young people (alcohol, drugs, electronic games, inappropriate online links, etc.).

The activity will be implemented through a variety of cultural, civic and educational initiatives for children, young people and stakeholders from Kardzhali Municipality (at least 22% of whom being representatives of vulnerable groups), incl. innovative activities and services (such as CoderDojo, Youth Smart Hub), informal training, etc. to support the multicultural approach and encourage their active participation in the life of the municipality, incl. a variety of volunteering activities; activities on the premises of the YC and outdoor activities such as happenings, exhibitions, bazaars, concerts, etc. Qualified staff will be hired for the successful operation of the YC. The main staff includes: a manager, an accountant, a steward, 5 youth workers, 2 educational mediators. To support the center, the following will also be hired: 2 janitors, a technical support expert, an IT expert, 4 doormen / security guards, 2 receptionists, with which the number of employees hired at the start-up of the Center's activity is expected to be up to 20 people. The recruitment of the staff of the YC will be carried out following open, transparent and non-discriminatory selection procedures carried out in accordance with national law. Within the activity, 10 youth center staff members will be trained to work in accordance with national standards for youth work. The dining area may be outsourced to a catering company that should provide the necessary staff for its successful operation. During the implementation of the project, the activities offered at the center will be used free of charge by the target group. In the event that any income from the rental of the dining area or other income is generated, it will be reinvested in the main activity of the YC. Depending on the needs of the activities planned, the respective heads of clubs, workshops and schools, a director, a journalist, trainers, lecturers, etc. will also be hired for their implementation. The implementation of the activity will be supported by the production of 4 educational films; 10 interactive exercises for solving different social and civil cases; 3 happenings and other various measures aimed at the target group, which are described in detail in the section “Measures for the fulfillment of the specific goals of the YC – Kardzhali during the first stage of its development and sources of funding” of the Strategy for development of the YC – Kardzhali attached to the project proposal. Materials and supplies necessary for the operation of the Center will be provided within the scope of the activity. Questionnaires will be given to visitors and users of the YC to assess satisfaction with the activities and services of the YC. For this purpose, questionnaires will be developed, which will be in accordance with the specificity of the respective activity / services and the target group at which it is directed, aiming at receiving feedback and improving the activity of the center.

Exchange of experience and good practices

The activity shall provide:

- Inclusion in the network of youth centers on the territory of our country that have been made with funds from the EEA Financial Mechanism.

- International exchange with donor countries and creation of partnerships in the field of youth exchange and sharing experiences in respecting the democratic rights of disadvantaged children and young people and their reintegration into the community.

- International exchange of youth groups and experience with other countries.

The Youth Center in the town of Kardzhali will join the network of youth centers organized on the territory of the country with funds from the EEA Financial Mechanism. Joint activities with these youth centers are planned to be carried out, such as: competitions, exhibitions, etc., which will take place in the framework of two exchanges of young people from Kardzhali Municipality in other centers on the territory of Bulgaria.

The project plans for 2 international exchanges with a donor country, each of them lasting 6 days. The first exchange involves a group of 20 participants from the Youth Center to visit the donor country. The second exchange has planned for a group of 20 participants from the donor country to visit the Youth Center in the town of Kardzhali. Within the project, 2 exchanges will be held with a youth center from a neighboring country (Greece, Turkey, Romania, North Macedonia, etc.), in the same way as youth exchanges with the donor countries, 20 participants from the Youth Center – Kardzhali and 20 participants from a neighboring country, respectively. Within the exchanges, joint cultural initiatives will be organized, as well as discussions focusing on the problems of young people and helping young people from vulnerable groups with a view to their successful integration into social life. Through the implementation of this activity, the Youth Center and the services provided therein is aimed to reach the levels of quality established by the Council of Europe to cover the requirements for the provision of the Council of Europe Quality Label.

The planned expenses are in accordance with Art. 8.3.1 of the Implementing Regulation of the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 - 2021 and common practices for the country, formed on the basis of the limits set in the Regulations for missions in the country and abroad, and indicative prices for airplanes tickets and inland transport. They are planned in budget line 16. Expenditure for development of bilateral relations and budget line 12. Expenditure on other contracts concluded by the Beneficiary for the purpose of carrying out the activity. Procedures for the selection of contractors for the provision of logistic services according to the Public Procurement Act will be carried out for the implementation of the activity.