

F2F Web#1

FAL AVIGNON

Citizens' involvement

Main objective of the initiative

Our initiative is to set up a Children City Council i.e. an institution consisted only of children, elected by children from all our city schools (public and private). All school children have to choose two elected representatives per school, for a 2 years term.

It aims at increasing their awareness of citizenship, testing the elected representatives' role and discovering various issues: mobility, social action, education, leisure and culture, and of course food.

Levels of citizen's involvement

The children are stepping into elected representatives' shoes so they are in charge to implement their projects (once validated by the Mayor herself!), organized into different thematic groups; so they:

- are informed about various issues
- collaborate with some municipal services, helped by 2 dedicated adults in charge of their group
- are empowered by experimenting their projects' implementation from start to finish

Starting point of the citizens' involvement

- It was a city project so the first input was given by the Mayor willing to create such an institution.
- It concerned only one targeted and dedicated group that are the city school children, from 8 to 10 years old.

Economic rationale

- There is a dedicated budget
- The budget did increase



Challenges at the beginning: getting human and technical resources

- The main challenge may be to make children understand the “reality principle” that can affect the implementation of their projects, even stopping them.
- For example: breeding hens in the central kitchen to provide daily fresh eggs (for our daily 4500 school meals!!)

Current challenges: Income

- Now we are at the beginning of the third term and one of the challenges is to embed their projects into the municipal services agenda and timing!
- We also have to be attentive not transferring our projects to them, letting them “free” to propose some ideas in coherency with ours (i.e. recycling biowaste and fighting against food waste from canteens is one of our projects so we suggest them to participate developing their ideas)
- One of their recent proposals is to elaborate a menu called by one child’s name and to give it to the central kitchen team to cook it for all children school canteens / to best the displaying menus, adapted to child-sized and more visual.



Key-points relevant for my LAB - Lessons learnt

Good practices - City dialogues powerful to:

- Empower children who can test the implementation of their projects and ideas, i.e. make concrete the “citizenship”
- Mistakes and Bottlenecks: Hard to link with every stakeholders who are needed for long term success
- Trying to transfer our political and adults' projects on them.
- Not giving them necessary resources.
- Not informing them enough to understand our internal way of working.
- The main challenge is not creating an “empty shell”

Key recommendations for other citizens' initiatives

- Excellent to experiment the same type of institution in your city
- Give the children a real power of action by supporting them with human resources

Framework conditions

- Necessary to dedicate a global budget to implement the actions and also to provide a human support : each thematic group works with 2 adults helping children + 1 person who is in charge of the global coordination

Q&A - Solutions designs

Key-figures

- In 2021, there are 66 elected children from 33 public and private elementary schools
- Each child who candidates to the Council writes a statement of objectives to inform his schoolmates of his projects, programme and priorities
- Many projects have been implemented and others are currently underway: « Le printemps des écoliers » (Schoolchildren's Spring) is one



of them. It's a big family event with lots of outdoors activities, stands with a big parade. Fun activities like «acrobranche», a free aerial obstacle course was built in a city park; an intergenerational dance party was organised by the children; school restaurant menus were created by the children ; road signs with explanations adapted to a child's height as well as an electric minibus to drive the children to and from school, to outdoors activities...

- Here is the full list of the thematic commissions :
 - Food (institutional food service, fighting against food waste, balanced diet)
 - Living together (social actions and solidarity)
 - Save the planet (environment, sustainable development)

- My life my city (equipment, security, education)
- Having fun in Avignon (culture and leisure activities)
- Taking care of your health (sports and health)
- the Children's City Council is integrated into other democratic participative bodies in the City : meet elected members, neighbourhood councils, participate in city participatory budgets, etc.
- Human resources needed and internal organization: 14 mobilizers, 1 leisure center director and 1 project manager are present to organize the children's days and help bring the children's projects to life. Every month, the children participate in a community relations training day on Saturday in different areas in the city.
- Twice a year, they meet the Mayor to present to her their work in progress.

How to start implementing a "Council" at school level?

- Oostende: 1 child wrote 1 letter to the Maire, asking for the creation of Children Council

Arguments in favor of starting the process to get a Children Parliament:

- Having the level of city creates a broadening of the perspective of the childrens
- Starting at school level could open the possibility to make the city aware about Food concerns and policy needs

Do the children really make "election campaign"?

- Yes, this is really a replicate of a usual election campaign!

Why the age from 8 to 12?

- "reality principle" may be the main reason to open this only from 8

Older children could be interesting?

- Yes, for sure, but in France, the limitation is the competence of municipality, which is only for the primary school

Place of Food related proposals in the activities of the Food Council?

- Food is only one aspect among many others: there are altogether 6/7 topics (mobility, leisure and sports, inclusive action, etc.).