

# TalentMagnet

## Guide for setting up and running Local Talent Club

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## 1 Introduction

Work Package T2 (WPT2) of TalentMagnet project – co-financed from Danube Transnational Programme – is focusing on developing an innovative TalentMagnet toolkit (also using the benefits of ICT) that can be used by partners (and by other towns in the Danube Region)

- to enable the practical use of the improved Multilevel Governance Model for Talent Attraction and Retention
- and to create a more attractive local environment for talent.

The present document introduces one of these tools, namely the Local Talent Club in the following structure.



## 2 Background and Purpose

### 2.1 The Challenge

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more and more people move within national borders – and increasingly between countries to find better jobs and better places to live. Young, highly educated and talented people move from rural areas to urban cores, from smaller towns to capital cities, metropolises in the hope of better jobs – and, ultimately, better life.

Gradually losing the brightest young people has dramatic consequences for any city in the long run, no surprise, then, that any forward-looking local authority wants to do something to stop losing talent. One of the key challenges small- and medium sized towns face, however, is that even if they have quality secondary education that “produces” young graduates with competitive knowledge, many of these talented young people go elsewhere to attend university – and after leaving their hometown they never return – they start a new life elsewhere. One of the related problems is that once secondary school graduates start their studies elsewhere, the local authority and the city completely loses contacts with them. And that leads to the following issues:

- **the local authority does not really know about the preferences, expectations, desires of these young people** – does not really understand what would make them at least consider returning to their hometown and starting their adult life;
- while those studying elsewhere occasionally return to the city to visit family and friends, these visits become less frequent as time passes and they build their links at their new residence, and slowly but surely, they **lose their previously strong attachment to their hometown**.

Then there are those young talent who moved to the city from elsewhere: when they start their new life, they have no acquaintances, no informal local network and they know very little about the city. Thus, they are rootless, and their attachment to place builds very slowly, if at all, and mostly by lucky coincidences. As a result, if a new and better job opportunity emerges in another city, they can easily decide to leave – there’s very little that would keep them back.

### 2.2 The Purpose

When it comes to talent attraction and retention, retaining those who are already in our city and have some existing emotional links, is significantly easier than attracting new talent from elsewhere. The **talent we already have in our city represent the “low-hanging fruit” of talent attraction and retention**. Consequently, any **local authority should strongly focus on working with these groups** before even considering attracting talent from elsewhere and this should be at the forefront of the talent attraction and retention strategy of small- and medium sized towns.

**The Local Talent Club can serve as an excellent framework for building connections with those groups and actively involving them in improving our city,** thus gradually building their strong attachment to place.

The purpose of this practical guide is to help local authorities understand the rationale and benefits of setting up and running a Local Talent Club, and to provide a blueprint for building and successfully running their own.

### 2.3 The Target Group

Before discussing the target group, it is important to highlight that in the TalentMagnet project “talent” has an inclusive meaning: talent is a set of abilities of a person including skills, knowledge and capacity for growth and development. It refers to people with innate gifts, as well as to people who have learned knowledge and acquired skills related to a particular field and are ready and able to do high quality work in her / his chosen field.

It is recommended that **the Local Talent Club focuses on the following main groups:**

- those secondary school students in our city who are in their last year (and probably intend to continue their studies in higher education),
- those studying in higher education in our city,
- those studying in higher education in other cities, but our city is their hometown,
- those young professionals who started their career at a workplace in our city (with a special focus on those who moved to our city from elsewhere).

Obviously, Local Talent Club could also be open to enthusiastic talents who do not fall into the categories above.

### 2.4 The Stakeholders

**Stakeholders include all local organizations, institutions that have an interest or potential role in attracting and retaining talent.** The exact list of stakeholders may differ from city to city, reflecting the local circumstances, but typically include the following actors:

- Local authority
- Secondary educational institutions
- Higher education institutions (if any)
- Employment office, employment organizations
- Major employer organizations, businesses
- Business support organizations
- R&D organizations, research institutions
- Youth organizations
- Relevant NGOs

## 2.5 Definition of Local Talent Club

The Local Talent Club is a **flexible and loose community of talented young people** (see target group) with the purpose of strengthening their attachment to place – to the city and the local community. It achieves its purpose primarily by:

- providing a **meeting point and informal networking opportunity** of the target groups,
- facilitating a **constant dialogue between the target groups and the stakeholders** in order to better understand the target groups' needs and expectations and incorporate their ideas and suggestions in developing the city,
- **delivering the brand values of the city** to the target groups as an integral part of the branding process.

The Local Talent Club reflects the „customer focus“ of our approach and facilitate the direct involvement of the most important target group of the project: young talents. The Local Talent Club enables the local authority and the other stakeholders to better understand the very specific needs and expectations of the local talent and to address those needs in an agile way.

It is also important to clarify **what is not a Local Talent Club**:

- it is definitely not a project – if it is set up and managed as one, will inevitably fail;
- it is not a formal, partially closed group (like for instance a sport club) – it will rather evolve organically encouraged by the municipality, the stakeholders and the target groups themselves;
- it is not (or at least not necessarily) a physical place (like a clubhouse) – it is rather an informal and fairly virtual network of young talents attached to the city in some way;
- it is not a series of ill-considered and incidental events (during the project implementation period) – it should be based on a solid governance structure and a long-term plan detailed in the following chapters.

### 3 Setting up and Running the Local Talent Club

#### 3.1 Establishing the Governance Structure

Setting up and running it successfully requires **constant effort, a clear governance and management structure complete with responsibilities, dedicated human and financial resources**. While voluntary contributions can play an important role in its operation, it cannot be exclusively built on voluntary work – definitely not at the beginning.

The **governance structure** of the Local Talent Club has the **following main elements**:

- **Political representation:** it is important that the Local Talent Club – and the issue of talent attraction and retention – have strong political representation and support, dedicated actors in the local decision-making system who can keep the relevant issues on the agenda, initiate policy changes and decisions. How exactly this is ensured is naturally highly dependent on the local political and decision-making structures and culture. Nevertheless, good political representation definitely needs to have the following 2 “ingredients”:
  - o **A local “Youth Champion”** – a local politician with significant influence who has a clear responsibility (and ambition) for youth issues. This person could be one of the vice-mayors, or an influential local council member.
  - o **A body that is responsible for preparing political decisions** related to talent attraction and retention, and specifically the Local Talent Club’s operation. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but in many local councils there is a committee structure – ideally, the committee responsible for youth issues. In fact, if currently there is no such committee, setting up one would reflect the political commitment to focus on talent attraction and retention.
- **Management / delivery structure:** setting up and running the Local Talent Club involves regular activities and work – even if volunteers are involved in this process, there needs to be a dedicated organization or department that coordinates their work, does the day-to-day activities, keeps in touch with the target group and the stakeholders, maintains the databases, organizes events. Again, what this organization would be could change from city to city, but preferably it is a body that has strong links with the local authority (and thus with the political decision-making structure). It could be a department of the local authority that is responsible for youth issues, or one of the agencies of the local authority (for instance the urban development agency if it exists, or employment agency, or similar).
- **Dedicated person within the dedicated organization:** having a dedicated organization is crucial, but if there is no one staff member who has the tasks related to running the Local Talent Club in her / his job description, it will become just another frustrating

activity nobody wants to deal with. So, it is important to appoint one person and dedicate a certain percentage of her / his time to running the Local Talent Club.

- **Budget** – setting up and running the Local Talent Club also costs money – so if any city takes it seriously, they need to dedicate realistic financial resources to the related tasks. The budget can be combined from different sources: it could include some funding from the local authority, contributions from the stakeholders (for instance from businesses), grant support to some of its activities and programmes, just to name a few.
- **A structure ensuring the involvement of stakeholders** – the stakeholders play a crucial role in the success of the Local Talent Club – and in that of talent attraction and retention. So having a forum that ensures regular meetings and dialogue of stakeholders, giving them the opportunity to share their ideas, expectations, propose actions, events, etc., is important. Such a body could involve all important stakeholders – and, very importantly, needs to incorporate representatives of the target group. How exactly this structure is set up and run can vary, but having a Local Youth Forum, for instance, could be an option.

### 3.2 Creating and Maintaining a Talent Database

Creating and maintaining a talent database is a crucial element of running a Local Talent Club, as we need to reach our target groups, to communicate with them, to engage them, and to get to know their expectations regarding the city where they live, or they want to live. Creating the database is a gradual, phased process:

- as a first step, you can mobilize the network of stakeholders who are in direct contact with your target groups – this is rather an informal way of building a basic database;
- at a later stage, the Local Talent Club's participants can nominate and invite their acquaintances (similar to snowball sampling method in social science research: the Club can grow like a rolling snowball);
- the most effective way is to involve local high schools, vocational schools, and universities: they can collect the necessary information from their undergraduates – similar to career tracking (if the relevant organizations have their own career tracking system, they can use it); nevertheless, it requires much more efforts both from the organization/person responsible for maintaining the Local Talent Club and from the educational institutions.

The number of people we want to reach depends on where we are in the process mentioned above: in case of activating only informal networks, the database will contain for instance 30-50 people – it can be enough if they are motivated and committed. This number can be extremely increased by using a formalized questionnaire and involving educational institutions – in that case the communication might be less personal and more general.



**What should be in the database?**

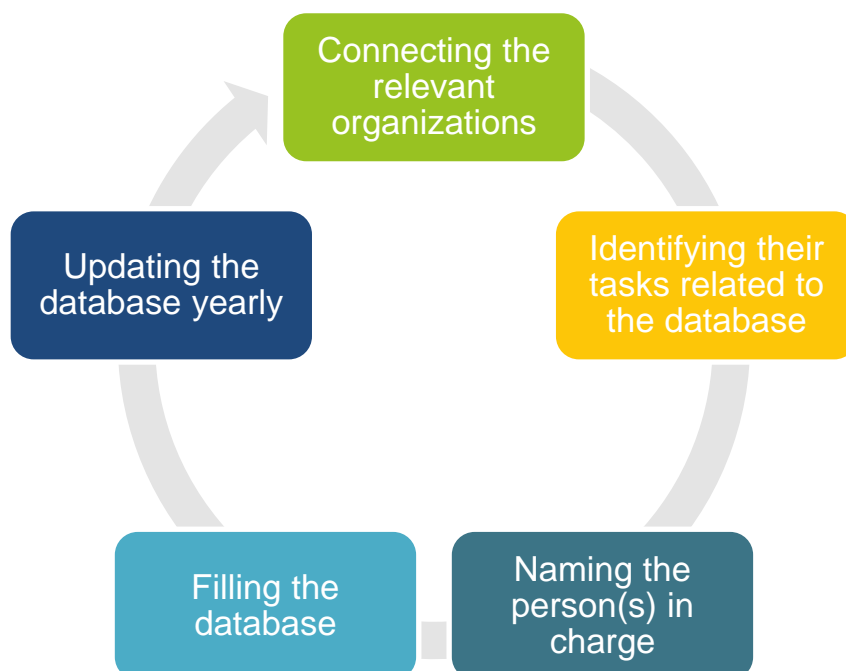
- Contact details
- Information about the degree obtained
- Place of further education (if any)
- Progress in the labour market (first job, recent job)

**Who should be involved in compiling the database?**

- High schools and vocational schools
- Universities
- Youth organizations, NGOs
- City department responsible for youth issues
- Expat centres or similar organizations

Ideally, creating and maintaining the Talent Database involves the following main steps:

- identifying and contacting organizations that are in connection with youth, mainly undergraduates (e.g. high schools, vocation schools and universities) or expatriates,
- organizing a preparatory event with these organizations to inform them and to jointly design the talent database and the process of setting it up and maintaining,
- appointing the organization and person(s) in charge of managing the database – optimally, one person at city level can coordinate the whole process, and, in addition, each organization designates one person to perform organizational level tasks,
- collecting the baseline data and information from the undergraduates (you can use the Excel template from the Annexes as an example, but you can also design your own database in a dedicated platform),
- regularly (at least annually) updating the database (you can use Google Forms template from the Annexes).



In connection with the database, it is highly important to meet the GDPR requirements as personal data will be stored, processed, and used. As annex, a privacy policy sample is provided that can be adapted by each organization responsible for the database.

### 3.3 Engaging Youth during and after the Project

As we have already indicated previously, the Local Talent Club (and, more generally, talent attraction and retention) is not a project and should not be tackled as one. Even though in the context of TalentMagnet project each city partner “only” needs to deliver 2 Local Talent Club events, from the wider perspective of talent attraction and retention, **TalentMagnet project can be considered as a catalyst or trigger that launches the operation of the Club**, enables partners to experiment with this tool and create the basic conditions in a relatively risk-free environment.

However, **no city can expect a drastic change and improvement from simply delivering two events**. In fact, it can even have an opposite effect: delivering the two events only because it is required in the project and then letting the initiative gradually die can send the clear message to the target groups that the local authority does not really take seriously the local talent... Therefore, the only viable strategy is to **use the TalentMagnet project to set the example and deliver two excellent events – and then build on this success and momentum to continue, gradually develop and expand the Local Talent Club’s activity**.

Also, it is important to emphasize that the **Local Talent Club is not something the local authority (together with some of the stakeholders) creates and runs FOR local youth; it is an initiative that creates and runs WITH the local youth**, providing them freedom to shape it according to their needs and expectations. Engaging representatives of the target group, therefore, is crucial from the very beginning – already in establishing the concept and framework of the Local Talent Club (e.g. frequency, forms, and topics of gatherings and keeping contacts). Besides, the two events that need to be delivered within the project need to be exciting, interactive, fun and engaging – so that they set the bar and make the target groups keep coming back for more. They definitely should not be the usual meeting with various “talking heads” from the stakeholders giving boring presentations but interactive gatherings with a high degree of involvement. It has to be made clear what the Club’s benefits are for the target groups, otherwise it will be difficult to persuade them to take part in the Local Talent Club.

In general, the Local Talent Club have to be used also for communication purposes to show an attractive image on local level for talents and develop the thoughts in their minds that they want to come with us. In that branding process, cities have to regularly create and share interesting (digital) contents that are of added value – the Local Talent Club and the database are ideal channels to achieve and involve them. And cities have to spend on this by using paid advertisement on social media or paying the target groups themselves for creating contents to publish.

The main communication channel to address young talents live or lived in our city is the database itself: they give their contact details through which we can share with them information that is interesting and useful to them.

The TalentMagnet Application developed within the project is also a useful tool for

- engaging young talents,
- sharing with and collecting information from them,
- support them in networking.

And the engagement cannot stop when the TalentMagnet project comes to an end – partner cities should continue working with the target groups, engaging them in various activities, keep on organizing events and gradually involving them in making a city a better place.

## 4 Organizing Local Talent Club events

### 4.1 Approach and Process

Two Local Talent Club events have to be organized during the TalentMagnet project; however, regularity, effectiveness, and transparency are key factors: Local Talent Club can only have long-term results if

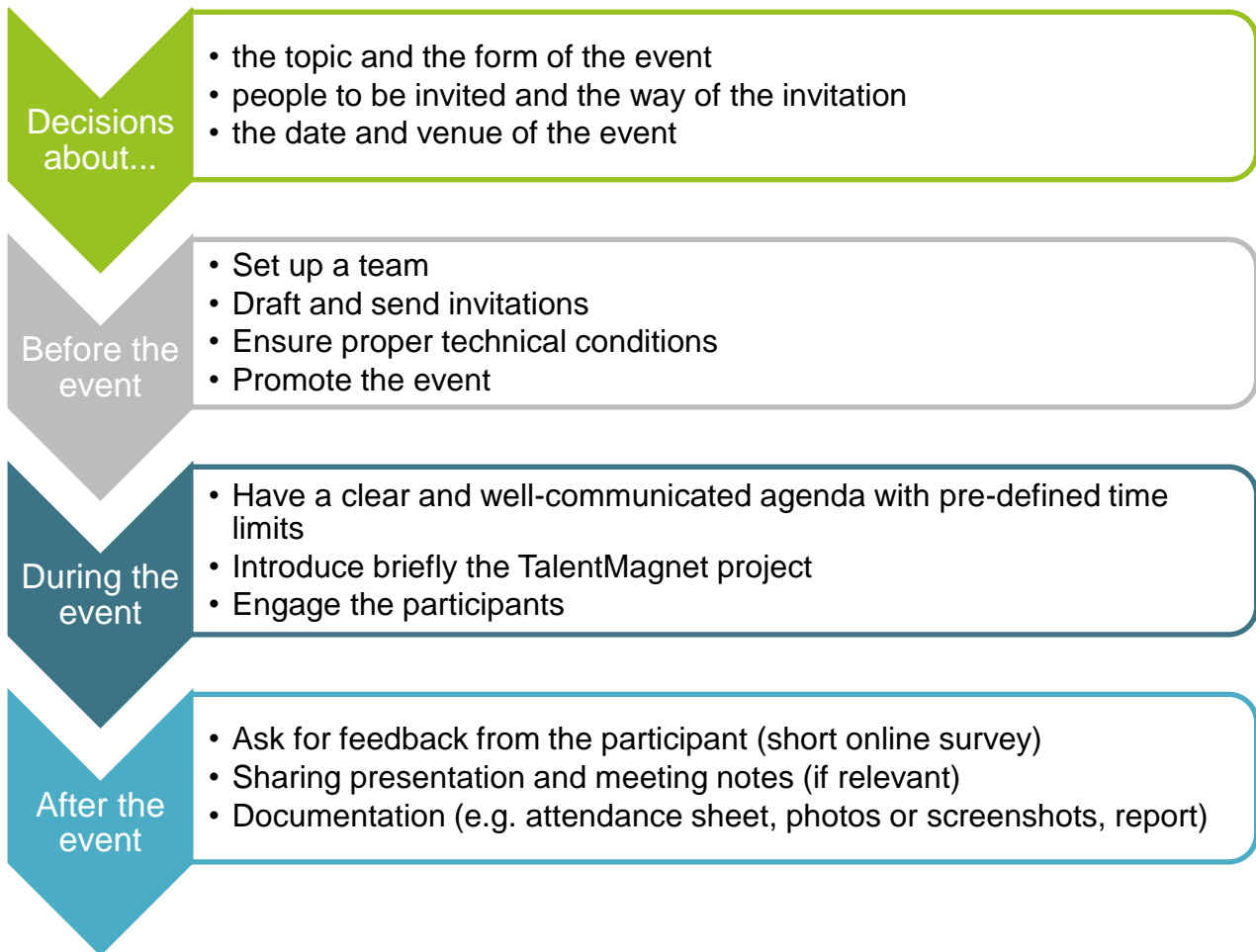
- we constantly keep in touch with the target groups,
- we provide tailor-made, useful information for them (in terms of both the subject and the form),
- youths have a real say in the local processes, developments,
- they perceive a genuine change in their local situation and appreciation (or at least the commitment to that).
- they can see where their city is going, that it has a positive vision,
- they enjoy the events, have fun while participating.

A Local Talent Club event can be organized as a stand-alone event dedicated only to this purpose, or it can be integrated into other city-level events. Under the current circumstances, online events are preferred, but they can be also used in the post-COVID-19 period – particularly when the city intends to address talents living in other part of the country or even abroad.

Some examples of possible events:

- facilitated workshops about youth-related topics and planned local development projects,
- co-creation event to jointly design the local talent attraction and retention strategy,
- cultural or sport events dedicated specifically to talents living or lived in the given city,
- “meet the mayor” and “walk with the mayor” events,
- introduction of successful local entrepreneurs and other interesting personalities (local success stories),
- introduction of large employers, factory visits,
- networking event for talents,
- meetups, engaging presentations related to interesting topics,
- short, practical knowledge-sharing events/training courses.

The following steps have to be taken when organizing a Local Talent Club event.



## 4.2 Preparation

First of all, we have to choose the relevant subject and the ideal type of the event – depending on the number and interest of the target groups to be directly involved. It is also important to define both the date and the venue or the online platform that is suitable for organizing the meeting.

Definitely, the key to a successful Local Talent Club event is a competent and committed team. The composition of the team depends on the type of the event: you might have a chief organizer, one or more on(co-)facilitator(s), a chat moderator, technical supporter(s), and presenter(s) with good presentation skills.

The invitation letter, which includes the detailed program and the link for online registration, has to be sent via e-mail to people who are on the pre-compiled address list. In case of larger and public event, online promotion is also recommended – using social media.

Next step is to create suitable technical circumstances depending on the type of the event, e.g. online platform with the required functions and capacity, appropriate venue and catering if necessary. Before the event, the system needs to be tested in advance to minimize the risk of mistakes. In case of virtual events, it is also advisable to pre-record video presentations.

### 4.3 Delivery

During the event, there are four things to keep in mind:

- declare the agenda, the time limits and the objective of the event,
- introduce briefly the TalentMagnet project,
- engage the participants by making activities interactive and using different co-creation methods,
- document the event properly (see next chapter).

### 4.4 Documentation

Two Local Talent Club events have to be documented during the TalentMagnet project. The following outputs are obligatory for all city partners:

Online event	Offline event
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ invitation and program</li> <li>✓ name of registered people</li> <li>✓ screenshot of the online meeting</li> <li>✓ presentations, results of the event (if relevant)</li> <li>✓ report and feedback (see template in the Annexes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ invitation and program</li> <li>✓ attendance sheet</li> <li>✓ 4-5 photos about all participants</li> <li>✓ presentations, results of the event (if relevant)</li> <li>✓ report and feedback (see template in the Annexes)</li> </ul>

## 5 Annexes – Templates

Sample Excel file to create a database of Local Talent Club	TalentMagnet_D.T2.1.1_LocalTalentClub_database_EN_template.xlsx
Google Forms	<a href="#">TalentMagnet: Local Talent Club database (google.com)</a>
Privacy policy in connection with GDPR	it will be available later on
Attendance sheet	TalentMagnet_D.T2.1.1_LocalTalentClub_list_of_participants_template.docx
Template for invitation	TalentMagnet_D.T2.1.1_LocalTalentClub_invitation_template.docx
Template for report on Local Talent Club events organized by city partners (including feedbacks on the usefulness of the guide)	TalentMagnet_D.T2.1.1_LocalTalentClub_report_template.docx