



MOBILE YOUTH WORK

A journey with Roter Baum from another perspective

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"Outcome of the Erasmus+ Job Shadowing "Artistic Expression to facilitate youth inclusion processes" realised by Igor Arkhypenko in Berlin from 27th August to 10th september 2025

LAYOUT:

Igor Arkhypenko

PROJECT IMPLEMENTED AND COORDINATED BY:

Igor Arkhypenko, Giorgio Micoli, Mario Serrao, Bojan Lacmanovic, Martin Kleinfelder

PROJECT REALISED BY:

ARCI Circolo Territoriale Chieti APS (Italy)
in partnership with Roter Baum Berlin (Germany)

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CONTACTS:

circoloarcichieti@yahoo.it
www.arciyouthlab.eu

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Chieti, November 2025

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INTRO

This job shadowing project was born from the need to keep youth work aligned with the rapid changes of the modern world. In recent years, especially after the pandemic, young people have experienced a significant decline in socialisation, community engagement and sense of belonging. Traditional youth work models had to evolve, and the idea of a mobile youth centre has emerged as a more flexible and meaningful approach for today's realities.

ARCI Chieti, which has long been committed to promoting social inclusion, active citizenship and sustainable development through non-formal education, creativity and international mobility, decided to explore this direction further.

Our historical partner Roter Baum, with its long-standing experience in mobile youth work, naturally became our point of reference and inspiration.

Discovering the work of mobile youth centres in Berlin offered us a new perspective on how innovative practices can be reshaped and adapted to our own territory, strengthening communities and expanding opportunities for young people in our region.

During my stay, I had the opportunity to take part in several meaningful events, including the inauguration of the floating youth centre Käthe, the SLON Festival, and the International Exchange of mobile youth centres from Belgium, Romania, Italy and Germany.

These moments provided not only practical insights, but also a deeper understanding of how mobility, flexibility and creativity can shape youth work in powerful ways.



Roter Baum Berlin

Roter Baum was founded in Dresden in 1993 as a youth association committed to non-formal education, social inclusion and cultural participation, now is active nationally in Saxony and Berlin.

In Berlin it has been active since 2011 as Roter Baum Berlin UG, an organisation managing different spaces and projects for young people.

Its work is rooted in the eastern part of Berlin, especially in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, a district of 270,000 inhabitants characterised by great cultural and social diversity. Once part of the former GDR, this area was originally built as a large socialist housing district and still reflects many of the social and architectural features of that period. After reunification, Marzahn-Hellersdorf went through significant social and economic changes, with higher unemployment rates and fewer opportunities for young people compared to other parts of the city. Today, many families still face economic challenges, and the district is home to a growing number of residents with migrant backgrounds.

Here are the main offices of Roter Baum: the Zentrale and the Anna Landsberger Youth Centre, a creative hotspot for young people. With rehearsal rooms, studios, a café, a sports hall and a large event space, it is more than just a youth centre: it is a community where young people can explore their talents, join workshops and develop new interests, supported by a dedicated team of educators.

Also active in Marzahn-Hellersdorf is the multi-generational house Buntes Haus, which offers activities and support for the entire neighbourhood

Beyond Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Roter Baum is also active in Treptow-Köpenick, Reinickendorf (Frohnau) and Mitte (Wedding). Roter Baum's presence plays a key role in fostering inclusion, participation and a sense of community among young people from very different backgrounds by adapting its youth projects and centres to the needs of the local community.

The most innovative feature of Roter Baum is the use of mobile youth centres: vans, itinerant structures and even a boat, which transform squares and public spaces into places for play, meeting, workshops and creativity. These tools literally bring life into the neighbourhoods, reaching children and young



people who often lack access to extracurricular activities or safe community spaces.

In all of its activities, Roter Baum gives a central role to youth participation and involvement. This is reflected in the budget available in each youth centre, which can be decided only by the young people themselves and used for anything they choose, such as trips, shared activities or new materials for the youth centres.

There is also a small youth action fund, “Jugend.Macht.Ideen”, which allows informal groups to apply for support for their own initiatives.

In addition to the activities of the youth centres, Roter Baum organises and takes part in many international Erasmus+ projects. These initiatives create strong connections with partners across Europe and beyond, increasing the active participation and collaboration of young people in social and intercultural projects and build a stronger sense of community and belonging.

The international focus is also reflected in the team and volunteers of Roter Baum. People from Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Romania, Spain, the USA, Russia, Italy and France work side by side, creating a diverse and welcoming environment where different perspectives and cultures enrich everyday activities.

“One of the highlights of my stay was the inauguration of Käthe, a brand-new youth centre on the water. The boat is more than just a physical space, it represents a new way of bringing creativity and participation to young people in Berlin.”

"I saw the difference between calmer districts and those facing more challenges, and how the mobile youth centre manages to reduce this distance, breaking down barriers between young people."

Mobile youth centers

The job shadowing experience began with participating in the activities of the mobile youth centres. Their first goal is to bring children and young people closer in a natural, non-forced way, giving them the chance to interact with each other while paying attention to discrimination and judgement. In this way, a safe and welcoming space is created.

The variety of activities offered by the mobile youth centres is truly impressive. They range from sports and games such as football, basketball, skateboarding, hula hoop, pogo, table tennis, freestyle scooter, BMX, trampoline, boxing bag, rollerblading, badminton, table football, diabolo, and darts, to games like board games, drawing, Lego, face painting and even PlayStation.

There are also artistic and creative workshops like graffiti, linocut printing, cooking, bracelet making, button making, and more. These activities require more preparation and involvement from the facilitators, but at the same time they are the ones that create the strongest connections among young people. By working closely together, participants learn, share and build meaningful relationships.

Through their constant presence in neighbourhoods, the mobile youth centres create trust and mutual support among young people. This safe relationship not only encourages them to talk openly about personal and social challenges, but also allows the centres to provide valuable information and guidance. Children, adolescents and parents are introduced to local opportunities such as family centres, youth leisure facilities, libraries, sports clubs, holiday programmes and participation structures like the Children's and Youth Office, the Youth Parliament and local Youth Forums.

In this way, the mobile youth centres go beyond play and creativity: they become a bridge connecting young people and families to resources, services and opportunities that strengthen community life.

Another key part of the experience was the **international youth exchange** organised within the Erasmus+ project "Mobile Youth Work."

For one week, mobile youth centres from Belgium, Romania, Italy and Ger-



many gathered in Berlin to share their practices, ideas and ways of working. What made this exchange particularly enriching was discovering how each centre had developed its own approach, shaped by the needs, challenges and cultural background of the community it came from.

The way facilitators interacted with young people also varied: some teams used a more structured and pedagogical style, others a more informal, spontaneous and street-based approach. Seeing these differences up close showed how mobile youth work is not a fixed model, but a flexible method that adapts to the reality of each neighbourhood, city or rural area.

The exchange was not only about observing, but also about collaborating. Participants shared ideas, methods and contacts, creating a network that

goes beyond borders. One of the most inspiring parts of the week was the joint work on the “Dream Mobile Youth Centre”, a collective exercise where all groups imagined and designed what an ideal mobile youth centre could look like. This process helped identify common values, understand different priorities and reflect on how mobility, creativity and inclusion can be combined to reach young people more effectively.

The experience made it clear that, despite the differences in context or approach, all centres share the same mission: creating safe, accessible and meaningful spaces for young people. And by learning from each other, we expand our understanding of what mobile youth work can become.



CONCLUSION

This job shadowing experience with Roter Baum made the value and potential of mobile youth centres particularly clear. Throughout the activities, events and field observations, it became evident that mobility in youth work is not simply an alternative format, but a highly adaptable and effective tool that can respond to different communities, territories and social contexts.

Mobile youth centres show their strength in their flexibility: they can be shaped according to the needs of a neighbourhood, a rural area, or a specific group of young people. They can change their focus depending on the season, local issues or emerging priorities and they can reach those who do not usually access fixed youth facilities. This adaptability makes them a powerful complement to traditional youth centres and a valuable option to consider when creating new spaces or expanding existing services.

This experience has opened new perspectives for ARCI Chieti (Italy). The methods of mobile youth centres developed in a large urban context like Berlin cannot simply be copied, but their principles, such as bringing activities directly to young people, building trust in their own spaces and making opportunities accessible, can be translated into our local context or even to the context of any country.

In Abruzzo, for example, where rural and mountain areas often face geographical isolation, mobile initiatives could help connect young people, respond to their needs and strengthen their bond with the territory. While in Berlin urban culture is expressed through graffiti, hip hop and street activities, in our region outdoor experiences, environmental education, handicraft, art and the promotion of local traditions could serve the same purpose.

The international dimension of the project also highlighted how mobility encourages creativity, cooperation and cultural exchange. Despite differences in approach, each mobile youth centre visited shared the same mission: creating accessible, safe and meaningful spaces for young people.

Overall, this job shadowing confirms that mobile youth work is not only a set of activities but a strategic approach capable of building bridges between people, cultures and generations. It offers a flexible, inclusive and community-rooted model that can inspire innovation both in Berlin and in regions like Abruzzo, supporting youth participation and social cohesion in a rapidly changing world.

MOSTRA FOTOGRAFICA



"MOBILE YOUTH WORK"

Uno sguardo dall'esterno sui centri giovanili mobili a Berlino

by Igor Muvin

27 GIOVEDÌ
NOVEMBRE

Apertura ore 20:00

** in esposizione fino 4/12*

SPRECACÈ

Vico Mercatello 7, Chieti



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MOBILE YOUTH WORK

Uno sguardo dall'esterno sui centri giovanili mobili a Berlino



Nel periodo agosto - settembre 2025 Igor Muvin ha partecipato a un progetto di job shadowing organizzato da ARCI Chieti presso Roter Baum Berlin, un'associazione impegnata nei quartieri della Berlino Est attraverso la mobile youth work. I centri giovanili mobili portano attività, supporto e creatività direttamente nei quartieri più vulnerabili, raggiungendo giovani che spesso non hanno accesso ad altri spazi sicuri.

Questa mostra è un racconto visivo dell'esperienza, un modo per osservare da vicino come la presenza costante sul territorio possa ridurre le distanze tra i diversi quartieri e creare comunità più inclusive. Le fotografie mostrano il lavoro dei centri mobili e il paesaggio urbano della Berlino Est, dove architetture ereditate dalla ex DDR si intrecciano con nuove forme di partecipazione giovanile.

Igor Muvin, fotografo freelance abruzzese di origini ucraine, si sta avvicinando alle tematiche sociali e al lavoro giovanile grazie ai progetti promossi da ARCI Chieti. Questa mostra rappresenta uno dei suoi primi passi in un percorso che unisce immagine, territorio e impegno sociale.

In August - September 2025, Igor Muvin took part in a job-shadowing project organised by ARCI Chieti at Roter Baum Berlin, an association active in the districts of East Berlin through mobile youth work. Mobile youth centres bring activities, support and creativity directly into vulnerable neighbourhoods, reaching young people who often have limited access to safe community spaces.

This exhibition is a visual account of that experience, showing how a consistent presence in the streets and squares can reduce social distance between different areas and help build more inclusive communities. The photographs highlight both the work of the mobile youth centres and the urban landscape of East Berlin, where architecture from the former GDR meets new forms of youth participation.

Igor Muvin, a freelance photographer from Abruzzo with Ukrainian roots, has been approaching social themes and youth work through projects promoted by ARCI Chieti. This exhibition represents one of his first steps in a path that connects image-making, local context and social engagement.

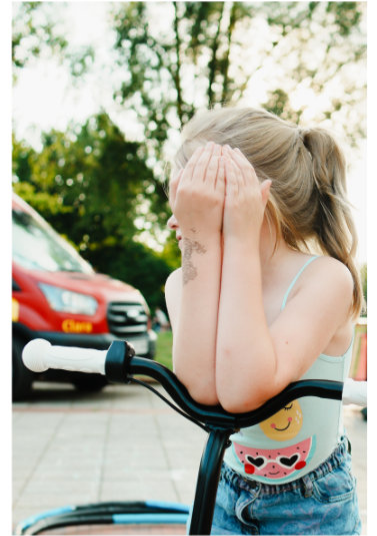
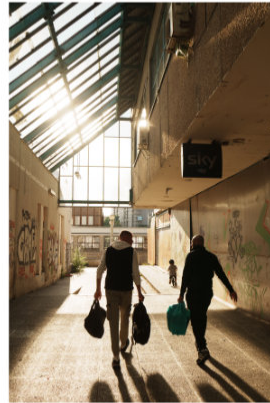


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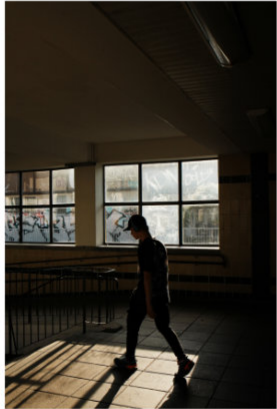
















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