



Norway
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STARACHOWICE
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**STARACHOWICE LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

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EEA and Norway Grants Funding represent Norway's contribution to a green, competitive and inclusive Europe. Within their framework, Norway contributes to the reduction of social and economic inequalities and to the strengthening of bilateral relations with beneficiary countries from Central and Southern Europe and the Baltic Sea region.

Norway cooperates closely with the European Union as partner of the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). Norway Grants Funding for the period of 2014-2021 amount to €1.25 billion. Priority topics for the given period are: innovation, research, education, competitiveness and decent work, social inclusion, youth employment and poverty reduction, environment, energy, climate change and low-carbon economy, culture, civil society, good governance and fundamental rights, justice and home affairs.

It is with deep satisfaction that I am presenting to you this publication which summarises more than two years of a group effort of our partners and local residents put into the project "Direction - Future. Strachowice Local Development Programme". During this period of time our community has been actively involved in local development, undertaking innovative initiatives that not only contribute to improving the quality of life of our residents, but can also serve as a model for others.

This publication addresses projects and activities that reflect our commitment and show the power of cooperation and perseverance in the pursuit of common goals. Among the presented initiatives there are activities that support the development of our city, promote ecology and sustainability, programmes dedicated to different age groups, especially the young and the elderly, as well as revitalisation projects that contribute to the revival of our urban space.



It is extremely important to emphasise that the success of this project would not have been possible without the involvement of the local community and partners from the public and private sectors in Poland and Norway. Together, we have created space for dialogue, exchange of knowledge and experiences, and for meaningful actions leading to positive change.

Sincerely Yours,
Marek Materek
Mayor of Strachowice

DIRECTION - ECOLOGY ECOSCHOOL

ECOSCHOOL - the new, ecological face of Primary School No. 11 (SP11) in Starachowice.

The idea of creating an ECOSCHOOL came about as early as 2020 during the project development stage based on comprehensive diagnosis of the quality of life in the city and the level of education in Starachowice.

The entire preparatory process - from the idea to the start of the construction works - took 3 years. The concept of the facility and its final shape was developed in a participatory formula with the engagement of students, teachers, parents, young people, senior citizens and residents, and the support of experts and specialists.

As a result, the ECOSCHOOL was created - a place for innovative and interesting education, where children and young people - but also local residents - will have the opportunity to learn to care for their natural environment.

The project involved the adaptation of the school library and the former Middle School No. 3 building which had been unoccupied since the last reform of education. New green spaces for learning, integration and leisure activities for students, teachers and residents were created there.



The innovativeness of the project should be regarded in two dimensions – the institutional - through the creation of a modern, ecological space in the educational institution where the environmental education programme will be implemented and the social - through raising ecological awareness of the local community of Starachowice.

Thanks to the implementation of the project, the quality of education will also increase, as the educational programmes developed will constitute

a set of good practices that can be implemented in other educational institutions in the city, region and Poland.

ECOSCHOOL is an accessible place, acting as a kind of social activity centre, which educates pupils and at the same time provides leisure activities for all residents - a concept taken from our partner, the City of Bergen. Elements of Norwegian schools are also evident in our ECOSCHOOL precisely thanks to the bilateral cooperation and case visits. The building complex and the surroundings of SP11 represent a potential that, with appropriate adaptation, will have a central function in addition to educational purposes. In a similar way, the local community in Bergen



benefits from the infrastructure of the Ny-Krohnborg - Centre for Education and Culture. The development of the building and the surroundings of the ECOSCHOOL will also have a positive impact in the context of demographic change.

Due to the ageing population (and the exceptionally high number of senior residents in the north-eastern part of the city, where the ECOSCHOOL is located), the organisation of green and friendly public spaces will make it easier for the senior citizens to access green recreation areas. In addition, the ECOSCHOOL will be an educational institution whose offer and mission is to attract children from the surrounding areas. It is to be a green brand of the city, which will set the tone for its ecological development.

The school now has dedicated and arranged space and classrooms specially adapted for environmental education for pupils from all over the city. The school's interiors harmonise with its ecological mission and form a symbiosis with the building's green surroundings.

The project involved modernisation or construction of the entrance hall, the corridors with their new Green Relaxation Zones, a relaxation room for pupils with special needs, a library with a reading room and a separate room for local residents, language rooms, a maths room and themed rooms - 'recycling' and 'earth'.

The modernised facility will accommodate bilingual classes, ecology classes and sports classes. As part of extra-curricular activities, pupils will be able to develop their skills in rhythmic, art, sports, civic education and other classes launched as required. The teaching staff have also been given the chance to develop themselves through a number of in-service courses and training sessions and the opportunity to collaborate with numerous primary schools in Europe.

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DIRECTION - ENTREPRENEURSHIP "Little Palace" CREATIVITY CENTRE

The modernisation of the historic Palais building was another focus of the project and, in a wider perspective, of the city's revitalisation. The Norway funds provided an opportunity to give a new shine to this unique place on the map of Starachowice. The building was included as a basic project in the Municipal Revitalisation Programme for 2016-2025, and the first idea came in 2015 from the young generation of residents who realised that they did not have a proper meeting space in the city. After years of public consultations, technical documentation and the plan of works was prepared, and thanks to the funding from the Norwegian project, work began in October 2022.



The palace dates back to 1922, but after the war it began to fall into disrepair. Thanks to the possibility of obtaining external funding, it was possible to fulfil the dream of the young people in particular, but also of all residents, for the place where the local community can finally integrate. It was a place for development, new ideas and social activities.

The new venue was planned as a meeting hub for representatives of business, youth and non-governmental organisations, with regular local events and exhibitions to be held there. This space has great potential to develop as a centre for cooperation, integration, exchange of experiences, and mutual learning, with the ultimate goal being the growth of both the city of Starachowice and the inhabitants of the municipality.

The historic part will hold after the renovation: a café and rooms available for rent for business start-ups.

One of the objectives of the Palais will be to initiate and implement actions to accelerate the development of the local economy by creating attractive conditions for the development of entrepreneurship with particular emphasis on the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector. They will be given wide access to the developed tools for support and development of entrepreneurship, which will be assisted by experts from many fields and institutions during meetings organised in the Palais spaces.

The idea of bringing entrepreneurs and business people together requires openness and the provision of conditions for meetings. The creation of a co-working space will allow the creative sector to network and connect with other communities in the city. An important link will be the presence and cooperation between NGOs operating in the city.

The new wing, the corridor, the equipment and the landscaping of the surroundings have been carried out as part of the Project.

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IMPACT HUB SESSIONS

One of the first initiatives prepared by the Starachowice Youth City Council as part of the Project was the Youth Civic Festival, which took place on 4 September 2023 in the city park. This unique event had one main objective - to integrate and unite the young community of Starachowice.

The huge turnout showed how valuable and necessary this initiative was. Lectures by interesting guests, interviews, musical performances, presentations by local music and art groups, debates, an instax point, competitions - these are just some of the attractions that the Starachowice Youth Council prepared for the participants of the festival.

In addition, the participants were able to take part in a field game and knowledge competitions about Starachowice and Norway.

The stars of the event were Dawid Myśliwiec who runs a channel and a blog called "Watch out! Scientific Bubble" and Rafał Gębura from the podcast "7 metres underground", who talked about how to achieve success in social media by creating valuable content. Another idea of the Youth City Council carried out as part of the project was a meeting with the popular Youtuber and traveller Piotr Jurkowski.



Everybody was invited to take part in the meeting to learn about different ways of looking at the world while travelling, as well as about interesting and original ideas for living.

On March 26th, the official opening of the Palais took place, to which the young people invited Mr Paweł Kołodziejski, who gave an inspiring account of the history of the place.

While on the 5th of April, a Youth Day was held at the Palais with the leading theme of young people's mental health. As part of the event, there were talks, workshops on how to deal with stress, overstimulation, excessive worrying, or how to deal with online heckling.

DIRECTION - BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH NORWAY

The cooperation agreement was signed at the Starachowice City Hall in 2022 by the Mayor of Starachowice Marek Materek together with Vincent Mrimba, the Director of the Cultural Agency within the Department of Culture, Equality and Diversity of the City of Bergen.

Bilateral cooperation focused on several areas:

- environment and ecology
- housing policy
- accessibility
- formal and informal education
- youth policy
- institutional development and city management
- culture
- social activation
- senior citizen policy



Case study visits, counselling support, workshops, training, youth exchanges, site visits, jobshadowing - these were the activities we have carried out together over the course of the project.

The bilateral cooperation with the City of Bergen, with expert support, inspiration and solutions taken directly from Norway, had an invaluable impact on the final shape of:



- ECOSCHOOL
- The Palais Creativity Centre
- strategic documents on housing policy, education, environment, accessibility
- the development of youth policy and of young people themselves taking part in international activities
- Institutional development of the city

DIRECTION - CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS SOCIAL ACTIVITY CENTRE, ACTIVITY CENTRE IN “WZGÓRZE” (THE HILL) HOUSING ESTATE

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Another important point of the Project was the establishment of a new day-care facility called the Community Activity Centre in “Wzgórze” housing estate - a site that is the centre of revitalisation. The facility is run by the local Centre for Social Services and it houses: a day-care centre for children and adolescents created in what used to be storage compartments, as well as four council flats located on the first floor of the building.

The Centre runs activities scheduled according to an annual work plan of the day-care centre, catering for many educational, pedagogical and caring aspects. The wards spend their free time under the supervision of educators, and also have the opportunity to develop their interests.



During the school year, the Centre offers classes in mathematics, Polish and English. The children are taking the classes willingly, improve their knowledge in school subjects, catch up and get help with their homework. In the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 school years, 200 school hours of English, Polish and mathematics each were completed. On average, 80% of all wards benefited from educational activities at the facility. Children and young people can also take part in group activities to develop creativity and soft skills – for example by taking part in creative thinking training. Eighty hours of these classes have been completed.

As part of the Project the facility organised “Active winter break and holidays”. Activities available for children during their school breaks included: robotics, nature and space workshops, making of soap bubbles, science experiments, balloon experiments, cooking and environmental workshops. As part of the animation workshop, pizza and drinks were provided for the participating kids, and the cooking workshop ended with tasting of the prepared dishes. Outings to the cinema, swimming pool and bowling, team-building activities and other activities included in the action plan and carried out by the staff were also organised.

Every day, the centre provides food for all participants - lunch and dry provisions.

On the everyday basis during its operation times, the day-care centre engages the children and young-

sters in numerous sports activities. There are field games, ball games, ping-pong and dance classes. There is also a lot of arts and crafts activities such as preparing decorations for Christmas or Easter, theme works for Independence Day, Mother's Day, Grandmother's and Grandfather's Day, Senior Citizen's Day or the First Day of Spring, etc.

A communal garden was opened in July 2023, with the residents of the estate actively involved in its preparation. As part of introducing the youngest to ecology, an environmental workshop was held for the children. The garden is cared for daily by local residents, the day centre participants and the staff.



Throughout the entire period of operation of the Community Activity Center, activities are carried out for families and adults from the Wzgórze Housing Estate as part of the Crisis Intervention Point. Support from a psychologist, a family coach, a life crisis therapist, industry consulting, a financial advisor and career counseling is organized.

An important and key role of the Community Activity Centre is to integrate the residents of the "Wzgórze" Estate. As part of the joint effort of the Starachowice City Hall and the Centre for Social Services in Starachowice in the years 2023-2024, cyclical meetings of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Starachowice with the residents of the Estate were held for the local community, including such events as the New Year's Eve balls, Cinema under a cloud, Women's Day, Mums' Club, joint barbecues and bonfires, or cleaning up the Estate.

The Community Activity Centre enjoys a good reputation and cooperation with the residents and attracts volunteers to support the activities of the day-care centre. It is a facility open to the needs of the residents of the "Wzgórze" Estate and the city as a whole, whose key role is to support parents in their role, as well as integrating and developing the social activities and activities of the residents.

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NEW COMPETENCIES OF THE YOUTH CITY COUNCIL

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The Youth City Council in Starachowice has a long-standing tradition. Thanks to its participation in the Project, the YCC got a chance to make an incredible step forward, to acquire new competencies and to be able to act more effectively for the benefit of the young generation of Starachowice.



TRAINING IN DESIGN THINKING

In June 2023, the YCC took part in a special training on design thinking. The aim of the workshop was to demonstrate the role of the design thinking method and service design when catering for the daily needs of the local community and the youth of Starachowice.

Design Thinking is a process that combines creative and analytical thinking to come up with innovative solutions targeting the needs of the community. Its main benefit is its ability to enhance creativity and innovation by enabling those using this approach to focus on the needs of users and empathetically understand their experience. One of the most important elements of building design thinking competence is to encourage the testing of the proposed solutions and their systematic improvement.

During the 3-day workshop, the young councillors learned, among other things, what design thinking is and what stages it consists of. They learned about teamwork or how to conduct a conversation with empathy towards the interlocutor, both in everyday and professional life. The young people also learned about the principles and types of brainstorming technique, and developed the ability to look for solutions to the encountered problems.

The final task of the training was to transfer the plan made according to the design thinking method

to the local ground. Young councillors designed future activities for primary school pupils regarding the upcoming Green Participatory School Budget initiative. The three days packed with various activities definitely provided the young councillors from the YCC with many new skills and had a positive impact on the integration of the entire group.

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One of the most valuable initiatives in activating children and young people, in terms of environmental education and engagement in the life of the city and their community, was the Green Participatory School Budget (Eco Budget) targeting pupils from the city's 8 primary schools.

Starachowice Youth City Council, together with experts and local government officials, worked on the model, the concept and terms and conditions of the budget.

School Participatory Budgets have been organised in Poland before, however, the Starachowice edition was unique in that it concerned endeavours supporting pro-environmental activities, and each school was awarded more than PLN 5,000 to implement their ideas.



The Eco Budget was a process in which the allocation of money was voted by the school community. Pupils came up with ideas, created projects and then selected the ones they thought were most attractive and needed. The Eco Budget is also about learning how a participatory society works in practice, tailored to the needs and requirements of young people. In this way, from an early age, children and young people learn that each of them carries responsibility for the place where they live, study or work.

The Eco Budget was managed by the City Coordinating Team consisting of 3 representatives of the Town Hall appointed by the Mayor, 3 councillors of the Starachowice Youth City Council and 1 representative of each school (the principle or his/her nominee). The schools, on the other hand, appointed School Coordinating Teams, consisting of 4 representatives: the principal, a teacher appointed by the principal, a student council representative and 1 representative of the Starachowice Youth City Council.

The first edition of the Eco Budget was implemented from September 2023 to April 2024.

STARACHOWICE COMMUNAL GARDEN

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The project provided an opportunity for all of the residents to grow. Apart from the young, the senior citizens from the University of the Third Age in Starachowice – one of the project's partners - also received their chance to act for the benefit of their city, revealing their hidden potential.

The construction of a communal garden was one of the elements of the pilot programme for environmental education. What is worth emphasising is that the activities are cross-generation in character, since the seniors could count on the help of the young.

Herbs and flowers were planted on an area of around 600 square metres on a plot by Gliniana Street, designated by the city specifically for this purpose. "We treat ourselves with herbs, not with antibiotics" – such is the motto of the Starachowice Communal Garden.



It is now a place where meetings and workshops are being held periodically, during which the residents learn about the planted herbs and their use in everyday life.

The garden has an educational and recreational function. Classes, lectures or intergenerational workshops are held here.

Numerous herbs grow in the garden: lemon balm, mint, thyme, basil, chives, dill, oregano, bear garlic, rocket or parsley. The garden is also abundant with plants and shrubs such as barberry, purple sapling, multi-coloured heather, climbing rose, honeysuckle, ivy, five-petalled grape ivy, Pennisetum, sedum, aster, phlox, hydrangea or buddleia.

In addition to the planned activities funded under the project, the senior residents carried out many voluntary activities: there were theoretical classes on topics such as: the use of herbs in pharmacy and cosmetics, preparing the garden for winter, birds in our gardens, home methods of spraying plants against fungi, the effectiveness of herbs on the human organism, etc. Members of the group and students of the U3A also met

in the garden for recreation: tasting fresh and healthy herbs, camaraderie - in their free time to discuss how to use products from the garden or compose beautiful presents out of flowers, to observe and record in photographs the lovely plants and the 'guests' who visited them, as well as the changing colours of the garden as the seasons change.

By building the herb garden, the elderly residents developed their passions for exploration and observation.

They could observe the appearance of nests and cocoons of the garden mason bee. They set up a hotel for these insects in the ECO-garden. They made the house out of natural materials, filled it with empty reed stalks and protected it with plastic netting against birds.

Based on the original embryonic material, the murrelet developed rapidly. Raising murrelets provided plen-



ty of satisfaction for our seniors. They observed their development, structure, flight, pollination of plants and flowers.

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INTEGRATION OF FOREIGNERS MODEL

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As part of the project, the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce designed special modules for the Multifunctional Mobile Service (MSM) for new residents and foreigners called "Welcome to Starachowice". It is a website with an option of downloading an app to your phone.

The modules, which serve as guidelines for foreigners in the process of adapting to life in the city, include the following:

1. Language and culture map of Starachowice
2. Society
3. Economy
4. Education
5. Law



The modules on rules and regulations in Poland and on support in the most important issues of everyday life in Starachowice are a great compendium of knowledge for foreigners taking their first steps in our city.



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