

# HANDBOOK ON QUALITY IN LEARNING MOBILITY

2nd edition



## Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



EUROPEAN UNION

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# HANDBOOK ON QUALITY IN LEARNING MOBILITY

2nd edition

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This publication builds on the first edition of the handbook, by Søren Kristensen, Snežana Bačlija Knoch, Valentin Dupouey and Susana Lafraya, published in 2019.

This handbook was also extensively reviewed and enriched by the members of the Quality Working Group of the European Platform on Learning Mobility in the youth field (EPLM) and the organisations there represented, as well as by its individual members, including Sofie Van Zeebroeck, Snežana Bačlija, Elisa Briga, Safi Sabuni, Tony Geudens and Esmat Elsayed.

Last but not least, we acknowledge all those youth workers, young people, researchers, policy makers, experts and contributors who participated actively during meetings, seminars and other events, as well as online and in written form, in the various phases of the process that led to this handbook, including the work on its first edition. Therefore, we wish to consider this handbook a collective endeavour, resulting from the knowledge, competences and experience of the European youth sector.

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# Preface

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**W**hen the first edition of this handbook was launched in the spring of 2019, it was deliberately presented as a “line drawn in the sand” rather than the ultimate word on the subject. And for a good reason – learning mobility in the field of youth is a living organism that develops and mutates all the time in response to both external and internal factors, and our notion of quality must therefore constantly be adjusted to reflect this.

The major external factor that occurred is undoubtedly the Covid-19 pandemic, which struck less than a year after the launch of the first edition and which made travel impossible almost overnight. Youth mobility suffered grievously during this time but rather than cancelling projects and abandoning dialogue across borders, many organisers turned to technology and set up online encounters between young people from different European countries, and found that many of the learning objectives of physical mobility projects could, in fact, also be achieved via the internet. The situation has since changed and international travel has resumed but “virtual mobility” has remained, both as a supplement to physical mobility and as a phenomenon in its own right. Of course, this new version of the handbook has taken this development on board.

The major internal factor was arguably the realisation, stemming from reactions from stakeholders and practitioners, that the first version of the handbook had perhaps adopted a too instrumental perspective on learning mobility in the field of youth. The reflections on the first edition pointed to the following: not only the engineering aspects of youth mobility count – how to technically achieve learning objectives described in terms of knowledge, skills and competences – but also how youth mobility can promote and reinforce the basic values and attitudes on which Europe has been constructed, notably solidarity, inclusion, democracy and human rights. In other words: quality is not just how you do it but also what it is all about. This value-based (as opposed to instrumental) approach to youth mobility has consequently been made more visible in this revised version – not as grandiose declarations but rather as an underlying trend with a focus on its practical implications.

Two other issues that received attention during the revision process were, in fact, already present in the first version but have been further reinforced. The first issue is environmental sustainability, which has become more present on the policy agenda due to the urgency of climate change. All human activity consumes resources and leaves a carbon footprint but it is becoming an increasingly important quality parameter how to reduce this as much as possible while still undertaking projects that empower young people and instil values and attitudes that lead to a better world. The other issue is the mental health and well-being of participants in youth mobility projects, and the need to provide support to young people during and after mobility activities.

The consideration of these themes and aspects led to the formulation of several new indicators. Yet it had been agreed during the revision process not to expand

the total number of indicators. A critical reading of the 119 indicators in the first edition revealed a number of overlaps and duplications of messages, which allowed for amalgamations to keep the number of indicators in the new version as low as 117. Besides these new indicators and amalgamations of existing ones, the process also consisted of a critical review of the tools and practice examples at the end of each indicator. We thank the European Platform on Learning Mobility in the youth field (EPLM) and the members of the Quality Working Group and Q!App team for their inputs in this regard.

Søren Kristensen (editor-in-chief), Susana Lafraya, Dragan Stanojević

# Introduction

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**L**earning mobility in the field of youth – defined as stays abroad undertaken for a period of time and with a clear educational purpose – refers to the mobility of young people across countries in formal and non-formal learning settings. It takes place within a framework of exchange programmes with the aim to promote and develop personal and professional competences, communication, interpersonal and intercultural skills, and active citizenship, among others. The competences developed by young people taking part in mobility experiences also contribute to the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning, and to the increase of young people’s employability.

Learning mobility in the field of youth has been at the core and an integral feature of European youth policies and practices for a very long time. It is an extremely multifaceted phenomenon, covering many forms of activities and involving a variety of actors and stakeholders. In the youth field, learning mobility generally concerns non-formal learning, that is planned and organised learning taking place outside of formal education systems and curricula. However, the boundaries of learning mobility are fluid and may include diverse activities, such as:

- ▶ short-term encounters between youth groups;
- ▶ long-term residentials in upper secondary general education;
- ▶ international meetings of young people or youth leaders;
- ▶ study sessions, training courses and training of trainers;
- ▶ European Solidarity Corps and other types of national and international mobility of volunteers;
- ▶ mobility of youth workers;
- ▶ so-called work camps (multilateral encounters around a common project);
- ▶ placements in enterprises.

Learning mobility across Europe has been promoted by civil society organisations and political institutions since the end of the Second World War as a means to foster intercultural dialogue and peace. In particular, mobility of young people consisted of international work camps, voluntary activities, school and university exchanges, and mobility of young workers. In the last 40 years, the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) have contributed to the development of these cross-border mobility experiences, both by supporting the organisations already promoting them, and by providing policies and programmes for increasing outreach and quality of youth mobility.

Learning mobility in the field of youth is not dealt with in a full-scale formal convention at European level. So far, the intergovernmental co-operation of the Council of Europe and the legislation of the EU in the field of youth policy have focused on introducing instruments which promote it in a practical sense, such as funding programmes and enhancing co-operation among member states on the topic.

In particular, the Council of Europe had focused on the promotion of mobility for intercultural learning and integration in the wider Europe. In this way, it played an important role in recognising young people's aspirations in central, South-East and eastern Europe, and fostered East-West youth mobility, with new member states from these geographical areas joining in the 1990s and 2000s.

By the end of the 1980s, the EU had established mobility programmes addressing the specific aims of fostering European citizenship and the employability of young people, and member states have adopted several Council recommendations and conclusions to guide the developments of national and European policies in this respect.

The phenomenon of learning mobility in the field of youth has not been systematically measured and studied because of its high level of fragmentation. Given the considerable funds and significant political commitments made to promote youth mobility, the EU and the Council of Europe have also encouraged research and the setting of benchmarks in the field.

Important steps in this direction were made in 2011, when the two institutions, with support of Erasmus+ national agencies and youth organisations, created the European Platform on Learning Mobility in the youth field (EPLM), which was managed by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth from 2014 until the end of 2023 (EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership). This was the first initiative to gather all stakeholders concerned, namely practitioners, researchers, policy makers and young people, to foster dialogue, innovation and evidence-based policy in the area of youth learning mobility.

Since then, several efforts have been made around research on youth learning mobility. The Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility issued in 2011 included the proposal to establish an indicator on youth mobility in general: therefore, indicators were developed and have been included in the statistical part of the EU Youth Report and the Eurobarometer. Moreover, there has been a first attempt to map non-EU-funded mobility programmes (June 2012) and the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership has published several studies – *Learning mobility and non-formal learning in European contexts* and *Learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education*, a dedicated edition of the *Coyote* magazine, and this handbook on quality in learning mobility in the field of youth with accompanying principles, indicators and the Q!App. This was supplemented by additional research of the Youth Partnership since the publication of the first edition of this handbook, to include the social and community impact of youth learning mobility, sustainability and learning mobility, and types of learning mobility – blended, hybrid and online.

Finally, the RAY (Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action) network, an initiative of several Erasmus+ national agencies, provides data related to EU youth mobility programmes and their impact, and the website of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) national policy platforms now offers the Youth Wiki which includes an overview of youth mobility policies in EU countries.

In recent times, learning mobility has received growing recognition as a valuable educational tool. Increasingly, more young people and other actors are getting

involved while more funds are made available for learning mobility projects. While this is a very positive fact which comes as a recognition of the value of learning mobility in the youth field and in non-formal learning contexts, it inevitably brings the issue of quality to the fore. How can we ensure that this investment in learning mobility – in terms of time, effort and money – actually brings about the results that we are aiming for? By trying to answer this crucial question, through a comprehensive set of tools, our ambition is to ensure that quantity of learning mobility activities in the youth field does not come at the detriment of their quality.

Such reflections are particularly, though not exclusively, poignant in connection with activities aimed at inclusion in learning mobility activities of those with fewer opportunities, marginalised people or minority groups. For these participants, more and better organised resources must be allocated, and even more attention paid to achieving a successful and satisfactory experience.



# Institutional context

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## Council of Europe

The Council of Europe was the first international governmental organisation to address learning mobility in the field of youth at the European level in 1956. Youth mobility was included among its major themes when the Council of Europe youth sector started operating. The first initiatives in this field have been the European agreement on travel by young persons on collective passports (1961) and the European agreement on “au pair” placement and protocol thereto (1969). In 1972, the [European Youth Foundation](#) was established to provide financial support for European youth activities promoting peace, understanding and co-operation among young people in Europe.

From the mid-1980s, youth mobility became a permanent item of ministerial conferences and a number of texts covering specific aspects of mobility, such as the mobility of youth workers and local policies to promote mobility, were adopted. In particular, in the 1990s, the Council of Europe made important steps towards the promotion of youth mobility: [Resolution of the Committee of Ministers 91\(20\) instituting a partial agreement on the Youth Card](#) for the purpose of promoting and facilitating youth mobility in Europe, [Recommendation No. R \(95\) 18 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth mobility](#), and [Recommendation No. R \(94\) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the promotion of a voluntary service](#). Several other texts related to the topic of youth exchanges have been adopted by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly from the 1950s to the 1990s.

Since the late 1990s, the role of the Council of Europe has been one of continuing to support member states in youth policy development related to this topic, and support quality international youth work, notably through the European Youth Foundation. More recently, youth mobility has been encouraged in the framework of the [European Convention on the Promotion of a Transnational Long-term Voluntary Service for Young People \(2000\)](#), [Recommendation Rec\(2004\)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of young people in local and regional life](#), where an entire article is dedicated to the role of local and regional authorities in the policy for mobility and exchanges; and in the former Council of Europe youth policy: [Resolution CM/Res\(2008\)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe](#), also known as [AGENDA 2020 \(2008\)](#), and a subsequent youth sector strategy 2030, adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 22 January 2020 ([Resolution CM/Res\(2020\)2 on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030](#)).

Following the economic crisis of 2008, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly issued two documents inviting member states to remove obstacles to mobility as an answer to the crisis and youth unemployment: [Resolution 1828 \(2011\) “Reversing the sharp decline in youth employment”](#) and the [report “The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis” \(2012\)](#).

More recently, in 2017, the Council of Europe adopted two documents which have an influence in the field of learning mobility, namely the [Competence Framework for Democratic Culture](#) and [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 on youth work](#). The framework provides clear guidance to formal education systems on how to develop competences that are the key objective of learning mobility programmes, and therefore can be seen as a useful resource to improve the quality of youth mobility. The Recommendation on youth work aims at providing a standard on how to strengthen the youth work sector, where youth mobility programmes are rooted. The review of the implementation of the Recommendation and its conclusions were endorsed five years after its adoption, at the 49th session of the Joint Council on Youth, noting that, as the first Europe-wide policy document dealing with youth work as such, it has had an important impact as a framework and as guidelines, both in European policy and in some member states, and has contributed significantly to uniting the youth work sector and strengthening co-operation.

Finally, in 2017, the European Steering Committee for Youth has adopted its [self-assessment tool](#) on youth policy, where youth mobility is one of the six major areas of youth policy. This was followed in 2023 by the publication of the self-assessment tool for youth policy – mobility indicators.

## European Union

At the end of the 1980s, the EU started promoting youth exchanges through specific funding programmes such as Erasmus (1987) and Youth for Europe (1988). The implementation of these mobility programmes represents the first initiative of the EU in the youth sector. The Treaty on the European Union signed in Maastricht in 1992 recognised this development in Article 165, section 2, which states that the Community action should also be aimed at “encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors”. Youth mobility became the key feature of the EU youth policy and related funding programmes were developed further: in particular, a great achievement was the launching of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme in 1996.

Following the creation of mobility programmes and the inclusion of youth mobility in EU treaties, several policy documents were issued to facilitate and promote youth learning mobility, such as [Resolution 2000/C 371/03](#) concerning an action plan for mobility and [Recommendation 2001/613/EC](#) on mobility within the EU for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers, whose principles were then included in the [white paper “A new impetus for European youth”](#) (2001). In the white paper, youth mobility emerges as a transversal policy and specific attention is given to the recognition of competences gained through mobility experiences. The white paper was followed by the first [Framework for European co-operation in the youth field](#) in 2002 which was then updated in 2005 to take into account the European Youth Pact where “education, training and mobility” figures as one of its three strands.

In the same period, the [Lisbon Strategy](#) was launched, setting ambitious objectives for education and training in the EU by 2010 and promoting Europe as a world centre of excellence for studies.

Further new initiatives were then undertaken to additionally support learning mobility activities: the creation of a tool for recognition of competences developed through youth mobility projects, namely the [Youthpass](#), the [European Quality Charter for Mobility](#) (2006), the [Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union](#) (November 2008), the [Conclusions of the Council on youth mobility](#) (December 2008) and the green paper “[Promoting the learning mobility of young people](#)” (July 2009).

A number of other milestones were reached in recent years.

- ▶ In 2018, the Council adopted a resolution on the new [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#). The strategy develops its cross-sectoral approach by addressing the needs of young people in other EU policy areas; it includes the [11 Youth Goals](#) developed by young people during the 6th cycle of the Structured Dialogue between the EU and young people.
- ▶ In 2018, Ministers adopted [Conclusions on the role of youth work in the context of migration and refugee matters](#). Based on evidence from the [EU Youth Report 2015](#) and taking into account political developments, national governments were invited, together with the European Commission, to support the integration of young people with a migrant background.
- ▶ On 30 May 2018, the Commission adopted its proposal for the next [Erasmus+ programme](#), with a doubling of the budget to €30 billion for the period 2021-2027.
- ▶ In May 2021, the regulations establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education, training, youth and sport, and the [European Solidarity Corps](#) were adopted. The [DiscoverEU](#) action, providing young people turning 18 the opportunity to travel predominantly by rail, was integrated in Erasmus+ 2021-2027.
- ▶ The announcement of the [European Year of Youth 2022](#) by the Commission President von der Leyen in her 2021 State of the European Union address. In 2022, the European Year of Youth was structured around nine policy areas of special interest to young people: European learning mobility, employment and inclusion, policy dialogues and participation, green, digital, culture, health, well-being and sports, youth and the world and solidarity with Ukraine.
- ▶ The [Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union \(2022/C 157/01\)](#) was adopted on 5 April 2022, replacing the 2008 Council Recommendation. Recognising the key contribution of volunteering to the development of young people’s skills and competences and its role in positively overcoming societal challenges, the Recommendation aims to boost the inclusiveness, quality, recognition and sustainability dimensions of transnational youth volunteering.
- ▶ In 2022, a new initiative called [ALMA](#) (aim, learn, master, achieve) was launched to support cross-border professional mobility for disadvantaged young people.
- ▶ The European Commission work programme for 2023 has strong references to reinforcing learning mobility and envisions the establishment of a new generation of citizens’ panels on learning mobility. In a follow-up to the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#), the Commission organised three citizens’ panels, giving

young people a stronger voice in EU policy making, one of which focused on learning mobility.

- ▶ In November 2023, the Commission adopted the proposal for a [Council Recommendation “Europe on the Move”](#) – learning mobility opportunities for everyone as part of the Talent Mobility package, announcing three new ambitious targets to boost the share of people in the EU benefiting from a learning period abroad.
- ▶ On 10 January 2024, the Commission adopted the [Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022](#) that emphasises key achievements made during the European Year of Youth. The communication outlines future priority actions in the field of youth that are presented under two key policy areas: giving young people a stronger voice in EU policy making and addressing youth concerns across policy areas of relevance to young people.
- ▶ As part of the Commission’s effort to bring the EU close to young people, the [2024 European Youth Week](#) focused on democratic participation and elections, two months ahead of the European elections. The week celebrated and promoted youth engagement, participation and active citizenship through a series of activities all over Europe.

## Quality in mobility

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**E**ven though success rates of mobility programmes are often provided in terms of numbers of participants involved, it is clear that this approach is meaningless in a quality perspective. The fact that 100, 1 000 or even 10 000 young people went abroad is in itself of little importance; what is important is the nature and extent of what they brought home with them in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, and how these acquisitions contribute to the development of communities, societies and individuals. This is the learning potential of mobility.

From evaluations and evaluative research carried out, we know that good quality learning mobility can indeed bring about quality outcomes to individuals, organisations and communities. What they also tell us, however, is that outcomes do not come about by themselves merely as a consequence of being abroad and specific types of mobility are conducive to specific kinds of learning results.

This makes quality in mobility a tricky concept to work with, for it will have many permutations according to the specific aims of the activity, the type of activity in question, the intended target group, and the specific and general context. Most attempts at defining the concept of quality in learning mobility have either become so tied to one particular type of learning mobility that they are difficult to apply to other contexts, or so broad that they are only of very limited practical use, especially for practitioners who approach the field for the first time. An equally serious challenge is that research on learning mobility in the field of youth is still patchy and compartmentalised, which means that efforts often have been based on examples of good practice rather than knowledge extracted from valid research. Their value in other contexts than the one in which they were originally harvested may be questionable.

Ideally, therefore, any attempt to work on quality in youth mobility should involve actors and stakeholders – young people, practitioners, researchers and policy makers – from a very broad field of activities and contexts, and base itself on valid knowledge obtained by pooling and comparing both practical experience and research from all over Europe. This is exactly what we did while preparing a comprehensive set of tools over a period of almost four years for the first edition of the handbook, and then again later for the revised edition.



# The quality framework for learning mobility in the field of youth

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In 2015, the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership launched its work on developing a quality framework for learning mobility in the field of youth within the context of the EPLM, which the Youth Partnership has co-ordinated since 2014. The aim of this endeavour was to reach a clear and shared understanding of what this elusive concept of quality in mobility actually is and to develop concrete guidelines and definitions that can help practitioners across Europe to achieve even higher quality in the projects they are undertaking.

The work was carried out in three phases, each of which ended with a concrete deliverable:

- ▶ A set of **22 quality principles** for mobility, which constitute a tool for reflection to frame the overall discussion of quality in mobility. This revised edition of the handbook does not contain these 22 principles. They are, however, available in the [first edition of the handbook](#) and the [EPLM online library](#).
- ▶ A set of 119 quality indicators (updated to 117 in the second edition) that function as a targeted checklist for practitioners to ensure that learning outcomes of the project, as well as issues linked to inclusion, health and safety for participants, their active participation in the process, etc. are safeguarded.
- ▶ A quality handbook that underpins the principles and indicators with more extensive explanations, and references to relevant resources that provide further information, relevant tools, or examples of implementation in practice.

During the work on the first edition of the handbook, working groups consisting of researchers and experts were set up to elaborate draft versions of the deliverables of this undertaking, then open for comments among the public through an online consultation, and their outputs were subsequently validated by the Steering Group of the EPLM and at European expert seminars. This process – like all previous attempts to come to terms with this issue across geographical, sectoral and organisational boundaries – resulted in protracted discussions and argumentation but it was driven by a clear sense of purpose and strict deadlines, which meant that at the end of the stipulated time frame (April 2019), the quality framework could be presented at the bi-annual conference of the EPLM in Ostend, Belgium.

The ambition behind the quality framework was never one of delivering, once and for all, the ultimate guide for use in a field that is constantly expanding and evolving. Rather, it was one of drawing “a line in the sand”, encapsulating the current knowledge base and making it available to practitioners across Europe so that they are able to exploit this in their activities, rather than wasting precious energy on reinventing the wheel. As such, it was a guide open to revision in the context of new insights

and developments. The work on the revised edition started at the end of 2021 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the use of digital tools and virtual mobility. The Working Group on quality in learning mobility guided this process.

Furthermore, a quality mobility app called Q! App was developed in the framework of the EPLM, in line with the principles for quality in learning mobility. Unlike this handbook, the app follows a project-cycle approach and is therefore very complementary to this handbook. We encourage all users to utilise the app in addition and in connection to this handbook. More information on the app is available at: [www.qualitymobility.app/](http://www.qualitymobility.app/).

# The 117 indicators

The following 117 indicators are an attempt to capture a 360-degree perspective on quality in mobility within the field of youth. They were elaborated by experts on the basis of research, discussions with practitioners and stakeholders within the framework of the EPLM, as well as personal experience.

**Table 1 – Overview of dimensions, sections and indicators**

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
Rationale	Aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are the general aims of the activity rooted in a needs analysis among target group, community and stakeholders?</li> <li>2. Are the general aims specified through concrete objectives?</li> <li>3. Have you discussed the aims and objectives with all actors and stakeholders in advance?</li> <li>4. Have you ensured that the objectives are understood in the same way by all relevant actors?</li> <li>5. Are the objectives designed in a way that makes them measurable so that you can assess outcomes afterwards?</li> <li>6. Do young people take part in the process of defining objectives?</li> <li>7. Is the position of young people in the decision-making process clear?</li> <li>8. Have you considered all aspects of the sustainability of your project?</li> </ol>
Rationale	Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Are the methods tailored to enable the activity to reach its objectives in the most efficient and timely manner?</li> <li>10. Are the methods tailored in accordance with the needs, capacities and skills of the participants?</li> <li>11. Are there feedback mechanisms during the stay that enable team members and participants to adjust (aspects of) methods when needed?</li> <li>12. Are all team members familiar with the methods used or is preparatory training required?</li> <li>13. Do methods enable young people to develop their problem-solving skills?</li> </ol>

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
		14. Do methods involve exposure to – and familiarisation with – people from different backgrounds?
Rationale	Target group	<p>15. Is there a clearly defined target group for the activity?</p> <p>16. Are the aims, objectives and methods designed in accordance with the profile of the target group?</p> <p>17. Are the communication channels used of a nature that will reach all those in the target group, e.g. for recruitment?</p> <p>18. Do any of the participants have special needs?</p>
Organisation	Hosting organisation	<p>19. Does the hosting organisation have the proven capacity to deal with all aspects of the activity for which they are in charge?</p> <p>20. Has the hosting organisation received full information about the exact scope and nature of the activity before consenting to host the participants?</p> <p>21. Have the nature and requirements of the target group been clearly communicated to the hosting organisation, in particular with regard to participants with special needs?</p>
Organisation	Time frame	<p>22. Is the duration of the activity sufficient for the participants to reach the stipulated learning objectives?</p> <p>23. Is the duration of the activity realistic in relation to what participants can handle in terms of absence from home?</p> <p>24. Is there sufficient time available for pre-departure preparation of participants and team members?</p> <p>25. Is there sufficient time allocated after homecoming to discuss about the activity with participants and team members?</p>
Organisation	Programme	<p>26. Has a detailed programme for the activity been developed?</p> <p>27. Has the programme been developed together with the hosting organisation and participants?</p> <p>28. Are the programme activities conducive to reaching the stipulated objectives?</p>

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
		<p>29. Does the programme allow for maximum interaction with the hosting environment?</p> <p>30. Is there an adequate balance between programme activities and free time for the participants?</p>
Organisation	Responsibilities	<p>31. Are responsibilities for all aspects of the programme clearly allocated to specific persons?</p> <p>32. Are the names of these specific persons and responsibilities clearly communicated to all involved, including participants?</p> <p>33. Do the responsible persons have the necessary capacity to deal with issues occurring within their sphere of responsibility?</p>
Organisation	Risk and conflict management	<p>34. Have you analysed beforehand the types of risks, problems and conflicts that may possibly occur?</p> <p>35. Have you developed adequate procedures for dealing with various types of conflicts and other problems, including a contact point and who to address?</p> <p>36. Are participants prepared so that they can act appropriately in the event of problems?</p> <p>37. Do your financial resources allow you to deal with unforeseen costs?</p>
Organisation	Evaluation	<p>38. Have you developed a detailed plan for evaluating the activity and the learning experience of the participants, to assess whether you have reached your aims and objectives?</p> <p>39. Does the evaluation consider not only learning outcomes of participants but also the project's impact on hosting and sending communities, and on your own organisation?</p> <p>40. Does your evaluation plan also include the possibility to identify non-intended outcomes?</p> <p>41. Have all parties agreed on the evaluation plan?</p> <p>42. Have you agreed on who does the evaluation?</p> <p>43. Have you identified what kind of information you need to collect for the evaluation?</p> <p>44. Have you established when – and how – this information has to be collected?</p> <p>45. Have you identified platforms where your evaluation results can be shared with others?</p>

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
Formal framework	Agreements	<p>46. Do you have a clear, written agreement with your main partner(s), setting out the timetable, deliverables, workload, financial arrangements and responsibilities?</p> <p>47. Do you have clear, written agreements with all other actors involved?</p> <p>48. Do you have clear, written agreements with all participants concerning rights and responsibilities, rules of conduct, possible contributions, etc.?</p> <p>49. Do all minors participating in the project have signed permission from their parents/guardians to participate in the activity?</p>
Formal framework	Insurance	<p>50. Are all participants and team members adequately covered by health insurance beyond what is conferred by national schemes?</p> <p>51. Are all participants and team members adequately covered by insurance for accidents and liability, both when involved in project activities and in their spare time?</p> <p>52. Are details about the insurance known to relevant team members, so that they can take appropriate action if needed?</p>
Formal framework	Visa	<p>53. Do any participants require a visa to enter the host country?</p> <p>54. Is it clear who does what and when in relation to obtaining visas and who covers the costs?</p>
Resources	Financing	<p>55. Have you prepared a detailed and comprehensive budget for the activity?</p> <p>56. Is the funding available adequate in the light of the objectives of the activity and the nature of the target group?</p> <p>57. Do you have clear agreements with the funding providers concerning amounts, coverage and situations where funding can be cut?</p> <p>58. Do you have signed agreements or memoranda of understanding with partners, teams and hosting organisation, clearly stating financial details and a timeline of the financing and reimbursement process?</p>

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
		<p>59. Is it clear to participants before departure what financial contributions they need to make (if any)?</p> <p>60. Are participants required to demonstrate their commitment prior to departure?</p>
Resources	Logistical requirements	<p>61. Is adequate physical space available for the whole duration of the activity – not just during the stay abroad but also before (preparation) and after (debriefing)?</p> <p>62. Is the space adequate for the needs of the project in terms of size, natural light, equipment and heating/cooling system?</p> <p>63. Are the physical space and the overall environment suitable for achieving the learning objectives without any obstacles?</p> <p>64. Is the workspace physically accessible to everyone?</p> <p>65. Are all the equipment and materials necessary for the implementation of the activity available beforehand and at the appropriate moments?</p> <p>66. Is adequate accommodation available for participants in line with needs and objectives?</p> <p>67. Are the accommodation and working venues within an appropriate distance of each other?</p> <p>68. Are adequate means of transport available when and where needed?</p> <p>69. Have you developed guidelines to ensure the environmental sustainability of your project?</p>
Resources	Team	<p>70. Is the team selected on the basis of the competences and experience necessary to achieve the objectives?</p> <p>71. Is it necessary to add new members or to offer additional training to fill competence gaps in the team?</p> <p>72. Is there a clear division of workload and responsibilities within the team?</p> <p>73. Is everybody in the team aware of other team members' competences, experience, values and preferred working styles?</p>

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
		<p>74. Is it possible for team members to meet before the activity to get to know each other and prepare details?</p> <p>75. Does the team have knowledge of, and experience with, participative methodologies?</p> <p>76. Are team members aware of the need to minimise and/or compensate the impact of the activities on the environment, and familiar with principles and methods to ensure this?</p>
Participants	Dissemination of information	<p>77. Is information about the activity – including conditions for participation – disseminated to the target group in due time and through adequate channels?</p> <p>78. Is there enough time to promote the activity to all potential participants and motivate them to participate?</p> <p>79. Is the terminology used appropriate for the target group?</p> <p>80. Has the process of advertising the call been monitored with a plan to change the dissemination strategy if needed?</p>
Participants	Selection	<p>81. Is the selection process open and fair?</p> <p>82. Are selection criteria clear and transparent, and set in accordance with the objectives of the activity and the profile of participants?</p> <p>83. Do the selection criteria reflect the diversity of the target group and are they formulated in an inclusive way?</p> <p>84. Is the selection done by more than one person?</p> <p>85. Is the selection process carried out in time for the selected participants to take part in preparation activities?</p> <p>86. Are unsuccessful candidates informed about the reasons for rejection?</p>
Participants	Preparation	<p>87. Are participants fully aware of the objectives and methods of the activity?</p> <p>88. Is practical information about the activity exhaustively communicated to participants?</p>

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
		<p>89. Are participants aware of their responsibilities and obligations?</p> <p>90. Are participants trained in problem solving and conflict management?</p> <p>91. Do the expectations of participants align with the aims and means of the project, as well as conditions in the hosting environment?</p> <p>92. Have participants received adequate linguistic and cultural preparation to facilitate their interaction with the hosting environment?</p> <p>93. Have participants been informed in due time about any preparatory work they need to do?</p> <p>94. Have participants been adequately prepared on how to deal with potential psychological issues arising from their learning mobility experience?</p> <p>95. Are participants instructed on how to minimise the impact of the activity on the environment?</p>
Participants	Accompaniment and support	<p>96. Is adequate (monitoring/mentoring) support available in the hosting environment?</p> <p>97. Are the particular requirements of young people with special needs supported during the activity and are possible extra costs for this covered in the budget?</p> <p>98. Are minors accompanied by an adult or under adult supervision during the activity?</p> <p>99. Are language support and translation services available if and where required?</p> <p>100. Is there an awareness of issues regarding participants' mental health and well-being, and are contingency plans in place in case problems occur?</p>
Participants	The learning process	<p>101. Is there a clear understanding of desired learning processes among both participants and team members?</p> <p>102. Do participants have time to reflect on their learning process before, during and after the activity?</p> <p>103. Is there a plan for how and where the reflection process will take place?</p>

Dimensions	Sections	Indicators
		<p>104. Are adequate facilities available for the reflection process?</p> <p>105. Is the reflection process facilitated and supported by the team before, during and after the activity?</p>
Participants	Debriefing	<p>106. Is a structured debriefing process conducted after the activity?</p> <p>107. Do participants have a chance to meet after the activity to share their experiences and reflections?</p> <p>108. Is the debriefing process supported by the team, considering the needs of individual participants?</p>
Participants	Outcomes and social impact	<p>109. Are individual participant's learning outcomes (intended and unintended) identified and assessed?</p> <p>110. Will participants receive a certificate documenting their learning path and competence development?</p> <p>111. Is guidance available to help participants capitalise on their learning outcomes in their further career trajectory or civic life?</p> <p>112. Will outcomes of the activity be used to develop sending and hosting organisations?</p> <p>113. Will outcomes be used to further improve sending and hosting communities?</p>
Virtual mobility	Points of attention	<p>114. Have the necessary precautions been made to ensure adequate protection of participants?</p> <p>115. Is the necessary equipment available to all participants?</p> <p>116. Is the screen interaction structured, varied and of an appropriate duration?</p> <p>117. Are adequate resources available for monitoring activities?</p>

# The handbook

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**T**his handbook is, in a sense, the crowning achievement of all the work put into the development of the quality framework, and it incorporates the outcomes of both the quality principles and the quality indicators. Concretely, it takes up the 117 indicators and provides more in-depth definitions, descriptions and explanations for each of these, so that practitioners using the list of indicators as a checklist in their project can draw on more extensive information. With approximately one page of text per indicator, it is not really intended for reading in one stretch – the intention is that it is used, in connection with the quality principles and indicators, as some sort of telephone directory where it is possible to look up and get more extensive information on individual indicators – what has also been called a cherry-picking approach.

Here are some further issues to keep in mind when reading the handbook.

- ▶ Intended users of the handbook represent a very large spectrum of practitioners, researchers and policy makers, some of whom have a deep and detailed insight into learning mobility, while others will be hearing about it for the first time.
- ▶ Learning mobility projects come in many varieties, distinguished by, for example, nature of learning objectives, duration, types of target group, choice of methods, mode of organisation, and so on. All these factors may influence how individual indicators are implemented but it is not possible to make allowance for this diversity in the short descriptions here. Readers are therefore asked to make the necessary adaptation to a concrete project themselves.
- ▶ The handbook is a tool for quality assurance and not project management. The main aim is to define and describe in detail the meaning of the concept of quality in learning mobility and to function as a guideline and reference tool in situations where quality is discussed.
- ▶ Quality assurance is something that should be done in the planning phase of a project and the sequence of indicators thus does not follow the logic of project management (before, during and after), as this would indicate that you can distribute your efforts along a timeline. Rather, it follows a thematic structure with overarching dimensions of quality assurance (rationale, organisation, formal framework, resources, participants) of which each are subdivided into a number of sections.
- ▶ Since the indicators represent abstractions of what should be a coherent whole, there will inevitably be overlaps between individual sections and indicators. The ambition, however, has been for each indicator to contain a separate message, so that if an issue contains several messages, these have – for the sake of clarity – been spread over several indicators, even though they may be very close to each other.
- ▶ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it must be kept in mind when using both the indicators and their explanations in the handbook that they – in many cases – represent simplifications of very complex issues that may present

themselves in different forms according to the contexts in which they appear. The handbook should therefore be regarded as a point of departure for reflection rather than a text which contains all the answers. It asks a question: “have you thought of this?”, rather than issuing the prescriptive “do things this way”.

## How to use the handbook

The structure of the handbook follows that of the list of indicators given above. This list has been divided into dimensions and sections that reflect specific aspects of learning mobility activities, and individual indicators have been numbered so that they can be easily identified in a numeric sequence. This means that you do not have to read the entire handbook if you have a specific issue concerning quality in learning mobility. You can skim through the six dimensions and their subdivisions in sections:

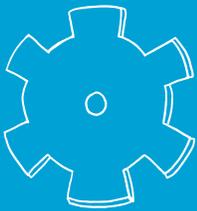
- ▶ **rationale:** aims, methods, target group;
- ▶ **organisation:** hosting organisation, time frame, programme, responsibilities, risk and conflict management, evaluation;
- ▶ **formal framework:** agreements, insurance, visa;
- ▶ **resources:** financing, logistical requirements, team;
- ▶ **participants:** dissemination of information, selection, preparation, accompaniment and support, the learning process, debriefing, outcomes and social impact;
- ▶ **virtual mobility:** points of attention.

You can choose what you are interested in, locate the indicator that reflects your query and read just that.

For many – but not all – indicators, references to one or more resources (publications, websites, examples of good practice, etc.) have been added, where further information or examples of implementation can be found.

We hope you will find this handbook useful.

# DIMENSION – RATIONALE



Section: aims

Section: methods

Section: target group



## Dimension – Rationale

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**W**hy do you want to carry out a learning mobility project? What values do you wish to promote? What methods are you going to use to reach your aims? What is the profile of the participants you would like to involve? How will you ensure that your project is sustainable, both in terms of carbon footprint, societal impact and economy?

### Section: aims



Learning mobility is a common denominator for activities that involve (physical or virtual) stays abroad as an educational tool: activities that are implemented so that participants can reach certain aims which are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. In the handbook, these aims are referred to as learning objectives. Learning objectives are not the same for every project but may be very different according to the needs of the target group and the methods chosen. Often, projects operate not only with one kind of learning objectives but with bundles of objectives. Typically, learning objectives are described under the following headings:

- ▶ European values (promoting active citizenship, democracy and pluralism, inclusion and diversity, human rights, solidarity, etc.);
- ▶ intercultural competences (enabling participants to interact constructively with people with other languages, values and cultural frameworks);
- ▶ personal development (strengthening competences like self-reliance, problem solving, adaptability, flexibility, etc.);
- ▶ societal development (community impact);
- ▶ vocational skills (obtaining knowledge and skills that can be used in a specific work context).

Under each of these groups you may identify dozens or more underlying, separate objectives. This handbook does not target any particular objectives as such but it is predicated on the assumption that projects share the European values as expressed above.

There are eight indicators in this section.



## Indicator 1

*Are the general aims of the activity rooted in a needs analysis among target group, community and stakeholders?*

Many learning mobility projects are initiated by one or more individuals who have a great idea for a project and/or have come across a source of funding. Individual initiative and enthusiasm are important drivers of learning mobility but there is always a risk that tunnel vision sets in and a lot of effort is spent on pursuing an idea that may not necessarily reflect the real wishes and needs of those who are directly concerned – participants, other actors and stakeholders.

At an early stage in the planning phase, it is therefore a good idea to sound the depths of the project environment – notably the target group (young people) but also other actors and stakeholders more indirectly involved (for example, parents and local authorities) – to find out whether the project does indeed respond to real requirements. In other words, you should carry out a needs analysis.

A needs analysis is a way to find out whether an intended activity is really worth carrying out and whether it has the support of those concerned. It basically serves to clarify the following issues.

- ▶ Do the knowledge, skills and attitudes that participants can acquire in the project respond to a real need?
- ▶ What benefits does the project bring to the (sending and hosting) community?
- ▶ Who else may benefit from the project and in what way?
- ▶ Are there other – better, more sustainable and/or cheaper – ways to achieve the same results?

Even though the term may have a somewhat scientific ring to it, a needs analysis is primarily about involving actors and stakeholders in a consultation exercise very early on, and it can be carried out in many ways according to the context. In its most direct form, it may consist of meetings where the idea is presented, and aims and means discussed. Depending on the nature and size of your project, these may be supplemented with – or replaced by – other methods: questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, etc.

A needs analysis is not necessarily a complicated thing to do. You can easily find electronic tools on the internet that are available free of charge and can help you carry out, for example, surveys and analyses. You may also find lots of information on various methods that may be used for needs analyses but there is not one prescribed way of doing these and you will have to adapt them to your specific situation. Before you start, however, check whether something similar has already been done, so that you are not doing double work.

The following two resources are general guidelines for conducting needs analyses. They both refer to larger contexts but they contain much information and inspiration that may be useful for needs analyses carried out in smaller projects.

How to do a needs analysis

Training needs analysis and national training strategies. How to ensure the right training at the right time to the right people?



## Indicator 2

### *Are the general aims specified through concrete objectives?*

Aims and objectives – also known as rationale and learning outcomes – lie at the heart of the quality discussion. Aims reflect the overall strategic goals and values of your project, whereas objectives reflect the steps you need to take to achieve these aims (tactical level). Schemes and programmes promoting learning mobility often explain their aims in broad, overall concepts and terms like intercultural understanding, employability, active citizenship, personal development, etc. Even though we may have a good idea of the meaning of these concepts and terms, they are too vague to provide actors and stakeholders with more than a general sense of direction. To give meaning in the context of a specific project, they therefore need to be translated into concrete objectives that mirror the context. In other words, they need to be made operational.

Let's take a concept like intercultural understanding. It is often explained in terms of the ability to interact constructively with people from another cultural background, but how are participants going to achieve this during a mobility project? To come to grips with this, we need to translate the broad, general aim into smaller, more concrete units – objectives – that can bring about the type of learning that we want and on the basis of which we can construct a more detailed roadmap for the experience.

As an example, we can use the case of a learning mobility project that has as its general aim to develop the intercultural understanding of participants. They will do this by organising a bilateral three-week work camp abroad and they have formulated the following set of concrete objectives that all participants must achieve:

- ▶ participate in a short induction course on language and culture of the host country;
- ▶ participate in a workshop on intercultural learning;
- ▶ learn basic methods of conflict management;
- ▶ stay with a host family for the duration of the period abroad;
- ▶ plan and execute a concrete activity with a peer group from the host country;
- ▶ participate in two excursions that illustrate aspects of the history and culture of the host country;
- ▶ participate in a one-day debriefing session after homecoming.

There is no single, one-size-fits-all solution on how to make general aims operational into concrete objectives. Other projects with the same general aim as the example above may formulate different objectives, extending or shortening the list, depending on their context. Therefore, you always need to formulate your own aims and objectives – only very rarely will you find other projects where you can simply “copy and paste”. The links below provide some resources that can help you in this process.

[T-KIT 14: Value-based learning in mobility projects](#)

[LOOP – Learning outcomes for YFU orientation programs – Implementation manual](#)

[T-KIT 3: Project management](#) (see p. 53)



### Indicator 3

*Have you discussed the aims and objectives with all actors and stakeholders in advance?*

You have translated your general aims into concrete objectives. As part of your quality assurance procedure, you should now double-check with actors and stakeholders, as general statements of intent may look quite different once they have been operationalised into concrete objectives. Having everyone on board with the aims and objectives means that all those involved are moving in the same direction, which significantly increases the likelihood of a good quality project. Also, it means that they take ownership of the project, which may amplify its impact (see, for example, indicators 111-112).

You may already have discussed aims as part of your needs analysis, where you will have been in contact with at least a representative selection of actors and stakeholders. They may – or may not – also have been involved in the process of formulating concrete objectives. If not, you need to go back to the actors and stakeholders, and ensure that they approve of the objectives, in particular if they play an active role in the implementation of the project.

At this stage, you should also consider actors and stakeholders of the organisation or community abroad with which you are partnering in your project. You have already been in contact and discussed your idea(s) with them before, when you were planning the project and searching for partners, and you may already have carried out other projects together in the past. But it is still imperative to check (once again) whether you and they are in alignment concerning the project, now that it has become a lot clearer what it is that you wish to achieve and how they can contribute to this.

*“Cherry on the cake” – Advice for quality planning of youth exchanges*



### Indicator 4

*Have you ensured that the objectives are understood in the same way by all relevant actors and stakeholders?*

This is not really a separate step but merely a reminder for when you are discussing your aims and objectives with actors and stakeholders at home and abroad (see indicator 3) – but it is nevertheless important enough to deserve a specific indicator. Do bear in mind that words and concepts may be understood differently by different people, especially when expressed in a foreign language.

Ideally, you will already have discussed and agreed on objectives with your main partners but in most cases, you as a project organiser will be responsible for writing these up and ensuring that they are brought to the attention of everyone involved. However, circulating a list of objectives with the injunction to speak up if there is something unclear is in itself no guarantee against misunderstandings. Often, we interpret things from our own perspective and get something very different out of it than what was intended by the sender – we think we understand but in reality, we miss the point.

When, for example, we describe target groups, we often talk about disadvantaged young people or young people with fewer opportunities, without really taking into account that there is no absolute definition of these concepts and that their meaning is always contextualised. Even otherwise well-functioning, competent young people may be disadvantaged in specific contexts – they may for instance be temporarily unemployed but still possess a qualification, speak several languages, and be physically and mentally in good health. In other contexts, however, disadvantaged (or with fewer opportunities) can mean that participants experience physical or mental difficulties or possess no qualifications. A shared understanding of the term in the context of a specific project may be absolutely crucial for a successful outcome.

Again, the ways of ensuring that such misunderstandings do not occur need not necessarily be very costly and time-consuming. Written material, followed up by, e.g. a virtual meeting, may often be enough to clear up potential misunderstandings. The important thing is to be aware that this may be a challenge and take the necessary precautions.

TOSCA – Training and support for organisations active in the European Solidarity Corps  
Inclusion A to Z

## Indicator 5



*Are the objectives designed in a way that makes them measurable so that you can assess outcomes afterwards?*

As the organiser of a learning mobility project, you are naturally interested in knowing whether or not participants have reached their learning objectives. So are external funding providers, and therefore grant money therefore usually comes with a requirement to carry out an evaluation regarding the activity. But how do we actually measure success in this respect? The very fact that a group of young people have travelled abroad, spent some time there and returned home safely cannot in itself be a criterion for success. Neither can the fact that participants declare themselves happy and content with their experience abroad. Having a good time is not necessarily the same as learning.

There are many different types of learning objectives that can be acquired during a stay abroad and for some of these it is comparatively easy to assess afterwards – for example, through tests or observations – the extent to which participants have been able to do so. Foreign language proficiency, for example, can be tested both before and after the stay, and progress is easily measured. For other types of learning outcomes, however, it is more difficult. Intercultural competence, for instance, is often given as a learning objective in youth mobility projects but what exactly does this mean and how do you assess whether it has been achieved or not? In the same elusive category we can place many of the learning objectives appearing under the heading personal development or life skills – self-reliance, problem solving, conflict management, flexibility, etc. – not to speak about changes in attitudes related to values.

For these types of learning outcomes, we often do not really have any methods to measure them directly, at least not methods that are easy to use and cost-friendly at the same time. In most cases, you must therefore resort to methods that do this indirectly – namely by developing indicators that are observable and measurable, and at the same time valid (actually relating to the outcome) and reliable (giving an adequate picture). This may sound very scientific but it is in most cases a matter of using common sense. We know, for instance, that the acquisition of intercultural competence depends on the degree and intensity of the contact with young people from the host country and, in general, with young people of different backgrounds, origins, values and world views. If you record the extent to which this has happened in your project by developing one or more indicators for this, you may not be able to conclusively prove the result but you will know something about the extent to which conditions necessary for the learning process have been in place.

It is extremely important to define these indicators before the activity takes place. For one thing, you may need to gather data before departure, so that you can make a comparison with the situation afterwards (baseline). But it is also often the case that the information you need must be collected during the stay and that it is very difficult or even impossible to do so after participants have returned home.

Effects of mobility and how to measure them

Evaluation of international youth exchange programmes – Presenting a new tool in “easy English”

Impact and evaluation



## Indicator 6

*Do young people take part in the process of defining objectives?*

“Nothing about them without them” is an often-repeated adage in youth work. You should try to involve the target group as much as possible in all the processes before, during and after an activity to ensure that their voice is heard and to allow them to develop a sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the project. In some projects, the initiative has come directly from young people themselves, and it is based on a clear perception of why they are doing it and what they want to achieve. In other cases, however, the initiative comes from elsewhere – from youth workers, from the community – and here it is necessary to make efforts to ensure that the participants actually accept and take ownership of the rationale of the project.

There are two good reasons why involving young people in the process of defining learning objectives contributes to the quality of a mobility project. First of all, your diagnosis of learning needs may be grounded in very thorough analyses of their situation but at the end of the day, they are the ones it is all about, and they may have different ideas of what they need and what is realistic to achieve. Involving them at the very beginning in discussions about aims and rationale may both enlarge the scope of the project and increase the possibilities of a successful outcome.

Secondly, many learning objectives depend for their success on specific behavioural patterns of young people during the stay. Again, we may use the example of intercultural competence: we know from research that it is a requirement for acquiring intercultural competence that participants have real interaction with their counterparts in the hosting environment. It is not going to happen if they just hang around with other members of their group (in group exchanges) or are in constant contact with their friends and family at home via social media to the extent that they are unable to develop relationships with people around them. A successful learning process therefore requires them to be open and outgoing, and this is so much more likely to happen if they see the reason for this – when they have taken ownership of this particular learning objective. Defining learning objectives together with young people thus becomes a crucial part of the preparation phase.

### Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

“Have your say” – Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

## Indicator 7



### *Is the position of young people in the decision-making process clear?*

Actual levels of influence of young people on an activity and its implementation may differ widely according to context. Some projects are conceived and largely run by young people themselves; in others, it is part of the learning objectives that their decision-making skills and ability to participate in open, democratic processes are developed through participation and in such cases the level of influence is equally high. On the other hand, we find projects involving very fragile target groups, where too much responsibility risks turning into a stress factor and where organisers consequently are in charge of most decision making for all important aspects. Also, there are projects that come as a package (for example, the activities organised by many exchange organisations), where the overall framework is already in place and where possibilities to influence this – other than by saying yes or no to the offer or choosing between a predefined range of possibilities – are limited.

In a quality context, it is thus impossible to give any hard-and-fast rules about young people's levels of influence in learning mobility projects, as this is very context dependent. Quality generally improves, however, when participants are taking ownership of the project and its objectives. Being part of the decision-making process is a very effective way of ensuring that – but not necessarily the only one. You as an organiser must, however, be very clear about what role young people play from early on and make sure that this is properly understood. When you involve them, is it as a consultation (where you ask them about their opinion but retain the final decision-making powers) or are you prepared to let them participate in the actual decision making? What are the aspects they can influence and what is given from the beginning? This is not necessarily concerned with big decisions – even having an influence on minor issues may induce feelings of ownership towards the project as a whole.

As an organiser, you need to reflect on this before you start developing the project, as it will cause counterproductive frustration among participants if they believe that they have a say and afterwards find out that this is not the case.

Examples of how to involve young people in all phases of a youth mobility project



## Indicator 8

*Have you considered all aspects of the sustainability of your project?*

The term sustainability is often used in learning mobility projects and as a rule it refers to efforts made to ensure that these projects leave as little a carbon footprint as possible on the environment. It may seem ironic to talk about environmental sustainability in connection with an activity that is based on one of the biggest carbon discharging factors of all, namely international travel. Yet the outcomes of a learning mobility project in terms of participants' acquisition of values and attitudes – including increased environmental consciousness – may in the bigger picture easily outweigh the negative effects, also when viewed exclusively from a climate perspective. Nevertheless, you should as an organiser initially always ask yourself whether the aims you are pursuing with your project could be achieved in other, less polluting ways, e.g. through virtual mobility. But if you go ahead, you should be as attentive as possible to this issue and ensure that all activities – and not just travel – are conducted in ways that reduce the impact on the environment as much as possible.

Sustainability does not only refer to the environment, however. It is also commonly used to denote other aspects which you should consider in the planning phase of your project. Whereas environmental sustainability refers to the climate, social sustainability refers to the impact your project has on human beings and on society as a whole – namely how it can contribute to upholding and developing issues like human rights, equity, cohesion, diversity, democratic participation, mental health and well-being, and many other things vital to our concept of societal life. Learning mobility as it is perceived in this handbook is about bigger things than young people going abroad, having a good experience and picking up some practical skills. This has very direct consequences for how you recruit participants, involve them in decision-making processes and organise their encounters with peer groups in the partner country (or countries), etc.

Finally, there is also an economic aspect of sustainability. Most learning mobility projects are organised on the basis of financial grants from programmes set up by national, international or supranational entities but even though budgets have generally increased over the past decades, they still cover only a tiny fraction of all young people in Europe that could potentially participate in learning mobility projects. If we want to be more inclusive and extend opportunities to more young people, we should therefore also be thinking in terms of economic sustainability – how can we develop models of learning mobility that can be implemented without (or with reduced) grants, and/or be inventive and identify alternative funding sources – so that capacities can be expanded. You cannot expect all your grant applications to

be successful, so if you want to integrate learning mobility as a recurring activity in your organisation, it may be a good idea to always think along the lines of economic sustainability when implementing your projects.

Sustainability in learning mobility: exploratory study

T-KIT 13 – Sustainability and youth work

Let's co-operate 2.0 – The way for an inclusive and sustainable society

## Section: methods



There is a very close connection between the aims of your project and the methods you choose. It is not a case of one-size-fits-all – particular methods are more suited to achieve particular outcomes than others, and you must reflect carefully on what methods you choose on the basis of your learning objectives and target group. Methods may differ according to a number of factors, for example:

- ▶ **duration:** how long is the stay?
- ▶ **mode of sending:** are participants going out individually or in a group?
- ▶ **accommodation:** home-stay with a family or a youth hostel?
- ▶ **mode of activity:** work camp, placement, residential, virtual, etc.?
- ▶ **degree of immersion:** how close are they to peer groups abroad?
- ▶ **accompaniment:** are participants accompanied by a teacher or youth worker or sent out on their own?

The choice of preparation and debriefing activities is also a methodological question based on the nature of the learning objectives and the profile of the target group.

There are six indicators in this section.

### Indicator 9



*Are the methods tailored to enable the activity to reach its objectives in the most efficient and timely manner?*

Learning in a mobility project does not necessarily come all by itself – it must be facilitated. Before implementing your project, you must decide which methods you will use to help you develop learning processes, and organise learning spaces and situations.

A method is a pedagogical tool you use to reach your learning objectives and they come in many different forms: simulation games, role play, brainstorming, icebreakers, open space, buzz groups, excursions, workshops, self-reflection, video-forum, theatre games, etc. All of these are examples of non-formal education methods which you can use in the various phases of your project – before, during and after learning mobility.

During a project's lifetime, you are likely to use more than one method, as methods that are helpful in the preparation phase may not be productive, for example, in stimulating the reflection processes of participants in the debriefing phase. Methods may be simple instruments – for example, organising an excursion to enable participants

to see and experience a site or a phenomenon – but they can also be sophisticated and complex, and require specific expertise and supporting material to use. You may invent your own methods and develop your own material but it is always a good idea to look around and see what others in a similar project context have done, as you may find valuable inspiration and useful material there.

Below, you can find examples of toolboxes which contain literally thousands of different methods and resources to choose from. It can be bewildering with such a variety but all the toolboxes mentioned contain navigation features that help you search for the tools that may apply in your specific context. You should not use these uncritically, however, as many are developed in specific contexts or require specific expertise to implement. Any methods you choose must relate to the objectives and values of your project, and they need to be selected and adapted according to the different situations or phases in which they are used, the characteristics of your target group, your available time and resources, and the experience of your team.

Remember that if you develop your own methods and/or supporting material and you find that they work, they may also be useful to others who are doing something similar to what you have done. Some of the toolboxes below offer the opportunity to submit and share methods and material.

[Toolbox for youth work and training activities](#)

[Handling complexity in a learning group](#)

Examples of group activities, games, exercises and initiatives: [www.seedsforchange.org.uk/resources](http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/resources) and [www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org)



## Indicator 10

*Are the methods tailored in accordance with the needs, capacities and skills of the participants?*

Not everybody learns in the same way and each target group or individual has different ways of tackling learning. These are called learning styles and any pedagogical methods you use should be chosen in accordance with the learning style(s) that work for the people concerned. Note that learning styles are preferences and are not mutually exclusive. A person or a group may learn using different styles but they usually have one or two ways of learning that suit them best.

There are different models of understanding learning styles and the learning process, and they have slightly different perspectives, foci and vocabulary. They may, however, all be helpful as long as you treat them as reflection tools to guide your selection of methods. One example (remember, there are others) is the VARK model.

The VARK model helps to distinguish between learners and learning styles by describing four different learning styles: visual, auditory, read/write and kinaesthetic. Nobody uses purely one. We use them in combinations but we all have one as our primary learning style. They all require different methods:

- ▶ **visual learning:** provide pictures, cartoons, use maps, show a film or video, write or draw on a flip chart, use graphic organisers to access new information, demonstrate a task they can see, etc.

- ▶ **auditory learning:** promote listening and speaking, group discussions and talks, lectures, use music, poetry, read information aloud, use mnemonic devices, silence, etc.
- ▶ **read/write learning:** use text-based methods – reading and writing in all its forms; for example, manuals, reports, essays and assignments.
- ▶ **kinaesthetic learning:** use movement in the activities, active games, role play, change seats, use the tactile sense, the hands for doing things, use emotional connections, exercises with adventure, smell, taste, etc.

Whichever approach you choose, it might be helpful to reflect on your own preferred learning style(s), since they are very likely to influence your choice of methods. Being aware of that and making a conscious effort to select methods that would work for other learning preferences as well is an important way to ensure favourable learning conditions for different young people.

The VARK questionnaire: [how do you learn best?](#)

[Handbook for facilitators – Learning to learn in practice](#)

## Indicator 11



*Are there feedback mechanisms during the stay that enable team members and participants to adjust (aspects of) methods when needed?*

It is important to reflect on learning mobility experiences, learning processes and methods, not just at the end of the project but also during its lifetime when you can still change things and replace methods that are not producing results of the expected quality. As part of your project set-up, you therefore need to establish feedback mechanisms that enable you to detect any problems occurring during the project and take action to bring your ship back on course.

We can use different types of mechanisms during the stay to adjust methods. We can do it at the end of each activity, at the end of each day or week, or on an ongoing basis (for example, via project websites or social media). We can do it individually, in couples, or in smaller or bigger groups. We can do it with the responsible tutor/mentor in the project, with the team members, or without these. We can designate recurrent time slots for feedback or we can do it at irregular intervals. It all depends on your situation – the methods you use, the time you have, the resources you put into it. The main thing is that it is done.

Typical issues to be addressed during these feedback sessions are: how are things progressing? Are we reaching the planned objectives or others we did not even think about? Are the methods helping the learning process? Are they really suited to the needs, capacities and skills of the participants? Is there anything we need to improve? Which aspects work and which do not? What relevant information do we need to take into consideration for the next step or activity? Is the distribution of tasks among team members the most adequate to achieving the objectives?

Giving and receiving feedback can be a delicate process, which should be carried out at an appropriate time and in an appropriate manner. It is important to create a

safe and confidential atmosphere, where participants feel free to say what they think and come up with suggestions for improvement without feeling intimidated. It is a skill you can train and below you will find some resources that may help you do this.

Feedback sessions are, incidentally, important, not only to improve and possibly replace methods that do not function quite as planned. They also give participants a feeling of being involved and taken seriously and because of this stimulate their sense of ownership of the project.

[How to give and receive feedback at work: the psychology of criticism](#)

[Five steps for giving productive feedback](#)



## Indicator 12

*Are all team members familiar with the methods used or is preparatory training required?*

When you choose a method, it is because you think it is the best one to achieve your aims, and you want to make the most of its learning potential and use it in the best way. For this reason, it is essential that all team members (co-ordinators, trainers, facilitators) have experienced the method before, or have detailed knowledge of its educative use to prevent unexpected or unpleasant effects on the team as well as on the participants. Some methods are relatively simple, but others can be complicated to use. In case neither you nor any of your team members know how to apply a method, it is essential to familiarise yourself with the tool before implementing it in the project. You should therefore run a preliminary training session and possibly invite an expert to share their knowledge with your team before carrying out the mobility project (and even assist you during the mobility project, if needed). Team members should feel convinced and comfortable with the method, and confident in their capability to work with it.

For instance, if you are going to create an activity by means of the “human library method” and not all team members are familiar with this method, it is helpful to organise a training activity beforehand. At the same time, you can elaborate didactic material to easily describe how the method works; make a dossier with information on previous experiences with young people and recommend some videos; hold a practical session in which they can be the main characters and, later, evaluate the possibilities and risks of the method. Besides, it will give you clues on the distribution of tasks according to their capacities or interest in the method and on the strategy for debriefing and feedback.

You could also attend one of the training courses organised by SALTO-YOUTH and below you can find a list of experts that may help you.

[T-KIT 6 – Training essentials](#)

[T-KIT 11 – Mosaic: the training kit for Euro-Mediterranean youth work](#)

[Non-formal learning handbook for volunteers and volunteering organisations](#)

[The European training calendar](#)

[TOY – Trainers online for youth](#)

## Indicator 13



### *Do methods enable young people to develop their problem-solving skills?*

Quality mobility experiences need to be responsive to the fast changes we are living with and to the wider world. Therefore, it is important to work with young people on developing their problem-solving skills, not only to solve a particular problem in an effective and timely manner but also to learn how to identify and overcome different types of problems, obstacles or situations they will experience throughout their lives. They should be trained on how to generate and implement alternative solutions and gain the self-confidence to do so.

Non-formal education methods provide young people with new opportunities for active, critical and participative learning, and enable them to overcome different types of barriers: language barriers, mental barriers as prejudices or stereotypes, problematic or uncertain situations and leaving their own comfort zone. You may already have experienced the power of non-formal methods to change lives, attitudes and ways of seeing the world or understand relationships.

All non-formal methods to develop problem-solving skills should therefore focus on involving participants in a variety of situations where they can identify, analyse, evaluate and reflect around problems and their solutions in practice.

This could be done by different methods adapted to the learning needs of the person and/or the group, their motivations and expectations, learning styles, the objectives of the project and your experience with the method. You can work for a short or extended period of time researching and giving answers to an authentic, engaging and complex problem or challenge, or an easy one, combining creative problem solving with reflection in action. You can choose certain actions, experiencing their consequences throughout the activity, in order to achieve the goal.

When you choose, adapt or create a learning method to develop problem-solving skills, it is important to think of three dimensions:

- ▶ **personal dimension:** the method should be oriented to develop self-awareness and regulation, physical, emotional and mental well-being, etc.
- ▶ **social dimension:** covering interpersonal interactions, inclusion, communication, negotiation, working with others, co-operation and teamwork, empathy, creativity, etc.
- ▶ **learning dimension:** developing lifelong learning strategies as a process of continuous learning for responsible decision making, dealing with uncertainty and complexity, gaining critical thinking and resilience, etc.

[Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning](#)

[Learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education. Access, processes and outcomes](#)

[Learning to learn: what is it and can it be measured?](#)



## Indicator 14

### *Do methods involve exposure to – and familiarisation with – people from different backgrounds?*

In quality mobility projects, you need to prepare young people for intercultural meetings to promote respect for cultural otherness, beliefs and practices, improve different understandings of cultures and world views, and encourage curiosity and critical effort to understand the complexity of the world, diversity and human rights values, to prevent culture shock and promote cultural adaptation.

Mobility provides opportunities for young people to interact in different social contexts, with international peers, families and local groups. It is a way to learn about society, from others and about other cultures. Research tells us that one of the most powerful benefits of mobility experiences for young people is the development of and the increase in communication skills, sensitivity to different cultures, flexibility and resilience, and the acquisition of the ability to adjust to new situations and people.

When you use a non-formal method to promote exposure to and familiarisation with people from different backgrounds, you are working in this sense and promoting an inclusive society. You are making it possible to learn, explore, experience and create with people of different geographical origin, gender, generation, religion, class, other capacities or disabilities, employed or unemployed, and so on.

When you choose, adapt and create non-formal methods for active learning, you need to think carefully about the characteristics of your participants and adapt methods according to this. You cannot necessarily “cut and paste” non-formal methods from one target group to another. You need to reflect on the diversity of your target group, including vulnerable and excluded young people, and decide on the most effective strategy to expose and familiarise them with different situations and realities with open-minded attitudes and by promoting positive relationships.

Remember that you, as practitioner, create the conditions for the learning process and spaces for sharing experiences, help participants to understand the experiences that people from other backgrounds are living with using an inclusion and diversity approach, and try to transform established relationships between people in society.

[Guidelines for intercultural dialogue in non-formal learning/education activities](#)

[T-KIT 4 – Intercultural learning](#)

[Inclusion and diversity strategy 2021-2027](#)

[Handbook on intercultural citizenship in the Euro-Mediterranean region](#)



### **Section: target group**

The nature (and the needs) of the target group is one of the factors that decides on the type of learning objectives and the choice of methods. You should therefore have a very clear idea, as organiser, of whom you are involving as participants in the project. Establishing a clear profile of participants should be your very first concern in the conception phase. In some projects, the participant profile is given from the

start if the project is initiated by a particular group of young people (for instance, the members of a youth club) but in others, participants are recruited after the project has been conceived. No matter what the situation is in your case, the process is the same.

Inclusion is an important issue in relation to participants. You should try to reach out to all those to whom such an experience would make a real difference and be careful not to exclude young people with fewer opportunities or special needs.

There are four indicators in this section.

## Indicator 15



### *Is there a clearly defined target group for the activity?*

Some learning mobility projects are, so to speak, born with participants, in particular those where the initiative emanates from, or is developed together with, young people themselves. In these projects, the profile of the target group is clear from the beginning and the project can be built up around this. At other times, however, the project starts off as a brilliant idea that suddenly pops up in your head, or as an irresistible opportunity presenting itself – a source of funding that appears, or a youth organisation from abroad that approaches you with a desire to do an exchange. Here, the project outline is defined first, and participants are recruited and selected later. In these cases, as one of your first considerations, it is essential to establish a clear profile of the type of participants you wish to involve.

This profile serves as a guideline not just in the recruitment process but for the entire way in which you build up your project, as there has to be a match between the needs and wishes of participants and the project's objectives, resources and conditions. There are untold variations of target group profiles depending on your project set-up and the following are just aspects or points for reflection you can use to start off the process.

- ▶ **Age:** what age bracket do you want the participants to be in? What age are their counterparts in the hosting country they will be interacting with? Is the project of a nature that makes it necessary for participants to be of age (over 18)?
- ▶ **Gender:** do you aim for an equal distribution of male and female participants? Or, for example, do hosting conditions impose any specific distribution of sexes in the project? And what about people who do not see themselves as belonging to any of these two sexes?
- ▶ **Skill levels:** do participants need to possess any specific knowledge, skills and competences to take part in the activities, for example a certain level of foreign language skills, proficiency in an activity, trade or line of sports?
- ▶ **Lifestyles:** is the hosting environment also geared to cater for the needs of, for example, vegans and vegetarians? Are there elements in the hosting environment that may make it difficult for people with special lifestyles to participate in the project?
- ▶ **Independence and self-reliance:** will participants be on their own or will they be in a group? Are they required to handle day-to-day problems themselves, or is there extensive monitoring, for example by accompanying adults?

- ▶ **Physical and mental abilities:** for example, do travel arrangements, planned activities, conditions in the hosting environment or project funds in any way exclude people with physical or mental limitations, including allergies?
- ▶ **Own resources:** do participants need to contribute financially to the project from their own funds, or are they in any other ways required to provide resources to the project (e.g. by offering home-stays to foreign participants on the return visit in exchange projects)?

### Working with specific target groups

### Implementation guidelines – Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps inclusion and diversity strategy



## Indicator 16

### *Are the aims, objectives and methods designed in accordance with the profile of the target group?*

Just as there are many reasons for doing a learning mobility project, there are also many ways in which you can go about organising it. Purely from a quality perspective, it is not really possible to say that one set of objectives or one way of organising a learning mobility experience is better than the other – what does constitute a vital quality criterion, however, is that there is a close match between all the elements in it: objectives, methods, resources and the profile of the target group. Key here are the participants, for if they come back without any learning outcomes, then the whole experience is wasted, even though they may all have returned safe and sound, and having had a good time.

In the majority of cases, external factors limit the range of choices you can make to fit the profile of the target group with the objectives and methods. Mobility programmes may dictate specific types of learning outcomes, and the funding available may place restrictions on how long you can be away as well as on your options for travel, accommodation and activities. Also, the hosting environment may have limited capacities, which narrow the range of possibilities you have when organising the stay. As a rule, however, you will be able to choose or at least influence important parameters of your project and here it is vital that you base your decisions on a clear perception of whom your target group is – what is realistic to achieve and how this is done most effectively. It is not a case of one-size-fits-all. Methods that may work superbly with one type of participants may fail miserably with another. Especially when dealing with more fragile target groups (young people with fewer opportunities), you have to think very carefully about what methods to choose. It is not rocket science though – in most cases, applying common sense is enough. Often, however, you may receive valuable knowledge and inspiration for your reflection process from the experiences of others. Here are some factors you may want to include:

- ▶ **learning objectives:** what is realistic to achieve, given the nature of the target group and the conditions you work under? And how are activities conducive to reaching the stipulated objectives?
- ▶ **mode:** physical, blended, hybrid or virtual mobility?

- ▶ **duration:** the longer the stay, the bigger the potential impact on participants – but how long can participants be away from home before being overwhelmed by homesickness?
- ▶ **Accommodation:** home-stays arguably provide a more intense cultural experience but gathering participants in a hostel makes supervision easier.
- ▶ **Individual trajectories v. group dynamics:** participants on their own are potentially more open to immersion in the culture and norms of the host country but for some this is a cause for anxiety and they need the comfort of being with a group.
- ▶ **Monitoring v. accompaniment:** is it necessary to send an accompanying person (youth worker, teacher, etc.) with the group? Or is it enough to have a contact person they can call if they encounter problems they are unable to tackle on their own?

Embracing diversity – A guide to diversity management for organisations active in intercultural youth work

## Indicator 17

*Are the communication channels used of a nature that will reach all those in the target group, e.g. for recruitment?*



Once you have identified your prospective participants, it is important to establish communication channels so that you can get in contact with them before, during and after the stay abroad. Given that most young people today possess smartphones that they check at very frequent intervals, this is usually not really a problem, since they allow for contact through telephone conversations, e-mails and social media – alone or in combination. Gathering telephone and e-mailing lists, setting up a group on social media and/or creating a dedicated website is by now standard procedure in most projects. The only snag may occur in places where connection is poor (for example, in remote, rural areas) or where no Wi-Fi is available (which may make communication through websites and social media expensive). You will therefore need to check this beforehand (for example, with your partner in the host country) and plan accordingly. Make sure your data compilation complies with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules.

The major challenge with communication channels, however, occurs in the recruitment phase. If you recruit from a closed group – for example, members of a youth club or organisation – there will usually be established channels or methods you can use and it may be as simple as putting up a poster on the noticeboard in your club premises or sending an e-mail. However, if you recruit from a broader circle and target young people you do not know yet, the choice of communication channel(s) becomes crucial if you want to ensure that all those who may benefit from such an experience also become aware of it and are given the possibility of signing up before the deadline. Here, you may want to develop a more sophisticated strategy for getting the message across – one which ensures that all of those for whom this is relevant stand a reasonable chance of receiving the information.

Usually, this means adopting not one but several communication channels. Getting an article in a local/regional newspaper or magazine is fine but not everybody reads newspapers; and similarly, not everybody watches local/regional television. You need to reflect on which media – or which institutions – may be used as multipliers for spreading information to all potential participants and what you need to do to enrol them in the efforts. Educational establishments (schools) may offer a great platform for this but your target group may be in the age range where many have already left school. Libraries and youth centres are other possibilities, but it is hard to give more concrete advice on this at a general level – it is a matter of knowing the profile as well as haunts and media habits of your target group, and then using your creativity.

The consequences of not doing so may be that you are not able to involve those to whom your activity would be most beneficial – or you may ultimately have to cancel your project because you are not able to find enough participants.

### General Data Protection Regulation



## Indicator 18

### *Do any of the participants have special needs?*

You may already have known your participants for a long time and have extensive information about their personal history and backgrounds, or you may encounter them for the first time during the selection interviews. Whatever the relationship, however, you must be sure that you have – or else obtain – information about any special needs (for example in relation to nutrition, physical mobility or mental health) they may have which can influence their experience and which require particular attention by organisers and hosts.

In some cases, this is very straightforward and may be obtained simply by having participants tick a box in a questionnaire, possibly adding a line or two with additional information – for example, for dietary requirements, allergies and most physical and medical conditions. Other areas are more sensitive and applicants/participants may not want to talk about them – this goes for mental health issues or lifestyles, for example. In the latter case, it is up to you to decide whether it is an issue of “need to know” or “nice to know”.

This is not necessarily about in or out, about inclusion or exclusion but also about showing due diligence and being able to take measures to ensure that these participants may participate and return with a positive outcome. Some types of mobility projects are simply not suited for people with specific conditions, in others they may participate with great success if the necessary measures have been implemented to ensure their well-being.

During the selection or preparation phase, you may consider the following issues, always keeping in mind that this may be sensitive information, which should be restricted exclusively to those directly concerned.

- ▶ Do any participants have special dietary requirements (e.g. vegans, vegetarians, halal, kosher)?

- ▶ Do any participants suffer from allergies (both food and non-food) that require specific measures in the hosting environment?
- ▶ Do any participants have medical conditions (e.g. a need for regular medication) that may influence their participation?
- ▶ Do any participants have physical conditions (temporary or permanent) that may impede their mobility or otherwise affect their well-being during the stay?
- ▶ Do any participants have mental health issues (e.g. anxiety disorders, depression) that may influence participation?
- ▶ Do any participants have a special lifestyle or background that may cause conflict or tensions in the hosting environment?

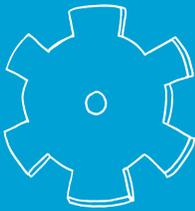
Including young people with disabilities

Engage in inclusion!

Mental health in youth work



# DIMENSION – ORGANISATION



Section: hosting organisation

Section: time frame

Section: programme

Section: responsibilities

Section: risk and conflict management

Section: evaluation



# Dimension – Organisation

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**W**ho are your partners abroad? What are your deadlines? What kind of activities have you planned for the participants? Who is in charge of what? What are you going to do if things take a wrong turn? How will you find out whether your project was a success and how are you going to convey your experiences to other organisers so that they can benefit from them?

## Section: hosting organisation



The indicators under this heading are concerned with the people at the other end – your partners abroad, whether they will be hosting or sending (or both). For partners you know well from previous activities and with whom you have a proven track record, you have probably already developed measures to deal with the issues covered by the indicators in this section. Therefore, these indicators are particularly important when you involve new organisations in the host country with which you have not worked before.

In most cases, “host” and “partner” are the same – namely the organisation with which you have agreed to carry out the project is also the one that will be directly involved with your participants once they arrive. It need not always be the case, however, as sometimes you will make the formal arrangements with one organisation or institution (a so-called intermediary partner), whereas the actual hosting will be done by one or more other entities. What we are concerned with here applies to either case but in the latter, you need to take measures to ensure that somehow all those involved in a hosting capacity are properly implicated.

There are three indicators in this section.

### Indicator 19



*Does the hosting organisation have the proven capacity to deal with all aspects of the activity for which they are in charge?*

How well do you know the hosting organisation(s) you will be working with in your learning mobility project? Have you done projects with them before or paid them a preparatory visit to make all the necessary arrangements on-site? Or is it the first time that you will be working with them, and do you only know them from telephone conversations and their website?

Ideally, you will know your partners abroad from previous projects or visits, so that you have a first-hand impression of their abilities and capacities. In many mobility schemes, it is possible to apply for funding for preparatory visits for projects with new partners or new types of activities and if this applies in your case, you should definitely try to exploit this opportunity. You will be able to inspect their facilities

and check whether they live up to your requirements, and you will take back valuable information and documentation you can use in the preparation process with the participants. Before going, make a list of all the things you want to check and make sure that you get to see it all. If qualifications and experience of local staff are essential, make sure that you get to talk to them, and, if needed, get information about their competence profiles.

No matter how careful an inspection you undertake, however, there will always be issues that somehow elude control. If, for instance, your mobility project involves placements in enterprises as part of the stay abroad, it is often not possible to identify these before they have the precise profile of individual participants. Also, if the project involves home-stays, you will in many cases not be able to check out every single family in advance. Here, you simply have to trust that your partner will do the job (and do it well). Trust is often a matter of personal relations; which is another reason why it is beneficial to have an on-site face-to-face meeting.

If you are not able to go on a preparatory visit and it is a partner you are working with for the first time, it is a good idea to take references from other organisations or institutions they have been involved with previously. These may be able to give useful supplementary information in addition to what you have already received from your prospective partner, and crucially, they may be able to tell you about any problems or shortcomings they experienced in the collaboration. Often you can find details about these organisations on your partner's website. In some cases, your Erasmus+ national agency may be able to give you information about other organisations in your country that have worked with this partner in the past.

T-KIT 5 – International voluntary service (see pp. 42-44)

Manual for EVS sending/hosting/co-ordinating organisations



## Indicator 20

*Has the hosting organisation received full information about the exact scope and nature of the activity before consenting to host the participants?*

As part of the funding application, hosting organisations of learning mobility projects must in most cases sign a so-called letter of intent, where they indicate their willingness to act as partners in the project and receive participants from the sending organisation, in accordance with the project description (or outline) accompanying the project application to the funding scheme. A letter of intent is a simple thing to draw up but the importance is great, in particular with new partners.

However, organising a learning mobility project is often a matter of juggling a lot of imponderables. In most cases, you cannot progress and make definite arrangements before you have secured funding and this may take time as many funding schemes operate with deadlines only once or twice per year. Once you get a positive reply, you may not get all you applied for. Only when you know exactly how much you have to play with can you start committing yourself to participants and other actors and stakeholders. And then you may encounter all other sorts of challenges and impediments (for example, in the recruitment process) that modify your original idea.

In short, the project you applied for may have been transformed in many respects from the idea you originally started out with – the one that your partner consented to in the letter of intent.

A letter of intent is not necessarily a letter of consent. A hosting organisation also has commitments and obligations to other parties and if the premises on which the original decision to become a project partner have changed substantially – for example, if the number of participants has dwindled from 20 to 10 due to diminished funding or problems with recruitment – the hosting organisation may face serious problems, and consequently go into the project with a lukewarm attitude and a lower level of commitment. Or they may even decide to withdraw from the project altogether, in which case your project may crash. In both cases, quality is affected – in the latter, fatally.

It is therefore imperative that you immediately communicate any changes to the scope and nature of your project to your partner, to secure their continued commitment and consent. If you leave it to the last moment, project quality may be compromised.

## Indicator 21



*Have the nature and requirements of the target group been clearly communicated to the hosting organisation, in particular with regard to participants with special needs?*

Special needs may cover a wide spectrum of requirements. Often, it is used as a synonym for disadvantaged and refers to the physical and mental health of participants but it may also refer to religious affiliations or dietary requirements that necessitate specific facilities or options. In fact, anything that involves special arrangements. You need to identify these well before the project starts.

As soon as you have completed the recruitment procedure, you should inform the hosting organisation of the profiles of your participants and in particular of any specific needs or requirements they may have. A failure to do so may have logistical consequences – for example, if one or more of the participants suffer from food allergies and the hosting organisation is in charge of catering during their stay. It is a good idea to let each individual participant draw up a small presentation of themselves according to a standard template, which can subsequently be forwarded to the partner abroad.

When providing information about the target group and participants, you should think very carefully about the vocabulary you use in your description. For many words and concepts, there are no standard definitions, and they may be perceived very differently according to how and where they are used. Overall terms like disadvantaged or young people with fewer opportunities are in themselves meaningless until one understands the context to which they refer. They may describe positions of disadvantage in relation to, for example, geography, educational attainment, health, mental well-being, income levels, family background and a host of other things, and it can make a huge difference when implementing a project whether it is one or the other (or a combination of several). Using the overall terms may mean that the nature and requirements of the target group are not clearly communicated.

At times, even relatively objective descriptors may cover significant differences. The term unemployed, for instance, can designate very diverse groups of young people, depending on where they come from. In countries hit by economic recession and high levels of youth unemployment, many otherwise well-functioning young people with, for example, university degrees and proficiency in several foreign languages find themselves in this category, simply because there are not enough jobs. On the other hand, in countries where the economy is thriving and employment prospects are good, being jobless may be a consequence of disadvantages of an entirely different nature. These two groups are not immediately comparable and if you plan an encounter on the basis of status equality, it may turn out very differently than expected.

Working with specific target groups

Shaping inclusion and diversity



### Section: time frame

When we talk about the time frame of the project, this does not only comprise the time spent abroad. True, the essence of learning mobility is about going abroad and staying there for a while but looking at the activity in terms of learning, there is also a very important part of the project that unfolds before departure (preparation) and after homecoming (debriefing). Therefore, we use the term time frame as the headline here, denoting the full stretch of the activity, including pre-departure preparation and after-homecoming debriefing, and (in some cases) reintegration – rather than duration, which is often used just for the time spent abroad.

Time is often perceived uncritically as a quality parameter in itself, and there is often a connection between time and impact. But it is not time as such but what you do with it that counts. This means that you can also achieve great results with short-term projects, if these are properly prepared and executed, and participants receive adequate debriefing afterwards.

There are four indicators in this section.



### Indicator 22

*Is the duration of the activity sufficient for the participants to reach the stipulated learning objectives?*

There is a direct correlation between duration and learning outcomes. The longer the stay abroad, the greater the potential impact on participants and hence the greater the possibility of achieving impressive learning outcomes. Therefore, many programmes operate with a minimum duration for stays abroad in learning mobility projects – for example, two weeks – and will not support projects with a shorter duration than this. However, it is hard to give any definite rules for the duration of learning mobility projects. It is possible to achieve valuable outcomes even with a limited time spent abroad, and, conversely, long-term projects are in themselves no guarantee of success.

For one thing, it is not the length as such but also the intensity of the experience that determines learning outcomes. Badly planned and executed long-term stays abroad which do not allow participants to engage in activities that stimulate their learning processes mean time wasted, and the same – or better – outcomes could have been achieved with a short stay with more meaningful content. Also, projects that put a lot of time and effort into preparation and debriefing before and after the stay may often achieve astonishing results even if the actual time abroad is limited. Duration in a learning mobility project is more than the time spent abroad – learning processes start well before and finish long after it.

Yet the crucial thing is the relationship between the learning objectives you are aiming for and the duration. What is it exactly you want to achieve with your project and is it realistic to achieve this in the time you have allocated? If you have precise and limited learning objectives linked, for example, to specific practical skills, you may be able to design a project that allows this to take place over a short period of time. More complex learning outcomes – linked, for example, to the development of attitudes of tolerance and solidarity – may require that participants are immersed in the hosting environment for a longer time. They may hold prejudices and stereotypes preventing them from interacting meaningfully with their counterparts in the host country at first, and they need time to open up and engage with them on a more constructive basis. If the time is too short and the immersion too superficial, they may return home with prejudices confirmed rather than dispelled and the quality of your project is seriously compromised.

In most cases, duration is not something you are entirely free to decide about yourself. There may be external factors that place certain restrictions on your project and which are beyond your control. These restrictions could relate, for example, to funding, capacities of the hosting environment, nature of the target group and time available. To the extent that you can influence this, however, you need to reflect on the duration and the learning objectives of your project, and adjust one or the other so that they stand in a reasonable relationship to one another.

[Inclusion by design – Inclusion strategies for non-governmental organisations](#)

## Indicator 23



*Is the duration of the activity realistic in relation to what participants can handle in terms of absence from home?*

As stated above, some learning objectives require that participants spend a longer period of time abroad to stand a realistic chance of developing relevant competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes). However, not all participants are able to be away from home for extended periods. You must therefore also consider, when formulating your learning objectives and deciding about factors like duration, whether it is indeed possible for your target group to be abroad for the time required. There may be very practical reasons that limit their capacity in this respect – namely obligations at home preventing them from being absent for extended periods – but for many it is mainly a psychological issue.

Homesickness is something that we may all suffer from when we are abroad. It can be very unsettling to leave your usual environment and go somewhere completely

new, where you do not know the rules, where the language is different, and you do not have your usual network of family and friends to support and comfort you. Of course, there is an important learning potential in doing just that, as it develops your adaptability and self-reliance but if the feeling becomes too strong, some participants may react by breaking off their stay and returning home prematurely – in which case the experience may have done more harm than good. Or they may be so frightened at the prospect that they decide to stay at home in the first place, in which case you may end up with a recruitment problem.

People have very different threshold levels for when feelings of homesickness kick in. Those who have had an international experience before and perhaps are able to make themselves understood in a foreign language are usually more resilient than those for whom it is a first. Yet other factors have an influence, too. The nature of your project is important – will participants be in a group with people they know, or are they on their own during the stay abroad? There is also something you can do as an organiser in this respect – good preparation can remove much of the anxiety and fear participants may have, and encourage them to embrace a longer period abroad than they otherwise would.

You will need to have all these factors in mind during your planning phase and carefully assess the participants to verify whether they are indeed able to go outside their comfort zone and live away from home for the time that your project plans require. If not, you need to adjust your learning objectives to something feasible to acquire in a time perspective that is more realistic for your target group.



## Indicator 24

*Is there sufficient time available for pre-departure preparation of participants and team members?*

It has been amply demonstrated both through research and practical experience that preparation is crucial to the success of a learning mobility project. Before departure, participants should therefore receive adequate preparation that enables them to reach the learning objectives of the project. Good preparation is not just about learning basic vocabulary of a foreign language and receiving some information on practical arrangements but also about working on attitudes and prejudices, and this takes time.

What adequate preparation of participants exactly is differs from project to project but it usually encompasses the following aspects:

- ▶ **linguistic preparation:** learning enough of the language of the host country to achieve the communicative competence required for the level of interaction foreseen;
- ▶ **cultural preparation:** learning about the history, cultures and mentalities of the host country – and how to deal constructively with differences in outlook;
- ▶ **practical preparation:** receiving information on practical issues: accommodation, transport, insurance, health, money, etc. – what to do and whom to contact in the event of problems;

- ▶ **psychological preparation:** learning to cope with conflicts, insecurity, loneliness and homesickness;
- ▶ **pedagogical preparation:** creating an awareness of the targeted learning objectives (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and how these are achieved.

On the basis of your learning objectives, the possibilities and constraints imposed by the environment, and the conditions in general, you must try to assess what exactly is required and how this is best achieved. This also means reflecting on the time needed and ensuring upfront that this is available as an integral part of the project set-up. There is not necessarily a direct relation between duration and time required for adequate preparation – often, short projects require longer and more intensive pre-departure preparation, since the time available to reach the learning objectives during the time abroad is limited. Also, certain target groups require more in terms of preparation than others, even though projects are implemented in identical ways.

Not only participants but also team members must be adequately prepared for the experience, especially since team members are often instrumental in the preparation of participants. In principle, this preparation encompasses the same aspects as the ones listed above but the main task is often to ensure that everybody in the team is on the same page, so that the issues are tackled in a consistent way.

[Mentoring and pre-departure training in European Voluntary Service \(EVS\) – Ideas, tools and suggestions for practice](#)

[Erasmus+ online language support](#)

## Indicator 25



*Is there sufficient time allocated after homecoming to discuss about the activity with participants and team members?*

After participants have returned from their stay abroad, there is sometimes a tendency to see the project as over and done with, and limit any further involvement of the participants to the completion of a standard evaluation form. Yet research has shown that the learning process by no means is over when the participants have returned and that many of them need help to process the many impressions they have had to transform these into learning that can impact their lives. At the same time, and especially with longer mobility projects, young people will need this time to reintegrate into their home community – to find their place on their return. It is therefore important to offer them opportunities and platforms to discuss their experiences, and try to make sense of them in relation to their future life trajectory.

There are many ways to do this and you will need to choose the one that makes most sense in your context. It is mainly about getting participants to talk about feelings, impressions and experiences, and to try to put these into words so that they can be further processed; in other words, supported or challenged. Again, it is a process that takes time and it is essential that you make allowance for this as part of your project planning. A failure to do so may mean that important lessons are lost and you do not get the long-term effects of the project that you had hoped for.

Debriefing (as this process is often called) after homecoming serves purposes of both personal and organisational learning. Just as participants may need further input to transform their experiences into learning, they may also give you important information that can help you to improve the design and implementation of future projects. Also, your team colleagues may need debriefing after the project is over to extract important information for future activities.

The possibility of organising online encounters makes it feasible to conduct debriefing activities involving real interaction, also in cases where participants come from geographically dispersed areas and have returned to these upon homecoming.

[Supporting learning face-to-face](#) (see p. 53)



## Section: programme

A programme is what you plan to do with your participants during the activity. It involves issues that require reflection, research and concrete planning, and key questions are: what types of activities are most conducive to achieving the learning objectives? What is actually feasible to do? And does your partner abroad have the resources in terms of facilities and staff competences to implement these?

This section is concerned with the time abroad only, as what goes on before and after (preparation and debriefing) are covered in separate sections (indicators 87-95 and 106-108 respectively).

There are five indicators in this section.



## Indicator 26

### *Has a detailed programme for the activity been developed?*

A programme is an organised, coherent and integrated set of activities which are planned and implemented to achieve the objectives of your project over a stipulated period of time. A well-prepared programme is a vital precondition for quality results.

Planning a mobility project is like preparing the road map for a journey into foreign territory, so you need to develop a structured and detailed programme to guide your participants for the road ahead, and to give stability and confidence to the team: “structured” because it should show the learning pathway or flow you will develop throughout the different moments or stages of the programme, and “detailed” because it should include all the activities on a day-by-day or week-by-week basis.

The planning of a programme is, above all, a creative process. When planning, you need to be open-minded and flexible, take into account all the possibilities you have and make the best choices on the basis of the project aims, the available time, the needs and interests of your participants, the context where the programme will be developed, the human and material resources that you have and will need, and so on.

When you create the overall programme, first make a list of the topics to work with and related activities; discuss and agree on them with your team, participants and hosting and sending organisations when possible. Then create the flow: choose and

prioritise contents and activities, giving a logical and balanced order which is coherent with the group dynamic process you want to generate; plan a detailed day-by-day or week-by-week programme and design the different sessions to be developed. A well-prepared and detailed programme should show what you want participants to learn, what topics you want to work on with them, when you are doing what and how (methods). The programme should reflect the learning adventure in a logical sequence and in a precise manner. In this process, you should:

- ▶ make sure that you cover a realistic number of topics for the available time and that the programme fits the learning needs of the participants;
- ▶ make sure that every activity has a clear purpose in the programme, and that they will help people learn and experience actively;
- ▶ look at the variety of the activities and delivery methods, and make sure they fit each other coherently as a whole and that they facilitate to achieve the proposed aims;
- ▶ make sure there is a balanced time distribution for the whole programme of activities;
- ▶ make sure you have the human and material resources to do it;
- ▶ make sure there is enough down time and space for personal reflection and informal learning. A too packed programme may tire participants out and reduce the intended impact.

## Indicator 27



*Has the programme been developed together with the hosting organisation and participants?*

Developing the programme all on your own will in most cases not work. A quality mobility project is a collaborative effort, where results depend on the active involvement of actors and stakeholders – and above all on the buy-in of participants as well as those at the other end, the hosting organisation (and the hosting community).

Collaborative planning can be a time-consuming process, because it is more than just getting people to agree on a day-to-day schedule of a visit – it is fundamentally about creating shared ownership and commitment across age barriers, geographical distances and cultures. It will, in the short run at least, make the whole process more complicated, because you need to listen to, discuss, take into account, and respect viewpoints and suggestions that may not match your ideas 100%, and sometimes it takes a lot of flexibility and creativity to find solutions that can be shared and agreed on by everyone.

There is no template for how this dialogue is organised, as it depends on the kind of learning mobility project you work with and the resources available to you. In essence, it is about developing a draft programme in consultation with participants, and getting comments and approval from your partner abroad. This can be done face-to-face and/or via telephone, e-mail and collaborative software.

This dialogue is an essential part of the quality assurance process, because it ensures that the programme is realistic, meets the needs of actors and stakeholders, and

has the acceptance of all those involved in its implementation. Having contributed to this phase of the project also means that a sense of ownership is created, where participants and partners take responsibility for the programme and actively contribute to its execution, rather than just leaning back and blaming the organiser when things do not happen quite according to plan.

T-KIT 6 – Training essentials

Manual for EVS sending/hosting/co-ordinating organisations



## Indicator 28

*Are the programme activities conducive to reaching the stipulated objectives?*

A quality programme should reflect how the learning objectives will be reached over a concrete period of time, and there should be coherence between these objectives and the activities and methods proposed. This means that – in principle – the objectives should guide the selection of all activities for the programme and that the activities in the programme should clearly reflect one or all of the objectives.

Activities and methods may contribute to achieving the learning objectives in both direct and indirect ways. Coherence and conduciveness do not mean that every single item on the programme's agenda must be accounted for in terms of learning – an evening at the cinema may be necessary after a hard day's work, even though the film itself has no connection with the objectives of the project as such. But no activity or method should be chosen just because it is attractive, new or joyful for the participants. Entertainment in itself is not a learning objective.

You should, however, be careful of being too ambitious or purposeful when designing the programme. It is a mistake to pack every single waking hour of the day with an activity – it is necessary to leave time and space for the participants to digest and reflect on their experiences, as well as to explore the new environment on their own and do things which they consider meaningful, even though they may not seem in alignment with the objectives. Often, this will lead to valuable new discoveries and learning outcomes that could not have been foreseen from the beginning.

Just as activities may be conducive to achieving the learning objectives, however, there may also be times when activities have an adverse effect. If one or more of your learning objectives are related to developing the intercultural competence of participants, research has shown that this is often best achieved through interaction with peer groups abroad – in other words, hanging out with other young people from the host country of roughly the same age and social status. If participants isolate themselves, being in constant contact with friends and family at home via telephone and social media, this is obviously not productive. Similarly, if participants stick together as a group too much, speaking in their own language and not engaging with the host environment, a valuable learning opportunity is lost. In these cases, you must try to break up this pattern of behaviour, and introduce activities and methods that provide interaction with locals.

Even though you have selected activities that seem perfectly suited to achieving your objectives, they may not function in this way when they are being implemented

in practice. Therefore, you should constantly monitor their progression, be ready to scrap some and introduce others in their place if they do not work. In fact, it is the exception rather than the rule that everything runs according to plan, and it is one of the hallmarks of a quality project that organisers are able to be flexible and adapt the programme if things are not shaping up the way they should.

T-KIT 3 – Project management

T-KIT 6 – Training essentials

## Indicator 29



### *Does the programme allow for maximum interaction with the hosting environment?*

By far the majority of learning mobility projects depend for their success on close interaction with the hosting environment. It is through the contact (and contrast) with people with other values, languages and ways of doing things that especially value-based learning objectives like intercultural understanding, tolerance, communicative skills, respect, solidarity, and so on are achieved.

Interaction is more than superficial, fleeting encounters, however. Learning processes leading to intercultural understanding, for example, demand that the contact be focused around meaningful, joint activities that allow participants to explore the culture and character of their counterparts in depth. This also involves exposure to potentially delicate issues – merely having a good time together is not enough. How this interaction is practically organised depends on the nature of your project, the precise learning objectives and your target group. It is always more difficult when participants go out in a group, since they may tend to stick together rather than socialising with their counterparts abroad. Organising accommodation individually in host families can be a good way to ensure that they have direct exposure to, and interaction with, people from the host country.

Just bringing two groups of young people together does not necessarily mean that they develop relationships and start exploring similarities and differences. Psychologist Yehuda Amir has formulated some ground rules – known as the contact hypothesis – that identify factors facilitating interaction between youth groups:

- ▶ **equality in terms of status** – both parties must share a roughly similar socio-economic status to allow them to identify with one another;
- ▶ **convergence of aims** – both parties must have at least a degree of shared aims and interests to ensure that contacts between them develop;
- ▶ **appropriate attitudes prior to implementation** – there are no overly negative attitudes towards people from the other culture beforehand;
- ▶ **appropriate contact intensity and length** – the contacts should last for a certain period and must not be superficial in nature;
- ▶ **low cultural barriers** – cultural barriers are not so high at the beginning of the actual encounter that interaction is made impossible;
- ▶ **social and institutional backup** – the encounter is organised around an integrative institutional framework and a climate of mutual backup exists;

- ▶ **appropriate preparation** – participants are given adequate linguistic and cultural preparation before the encounter.

Intercultural learning in non-formal education: theoretical frameworks and starting points

The contact hypothesis in intergroup relations



### Indicator 30

*Is there an adequate balance between programme activities and free time for the participants?*

There is sometimes a tendency – especially in short-term projects – to try to make the most of the time available and pack the programme with activities almost round the clock. This is done in a well-meaning effort to reach the learning objectives of the project but ironically enough, this may prove counterproductive in the end, actually reducing rather than enhancing learning, and hence the quality of the project. There are three reasons for this.

First, the type of learning targeted in mobility projects is most often what we call reflective learning, where participants learn through trying to make sense of their experiences (this is opposed to imitative learning, where the learner merely reproduces something they have heard, read or seen). As well as providing opportunities for the experiences that this learning feeds on, it is therefore also important that there are spaces where the participants can think about and try to extract meaning from them – that is, convert them into learning – before one experience is superseded by the next.

Second, learning experiences in mobility projects are often predicated on experiences of cultural differences, where participants are confronted by other ways of perceiving and doing things – in the host family, in the company where they are doing a placement, in the work camp and indeed whenever they are together with young people from the host country. Some of these differences are merely amusing, where participants may be well within their comfort zone but they can also be stressful (cultural clashes) and an overload of stress is not conducive to learning. It is therefore necessary to have periods where it is possible for participants to recuperate and build up new energy to tackle the world around them.

Finally, free time is also an opportunity for participants to seek out new experiences on their own and create learning spaces that were not originally foreseen in the programme. They may join a sports club, frequent cultural events or organise sight-seeing that allows them to explore other aspects of the host country and its culture.

It is not possible to give hard-and-fast rules on what the ratio between programme activities and free time should be, as it depends on the time and resources you have and on the nature of your target group. Adequate balance is a term that must be defined for every project but it is an aspect which should be essential when planning the programme for a learning mobility project.

T-KIT 1 – Organisational management

T-KIT 6 – Training essentials

## Section: responsibilities



Even if all aspects of planning and organisation are covered, it may still all come to nothing if the responsibilities to ensure that everything happens (and at the right time) are not clearly indicated, and that those in charge have the proper competences and resources to carry out their tasks. It may seem a fairly simple thing to do but lapses often happen because everybody thinks someone else is doing the job. It is therefore necessary to approach the various aspects of this issue in a systematic manner and to ensure that not only the person in charge but also all others involved know who is doing what and when.

There are three indicators in this section.

### Indicator 31



*Are responsibilities for all aspects of the programme clearly allocated to specific persons?*

A quality mobility project is always teamwork, where each member is important and needed to reach the stipulated aims. For this reason, it is essential that tasks and responsibilities are divided and clearly allocated to specific persons.

As an organiser, you must know who does what and when, and you must ensure that all team members know the responsibilities of the others to achieve efficient collaboration and avoid duplication of efforts. Also, participants must know who in the team is responsible for which aspects of the project so that they know who to turn to when they have questions or when problems occur.

As part of your planning process, you must therefore make a “battle plan” where all functions in the project are identified and the names of the person(s) responsible for each aspect are known. These functions may change from project to project, so the list below is just meant as a starting point for such an exercise, which you should undertake as early as possible in your project’s life cycle.

- ▶ Who is in charge of the recruitment process?
- ▶ Who is in charge of selecting participants?
- ▶ Who manages visas and talks to embassies?
- ▶ Who runs preparation activities?
- ▶ Who is responsible for overseeing that all activities are as environmentally sustainable as possible?
- ▶ Who co-ordinates travel and buys tickets?
- ▶ Who is the formal representative of the hosting organisation?
- ▶ Who is in charge of accommodation arrangements?
- ▶ Who has the overall responsibility for the programme in the host country?
- ▶ Who is in charge of health and well-being of the participants?
- ▶ Who looks after insurance arrangements?
- ▶ Who is in charge of monitoring the participants when they are abroad?

- ▶ Who is in charge of contacts with the press?
- ▶ Who controls the budget?
- ▶ Who runs the debriefing process with participants?
- ▶ Who conducts the project evaluation?
- ▶ Who writes the final report?
- ▶ Who is in charge of dissemination of the project results?
- ▶ Etc.?

Make sure that this list of functions and responsibilities is updated and available at all times. In addition to names, the contact details of each person should also be given.



### Indicator 32

*Are the names of these specific persons and responsibilities clearly communicated to all involved, including participants?*

Once you have the specific tasks and responsibilities divided, agreed and clearly allocated, this information must be communicated to team members, partners and participants involved in the project to facilitate efficient organisation, communication and co-operation. It will be ironic if you create a perfect model of co-ordination but nobody knows it. Even worse – it may create confusion, delay and frustration, which in turn may have serious consequences for the quality of your project.

The list of responsibilities and names may be very short for small self-organised projects, and much longer for bigger projects carried out by larger organisations. In both cases, however, you should think in terms of “need to know/nice to know” when you plan your communication to the involved target groups. In each case, you must consider what information they need to have to be able to play their role in the project and what information is superfluous.

In most cases, your partner(s) abroad would want to have the full list of names and responsibilities, as they are often involved (or may become involved) in all phases and activities of the programme. If your partner in turn delegates responsibilities to others in the host environment, you should make sure that these people have the relevant information. Do not just assume that this happens automatically.

Members of your team need, as a minimum, to know the names of the persons responsible for the aspects of the project that are (or may become) relevant for the functions they carry out. Who, for example, should they turn to if they want to change the programme and introduce other training activities and methods? And who is the person who can authorise changes in the budget, if something unforeseen occurs?

Participants will definitely need a list of persons to be contacted in the event of homesickness or other mental issues, health problems, accidents, as well as theft and other crimes but not necessarily much else. In accompanied projects, it may be one of the accompanying team members but in unaccompanied projects it may be one or more persons from the partner organisation abroad.

How you want to get this information across is up to you and the project situation. The easiest thing is, of course, to upload it onto the project website but this requires that everyone has internet access at all times. A very simple solution – especially for use in emergency situations – is small, laminated plastic cards that can be carried in a wallet.

A final but crucial thing to consider is the accessibility and availability of contact persons. Is it necessary to be on call 24/7, or is it OK to just respond within office hours? Also, contact persons may fall ill or for other reasons be unable to respond, so it may be relevant to have a named backup person who can be contacted if the primary responsible person is not available.

## T-KIT 1 – Organisational management

### Indicator 33

*Do the responsible persons have the necessary capacity to deal with issues occurring within their sphere of responsibility?*



A quality strategy is based on a clear definition of the needed roles and responsibilities within the project; ensuring that each responsible person has the necessary knowledge, authority, availability, as well as means to carry out their role effectively.

Sometimes you are able to select your team and other people involved in your project, whereas on other occasions, those persons are already appointed by their organisation. All people involved should feel comfortable with their responsibilities and confident in their capability to work them out.

This requires two things from you:

- ▶ first, an appreciation of what is required for each particular function in the project in terms of knowledge, authority, availability and means; and
- ▶ second, an appreciation of the persons involved in the execution of the project (team members, partners abroad, contractors, etc.) and what they already have relative to the four parameters mentioned above – knowledge, authority, availability and means.

When you match these two insights, you will obtain two vital pieces of information – namely whether you have appointed the right persons for the tasks and the extent to which you need to top up already existing resources or privileges so that the persons appointed can carry out their duties in a satisfactory way.

In some cases, you may decide that you need to replace a person or swap roles within the team to reach the optimal solution under the circumstances. In other cases, you must provide extra resources to the persons to empower them to do their job. Within each parameter, this could for instance mean:

- ▶ **knowledge:** if the person in charge of health and well-being for the participants has insufficient knowledge about how, for example, the health system works in the host country, they must be updated on this;
- ▶ **authority:** if the person in charge of the budget only has limited right to approve extra costs that were not foreseen from the start, their authority must be extended so that it is realistic in comparison with the nature of the possible incidents;

- ▶ **availability:** if the person in charge of dealing with emergency situations only has limited availability in certain periods, a backup or replacement must be found;
- ▶ **means:** if the project also involves participants with special needs (e.g. physical disabilities or learning difficulties), the budgets available for trainers and tutors must reflect this.

## T-KIT 3 – Project management

### Defining roles, responsibilities and skills in project staffing plan



#### Section: risk and conflict management

A frequently heard saying – called Murphy’s Law – states that in a project context everything that can go wrong, will go wrong. It need not be as bad as that but it is nevertheless necessary that you have considered (and hence are prepared for) all eventualities and have thought about what to do and who is doing it if accident should strike. Of course, you cannot prepare for the unexpected but the point is that many potential problems can be foreseen and you can develop procedures for dealing with them, if they should occur.

This does not mean that you should strive to eliminate all possible situations that may contain an element of risk or a potential conflict. Risks and conflicts are unavoidable facts of life, and training participants to cope with them is often a better strategy than trying to avoid them being exposed to even a little bit of discomfort and conflict. In fact, conflict often has a huge learning potential, which – if tackled constructively – can lead to valuable learning outcomes.

There are four indicators in this section.



#### Indicator 34

*Have you analysed beforehand the types of risks, problems and conflicts that may possibly occur?*

Most mobility projects experience small hiccups on the way – unforeseen occurrences that require some kind of intervention or a change of plans. This is quite usual and these situations may, in fact, contain important learning opportunities that can actually end up enriching the outcomes of the project. In a few cases, however, these occurrences are of such a serious nature that they threaten to destabilise or even ruin the experience for one or all of the participants.

As stated previously, there is no way you can foresee everything that may possibly happen to participants or the project as such but there are some types of occurrences – or risks – which will always be present and for which you need to be prepared. Other risks may be specific to the type of project or the activities you are engaged in – for example, participation in so-called dangerous sports (like rock climbing). It is part of the preparation phase of a quality project that potential risk factors are identified, analysed and assessed, and the necessary contingency plans made, so that you can limit their effects as much as possible – even though they may never materialise.

Many of these risk factors are connected with the physical and mental health and well-being of participants (and team members, too). People may fall ill, they may have an accident or they may become victims of a crime (theft or violence). Conversely, they may also cause an accident or commit a crime themselves. Mental health problems – like depression – may occur and in the context of youth mobility the most prevalent of these is homesickness. It is very normal and most participants (especially in long-term projects) experience it at one time or another; but for some, the feeling may get so overwhelming that they break off their stay prematurely and return home, which rarely produces any positive learning outcomes. Homesickness will often disappear after a while but be aware that more serious mental health conditions may lurk underneath, which may require the intervention of a psychologist.

Conflicts are always a possibility, especially those that arise out of so-called cultural clashes, where people of different cultural backgrounds and value systems disagree over issues in their interaction. These clashes are unavoidable and part of the learning process but for this to happen they need to be recognised at the earliest signs, tackled constructively and not allowed to spin out of control. Other types of conflicts may happen within the group of participants, especially if they spend a lot of time together. Conflicts may also pop up at organisational level – for example over financial issues, if arrangements and contracts are not crystal clear but open to interpretation. And while conflicts will happen anyway, the conflict escalation curve shows that the sooner you recognise a conflict, the more chances you have to prevent it from escalating and for using it to transform the relationship and learn from it.

When creating a list of potential problems and conflicts, it is highly recommended that, whenever you can, you do it with the young person(s), because they:

- ▶ can be aware of problems you are not aware of, since they are stemming from their reality, not yours;
- ▶ will develop an awareness of things that might happen and will start mentally and emotionally preparing for them;
- ▶ will have time to digest and perhaps even think of alternative solutions for potential problems and conflicts.

### The five stages of conflict escalation

### Child safety and youth exchange programmes: guidelines for good practice

## Indicator 35

*Have you developed adequate procedures for dealing with various types of conflicts and other problems, including a contact point and who to address?*

Once you have identified the different types of conflicts and problems that may affect your project, you need to check your level of preparedness to deal with them. This means first and foremost establishing procedures for what you do if calamity should strike, and secondly making an inventory of the resources and availabilities that you have – both within the team and in the surroundings – and distributing roles and responsibilities accordingly, so that everybody knows what to do in an emergency.



You will be able to deal with some of these problems and conflicts on your own, using resources within the team and the group of participants. This could, for example, be disciplinary problems, interpersonal conflicts, problems with host families, lighter injuries, mild cases of homesickness. In other cases, you may need outside intervention, and you and your team members should therefore have the addresses and telephone numbers of doctors, psychologists, hospitals and police at hand, just in case. You should also have the contact details of parents and next-of-kin, so that they can be contacted, for example, in the event of more serious cases of homesickness.

Of course, you can never anticipate all possible types of problems and conflicts that may occur but the kinds of difficulties that mobility projects experience are often surprisingly familiar. Homesickness and premature return are two quite common occurrences. Having procedures prepared and responsibilities assigned means that you avoid impulsive and ad hoc reactions that may aggravate rather than help, and problems and conflicts that escalate because everybody thought somebody else was going to do something. Furthermore, the fact that these have been highlighted and discussed raises awareness and may lead to earlier detection before they develop.

Education and peace training on cultural conflicts



### Indicator 36

*Are participants prepared so that they can act appropriately in the event of problems?*

From a learning perspective, problems are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they represent a source of disruption: they are disturbing elements that must be avoided or the consequences must be reduced as much as possible. However, on the other hand, they also represent a source of empowerment: it is part of the learning objectives of many mobility projects that participants should develop their problem-solving skills along with their independence and self-reliance. They can only do this if they are not placed in a protected glass bubble but allowed to be exposed to adversity and to try to get to grips with this on their own.

You have to take both these dimensions into account when you prepare participants to deal with problems. Essentially, you can divide problems into two groups, each requiring a different approach in the preparation process.

Some problems are urgent and have to be dealt with on the spot. You – or one of your team members – may not be there when they happen and participants will have to cope on their own. Problems in this category are often connected to accidents and crime – things that happen suddenly and unexpectedly, and where it is essential that people do not panic but keep cool and respond in a logical and constructive manner. Preparation for this is usually done in the form of drills – namely a set of rules or steps for behaviour that are developed and agreed on by all, so that everybody knows how to react appropriately if, for example, there is a fire in the building.

Other problems are of an interpersonal nature and appear as conflicts between individuals or groups. They often develop over time and though they start as minor

disagreements, they may develop into something that can put the whole project at risk if not stopped at an early stage. In a youth mobility project, the most common cause of such tension and conflicts is the clash between people with different mentalities and sets of values. Since it is often a lack of understanding that lies at the bottom of these, preparation is a matter of training participants' intercultural competence, namely their ability to see things from other perspectives than their own. Whereas a fire drill may be done on the spot and in five minutes, this process takes time and has to be introduced at an early stage, well before the departure date. This also means laying the foundation for a learning process that hopefully is continued and developed during the time abroad, leading to an increased ability to interact constructively with people from other backgrounds.

Last, but not least, there are the psychological problems of individuals, which may occur during or after participation in a learning mobility project. Here, it is important that both participants and organisers have a strong awareness and are able to detect early warning signs so that matters can be taken in hand before they develop. For more insight into this (and preparation in general), you should also consult indicators 87-95 about the preparation of participants.

[T-KIT 11 – Mosaic: The training kit for Euro-Mediterranean youth work](#)  
[Mental health in youth projects](#)

## Indicator 37



### *Do your financial resources allow you to deal with unforeseen costs?*

Sound financial planning is important for a successful project. A realistic appraisal of the costs involved means that you are able to carry out the activities and reach your objectives as originally stipulated. However, it is the rule more than the exception that something happens after the budgeting phase that adds extra expenses, incurring so-called unforeseen costs. If your budget is too tight with no buffer to absorb these, a consequence may be that you have to cancel activities to save money, thus diminishing the overall quality of your project.

We use the term unforeseen costs here to cover both extra expenditure and loss of expected income. A typical example of the latter occurs when you have last-minute cancellations from participants, so that the size of the group you send abroad is smaller than originally envisaged. As financial support in most mobility schemes is calculated as a flat rate per participant, this means that your overall budget is reduced, whereas many of the expenses (for example, rental of premises and equipment) remain the same. Extra expenditure could, for example, be that prices for transport (flights) have taken a hike since you made your initial calculations, meaning that you have a lot less at your disposal than originally foreseen. Or that some participants have to change accommodation during the stay, switching to something more expensive. Many of the additional expenses may be trivial on their own but if several occur at the same time they may add up. A realistic budget for a learning mobility project will thus always contain provisions for unforeseen costs.

The size of the buffer for unforeseen costs depends on the nature of your project. They are impossible to anticipate and may occur when you least expect them but there is no reason to expect that anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.

The learning-conducive activities should not be in danger of cancellation in the event of even small extra expenditures, so that the envisaged learning objectives cannot be achieved. If your budget is so scraped that there is no room for any extra expenses, you must try to create this space; either by raising additional funds (increasing income) or by looking for items on the budget where money can be saved.

Once the project is on the way and the chances of unforeseen costs occurring are diminishing, you can diminish the buffer accordingly by ploughing the money back into the project.



## Section: evaluation

Evaluation is about summing up what worked and what did not work in a project, and is an integral part of quality assurance – if not for this project, then for the next one. Evaluation is first and foremost concerned with the outcomes (did we actually reach our objectives?) but also with the organisation of the activity (what did we do wrong that we could do better next time?). Even though evaluation is usually carried out after the activity (so-called summative evaluation), it needs to be planned beforehand. Much of the information you will need can often only be gathered in a specific window of time during the activity and if you have not made provisions for this, the opportunity will be lost.

Even if it is a stand-alone activity that you are not planning to repeat, an evaluation of what you did and how you did it (and what came out of it) can be very helpful for others who are about to do something similar. It may mean that they avoid making the same mistakes as you did. Evaluations should therefore be read not only by those who were involved in the project but also by relevant others who can benefit from your experiences.

There are eight indicators in this section.



### Indicator 38

*Have you developed a detailed plan for evaluating the activity and the learning experience of the participants, to assess whether you have reached your aims and objectives?*

An evaluation is the systematic process of collecting and analysing information about your project to find out what was achieved – whether you reached your objectives or not, what functioned well and what did not. It is thus an integral part of the quality assurance process, for it allows you to constantly improve your practice; if not in this project, then in the next.

In some funding schemes, evaluation is a formal requirement and comes equipped with methods and tools you must use. In others, it is up to you to design your own evaluation plan. To do so, you need to ask yourself five basic questions.

- ▶ **Why:** it is very rare that you can make a 360-degree evaluation of all aspects of a project. You will therefore in most cases need to establish a clear focus for the evaluation: what is it precisely that you would like to know? And for whom are you doing the evaluation?
- ▶ **What:** what follows why: to find out about the aspects that you want the evaluation to throw light upon, what kind of information is it that you need to collect? And are you able to measure outcomes directly or do you need to identify so-called indicators (i.e. phenomena that can say something about factors not directly observable)?
- ▶ **Who:** you need to designate who will do the evaluation, who will collect the data and identify from whom you are going to get the information you need.
- ▶ **When:** most evaluations are carried out after the project is finished but some of the data you need may have to be collected when the project is still running. You therefore need to stipulate when information needs to be gathered to ensure that this happens before it is too late.
- ▶ **How:** there is a huge variety of methods you can use: observation of project activities, questionnaires or surveys, interviews with participants and other actors, document analysis (e.g. of participants' reports or log books), and so on. Evaluations rarely rely on one method alone but use a combination of methods. Which ones are suitable for your purpose?

Evaluations can be more or less sophisticated, depending on the resources you have dedicated to this activity. Most evaluations are carried out immediately after the project is finished but it can be difficult to get more than participants' immediate reactions to the experience. If you have the possibility to follow the participants for a longer period of time after homecoming, you may be able to get a better picture of the true impact of the activity – whether they have actually developed knowledge, skills and attitudes that make a real difference in their lives.

As most evaluations are carried out after the project is finished, it is too late to change anything that did not function well (in this project, at least). Some projects therefore carry out so-called formative evaluations where evaluation work is done while the project is ongoing and where results are used to improve practices on the way. This is a special type of evaluation where the focus is more on the process than on the outcome.

T-KIT 10 – Educational evaluation in youth work

Asking good questions. A framework for learning, evaluation and continuous improvement

## Indicator 39



*Does the evaluation consider not only learning outcomes of participants but also the project's impact on hosting and sending communities, and on your own organisation?*

There is often a tendency for evaluations of mobility projects to focus exclusively on the learning outcomes of participants. Yet not only the participants learn – organisations and communities at both ends (sending and hosting) may learn, too, and this

may in fact be a very significant outcome of the project. It is therefore important that you at least consider this aspect when trying to assess the footprint that the project has left behind.

Organisational learning happens when an organisation (for example, a youth club or a school) or a community (for example, a neighbourhood) changes attitudes or develops new practices as a result of being involved in an activity like a learning mobility project, where it is confronted with new elements and aspects that challenge its usual routines. Examples of organisational learning occur for example when:

- ▶ an organisation that has only operated at local or regional level also starts incorporating an international dimension in their activities;
- ▶ a community changes its attitudes to “foreigners” and “strangers” as a result of having hosted young people from abroad;
- ▶ a community develops a consciousness vis-à-vis specific issues that were addressed in the project (e.g. the environment);
- ▶ an organisation introduces new work forms (e.g. volunteering).

Such impacts may not be easy to detect immediately after the project has ended, as many organisations require a certain amount of time to change practices and attitudes. Many evaluations therefore fail to capture these impacts, because the signs are so small that they do not catch your attention unless you are specifically looking for them. It is therefore a good idea to write them into your evaluation plan from the beginning, so that attention is drawn to them from the start.

Evaluations that seek to identify such learning may actually play a significant role in accelerating these processes by making this learning visible and a topic for discussion among actors and stakeholders.

## Evaluation

### Community impact of learning mobility projects



#### Indicator 40

*Does your evaluation plan also include the possibility to identify non-intended outcomes?*

When you formulated your project idea, you had specific learning outcomes in mind that you would like to achieve. Of course, it is extremely important that you follow up on these in your project evaluation to try to assess whether you were successful or not. However, besides the intended outcomes, there are usually also others that occur, even though they were not part of the rationale of the project from the start – the so-called unintended learning outcomes.

Unintended learning outcomes may occur as a result of project activities that did not go quite as you had planned or as a result of things that happened in the participants’ free time. They may be positive or negative but irrespective of their nature you should try to capture and describe them in your evaluation, for besides their significance for the individual participant, they may also hold important messages to you as an organiser about what to do – or not to do – next time you organise a learning mobility project.

Unintended learning outcomes can be identified if at least some of your evaluation questions are not narrow and focused around the intended outcomes but open-ended and with a broader focus, allowing participants (or other actors) to bring in additional aspects of the learning process. You will also need to be alert and listen for any statement that indicates learning that somehow was not foreseen from the beginning.

Unintended learning outcomes are often detected during the debriefing process after the participants have completed their stay abroad. If these learning outcomes are of a negative nature – for example, when some participants seem to return with prejudices confirmed rather than dispelled – you still have time to discuss them and possibly turn them into something more constructive.

Identify potential unintended results

## Indicator 41



### *Have all parties agreed on the evaluation plan?*

There are two reasons why it is helpful to have all parties agreeing to the evaluation plan. The first is that they are all likely to be implicated in the evaluation process as informants and by agreeing to the plan; they are also pledging themselves to delivering the required input needed for this. This will produce a qualitatively better evaluation and more learning that can help improve outcomes of future activities. The second is that by agreeing to the plan, they also take ownership and are more likely to absorb the results.

Ideally, relevant parties should be involved already in the design phase of the evaluation exercise, helping to identify questions of consequence (based on expected programme outcomes) and select evaluation strategies that will produce usable evaluation findings. In many projects, however, the evaluation issue is only brought up at the end of the project, where people's energies may be used up and where they may be already heading for other horizons. If it has been interwoven with the planning phase of the project, it is much easier to get their active commitment to this.

The list of relevant parties is potentially a long one and may include: participants (as learners and target group of the activity); team members and other facilitators (as responsible persons to guide the process); your organisation (as organisers); partners' organisations and institutions/companies (as promoters); funders (as supporters); stakeholders/policy makers (as responsible for further decision making); local communities at both ends; and others (like host families, other youth organisations and volunteers, enterprises, schools, universities, etc.).

Before involving them in this exercise, you should think carefully about who you are involving, why you are involving them and the extent to which you are prepared to take their viewpoints into account. There may be potentially delicate issues, for example about the focus of the evaluation and the use of project funds for evaluation, which may not be relevant to discuss with all. If you bring them up, only to overrule critical inputs later, it may create a negative atmosphere, where people feel that you are wasting their time.

Evaluations that actively and systematically involve partners and participants in the process are sometimes known as participatory evaluations. This is not a specific kind of evaluation that prescribes specific methods but a general approach that is predicated on the commitment of all those involved to produce results of a better quality and with better chances of actually making a difference.

### Participatory evaluation



## Indicator 42

### *Have you agreed on who does the evaluation?*

Who is doing the evaluation will potentially have a big impact on what comes out of it in the end. The key question here is whether you are going to hire an external evaluator or conduct an internal evaluation, and both of these solutions come with advantages and disadvantages.

An external evaluator may be expensive and may sometimes have difficulties in getting access to all information, since they were not part of the project. On the plus side, an external evaluator will be in a better position to provide an objective appraisal of outcomes and will (or should) come with professional evaluation tools and insights. An internal evaluator is someone from within the project and will consequently have extensive knowledge about it and open access to all informants. An internal evaluation will also be significantly cheaper (freeing project funds for other purposes) but those conducting the evaluation are not professionals and may not have in-depth knowledge of methods of data gathering and analysis. More seriously, however, internal evaluators may be biased, since they themselves have been a part of what they are evaluating. They may thus have a problem with credibility, since they may come with preconceived ideas about what should come out of the evaluation.

In some cases, it will not be up to you to decide whether you go for one or the other, as some funding mechanisms demand an external evaluator as a guarantee of objectivity. In these situations, your main concern is to find a professional, external evaluator and decide on how much you are going to pay for the evaluation. It is not possible to give any rules for this other than that, usually, price and quality go hand in hand. Those who have not had such experience before are usually shocked at how much it costs.

When you opt for an internal evaluation, your main concern is how to ensure that it will be as objective as feasible and that any possibility of bias is reduced as much as it can be. This means that you must develop a methodologically strong evaluation plan, considering things like the representativity of informants (who is being asked to provide inputs?), the validity of questions (are we asking the right questions?) and the reliability of answers (can we be sure that the answers we get represent an accurate picture of what really happened?). Also, you should try to identify any sources of bias in the evaluator beforehand and discuss these with them – bias is in most cases not a conscious misrepresentation of facts but the result of a subconscious selection due to a specific cultural background. Once these risks of bias have been identified and openly discussed, they become visible to the evaluator and can be avoided.

### T-KIT 10 – Educational evaluation in youth work



## Indicator 43

### *Have you identified what kind of information you need to collect for the evaluation?*

Quality evaluations are designed and planned in advance of the project's implementation, so that it is quite clear from the outset what kind of information you need to collect to feed into the evaluation process. It is therefore a very useful exercise to sit down in the planning phase and try to formulate the questions you would like to have answers to after the project is finished. These will then determine the kind of information you need. Such questions could be:

- ▶ **needs and context:** did participants and partners take part in the needs' analysis? Were the needs identified adequate and pertinent? What kind of learning was needed to reach the objectives? What was the baseline situation for the stipulated objectives?
- ▶ **programme design and planning:** did information about the project go out to all those in the target group? Were the right participants selected? Were the objectives clear enough and understood by all? Was the programme planned with hosting/sending communities and organisations? Did all activities contribute to achieving the objectives? Was the programme realistic regarding time and resources? Were the methods the best ones to achieve the objectives? Did the team members have the necessary competences to carry out the activities successfully?
- ▶ **programme process and development:** how well was the programme managed? Were all relevant issues explored? To what extent were planned activities and methods completed? How was the programme's flow? How were conflicts resolved in the group? What additional resources were needed? How well did logistics function?
- ▶ **outcomes and impact:** were the objectives reached? Was what has been achieved through the project expected or not, positive and negative? What did the participants learn? Did the participants change their behaviour based on what they learned? What are the effects on the participants' organisations? And on hosting/sending communities?

For many of these questions, it is not really possible to measure the results directly and you need to formulate indicators for which you can gather information that can help you reach a verdict (exactly like the indicators in this handbook). Indicators can be both quantitative (for example, how many participants showed up for a specific activity?) and qualitative (what was their opinion about the activity?). Indicators do not give you the objective truth but they indicate – alone or in combination – how you should assess specific aspects of your project.

[Quality youth work – A common framework for the further development of youth work](#) (see p. 20)

[Inspiring quality youth work – Using indicators to strengthen the quality of youth work](#)

[Youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European Union – Handbook for implementation](#)



## Indicator 44

### *Have you established when – and how – this information has to be collected?*

To carry out a quality evaluation, you must identify not only what kind of data you need but also when these are going to be collected and by what methods.

As for the timing, there are certain types of information that can only be gathered at specific phases of the project and if you leave it too late, you may find that you have missed the opportunity for good. This goes especially for so-called baseline information, where you gather information on the situation before the project is implemented, so that you can compare it with the situation afterwards to assess progress. Also, much important information can only be collected during the implementation phase when participants are abroad, for example how certain learning processes function.

In some projects, participants are recruited from a large geographical area (for example, national or regional level) and split up as a group afterwards and each go their way. If you are, for example, requiring the participants to write a report of their experiences, it may be very hard to get everybody to do so once they are back in their own environments and occupied with all sorts of other things. It may save you a lot of trouble if you gather them together on the last day of the stay and make them sit down and write the report. In this way, you are sure to get the information from everybody, and you (or a team member) may be present to guide them through the process and ensure they provide answers to all of the points required. Alternatively, you may organise a virtual meeting after homecoming, in which case you must ensure that all have access to relevant technology but there is, of course, no guarantee that they will log on at the time of the meeting.

There are many methods you can use to collect the information you need for the evaluation. The most common ones are:

- ▶ interviews (with participants, team members and actors);
- ▶ questionnaires and surveys;
- ▶ document analysis (e.g. of participants' final reports or logbooks written during the stay);
- ▶ observations on-site of project activities;
- ▶ presentations and discussions in plenary.

There is, in principle, no difference between the kind of methods you use for a large research project and a small youth mobility project but their use can be more or less sophisticated depending on the competences and resources available to those carrying out the evaluation. Anyway – there are plenty of sources where you can find help and advice, as well as practical examples for your evaluation.

Depending on which aspects you want to evaluate, some methods are more suited than others. Most projects do not restrict themselves to one method but use a mix of methods to ensure a higher degree of validity and reliability of the evaluation.

[Desk research – The value of learning mobility and its impact on communities](#)

[Evaluation – The SALTO-YOUTH way](#)

## Indicator 45



### *Have you identified platforms where your evaluation results can be shared with others?*

The evaluation of your project gives you valuable knowledge about what came out of it, what worked and what did not work – knowledge you can use to produce even better quality the next time you organise a learning mobility project. However, this knowledge is not only useful for you but also for others who are planning (or just thinking about) doing something similar. Therefore, you should not just keep the evaluation report in your drawer but make sure that the results of your work are made available to others, so that they can learn from your successes (and failures).

Probably you have already circulated the evaluation report among your partners and associates, and all of those who in some function or other were involved in the project. To reach a wider audience, you should, as a next step, ensure that it is available on the website of your organisation and those of your project partners. In an even bigger perspective, there are dedicated European platforms and websites you can use to reach a much larger circle of potential beneficiaries. This may require translating the report – in which case it may be more cost-effective to translate the main conclusions and give your contact information, so that anyone interested can get in touch for further details. You can find some relevant web-based platforms below but if you deal with special target groups or subjects, there may be other, more specialised ones, that are equally suitable. Incidentally, when you visit these platforms, you may also find much useful knowledge and material that you can exploit for your next project.

Before you share your evaluation with people from outside the project context, you should check whether it contains any sensitive information about specific persons or organisations that should not be shared with a wider public. If it does, make sure to delete it. If you are in doubt about what sensitive information is, you can always check with the GDPR.

Sharing the outcomes of your project means that the potential impact may reach well beyond the participants and organisations involved, spreading like ripples in the water. It also means that, in a European perspective, the overall quality of learning mobility is heightened, because energy is freed to develop practices further, rather than reinventing what has already been developed by others.

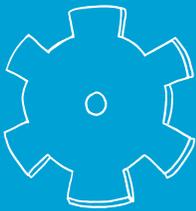
#### **Making waves: more impact with your projects**

Platforms and networks to share your evaluation results: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects>, [www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/eacea-platforms\\_en](http://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/eacea-platforms_en) and [www.salto-youth.net/](http://www.salto-youth.net/)

#### **General Data Protection Regulation**



# DIMENSION – FORMAL FRAMEWORK



Section: agreements

Section: insurance

Section: visa



# Dimension – Formal framework

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**A**re the necessary agreements with all the actors in the project in place and properly documented? Have you considered the environmental impact of your activities? Are participants covered in the event of accident and illness? Is everybody formally entitled to participate?

## Section: agreements



As part of the planning and implementation of a project, you will need to make a number of agreements with participants, partners and others involved: about things to be done, timetables to be respected, rules of behaviour to be adhered to, resources to be provided, funding that must be forthcoming, responsibilities assumed, and so on. There are always two parties to an agreement and all of them must be 100% conscious about what they are agreeing to and what it implies.

You may have complete trust in the person or organisation you make an agreement with but even then, agreements need to be specified and precise, and they should be in writing. Memories may play tricks on people, words may be understood differently, and the person you originally made the agreement with may have left the organisation and another has taken their place.

There are four indicators in this section.

### Indicator 46



*Do you have a clear, written agreement with your main partner(s), setting out the timetable, deliverables, workload, financial arrangements and responsibilities?*

Trust is an essential feature of any learning mobility project. No matter how well you have planned and agreed on everything, there will always be the unforeseen happenings which force you to deviate from the original scheme of things, and where you must rely on your partners' willingness and ability to improvise and find the best solution under the circumstances. But even so, clear, written agreements on all important aspects of the implementation are vital in the quality assurance of your project.

There are a number of good reasons for drawing up written agreements on all major issues regarding timing, deliverables, distribution of workload, financial arrangements and responsibilities. First of all, it makes it crystal clear who is doing what and when, and on the basis of what budget. Relying on the spoken word alone is not enough, as memories may be faulty and words may mean different things to different people. Second, the people you are making the arrangements with may not be the ones who are actually doing the job; or organisational changes or illness may

mean that the person with whom you originally made the deal is no longer around when the project starts. A detailed list outlining timetable, tasks and responsibilities will ensure that there are no misunderstandings.

It is up to you how formal you want to be in this respect. If you want to be absolutely on the safe side, you draw up a proper contract (or something similar), which is printed out and signed by both you and your partner(s). With smaller projects or partners you know very well, you can just draw up a list after your negotiations and send it by e-mail with the request that your partner acknowledges receipt and states their agreement with the contents.

The most common reasons for arguments between partners are of a financial nature and often arise when things do not go as planned. One quite frequent complication happens because many funding schemes allocate money on the basis of the number of participants, which means that your budget is cut accordingly if one or more participants suddenly decide in the last moment to stay at home or cannot go for any other reason. If your funding is predicated on this condition, it will be very helpful to include in your agreement what effects this has on your financial arrangements – for example, whether sums are fixed or liable to change with the number of participants actually involved. Also, you should agree on whether the money is paid upfront, in instalments or after the project is over.

Erasmus+ partnership agreement examples:

[Inter-institutional agreements](#)

[Internal partnership agreement template](#)

[Documents and guidelines](#)



## **Indicator 47**

***Do you have clear, written agreements with all other actors involved?***

What is valid for your main partners is also valid for all other actors involved in your project. While some cultures are prone to work on the basis of oral contracts, in the framework of European or international projects it is strongly recommended to work solely with written contracts and agreements.

Your funders will usually provide you with their own contract explaining the detailed rule of financing for your project: the eligible costs, the eligibility period, the deliverables and outcomes they expect, the reporting and administrative rules, the details of the grant instalments. If they do not offer such a contract at the beginning, you might want to look for templates, for example the Erasmus+ contract between the European Commission and beneficiaries, and offer to establish such a contract.

Contracts with all service providers, such as accommodation providers, catering or rental for rooms or equipment, should clearly indicate precise terms for the service to be provided and rules for conflict resolution. They should indicate the nature and date of the service, the conditions for payment and cancellation. If some elements seem unclear to you, never hesitate to ask clarifications and offer to add precisions

in the contract. Respecting these basic rules of contracting will greatly reduce the risk of bad surprises with your service providers and will allow you to plan a more accurate budget before your activity.

Agreements with host families or placement organisations are particularly important as the participants are at the core of these agreements. They should carefully list the responsibilities of each party regarding both the logistical dimension and the learning dimension of the activity. From the minimum quality standards for accommodation and catering to the support given to the learning process of the participants, these agreements should be clearly understood and signed by the organising partner, the hosting organisation or family and the participant.

Inter-institutional agreement

## Indicator 48



*Do you have clear, written agreements with all participants concerning rights and responsibilities, rules of conduct, possible contributions, etc.?*

The participants' commitment to the mobility activity should be established through a clear and written agreement to avoid misunderstandings or arguments regarding their rights and responsibilities, to promote better recognition and facilitation, and to ensure that all the rules of appropriate behaviour, including those related to personal data protection and possible contributions are known and agreed by all.

A useful practice to guarantee quality in mobility projects is to create the agreements together with the participants or go through them together, depending on the activity. They should be agreed on to ensure they are fully known and understood. This process allows for a stronger sense of shared and individual rights and responsibilities regarding the activity, and clarifies the participation conditions and the quality standards to be ensured.

There is a standard volunteering and active citizenship agreement in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps that provides a good example of the information that should be included in your main agreement with the participants regarding rights and responsibilities. It contains clear information about technical, logistical and financial support from the organisations to the participant, detailed information about the duration of the activity, insurance, other forms of support such as linguistic support and preparation, and, of course, information about the role, tasks and duties of the participant regarding the project itself and its administration.

Some organisations have developed different types of code of conduct or social contracts for their learning mobility activities and you can find good examples online. They usually list the basic rights and responsibilities of participants such as attending all the sessions and being respectful of each other, for example, and any other information regarding possible contributions of the participants. The collaborative creation of such a social contract with your participant(s), before starting the activity or during a session on the first day of the programme where all participants can sign at the end of the session, can be a relevant way to create this shared sense of responsibility.

Volunteering agreement example

European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

Privacy statement



## Indicator 49

*Do all minors participating in the project have signed permission from their parents/guardians to participate in the activity?*

In some countries, it is a legal requirement that minors (underage participants) have a signed document from their parents/guardians that they are allowed to participate in transnational activities. In other countries, presenting a valid identity document (ID card, passport) of a minor is accepted as sufficient proof that the parents are aware of the activity abroad. If in doubt, always check the legal requirements of both sending and hosting country before departure.

No matter what the legal requirements are, requesting signed permission from the parents/guardians of minors participating in your activity is strongly recommended for three reasons. First, it will clear away all doubt and uncertainties which may arise during the activity – for example, if the participant has to be hospitalised or in contacts with the police. Second, should any dispute between parents/guardians and your organisation arise because of something that has happened during the activity, this will clearly allocate responsibility. Third, drawing up and signing such a document could be a good opportunity to engage with the parents/guardians and make them partners in the project.

In most projects involving minors, the organisers elaborate a standard consent form that is signed by parents and/or guardians. The signed permission should contain as a minimum: the full name of the participant, their relevant ID details (for example, passport number), the dates and place(s), the nature of the activity, how data rights protection will be guaranteed (GDPR), the use of photos and/or videos, etc. It should also include the name of the youth leader(s) in charge of looking after the participants during the activity. It should be signed by at least one of the parents/guardians and accompanied by a copy of the participant's ID and the parent's/guardian's ID. In case you have any doubt, for example regarding the validity of the signature, you can always contact parents/guardians directly.

You could also use this consent form to ask additional information about dietary requirements or allergies, any medication/counselling that the young person is taking, name and contact details of the family doctor, agreement with the ground rules and sanctions if breached, understanding of the extent and limitations of the insurance.

It is recommended to collect all documents before the activity and to digitalise them so you are able to present at least a digital copy when needed.

Documents for minors travelling in the EU

Risk assessment, safety and youth exchange programmes – Good practices

Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment

## Section: insurance



It is not immediately obvious why the quality framework contains indicators on insurance, for what does this subject have to do with learning? The answer to this question is: directly, nothing at all – indirectly, perhaps quite a lot.

In its essence, learning mobility is basically about cutting oneself adrift and leaving one's comfort zone for something new, something unknown. Being out of the comfort zone must, however, never develop into a basic feeling of insecurity, for high levels of stress and worries are not conducive to learning. To learn, people must have a feeling that, even though they are out of their depth, the situation is still manageable. For this reason, it is important to know that in the event of something really serious happening, there is a safety net to catch you before hitting the ground. Then you do not need to engage in energy-consuming worries but can concentrate on other things. The necessary insurance – both for physical and mental health and accident/liability – must therefore be in place and the participants must be aware of it.

There are three indicators in this section.

### Indicator 50



*Are all participants and team members adequately covered by health insurance beyond what is conferred by national schemes?*

Before going abroad with your mobility project, you need to make sure that all participants, team members and accompanying persons are adequately covered for medical treatment in the event of illness or accident. Key issues here are where you live (place of residence) and where you are going to.

Citizens and/or residents of the 27 EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, are covered by national health insurance schemes in their home countries. It is not your nationality as such but your country of residence that guarantees your coverage – so if you have a residence permit you will be fine, even though you come from a third country.

When travelling abroad within other countries in the above group, you need a European Health Insurance Card (the “blue card”),<sup>1</sup> which is issued free of charge by the national health authorities of your country of residence but has certain limitations, both in terms of coverage and of who can obtain it. With this card, you are covered under the same conditions and at the same cost as people insured in the country you visit. The coverage of national health insurance differs from country to country in Europe – also within the EU – and what is free in one may cost money in another. If you want cover over and above what the host country can offer, or if you want costs for treatment in private clinics and hospitals, you need to take out special (private) insurance.

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1. Since Brexit, the European Health Insurance Card card is no longer blue in the UK but with a Union Jack.

This European Health Insurance Card it is not an alternative to travel insurance. There are certain types of services that are not covered, the most important being repatriation (the price of transporting you home if you have to return prematurely because of illness or accident). Also, it does not cover private healthcare and in many cases psychological help is not included. It is possible to take out extra insurance covering these eventualities and you need to decide whether you want to pay for this extra expense to get this additional coverage.

You need to be covered by the national health insurance scheme of your country of residence and this may not be the case for some groups (for example, asylum seekers). You will therefore need to check if all participants and team members are covered and ensure that they get the European Health Insurance Card before going abroad. If not, you need to take out full-coverage insurance for them.

In case you travel outside of the above-mentioned countries, the European Health Insurance Card provides no coverage and health insurance is absolutely mandatory. If somebody from your project falls seriously ill or an accident occurs, the costs may be astronomical. Additional health insurance need not be very costly and some participants may already be covered by their own insurance arrangements.

The information given above is liable to change and you should always check the current situation. You can use the following links to do this:

[Guide to national social security systems in Europe](#)

[European Health Insurance Card](#)



## Indicator 51

*Are all participants and team members adequately covered by insurance for accidents and liability, both when involved in project activities and in their spare time?*

In addition to health insurance, there are also other types of insurance that are relevant when participating in mobility projects.

**Accident insurance** covers costs that arise if you have an accident. Often, medical treatment is covered by health insurance and the accident insurance covers extra expenses – it may, for instance, give you compensation in the event of lasting injuries or cover participation in what are considered dangerous sports (like mountain climbing if, for example, you need to be evacuated by helicopter from a mountain top). Accident insurance often comes in a full-time version covering 24/7 and a free-time version that only covers leisure-time activities (that is, outside of work).

**Liability insurance** covers costs for damage that you may inflict on a third party – for instance, if you happen to set fire to somebody's house and it burns down to the ground. Needless to say, this is an extremely important insurance, as even a small act like building a campfire can have enormous economic consequences that may haunt you for the rest of your life, if you are considered responsible for the damages caused by a fire spreading. Like accident insurance, liability insurance often comes in a full-time and a free-time version. Note that if the activity involves placements in enterprises, the participants may (in some but not all cases) be covered by the enterprise's insurance.

There may be differences in the situation depending on your status – whether you are a participant or an accompanying team member. Accompanying team members are – if they are employed by the organisation in charge of the project – often covered by their employer’s accident and liability insurance, also when abroad. Anyway, remember that all need to be adequately covered.

Costs for accident and liability insurance vary considerably depending on the type of activity you are engaged in. Also, there may be significant differences in coverage between insurance schemes. If this is the first time you are organising a mobility project, you may find the insurance question extremely complicated to deal with. Fortunately, there is advice and guidance available, often from funding bodies (like national agencies for the Erasmus+ programme and European Solidarity Corps). You may also contact other, more experienced project organisers to hear what they are doing in similar situations to yours.

National agencies

## Indicator 52



*Are details about the insurance known to relevant team members, so that they can take appropriate action if needed?*

Having the right kind of insurance coverage is not enough. You also need to ensure that key team members and participants know what to do in the event of some kind of calamity that involves (or may involve) insurance claims. These often require that specific action is taken or documentation provided and if this is not done on the spot, it may not be possible to catch up on this later, and the claim may be considered invalid.

The exact details of what is required are in most cases described in the written material accompanying the insurance policy. You should go through this carefully together with other accompanying staff (and, if needed, participants) and ensure that everybody knows the correct procedure if anything happens. Depending on the situation, this may, for example, entail getting documentation for costs incurred in connection with treatment (invoices, etc.), contacting the police and obtaining copies of police reports, alerting the insurance company, filling in claims forms, and so on.

It may be a good idea to do some contingency planning, draw up a short list of relevant situations and go through each of these with the team to clearly establish what to do, if, for example, someone from the project:

- ▶ needs to go to the doctor or hospital for emergency treatment;
- ▶ needs to be hospitalised;
- ▶ needs psychological help;
- ▶ has luggage or personal belongings stolen;
- ▶ falls victim to a violent crime;
- ▶ needs to return prematurely for family reasons;
- ▶ causes damage to an object belonging to the host family or organisation.

As well as establishing what to do, you should also clearly indicate who will be doing it, so that you avoid a situation where vital actions are not performed or documentation not collected because everybody thinks that somebody else is doing it.

If you send out unaccompanied individuals or groups, you need to do the same and ensure that both participants and relevant persons from the hosting environment are aware of correct procedures regarding insurance matters.



## Section: visa

The issue about visas is a very practical one. When travelling within Europe, visas are usually not needed, unless you have a nationality from a country outside of Europe. The fact that someone lives in a European country may still mean that they require a visa to travel within Europe – for example, if they have a refugee or immigrant status from a country where visas are required. Consequently, you must always ensure what the situation is concerning the country you are going to and the status of the participants. Considering Covid-19, you should also check the country's requirements in case of an epidemic/pandemic situation (documentation of vaccination, etc.). Someone who is denied access at the border of the host country and has to return home will experience no learning.

The information below are common guidelines – always check with relevant sources (for example, embassies) about correct procedures in concrete cases.

There are two indicators in this section.



### Indicator 53

#### *Do any participants require a visa to enter the host country?*

A visa is a sticker affixed to a travel document (for example, a passport) which gives your participants the right to enter and remain for a certain period of time in the host country. There are two types of visa: short-stay visas (less than three months) and long-stay visas and/or a residence permits (more than three months); each has different requirements and rules. Visas are generally not required for EU nationals travelling within the EU but if your participants come from a non-EU country or are non-EU nationals, a visa may be required.

To avoid risks and last-minute unpleasant surprises (at the airport, border or police station), you should do the following well in advance of departure.

- ▶ Go through the nationalities of all participants in your project and check the visa requirements (NB resident is not the same as national – you may be a resident in one EU country and still need a visa to travel to another, if you have a non-EU nationality).
- ▶ Check with the embassy or consulate of the hosting country which kind of authorisations and permits are required in relation to your project (duration, status of your participants as students, volunteers, trainees, trainers, researchers, etc.).

- ▶ Check if the host country has special agreements for youth mobility activities with the other countries involved in the project (for example, working holiday agreements).
- ▶ Check the validity of participants' travel documents before departure (sometimes ID cards or passports must be valid for at least three to six months beyond the date of departure and issued within the last 10 years).

Bear in mind that each country has specific conditions and that, at the same time, the EU has established a common visa policy for stays (no more than 90 days in any period of 180 days) and transits through the international transit areas of airports of the Schengen states. In case your participants have a Schengen visa and wish to visit any of the EU countries outside the Schengen area (e.g. Ireland), you normally need to apply for a separate national visa.

[EU immigration portal](#)

[Schengen area](#)

[Global approach to migration and mobility](#)

[Examples of visas](#)

## Indicator 54



*Is it clear who does what and when in relation to obtaining visas and who covers the costs?*

Getting a visa is not something that should be left to the last moment, just before the participants are about to travel. For one thing, the procedure may take a long time (several weeks or at times even months) and different countries follow different procedures. Secondly, the procedure contains several steps and requires the involvement of several people – notably the organisations in charge and, of course, the relevant participant(s). Therefore, it is imperative that the procedure is co-ordinated and monitored, and that the responsibility for overseeing the different steps (and taking appropriate action) is clearly allocated.

The first step is invariably to check the visa requirements of the countries involved, which can be done either through embassies or consulates or via websites (your Ministry of Foreign Affairs may have a website with relevant information). This is as a rule the responsibility of the project organiser. Depending on what the requirements are or how the situation develops, there are several other steps where responsibilities must be clearly allocated.

- ▶ Who will prepare the official documents (in some cases, an official invitation letter is required to document the project's purpose and details of the stay, for example information on context, organisation or institution in charge, aims, venue and dates, accommodation details in the host country, travel arrangements, security and medical insurance, coverage of other expenses)?
- ▶ Who will sign these documents as legally responsible for the participants (in case you have participants under 18 years old, remember that the parent or legal tutor should sign, too)?

- ▶ Who will support participants in their visa application process in each partner organisation and who will check to see whether it has been done on time?
- ▶ Who will submit the applications, including booking an appointment at the embassy or consulate (if needed)?
- ▶ Who will be in charge of contacting embassies or consulates to follow up on visa applications (or make enquiries in case the visa is refused)?
- ▶ Who will pay the visa fee (and/or the offices of a service provider if need be) and when will it be done; and, in case the fee will be reimbursed, who will take charge of this and when will it be done?

The amount of the visa fee can change depending on the country of origin of your participants or the country of destination. On top of the visa fee, however, you also need to consider that applicants may, in some instances, be requested to pay an additional service fee. Visas can often be obtained electronically but in some cases a personal appearance is required, which means that some participants may need to travel to the capital of their own country, or even to a neighbouring country, to obtain the visa in the embassy or consulate of the hosting country.

In many (if not most) funding schemes, costs for visas are a justified expenditure, which means that you can include them in your budget and cover them from the grant. Make sure that participants keep receipts for any expenses they have had in connection with obtaining visas, in case these are needed to document any claims later.

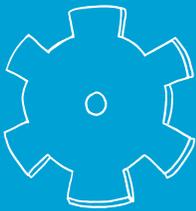
[EU immigration portal](#)

[Schengen, borders and visas](#)

[Schengen visa fees](#)

[Refugee and migrant integration into education and training](#)

# DIMENSION – RESOURCES



Section: financing

Section: logistical requirements

Section: team



# Dimension – Resources

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**D**o you have enough money to do what needs to be done? Are all requirements concerning physical space, accommodation and transport met? Does your team have the necessary competences to support the learning process of participants and ensure their well-being?

## Section: financing

Financing is a crucial framework condition, for a lack of money or insecurity concerning financial issues can ruin your project. You need to guarantee that the necessary funding is there and have a full overview of the situation at all times to ensure that there are adequate means to cover all project costs. There are many programmes and schemes that offer grants to mobility projects but they usually only offer co-financing and you will have to obtain the remaining funds from elsewhere or from your own sources – for example through participant contributions.

There are six indicators in this section.

### Indicator 55

*Have you prepared a detailed and comprehensive budget for the activity?*

Once you start applying for funding, your potential financial backers will usually want a budget from you to see that your project is realistic, namely that there is a balance between expected income and expenditures, and that the money is earmarked for activities serving the purpose of the project (accountability). At the end of the project, you will usually need to submit – on the basis of your budget – a so-called statement of accounts that shows how the money was actually spent.

However, it is not just for the sake of the funder that you should prepare a budget: it is an absolutely crucial tool for you in the planning and day-to-day management of your project. Initially, your budget will tell you how much money you have at your disposal and what the planned costs of the activities are, and by following up on this on the way, you are able to monitor expenses and react if items of expenditure start to grow beyond the amounts you had initially allocated. This will allow you to avoid unpleasant surprises – for instance, bills going unpaid, your project/organisation running up a deficit, or that you have to scrap certain activities or shorten the project because the coffers are empty.

Budgets do not necessarily require sophisticated accountancy expertise. It is a lot about common sense and in most cases, a simple spreadsheet should be enough to present and monitor your budget, listing project income in one column and expenditure in another. However, make sure that it is detailed and comprehensive



enough to give you the kind of monitoring information you need. If you require some inputs on how to structure your budget, some funding schemes have issued guidelines that can help you in the process.

Other than this, there are a few technical issues you need to bear in mind when preparing your budget.

- ▶ Many funding schemes have rules for eligibility of costs, which means that certain types of expenditure cannot be covered. Check these rules and ensure that all your cost items respect them.
- ▶ Some funders may accept so-called contributions in kind as co-funding (such as unpaid work or training facilities you can use for free). It means that you can assess their value and put this into the budget but there are often strict rules that you need to know and observe.
- ▶ Very often, your funders will impose an eligibility period, namely the period of time where you can spend money in relation to the project. Make sure that you respect these limits. Expenditures incurred outside of this period cannot be taken into account.
- ▶ Also, as part of the monitoring process, make sure to keep documentation (invoices, etc.) for all expenditures, so that you can prove where the money went if your accounts are audited afterwards.

Erasmus+ programme guide



## Indicator 56

*Is the funding available adequate in the light of the objectives of the activity and the nature of the target group?*

The nature of your activities and the target group can have a substantial impact on your budget and funding. Obviously, you will need to match your ambitions in terms of outcomes and your budget to ensure the quality of these outcomes.

For example, while young participants might be very happy to share large dorms in a hostel, older participants, such as experienced youth workers, might require different accommodation standards. The language level of the participants in your activities might vary a lot from one activity to another, and you might sometimes need to include translation and interpretation costs. Special needs must be addressed and sometimes come at a cost; this should be planned for in your funding efforts.

The nature of your activity must also be taken into account. Some mobility activities are relatively costless in terms of materials: a few flip charts, pens, papers and Post-its might be sufficient. But if you organise an activity on digital media making, you might need to buy or rent computers, cameras and editing software which will substantially increase your budget.

In many cases, the available funding is calculated in unit costs (such as for most Erasmus+ mobility activities), which means the available funding will be fixed depending on predetermined amounts reflecting the number of days and participants, and

not calculated on your real planned budget. You will need to either ensure your budget remains within the given limit or find additional funding sources if your activity is costlier than the allocated unit costs.

## T-KIT 1 – Organisational management

### Indicator 57



*Do you have clear agreements with the funding providers concerning amounts, coverage and situations where funding can be cut?*

When working with European funders such as the European Commission (through the Erasmus+ programme or European Solidarity Corps) or the Council of Europe (through the European Youth Foundation), you will get very precise rules with standard agreements outlining conditions and limitations. In many other cases, no such agreements or contracts with your co-funders will be initially available or you will have to agree on them. Make sure these contracts are equally clear and precise.

You need to read funding agreements carefully and note any possible limitations on using this funding. In many cases, the funding can only be spent on certain budget items and not on others and it is important to be aware of this, especially if funding comes from several sources. Also, make sure you understand how it is allocated: as a lump sum for the project, or as so-called flat rates tied to factors like duration and numbers of participants. You – and your partners – should have a clear understanding of all the implications of all the articles in the funding agreements you are signing, including:

- ▶ eligible and non-eligible costs;
- ▶ possibilities of transferring costs between budget items;
- ▶ eligibility period;
- ▶ rules for reporting;
- ▶ necessary documents;
- ▶ how and under what circumstances funding can be cut;
- ▶ rules for settling conflicts with the funder;
- ▶ etc.

If problems and conflicts arise, in the absence of a clear (signed) agreement between you and your providers of funding or services, you may find yourself in situations where your project is put at risk and where the mutual trust between you and your partners is broken.

### Indicator 58



*Do you have signed agreements or memoranda of understanding with partners, teams and hosting organisation, clearly stating financial details and a timeline of the financing and reimbursement process?*

While signed agreements are absolutely necessary with your funders and service providers, you might be tempted to work only with oral agreements with your trusted

partners and teams. To ensure the trust remains solid, it is strongly recommended to also sign agreements even with your closest partners. This will avoid misunderstanding of responsibilities and a great deal of potential conflict.

These agreements should detail:

- ▶ the mutual responsibilities in the preparation, implementation, evaluation and reporting of the project (which partner is doing which tasks);
- ▶ the financial details (precise budgets for activities, who is in charge of paying what, who is in charge of contributing financially or materially to the project);
- ▶ the timeline of the financing and reimbursement process (when is the money going to be transferred to partners and upon which conditions);
- ▶ the proposed mechanism to handle (legal) conflict resolution and unexpected events (fewer participants or participants dropping out, activity being cancelled, unforeseen exceptional costs, etc.).

Many examples of partnership agreements can easily be found online. Do not hesitate to find a standard one and adjust it to the co-operation with your partners. It can help to increase trust and transparency with your partners if these agreements are built in co-operation with them, including their feedback on the agreement you will sign together.

Examples of partnership agreements:

[Internal partnership agreement template](#)



## Indicator 59

*Is it clear to participants before departure what financial contributions they need to make (if any)?*

Requiring participants to make a financial contribution to the project may mean that some young people (and perhaps those most in need of the experience) are unable to participate but many projects are forced to operate with user payments as a source of income to meet budget needs.

Often these contributions are direct and very visible in the form of a participant fee taken at the moment of signing up but they may also be indirect and, so to speak, buried in the project – for example, if participants are required to pay for local transport themselves, or if certain activities within the project require some form of payment from participants. And bear in mind any unforeseen costs related to health (check what is covered by insurance), fines, etc.

It is essential that potential participants are fully informed of the contribution they are expected to make. The information should be clearly stated in the call for participants, as well as in the first message you send to the selected participants. This is also an advantage for you in the long run, as it may dampen participants' motivation considerably if they sign up and later find out that there are hidden costs in the project set-up.

If you work with participants from economically deprived backgrounds, you may be able to apply for additional funding from some funding schemes and these may

be used to cover planned participant fees. This does not just happen because you tick the box disadvantaged or fewer opportunities on your application form – you will in most cases be required to argue your point, backing it up with concrete data. Check out the funding possibilities in the schemes you are targeting and see if they contain such provisions.

Also, there may be grant opportunities at local and regional level where individual participants in difficult circumstances can apply for funds to cover their participation. If you know of such grant opportunities, make sure to pass this information on to relevant participants.

## Indicator 60



### *Are participants required to demonstrate their commitment prior to departure?*

Financial contributions from participants need not only be dictated by budgetary motives. Some organisers use these payments as a means to probe their commitment to the project: if participants are prepared to lay out a sum of money in order to be included, chances are that they are serious about participating and will not change their mind at the last moment before departure (with possible disastrous consequences for the budget, if grant support is calculated as a flat rate per participant).

This way of proceeding is perfectly permissible, especially when it is used to cover real expenses (such as for non-refundable flight tickets) rather than, for example, creating a profit but it does run the risk of functioning as an unofficial sorting mechanism, which may deter participants from less affluent backgrounds from participating. In case it is more about showing commitment rather than meeting budget needs, it may therefore be replaced by inputs which require the participants to supply other resources than money, for example their time and effort.

Some examples of this could be:

- ▶ participating in one or more preparation events, possibly over weekends or in the evening, which requires participants to give up their free time and invest it in the project;
- ▶ taking part in fundraising activities and events which generate income for the project in lieu of participant contributions;
- ▶ spending time and energy making presentations or gathering information that can be used in the preparation process.

In many cases, such activities will not just demonstrate commitment but may also actively contribute to creating motivation and a positive atmosphere.

## Section: logistical requirements



The indicators covering this section concern factors in the physical environment of the learning venues, whether at home (for example, in connection with preparation and debriefing activities) or abroad (meeting rooms, classrooms, placement venues, etc.). It involves the most obvious factors – including equipment needed for the planned activities – but there will probably be other factors and issues in connection

with the logistical requirements precisely for your project that are not mentioned. As an overriding factor, you should consider the environmental aspects – your carbon footprint – in any decisions you make.

As for all other indicators in the quality framework, these are not meant as detailed and exhaustive inventories but points for reflection that you need to think about in your context.

There are nine indicators in this section.



## Indicator 61

*Is adequate physical space available for the whole duration of the activity – not just during the stay abroad but also before (preparation) and after (debriefing)?*

As part of the planning process, it is important to reflect carefully on the requirements and conditions of the physical space(s) you will need for all stages of your learning project (before, during and after). For this reason, you need to be as clear and precise as possible when considering the project needs, both at your own end (for pre-departure preparation and debriefing activities) and at the location(s) in the host country. At the same time, and regarding the kind of activities you intend to carry out, you will need to communicate the requirements to all partners involved.

Learning environments have a direct impact on the way participants experience the project, and the design of the spaces and formats can help them engage in active and participative learning. For these to be adequate is a matter of space, arrangements, accessibility, comfort, sensory awareness, technology, availability, safety and sustainability, and you need to guarantee all of these.

Each of your project activities will have different requirements. For example, for the preparation and debriefing activities you may need one consistent meeting space or more in case you want to change it regularly (to practise different methods of seating in a workshop, interact with the local community, etc.); or for the debriefing and follow-up you may need safe spaces for presentations in the local community.

For some sessions, you will require a room that can fit in a circle of chairs for twice the number of expected participants to give them the necessary flexibility; in others you will require an auditorium where participants just sit – in which case it is merely a matter of securing the space with the right dimensions. If you also intend to divide the participants into smaller working groups – or just have the possibility to do this – you may need to arrange additional rooms or spaces to allow these to take place satisfactorily. And for the trainers and facilitators involved, you will probably need a separate room where they can meet and discuss, prepare sessions and store material.

Sometimes, the activities may include a lot of physical movement in an outdoor space, so you will need access to outdoor sports facilities or to a lawn or garden where it is possible for participants to relax between sessions. Check the availability in terms of access and make sure you can use the rooms or places at all times in safe conditions.

[Innovative learning environments](#)

[Youthpass learning agora report](#)



## Indicator 62

*Is the space adequate for the needs of the project in terms of size, natural light, equipment and heating/cooling system?*

Size is one but not the only factor to consider when reflecting on and planning for your requirements in terms of physical space, including when you combine online and hybrid activities within your project. If you are in a basement room with no windows and only artificial light, it will affect participants' well-being and energy levels, especially if you are confined there for many hours during the day. It does not mean that basement rooms cannot be used, for example, for preparation or debriefing activities, but it has an influence on your activities and it means that you may need to include more breaks during sessions, where participants can come up and see the daylight, or can recover from virtual fatigue.

In a situation where artificial light is required, you should ensure that this is adequate for what you are doing; for example, that it is strong enough for participants to be able to read in the room and/or on the computers without straining their eyes.

Depending on your destination, you may also want to formulate specific requirements concerning heating and cooling. If participants are either too cold or too hot, their ability to concentrate on the tasks they are doing will be impaired. It is difficult to formulate absolute requirements for what is too hot or too cold but it is worth checking beforehand whether there is, for example, air conditioning or heating installed on the premises, so that you can regulate these according to your needs and sustainability criteria.

Also, it is extremely important to ensure that any equipment you need for your activities is there and readily available, so that you can make the necessary arrangements if it is not. This does not only involve furniture (tables and chairs) but may also include items like:

- ▶ black- and whiteboards;
- ▶ flipcharts;
- ▶ overhead projectors (beamers);
- ▶ computers (or do you need to bring your own?);
- ▶ Wi-Fi access;
- ▶ pens, pencils and paper;
- ▶ printer and loudspeaker;
- ▶ equipment for online meetings.

Last, but certainly not least, you should always make sure that all necessary equipment and facilities to ensure the safety, security, health and well-being of participants on the premises – in the event of fire, natural disasters, lack of electricity, etc. – are in place and arrangements are made with adequate concern for their effects on the environment.

T-KIT 13 – Sustainability and youth work

Greening the youth sector – Sustainability checklist



## Indicator 63

*Are the physical space and the overall environment suitable for achieving the learning objectives without any obstacles?*

The venue should be at the service of your project's requirements and not the other way round. You may discover certain restrictions when deciding about the physical space and location – in terms of funds, partners' abilities, or the availability of premises and equipment for the development of the activities – but basically, the conditions must be conducive to achieving the learning objectives. In case they are not, you will need to rethink your project and make other choices.

Here are some questions regarding your reflections on space and environment with some particular learning objectives:

### Intercultural competences

- ▶ Do the facilities allow for genuine interaction with the norms and environment of the host country?
- ▶ Will participants have the space and facilities to meet and interact meaningfully with peer groups (i.e. other young people of roughly the same status) in the host country?

### Personal competences

- ▶ Is there space for participants to sit and reflect – alone and in groups, and without being disturbed – on problems they encounter during the stay?
- ▶ Is there a room available for individual talks and discussions between participants, and facilitators and trainers?

### Vocational skills and competences

- ▶ Is the relevant technical equipment needed for the learning process there and is it available for participants?
- ▶ Are the necessary health and safety requirements in place?

Some spaces will be suitable for one type of learning objectives or competence areas but might not cater for achieving the others. In such cases, more attention would need to be given to supporting particular learning. At the same time, to carry out the activities needed to achieve the project's learning objectives, you must take the following elements into account:

- ▶ rooms and equipment (acoustics, noise levels, temperatures, etc.);
- ▶ layout of the rooms and limitations placed on the use of these (visibility, accessibility, etc.);
- ▶ distance between accommodation and venue of the project activities (public transport, canteen or cooking facilities, etc.);
- ▶ Wi-Fi or WLAN connections.

There are many other things which may become obstacles and therefore, a preparatory visit where you inspect the premises is always recommended, if your budget permits it. If not, it is always possible to ask for pictures or videos, so that potential obstacles can be identified.

### Greening youth information services

## Indicator 64



### *Is the workspace physically accessible to everyone?*

Accessibility (to buildings, toilets, meeting rooms and workspaces, including outdoor spaces and technology equipment) is an extremely important issue if you have participants in your group with physical disabilities – those who are blind or visually impaired, are wheelchair users, have hearing problems or some kind of mobility impairment. If you have not checked the conditions beforehand, it may mean that these persons cannot participate in all activities, or that their participation is limited.

Your standards of accessibility depend of course on the nature of the participants' impairments. Once you know the profile of your participants, you can decide whether access is an issue and draw up a checklist of things to consider. In case of wheelchair users, for instance, you may check things like:

- ▶ ramps for getting in and out of doors;
- ▶ the availability of lifts suitable for wheelchairs;
- ▶ adequate toilet facilities;
- ▶ seating arrangements that allow wheelchair users to participate in group meetings, conferences, seminars, etc.;
- ▶ aisles and corridors with sufficient width to allow wheelchairs to pass without blocking the way, etc.

These are just examples; very detailed checklists are available from various sources that you can use when looking into the issue from the perspective of your project's requirements (see below).

The best is if you are able to do a physical inspection of the venue(s) and see the conditions for yourself. If you are unable to do this, your partner can do it according to your specifications, or you can ask the venue to provide information – for example, in the form of photos of the rooms and facilities in question, or in the form of a list of the assistive technology devices that can be used.

Getting people in is one problem – getting them out again may be another. You should, during your inspection of the premises or your conversations with your partner, also look into the emergency evacuation procedures and facilities to make sure that this aspect is covered, too, for your participants.

### Accessibility checklist

What is assistive technology? And how do disabled people use the web?

## Indicator 65



### *Are all the equipment and materials necessary for the implementation of the activity available beforehand and at the appropriate moments?*

The equipment and materials necessary for the implementation of mobility activities can differ greatly from one activity to another: from a few Post-its and pens to more advanced equipment for sport or digital learning activities. However, if they are not

there on the day you need them, activities might be postponed or in some cases even cancelled, which may have consequences for the learning processes of participants.

Drawing up a checklist of the material and equipment needed, the required amounts and specifications, is the simplest tool to ensure that nothing goes missing at the beginning of your activity. Once you have an overview of your activities, it is usually a fairly simple task to make such a list but to ensure it is comprehensive, you can ask all involved in the organisation of the activity, such as trainers and facilitators, to write down their needs on a shared spreadsheet. This should also include immaterial equipment (for example, Wi-Fi access).

This spreadsheet should also provide information on who is responsible for providing the equipment and how: is it already provided on-site or do you need to bring it yourself? Do you have to rent it or buy it? If you have to go out and buy it, you may want to indicate the budget for this. Finally: what will be done with the remaining material at the end of the activity? What recycling and reusing strategies do you propose?

Checklists for equipment and material should be drawn up well in advance of the activities. Precisely how far in advance depends on the nature of the activity – whereas a flipchart and a couple of speed markers can be found at short notice, it may be more complicated with information technology (IT) equipment like laptops, printers, scanners, etc. In the case of expensive equipment, you should already know your exact requirements at the time of your funding application, as this may have budget implications.

When the material and equipment have to be used by several trainers and facilitators, you need to ensure that storage is done in a systematic way, so that everybody can find what they need. This means making rules for what is done with the equipment after each session (and by whom) and how it is stored (for example, neatly stacked on shelves rather than in one big pile on the floor). Access to a dedicated storage room is easily overlooked as a logistical requirement when looking for a venue but can prove very useful during your activity, for example if you need to provide your own computers.

For a large and complex activity, you can appoint one person in charge of managing equipment and material. Doing it that way, trainers and facilitators will know who to turn to in case they have any problems finding it or have specific needs and requests.



## Indicator 66

*Is adequate accommodation available for participants in line with needs and objectives?*

The choice of accommodation has an influence on how you achieve your project's objectives. If you just need somewhere for participants to sleep, a youth hostel may be an excellent option. However, if you want to ensure that participants have maximum exposure to the culture of the host country and the character of its inhabitants, individual home-stays (such as lodging with a family) are a more appropriate choice.

While the choice of accommodation is often driven primarily by availability and price, there are other elements you can take into account when selecting between different options:

- ▶ **accessibility:** you should be able to match the needs of all participants, in particular participants with disabilities and the accessibility of accommodation. And what about bathrooms and other facilities?
- ▶ **number of participants per room:** younger participants, for example in a youth exchange, might enjoy and benefit from sharing dorms, while more experienced professional youth workers taking part in a mobility activity might need a more private space.
- ▶ **availability of working space and common space:** mobility activities might require participants to gather and work after the day sessions to prepare for the next day or to socialise. In that case, you might want to ensure the accommodation venue also offers common working and get-together spaces.

In the specific case of outdoor and travelling activities which can involve sleeping at a camp site, you should check more precisely the services offered and the level of comfort and privacy the participants can expect. Once all details are known, inform all participants of the accommodation standards they can expect.

In general, a discrepancy between expectation and reality regarding the standards of accommodation runs a high risk of negative attitudes, which can result in a sub-optimal learning experience. In this case, early and accurate information is key.

At all stages of the preparation process, you should of course keep the well-being of the participants in mind and ensure, first and foremost, that the selected accommodation allows for a restful sleep that will ensure participants are fully engaged in the daytime activities.

Good practice: [Mundo Matongé](#)

## Indicator 67

*Are the accommodation and working venues within an appropriate distance of each other?*



The constraints inherent to the logistic organisation of mobility activities, such as the budget or availability of venues, sometimes limit the choice of accommodation and working venues. If possible, you should take into account the distance between both venues as a factor in selecting venues.

Venues offering a working space and accommodation at the same place can be ideal in terms of time management. Venues separated by a reasonable walking distance (maximum 20 minutes' walk) allow for a break between sessions and more social moments, and can offer informal time for debriefing or socialising.

If venues are separated by a greater distance, you need to consider using sustainable public transport options.

You should also take other elements into account:

- ▶ **accessibility and participants with special needs:** ensure that the walking distance is also easily travelled by wheelchair;
- ▶ **weather:** a 20-minute walk on a warm summer evening is much more bearable than five minutes on a cold winter morning;
- ▶ **group walking speed:** while GPS software and apps provide quite an accurate estimated walking time between venues for one individual, you should always plan buffer time, taking into account the time needed to gather the group and the fact that a group always moves much slower than individuals.

Once again, giving precise information to the participants is key. Make sure participants are aware well in advance of the distances they will have to walk and of the alternative options they have.



## Indicator 68

### *Are adequate means of transport available when and where needed?*

As part of the preparation and planning stage, you should list the transport needed to reach the activity as well as local transport during the activity. The next step is to decide and inform participants which transport is their own responsibility and which is organised within the framework of the activity. You should decide if participants will be picked up at the airport/train station or need to find their own way to the venue.

For the journey under the responsibility of the participants, you are strongly encouraged to inform them of the different eco-friendly available options.

For local transport under your responsibility, you should take different elements into account:

- ▶ accessibility of the different transport means in relation to the different needs of participants;
- ▶ reliability of the transport means (frequency of buses for example);
- ▶ cost per participant: you should check the cost of public transport and compare it to the option of booking private means of transport;
- ▶ environmental-friendliness: you might want to favour walking or public transport over renting a van or bus when possible;
- ▶ practical arrangements: booking private transport sufficiently in advance, buying group tickets for public transport to save costs and time, etc.;
- ▶ security arrangements: if bikes are foreseen, plan to have helmets and reflective vests, or if you must walk with a large group in crowded cities, ensure you have group leaders to keep the group secure.

The information kit of your activity should also include different local transport options as a backup solution for participants running late or getting lost in the area.

[Erasmus goes green policy recommendations](#)

## Indicator 69



### *Have you developed guidelines to ensure the environmental sustainability of your project?*

Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is essential to mitigate the effects of global warming and prevent the planet from eventually becoming an inhospitable place for wildlife as well as human beings. All human activity – including your project – leaves a carbon footprint. Even though your project pursues noble objectives, it is still imperative to keep its impact on the environment as low as possible, and furthermore that the climate consciousness of all those involved is developed and reinforced as a result of participation.

As part of your planning, you should therefore critically review all the activities in your project, identify the ones that are potentially harmful to the environment and take steps towards reducing their impact as much as you can. During the project, you should monitor what goes on and be ready to intervene if things go in the wrong direction. As part of the preparation of participants, you should strive to instil in them a sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the environment and formulate guidelines, rules or checklists.

These are some of the issues you should consider:

- ▶ travelling and transport: reduce flights when possible; promote low-emission transport, use public transport, trains, electric vehicles, carpool with others, walking, etc.;
- ▶ venues: choose those with an ecological approach to energy, water and use of resources; those where worker's rights are respected and who re-invest in the local community; consider those with outdoor spaces, etc.;
- ▶ catering food and drinks: support fresh, organic, plant-based food and small-scale, local producers; avoid processed, packaged food or drinks, provide vegetarian or vegan meals, prevent food waste, etc.;
- ▶ waste management and recycling: avoid packaging and buying unnecessary products, use well-marked recycling bins and compost food waste, donate leftovers, etc.;
- ▶ printing and paper: avoid printing copies of documents and use online versions when possible, use flipcharts economically, use scrap paper, print double-sided, etc.;
- ▶ energy: promote the use of clean or renewable energy sources; use electricity efficiently, avoiding unnecessary heating and using the air conditioning only when necessary, etc.;
- ▶ information and technology: aim to leave a smaller digital carbon footprint, delete data stored in the cloud, use open-source software, Creative Commons to make your work accessible; choose a green internet provider if possible, etc.

Of course, it is impossible to avoid leaving a carbon footprint altogether – even purely virtual projects without physical travel will still produce emissions. But if one of your learning objectives is to develop climate consciousness among participants

and you succeed in that, this may lower their carbon emission in the future and your project will be compensated several times over.

Greening the youth sector – Sustainability checklist

Effective measures to “green” Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps

The European green deal



## Section: team

In all likelihood, you are not doing the project on your own – you have a team in place that can help you carry out the intended activities and look after the participants both at home and abroad. Whether you know each other or not, or have worked together before, we will still refer to all those involved in organising and carrying out the activities as the team. The team is a key factor in the set-up, as they will be facilitating learning processes of participants either by being directly involved or by providing the necessary framework conditions, and therefore their knowledge, skills and attitudes have a direct influence on the outcomes and hence the quality of your project.

The indicators under this heading are concerned with the team’s competence profile in relation to your aims and the dynamics between team members.

There are seven indicators in this section.



### Indicator 70

*Is the team selected on the basis of the competences and experience necessary to achieve the objectives?*

Learning mobility projects are complex endeavours which require teamwork to succeed. Even in the case of mobility projects where only one person goes abroad, the needs for support are often so complex that they have to be covered by a group of people. Relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes may include things like:

- ▶ foreign language skills;
- ▶ knowledge of culture and norms of the host country;
- ▶ general intercultural competence;
- ▶ expertise on specific learning objectives;
- ▶ experience of living and working abroad;
- ▶ knowledge of insurance and social security in the host country;
- ▶ guidance and counselling;
- ▶ mentoring;
- ▶ accountancy;
- ▶ evaluation;
- ▶ environmental consciousness;

- ▶ knowledge of indoor and outdoor participative methods;
- ▶ etc.

Precisely what configuration is required in the context of your project depends on the host country, the kind of mobility you are organising and the nature of the target group. If it is the first time you organise a project, or if you try out a new concept for learning mobility, a useful exercise is to first try to list the tasks that the project implies and based on an analysis of these tasks map the competences you think that the tasks may require. Here, you should consider “nice to know” and “need to know” – which ones are absolutely essential and which ones are merely convenient? Then, try to map the competences you actually have in the team to see if there are any significant gaps that need covering.

You should not only look at your own organisation when trying to assess what is available. Maybe your partner abroad has staff with competence profiles that may complement the ones you have in your organisation.

Bear in mind, however, that while it is important that your team members possess different skills and competences to allow them to complement each other in the project, it is essential that they all are in complete agreement about – and have ownership of – why you are doing it (learning outcomes) and how you are doing it (methodology).

If it is the first time you organise a project, you can find information on the kind of competences needed to run international activities in a youth context in some of the publications below.

[T-KIT 6 – Training essentials](#)

[ETS competence model for youth workers to work internationally](#)

[Council of Europe youth work portfolio](#)

[Outdoor academy – Guidebook](#)

## Indicator 71

*Is it necessary to add new members or to offer additional training to fill competence gaps in the team?*

If you find one or more important areas of knowledge or experience that are not covered in your team, there are two options. One is to cover the gap through recruitment. This does not necessarily mean hiring a new employee – you could also try to see if anyone in your network possessing the required competences is able and willing to step in as a volunteer, or you may get a volunteer from abroad to come and work in your organisation for a while; for example, through the European Solidarity Corps. The latter implies a long-term, full-time commitment, however, which may not be compatible with a small, short-term project (unless, of course, you have other tasks the volunteer could work on).

The other option is to train one or more of your present team members so that they acquire the knowledge, skills or competences needed. Maybe you are lucky enough



that relevant courses are offered at local level by evening schools or other types of education and training providers but there are also other possibilities. If it concerns relatively simple, technical and skill-based training (for instance a first-aid course), you can check for online tutorials. For the simplest and quickest solution, you can turn to platforms with online videos for help. A second option is consulting some of the dedicated platforms offering online courses and webinars, and see if they have something that responds to your needs.

Regularly, European-level courses are organised which address issues of international youth work (for instance learning mobility projects) and this may be an exciting possibility. You can find information about courses offered in the European training calendar online (see below). The main (but not only) focuses of this calendar are the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme and the European Solidarity Corps but mobility projects financed under this are similar to those financed under other schemes. All training activities in the calendar are not-for-profit and directed to youth workers wishing to develop their competences to further work with and for young people, share experiences and, on occasion, make contacts for common future projects.

[The European training calendar](#)

[European Solidarity Corps](#)



## Indicator 72

*Is there a clear division of workload and responsibilities within the team?*

Workload and responsibilities are in principle two different things, even though they often overlap. The former concerns the concrete tasks to be carried out, the latter is about making them happen. If you are responsible for something, you may not be the one actually doing it, as you may delegate this to others. However, if both of these functions are not allocated to specific persons, you risk confusion and frustration that may be damaging for your project.

The decision about workload and responsibilities is taken against the background of the actual tasks to be performed, the profile of individual team members (in terms of education/training, experience and attitude) and their availability.

In most smaller projects, there is often one team leader responsible for the entire planning, implementation and follow-up process but in bigger projects this may be split up and delegated to several persons. For example, somebody may be in charge of ensuring that the required material and equipment are there for the planned training sessions. This means that they make the necessary arrangements to ensure that they are available on the day but the actual workload of bringing everything to the seminar room and removing it afterwards for storage may be delegated to others – for example, to the trainers or facilitators working with the participants.

The allocation of workload and responsibilities should be done with a view to ensure seamless co-ordination and implementation of the activities. Some activities require that the person responsible is there on the spot, able to take action

immediately when things do not go as planned. Other activities can be handled from a distance and you need to take this into consideration when allocating responsibilities. If, for instance, a team member who is taking the group on an excursion does not show up in the morning, it is imperative that the person in charge is quickly able to find a replacement or plan an alternative activity. This is difficult to do if you are at home in the sending country (and possibly in a different time zone), whereas somebody local may phone a cousin and get them to step in immediately to carry out the task.

Beware of so-called grey zones when allocating workload and responsibilities, describing them in such broad terms that they overlap, and it can be hard to tell whether a concrete task or responsibility is the duty of one team member or another. This may lead to situations where something does not get done, because everybody thought somebody else was doing it.

Finally, clear and precise information on the division of workload and responsibilities, including names of persons in charge and contact details, must be distributed to all relevant actors, including participants.

## Indicator 73

*Is everybody in the team aware of other team members' competences, experience, values and preferred working styles?*



The more you know about each other's profiles and personalities in the team, the more efficient your project will be. Teams with a long track record of working together will often produce better results than teams which have only recently been put together and are collaborating for the first time. This is simply because their knowledge of each other's competences and values, preferred ways of working and reaction patterns makes processes go smoother and reduces the risk of conflicts and misunderstandings. Also, because of this knowledge and the shared experiences, a capital of mutual trust has been built up.

If it is the first time the team works together on a project, or if an existing team is supplemented by newcomers, you may, if circumstances (finances and availability) permit, gather the team members for a teambuilding activity to bring about mutual knowledge and trust.

If this is not possible, for example because some team members are based in the host country, you can achieve some kind of connectivity by putting members in contact with each other beforehand, either via e-mail or by phone/video conference, to discuss and plan the tasks and responsibilities they are involved in. In connection to this, you can also ask them to create small presentations – using text or video – where they explain a bit about themselves and their background, possibly also saying a word or two about issues like:

- ▶ the way they (prefer to) communicate;
- ▶ the way they approach conflicts and disagreements in the team;
- ▶ the roles they prefer (or not prefer) to take;

- ▶ what their strengths (and weaknesses) are when working with young people;
- ▶ the strategies they prefer to use for self-reflection and assessment.

Working together with people from another country is not always easy, because cultural differences may cause misunderstandings and sometimes conflicts. When working with the team dynamics, you should therefore keep this aspect in mind.



## Indicator 74

*Is it possible for team members to meet before the activity to get to know each other and prepare details?*

Maybe you already have a team that has worked together before – but it may also be that this is the first time you are gathered around a common task. If the latter is the case, rather than starting the work straightaway, a good investment may be to engage in some teambuilding activities first. Creating a team out of a group of individuals is one of the essential prerequisites for a healthy and constructive collaboration. This requires time and effort but the returns on the investment can often be measured in terms of increased project quality.

The theory of group dynamics developed by Bruce Tuckman involves four stages of group development: forming, storming, norming and performing, identifying what can be expected at each stage and how the process can be supported. According to Tuckman, every group should reach the stage of performing, when group members are really working together as a team, are able to resolve internal conflicts and make the most of their combined resources. When the group is at the stage of performing, they can focus on the quality of learning mobility and not just on surviving different stages of the project.

The core of the matter in group dynamics is that members should get to know each other as much as possible before they start on their task. This includes learning about each other's professional background, previous experience and passions in work; learning about working habits and preferences; gaining insights about each team member's behaviour in different situations and their strengths and weaknesses. This "getting to know each other" process could be done through different situations, tasks and activities.

There are plenty of resources suggesting different activities that can help you along in the process of building a team. Do not do one activity after another for the sake of being active and facing a challenging task. Even one carefully planned, chosen and well-implemented activity is better than a collection of random activities. At the same time, the activities need to be processed, insights extracted and then implemented to have a positive impact on the work together. In addition, one common misconception is that teambuilding happens at the beginning of the project and then it is done. On the contrary – teambuilding continues throughout the work and through all stages of group development, albeit with different intensity and attention.

[Bruce Tuckman – The forming, storming, norming and performing team development model](#)

## Indicator 75



*Does the team have knowledge of, and experience with, participative methodologies?*

The inclusion of participants in planning, implementation and follow-up of learning mobility projects has two dimensions, both of which are important in a quality context.

First of all, having a voice in all aspects of the project ensures that objectives are set according to real needs, that methods are conducive to learning in line with objectives and that evaluations convey the right messages about the actual outcomes of the project.

Second – and arguably more important in a greater perspective – is the fact that active involvement in all project phases in itself represents an important arena for learning, where young people develop their capacity to take responsibility and become engaged in, and contribute to, wider issues in civic society and the planet. For these reasons, it is essential that the team adopts participative practices and actively encourages young people's involvement at all levels in the project, including decision making.

Encouraging participation and empowering participants is not always easy, however, and requires both a specific cultural background and good knowledge of relevant methods, as well as how these can be adapted to the profiles of the young people in the project. If not present, the issue of youth participation risks being reduced to what has been called tokenism, where young people are allegedly being consulted but in fact it does not really matter what they say, since decisions have already been taken by others. Barriers are found not only in the team, however, but also sometimes in young people themselves, if this is the first time they are asked to assume responsibility and speak up (and expose themselves to criticism).

Methodologies to involve young people are often focused around the following vectors:

- ▶ **information** – must be clear and easy for everyone to understand;
- ▶ **choices** – must be real, i.e. have consequences in the project;
- ▶ **respect** – everybody must be heard and their opinions treated with respect;
- ▶ **benefits** – it must be clearly visible to participants that they achieve something by getting involved;
- ▶ **feedback** – on what difference participants' contributions have made and how ideas have been used, or why not;
- ▶ **values** – supporting key European values like democracy, solidarity, inclusion and active citizenship.

Youth participation is, incidentally, not merely a nice thing to do, and neither is it restricted to learning mobility projects. It is a fundamental principle of youth work in Europe and beyond, and enshrined in international treaties of the United Nations and in laws, policy documents and resolutions of the EU, the Council of Europe and its member states.

[Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#)

[Participatory methods: useful methods and ideas](#)

[Participative methods and tools](#)



## Indicator 76

*Are team members aware of the need to minimise and/or compensate the impact of the activities on the environment, and familiar with principles and methods to ensure this?*

As concerns about human-made climate change (global warming) increase, it is essential that all activities are assessed on the basis of the environmental footprint they leave, and the necessary steps made to ensure that the impact is reduced and/or compensated as much as possible. Learning mobility – involving the physical relocation of people from one country to another and back again – is a concern in this respect, since travelling, and especially long-distance travelling by plane, has a very big impact on the environment. In fact, flying is probably the most damaging thing an individual can do to the environment.

In addition to transport, however, mobility projects can also negatively impact the environment in many other ways: wasting unnecessary paper for the activities, using disposable cups and utensils, using large amounts of bottled water, food waste (especially for group mobility projects), or irresponsibly using digital technology and data transfer, etc.

The first instance where the awareness of this impact needs to exist is in the team. Team members need to be aware of the dangers of overconsumption and unnecessary waste, the impact this has on the environment and the ways to reduce it. As with any other aspect of learning mobility, reducing impact on the environment requires time and effort to get familiar with the ways to minimise impact: reading, watching videos, attending workshops and training on global education or environmental protection.

Once the team is committed to consume responsibly and minimise their impact on the environment (by travelling, whenever possible, by train or bus and other sustainable means of transport; by reducing, reusing and recycling; by avoiding plastic and disposable things; by saving water and electricity, by eating local produce, by limiting their digital environmental footprint, etc.), they can encourage and support a responsible attitude in young people as well.

And bear in mind that learning mobility does not always need to involve physical relocation – in some cases, it is possible to reach the same objectives through online activities (virtual mobility).

[Manual for facilitators in global education](#)

[Global education manual](#)

[Ecological footprint](#)

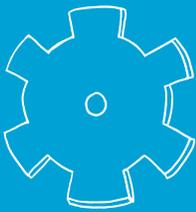
[Ecological footprint calculator](#)

[Sustainability in learning mobility: an exploratory study](#)

[Green toolbox](#)

[What is a digital carbon footprint?](#)

# DIMENSION – PARTICIPANTS



Section: dissemination of information

Section: selection

Section: preparation

Section: accompaniment and support

Section: the learning process

Section: debriefing

Section: outcomes



# Dimension – Participants

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**H**ow will you reach your target group? How will you select the right participants? What should your preparation activities include and how should they be carried out? What kind of support is needed during the different phases of the project? How are you going to facilitate the reflection processes of participants? What support will you provide to the participants after they have returned from abroad? How are you going to capitalise on the outcomes of the project? How are you going to guarantee there is an impact in organisations and communities involved?

## Section: dissemination of information



When and how you advertise your project has an immense influence on the kind of participants you get. The information has to be out well in advance of the event to allow young people in the target group time to make a decision and you have to use communication channels that ensure that you reach all of them, and not just a small proportion. Also, the information has to be formulated in a clear and concise manner, using words and expressions they can understand and relate to.

The very first step in this process is to have a clear definition of what kind of people your project is designed for. This section therefore overlaps with the section on the target group, covered by indicators 15-18.

There are four indicators in this section.

### Indicator 77



*Is information about the activity – including conditions for participation – disseminated to the target group in due time and through adequate channels?*

Going away for three weeks – or whatever the duration of your project – is not something that everybody can do at short notice. It may require planning well in advance (for example, with regard to work, school or family obligations) and it may also be necessary to save up money over a period of time or obtain permission from authorities (for example, for unemployed persons). Moreover, for some, the idea of going abroad may simply be such a challenging proposal that they need a long time to think about it before they are able to take a decision. There are plenty of good reasons for announcing the event as early as possible to the target group. Another advantage of sending out early notifications is that it allows potential participants to ask questions and maybe propose changes that will improve the project.

What this precisely implies may vary from project to project but as a rule of thumb you should announce the event and the conditions for participating to all in the target group at least six months before the proposed time of departure.

Disseminating information about the activity does not only imply announcing that it is going to take place but also involves giving details about the conditions for

participating, so that everybody is aware of these conditions and can decide early on whether this is feasible for them. What are the requirements vis-à-vis the preparation process? Do participants need to contribute to the costs? Are visas required? Is it mandatory to speak the language of the host country? And so on.

The target group is, of course, first and foremost the potential participants. You may consider, however, whether other parties need to be in the loop as well. If you are dealing with underage participants, it may be a good idea to also include parents and/or legal tutors, if parental consent is a requirement for participation.

Adequate channels means that the information is made available to the target group by methods that ensure that everybody concerned has the chance to read it and nobody is excluded for lack of knowledge of the event. There are many ways of doing this but it may not be enough to rely on one method only. Posting information on the website of your club or organisation, for instance, will only work if you can be 100% sure that everybody regularly visits the website and reads whatever news has appeared since the last time they were there. Social media may be more effective, since the recipient will receive a notification that new material is available. If you have the e-mail addresses of everybody in the target group, you can mail them directly and there is still the old time-honoured snail mail (paper information sent through the post office) if you have their physical address. If it is an open call for participants, you can ask recipients to distribute the invitation further and share it through social networks to ensure that it reaches as many potential participants as possible.



## Indicator 78

*Is there enough time to promote the activity to all potential participants and motivate them to participate?*

For some young people, the idea of going abroad and spending a period of time there is wildly exciting and reeks of fun and adventure. They are often the ones that have been abroad before, who speak foreign languages, and possess both self-confidence and social competences. They will sign up as soon as they get the offer. Others, who have perhaps never been out of their community before, feel insecure about going abroad and encountering strangers with whom they cannot communicate. They will be the ones that hold back and do not jump at the opportunity once it presents itself.

If you only allow a short time between passing the information around and the deadline for signing up, you will probably only get participants of the first category. If this was your intention anyway, this is fine. However, if you have the ambition to also reach out to more hesitant people or so-called young people with fewer opportunities, you will need to give them space to think about the proposal and come to terms with their fears and worries. Also, you may in most cases need to work actively to build up their motivation – and all of this takes time.

Motivation building concerns two things: convincing prospective participants that going abroad on a learning mobility project is a worthwhile activity they can benefit from and working with their fear of the unknown. Fear of the unknown can be countered firstly by feeding them detailed information about the hosting environment and secondly by providing them with tools that can help them cope with any

situations they may encounter – for example, a certain amount of proficiency in the language of the host country, and/or methods and techniques for dealing with cultural differences. Creating awareness about the benefits of participation is about trying to make the potential learning outcomes visible, how these are acquired and what good they can do. If it is a recurrent event, you can publish testimonials or organise encounters with former beneficiaries of the programme.

How long this all takes depends on the participants you intend to involve. As it is essentially about attitudes, it may take a long time to change these in the right direction, if their point of departure is a very negative one. Others may just need a slight push. But if you do not take the time and make the effort, learning mobility will inevitably become a privilege for those already gifted, and participation will effectively be excluded for the groups perhaps most in need of the knowledge, skills and competences that can be acquired through participation.

## Indicator 79



### *Is the terminology used appropriate for the target group?*

Getting the message out is one thing; getting it across another. In other words: you may have a plan to ensure that the information is disseminated (in a timely fashion) to the target group but you will also need to ensure that it is understood in the right way.

Obviously, this is more relevant for some types of information than others. Practical information – about when, where, how to get there, where to sleep, etc. – is fairly straightforward and hard to misunderstand. Other types of information leave more room for interpretation, in particular about issues related to the rationale of the activity – why we are doing it. When we discuss this among organisers and experts, we tend to use concepts and expressions that make sense to us but which may not necessarily do so to those directly concerned – the participants. They have to understand what it is all about but it can be very hard to decipher exactly what kind of learning outcomes we aim for when we explain it in terms like, for example, combating ethnocentrism and developing intercultural competence. What exactly do we mean by this and can we translate these terms into everyday language that makes more sense to the target group?

Understandable language is not only a matter of what words to use but also about the reference framework to apply. In the European Qualification Framework, learning outcomes are described in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, and this set of descriptors is sometimes also used for learning objectives and outcomes in mobility projects – especially in a vocational context. But whereas it may make excellent sense to education professionals, it often results in descriptions that are very abstract and analytical, and consequently hard to understand for lay people. Learning objectives need to be formulated in a way that is easily understandable, operational (so that participants and hosts understand what they need to do to achieve them), meaningful and motivating. Remember: there is not one correct way of doing this – methods of descriptions always need to be matched to the persons for whom they are intended.

You should keep in mind that not only the participants have this requirement – it also goes for your partner (or the hosting environment) abroad, where linguistic issues may add an extra layer of complications. In particular for projects where participants are not gathered in one place but spread over multiple locations – for example, when they are on a placement in different organisations or enterprises. Here, you need to ensure that all are on the same page and understand exactly what the intended outcomes are and what is required to achieve them. Before publishing the call, you can do a small test. Have a few young potential users read it and let them tell you how the text could be improved.

Finally, concerning the information requirements of the hosting environment(s), these will also need information on the background of the participants, so that they can make the necessary arrangements for the stay and the learning trajectory. Again, you should be aware that not everything translates directly and that terms that are seemingly identical may, in fact, be understood differently (for one thing, not even the concept of youth is defined in exactly the same way across Europe).

Guidelines for describing units of learning outcomes (ECVET)



## Indicator 80

*Has the process of advertising the call been monitored with a plan to change the dissemination strategy if needed?*

This indicator has two aspects. One is fairly straightforward – once you have launched your call for participation, you need to monitor the process constantly and be ready to try other channels of information if the response is not what you had expected or hoped for. If you leave it too late, you may have to cancel your project for lack of participants. The other is a bit trickier and is less about changes in information than changes in the project – but with implications for your information strategy.

Ideally, the idea for the project comes from, or has been developed together with, the target group of the activity, so that it closely reflects their own perceptions of needs and requirements. However, organising a transnational mobility project is a complex affair and it may be that one or several of the elements later turn out to be impracticable. It may also be that the project is the idea of an organiser or has developed out of a proposal from a partner abroad and that recruitment starts on the basis of this. However, it turns out to be difficult to arouse an interest in participation, as the target group does not perceive it as relevant or interesting enough to sign up to.

In both cases, it is necessary to either abandon the project altogether or change the set-up of the activity so that it can be implemented. This is not uncommon – in fact, it is probably exceptional that projects are carried out precisely in the way they were originally conceived – and you need to take that into account both in your planning and your information strategy. You can make a list of risks at this stage and think about potential solutions in advance.

Introducing such an element of uncertainty – or, as it may be perceived by some: insecurity – into your information material may be a tricky thing to do, as many participants will expect the project deliverable to be exactly what they signed up

for; especially for those to whom a stay abroad sounds like a daunting prospect in the first place and it may encourage them to forego the experience. On the other hand, if you do not, it may have even worse consequences, if participants find that things are not what they had been led to expect.

Learning to live with a certain element of uncertainty, it may be argued, is in fact a central outcome of the experience and one of the key reasons for going abroad rather than staying at home. You should therefore consider whether to include some kind of waiver in your information material to the effect that you cannot expect everything to be known in advance, so that participants are prepared for this from the moment they sign up. Precisely how this is formulated will, of course, depend on your target group and the nature of the project.

## Section: selection



If you have done your dissemination well, you probably have a larger number of young people interested in participating than you can actually involve in the project. This means that you have to select the ones you deem most suited for participation. Saying no to people who are very enthusiastic about the prospect of participating can be stressful but you only have room for a limited number, so it has to be done. Having defined and communicated some clear selection criteria in accordance with the aims of the project and having conducted a transparent selection process will make this easier, as people will understand why they are not among the chosen ones.

It is quite common that some of the selected participants drop out prior to the project start, so you may want to work with a reserve list of potential participants who can be contacted in the event of cancellations. Many funding schemes provide funding on the basis of the numbers actually participating and reduced numbers may mean reduced budgets. This may force you to cut out activities, which may reduce the quality of your project.

There are six indicators in this section.

### Indicator 81



#### *Is the selection process open and fair?*

Some types of projects are more suited to some types of participants than others and by including people in a project for which they do not have the right kind of background or personal competences, you are not doing them any good. On the contrary, they may experience their participation as a personal defeat and return in a worse state than when they left, in which case you have achieved exactly the opposite of what you aimed for. It is therefore OK to be selective when you decide whether people can participate or not, rather than operate on a first-come-first-served basis.

A selection process helps to ensure that you get the right kind of participants for your project. However, to ensure that this happens, the selection process must, at the same time, be open and fair. Openness and fairness are related but in principle

they refer to two different things, and a selection process may be open without being fair, and fair without being open.

Openness implies that:

- ▶ the call for participants is widely disseminated so that it reaches all those who are eligible and may benefit from the experience;
- ▶ the information is clear and transparent, and formulated in a way that prospective participants get a precise picture of the relevance to them;
- ▶ the criteria for participation are clearly spelled out, including the desired profile of participants, as well as contributions required for participation (e.g. in terms of own payments, obligations to host participants on return visit, participation in preparation activities);
- ▶ the call is made in good time, so that there is enough time for prospective participants to reflect on the possibility and decide whether they will go for it.

Fairness implies that:

- ▶ the selection is real and not just a formal exercise, where you have more or less decided in advance who you want to participate;
- ▶ the selection is done according to the criteria and conditions you have outlined in the information material;
- ▶ you avoid any personal bias in the selection, for example by having a selection committee which also reflects perspectives other than your own.

Selection is always difficult, for there may be many issues to take into consideration. However, since your success criteria are formulated in terms of learning, you should keep in mind that it is not a matter of selecting the strongest personalities with the highest levels of personal and vocational competences, but of identifying those who would benefit most from the experience.



## Indicator 82

*Are selection criteria clear and transparent, and set in accordance with the objectives of the activity and the profile of participants?*

Studies have shown that participants of learning mobility projects are often selected among those who are perhaps least in need of the knowledge, skills and competences that may be acquired during a stay abroad – rather than among those to whom this opportunity represents a real potential in terms of learning. In other words: to those that already have, more is given, and to those that are in need, opportunities are denied. Some people have all the fun.

This state of affairs is in most cases not the result of any conscious decision to reserve learning mobility for well-functioning young people only but quite the opposite. It happens because there has been no reflection prior to selection about the profile of participants in relation to the objectives of the activity, and because no clear, transparent criteria have been formulated to guide the selection process. Therefore, selection happens more or less spontaneously on the day, meaning that selectors often get a random selection of candidates and go for the obvious choices – which

are not necessarily the right ones. The result: the total impact of the project is diminished, because participants already possess many of the learning outcomes the project was intended to reach.

To get suitable participants and ensure that the sum total of learning outcomes is as high as possible, it is therefore essential that very early on you reflect on the desired profile of participants in relation to the activity, and formulate this in terms of clear, transparent criteria that are understandable to the target group and which can guide your selection process.

Clear and transparent means that you are able to present a precise image of what kind of participant you are looking for in a way that anyone belonging to this target group is instantly able to recognise themselves in the description. Also, that you can convey the conditions for participation in a way that enables potential participants in the target group to decide whether it is possible for them to participate or not. These criteria must, of course, make sense in relation to the contents of the activity. If you are, for example, sending out participants on placements in organisations or enterprises which require a specific background (in terms of experience or training), this must be reflected in your selection criteria.

If you only provide vague and very general criteria – or none at all – you risk that many young people who might otherwise have been interested will tend to think that this is perhaps not for them and they will not apply. Only the most adventurous or those with previous experience of going abroad will consider it a relevant opportunity and you fail to reach other young people who may not have tried it before or who may be a little timid but who might otherwise have benefited even more.

Youth Knowledge Book 22 – Learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education. Access, processes and outcomes

## Indicator 83



*Do the selection criteria reflect the diversity of the target group and are they formulated in an inclusive way?*

Diversity and inclusion are key issues in the underlying values of many mobility programmes and schemes, and consequently also in their assessment of applications. Whereas this insistence is mainly value-based, there is also a substantial quality assurance perspective in promoting diversity: many of those who would benefit most from participation often do not come from what one might call mainstream youth and by carrying out an inclusive recruitment procedure, you increase the overall impact of the project. Therefore, your recruitment efforts should reach out as far as the nature of your project permits and your selection criteria should be broad enough to attract those to whom participation might not necessarily be a self-evident option.

Young people with fewer opportunities (without education, with a criminal record, coming from poor economic backgrounds or being marginalised for some other reason) are often deselected for participation because criteria are formulated in a way that aims to pick “the best”. Hence, there might be a need to introduce some additional criteria to ensure that those young people are reached. This is sometimes

referred to as affirmative action or positive discrimination and it does not come without its controversies. Nonetheless, if implemented to empower young people who are not the usual beneficiaries of learning mobility projects, it can be justified.

One quite common argument for selecting only the best is that participants, when abroad, act as ambassadors for their country. If your main objective is to present a glorified image of your nation, this would be a valid argument but in that case we are not talking about learning mobility.

Erasmus + inclusion and diversity strategy in the field of youth

Inclusion A to Z



## Indicator 84

*Is the selection done by more than one person?*

The selection of participants is an important element of the overall project organisation, as it directly affects the effectiveness and impact of the activity. For this reason, when developing a quality mobility activity, you should clearly define the expected profile of the participants and how the selection process will be done to guarantee equal opportunities and transparency for the candidates.

For the sake of objectiveness and transparency, it is advisable to engage more than one person in the selection process. It can be useful to have at least two persons from your organisation to evaluate the applications independently to avoid bias – conscious or subconscious – and take their final decision jointly after a first evaluation. A third person can review and approve the final decision proposed by this first selection committee, if the process requires a tough selection. It can be useful too, depending on the type of activity, to involve someone from the hosting organisation in the process.

Participants should always be selected using the criteria defined in the expected profile that should comprise their motivations and learning needs, prior experience and competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes/behaviour), commitment to further development during the follow-up of the activity, and other characteristics such as age, gender, country of origin, etc.

The selection of participants can be a stressful experience, especially if there are more competent participants than there is room for in the project. Furthermore, some unsuccessful applicants may be resentful of the fact that they were not selected and take this out on the selector. Also for these reasons, it is better to involve several selectors.

T-KIT 3 – Project management



## Indicator 85

*Is the selection process carried out in time for the selected participants to take part in preparation activities?*

There are no fixed rules for how long beforehand you should select your participants. However, you should plan enough time for the selection process and when to inform selected candidates to ensure smooth logistic and content preparation from them.

There are different reasons why this selection process should be carried out in time to facilitate participants to organise their preparation. For example, if they have to book their own transport or arrange their own accommodation, you must ensure they are informed long enough in advance for the availability of options to be sufficient and for the costs to be reduced.

As far as content preparation is concerned, a useful way to ensure an adequate time frame is to design a reverse planning. This means that you start with your end goal and then work your way backwards to develop your plan. You will need to include all the tasks you expect the participants to perform before the activity itself and establish the real duration and deadline for each task (for example, receiving and signing the agreement, introducing oneself in the social media group, carrying out preparatory research on the topic). This will allow you to fix a date at which all participants must be informed of their selection.

Do not forget that there is always a possibility that selected candidates will cancel their participation for different reasons and, in those cases, you will need extra time for new participants to be found and to integrate them into the preparatory work.

Keep in mind that part of the preparatory activities can be done online. The first contacts with the organisers, the host institution and other participants can be organised through digital platforms. In this way, the programme costs can be reduced and the effects on the environment kept to a minimum.

How reverse planning can help you reach your goals

## Indicator 86



### *Are unsuccessful candidates informed about the reasons for their rejection?*

In many cases, when advertising a learning mobility project, you will have more applicants than places available in your project (and budget). You will therefore have to turn down some candidates and inform them that they have not been selected for participation. Giving them an explanation with reasons why they were not selected is more than just a courteous gesture – it is also a sign of a quality project. For some, who perhaps have never tried applying for something before, this is in itself a mini-learning process and by giving them constructive feedback you are – as well as showing them respect – pointing out how they can improve and enhance their chances next time round.

Giving this kind of feedback is immensely easier if you have worked with clear selection criteria that have been communicated to all potential candidates, in which case the arguments are immediately at hand. However, at times selection happens on the basis of minimal differences between candidates who all nominally fulfil these selection criteria and it is down to decisions that may be based on slightly irrational reasons – for example, that some are better able to express themselves than others (which may not necessarily make them more deserving of selection). Therefore, this aspect of the selection procedure is not always easy to deal with, even with clear and transparent criteria.

The initial reactions of people who have not been selected is often one of dejection or anger, which sometimes (initially, at least) can be stressful to handle. Giving unsuccessful applicants a reasoned answer is often less of a burden if selection has been done by a

committee rather than one person. When two or more persons have formulated the grounds for non-selection, you are not to the same extent held personally responsible.



## Section: preparation

The indicators under this heading are not concerned with project preparation in general but specifically with the preparation of participants, so that they are equipped to cope with the challenges of a stay abroad, and exploit the possibilities for learning and personal development to the maximum extent.

Preparing participants is an exercise with many dimensions. There is, of course, a very practical dimension to it but there are also dimensions of a more complex nature, like training their abilities to interact constructively with people from another culture and helping them develop coping strategies for dealing with the psychological effects of being away from home for an extended period of time.

Since preparation of participants is an aspect that permeates many different spheres of a learning mobility project, there will almost inevitably be at least a partial overlap with indicators listed under other headings. Also, in some cases there are indicators that appear under other headings, which are crucial also in a preparation context but which are only mentioned once to avoid identical indicators under different headings. This is particularly the case for preparation linked to the learning objectives of the project. Indicators covering educational preparation can be found below under the heading “The learning process” (indicators 101-105).

There are nine indicators in this section.



### Indicator 87

#### *Are participants fully aware of the objectives and methods of the activity?*

This indicator is not concerned with activities where young people have been involved from the very beginning and have formulated – or contributed to formulating – learning objectives and identified methods for acquiring them. There are, however, projects and frameworks for activities which have been set up beforehand, and to which participants are recruited later. Often, these are not advertised in the first place as educational set-ups but make their appeal more on the basis of feelings of adventure and exotic destinations. Here, an important quality criterion is to ensure that participants are aware of the stipulated objectives and the values they build on so that they can be actively and consciously involved in the process of reaching them.

To qualify as learning mobility there must be learning objectives and this should already have been highlighted during the recruitment process to ensure that the right kind of participants apply. Contrary to holidays – where the aims are excitement and recreation – learning mobility is about acquiring specific sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and this demands participants having an awareness and displaying attitudes conducive to this. This means that information about the learning objectives should be an integral and visible part of the recruitment material.

Similarly, in the preparation process, the issue of learning objectives and methods to achieve them should feature prominently and guide the selection of contents for

this, as all the activities here should serve to optimise the outcomes of the project. During this phase, you need to not only make participants aware of the objectives and methods but also – if necessary – assist them to connect with and buy into these.

## Indicator 88



### *Is practical information about the activity exhaustively communicated to participants?*

The very thought of going abroad and living there for a while, away from family and friends and in unknown surroundings where people speak another language, is frightening for many, especially for those who have never been away from home before. Worries and anxieties about this may take a lot of energy from the learning process and therefore it is important to send a signal in due time (as early as possible) that things are under control and the necessary arrangements in place. You can do this part of the process combining face-to-face meetings, e-mail communication, posting information on the relevant website but also via online workshops or consultations.

Things to include in your practical preparation process:

- ▶ **travel:** itinerary, means of transport, time and place of departure, documentation to bring (passport, visa, tickets, etc.), name of accompanying person (if any);
- ▶ **programme:** timetable, venues, nature and purpose of activities, names of trainers and facilitators;
- ▶ **accommodation:** address, type of accommodation (youth hostel, hotel, family, shared flat, etc.), conditions of lodging (single, double rooms, bathroom, etc.), how to get there, accessibility, Wi-Fi access;
- ▶ **local transport:** how to get to/from accommodation to venue for activities (e.g. placement enterprise, youth club);
- ▶ **meals:** what is included, what do participants need to provide themselves, how are dietary requirements covered;
- ▶ **health and safety:** emergency procedures and numbers, documentation to bring (e.g. European Health Insurance Card, details about insurance coverage), contacts for psychological support in the host and home country;
- ▶ **money:** what is covered, what do you need to bring (e.g. recommended amount for pocket money), indications of price levels in the host country (e.g. for public transport).

Many projects develop information packs (either written material or a website) with all the necessary information so that participants can access it at all times.

## T-KIT 3 – Project management

## Indicator 89



### *Are participants aware of their responsibilities and obligations?*

Participants must – as early as possible and before they decide on participating – be fully aware of what is expected from them in terms of responsibilities and obligations before, during and after the stay abroad. In some programmes and activities organised in multi-annual frameworks, these responsibilities and obligations are

largely given up front beforehand, whereas in projects that are conceived and run by or with young people themselves, they are formulated jointly between participants and those in charge of them as part of the preparation process.

The two terms (responsibilities and obligations) are often used interchangeably but in some contexts they denote different things. No matter how they are used, however, they usually cover four distinct aspects:

- ▶ **formal requirements** (e.g. in relation to travel documentation, health insurance, required vaccinations, financial arrangements, parental consent for minors) which the participants are formally required to comply with. Often, this can be a very simple checklist, which participants (or their parents/guardians) are required to fill in and sign before departure.
- ▶ **required input by the participants** before, during and after the project. This could, for example, be attendance (and active involvement) in preparatory meetings or debriefing sessions, tasks to be accomplished and participation in activities organised during the stay abroad.
- ▶ **code of conduct** is a list with rules of behaviour that participants are expected to adhere to during the stay. These could in principle cover a multitude of things, for example smoking or the consumption of alcohol during the stay, attitude to host families, driving motor vehicles, interaction with peer groups abroad and environmental issues.
- ▶ **handling crises**, especially for projects which concern individuals and where there are no accompanying leaders, it may be useful to agree beforehand what the procedures are in critical situations to ensure that the participant acts appropriately. Crisis situations could, for example, be illness, stress overload, acute homesickness, sexual harassment and need for premature return. Some crises can be overcome individually with good and timely organisation. For others, professional (including psychological) support is necessary and this should be included in the risk management.

Involving the participants in drawing up the list of responsibilities and obligations is a good way to ensure that they are known to all and that they have the necessary degree of acceptance and ownership.

[A guide for exchange students](#)

[Working group on risk prevention and crisis management](#)



## Indicator 90

*Are participants trained in problem solving and conflict management?*

Bringing together young people from different cultural backgrounds and making them interact will always give rise to misunderstandings, problems and conflicts – but this is not necessarily a bad thing. If tackled correctly, they may hold valuable learning potential.

There is a widespread conviction, especially among many first-time organisers of youth exchanges, that if you bring young people from different countries together and ensure that they all have a good time, they will almost automatically develop

mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance. Therefore, it is almost an instinctive reaction to try to eliminate all possible causes for conflicts and problems from the encounter, and when (not if) they occur, to quickly sweep them under the carpet.

However, we know from evaluations that having a good time is not the same as developing intercultural competences, even if it happens together with people from another country. In order to do that, you need to come to terms with not just the aspects of the other culture that are most like your own but also those which are very different. This process can often cause friction and frustration but this is where the learning potential truly resides. This is not the same as saying that you should actively seek out problems and conflicts but it means that you should accept that they are a natural part of the learning process, and that participants and any accompanying staff or leaders should be equipped to tackle these in a constructive and de-escalating manner.

As part of the preparation process, it therefore also makes sense to equip individuals with some basic tools and techniques that better enable them to come to grips with these aspects of the experience. A vital part of this is the ability to engage in an open and respectful exchange of views with people from other backgrounds without immediately activating prejudices and the fear of the unknown – a so-called intercultural dialogue.

This does not require a degree in psychology, as much work has already been done in this field that you can capitalise on. A number of resources exist, both at national and European level, that can give you important knowledge as well as practical instructions on how to go about this. Also, courses on problem solving and conflict management for leaders of international encounters are regularly being held at both national and European level.

Participation in youth exchanges can be used to develop the ability of young people to interact constructively with others from a different background, not just in international settings but also as a transversal competence in their civic and working lives. Including this aspect in the preparation is thus not just about providing a survival kit but also about laying the right foundation for a learning process that is not merely restricted to the preparation process but will continue during the stay and beyond.

## T-KIT 12 – Youth transforming conflict

### Conflict styles

### Intercultural dialogue – Living together as equals in dignity

## Indicator 91

*Do the expectations of participants align with the aims and means of the project, as well as conditions in the hosting environment?*

Ensuring that the expectations of participants align with the aims and means of the project, as well as with the conditions in the hosting environment, will not only save participants from many frustrations but also contribute to an optimal learning process.

Participants in learning mobility projects always ask themselves “what am I getting into?”, in particular first-time participants. As they will, to some extent, be stepping



into the unknown, there is always a risk that they will either develop too low expectations – which may make them timid and less outgoing or perhaps even make them stay at home – or too high expectations, which will eventually lead to disenchantment. For this reason, you should ask participants about their expectations and motivations as early as possible, so that there is time to realign these with the real and actual conditions in the hosting environment.

When communicating about your project and selecting participants, you should provide clear information about all the dimensions of your project, insofar as this is available and can be communicated. It provides great opportunities for giving a clear image of what the destination actually looks like and what the conditions are like.

You may find further information via youth information centres [ERYICA](#) or [Eurodesk](#).

[Backpack of needs and expectations](#)

[Expectations](#)



## Indicator 92

*Have participants received adequate linguistic and cultural preparation to facilitate their interaction with the hosting environment?*

Young people travelling abroad on a learning mobility project do not go as tourists. As part of the learning process, they will be expected to become immersed in the everyday life of the hosting environment to as high a degree as possible, no matter how short the project may be. This requires them to be able to communicate with peers abroad and have a positive and constructive attitude to the culture and norms of the host country from the start. Linguistic and cultural preparation are therefore an indispensable part of a quality project.

In terms of linguistic preparation, young people will not have enough time to learn a new language before they leave. Nonetheless, there may be several months of preparation and that is sufficient for learning the basics and becoming familiar with the sound of the language. Many online tools are available to help them with this, and some mobility schemes have published small thematic dictionaries of selected words and phrases for use in mobility projects.

As important as it is, language is just one aspect of culture and there is much more that awaits once a young person arrives in the other country. Depending on the length, previous experiences abroad and differences between home and host environment, the experience might come as quite a shock. This shock can come at the very beginning but also much later. Cultural preparation is not only about providing information on superficial differences in gastronomy, traffic rules, greeting habits or bureaucracy, etc. Cultural differences go much deeper and may lead to misunderstandings and clashes, especially in areas where one was not expecting them. They provide, however, also rich opportunities for learning and personal development if participants come prepared, for instance in the shape of:

- ▶ **reflection on one's identity** – If a person is comfortable with who they are, they are more likely to be open towards others. At the same time, being in a new environment will challenge their identity in many ways, while interaction

with differences will provide opportunities to learn about them. It is, therefore, important that they are ready for this to happen and open for the reflection to follow.

- ▶ **Awareness of preconceived ideas about others and own bias** – Stereotypes, prejudices and assumptions are all part of our coping mechanisms. A young person should be aware of them to be able to challenge them.
- ▶ **preparation to deal with ambiguity and change** – When on a learning mobility, young people will be faced with a lot of uncertainty and ambiguity. What is right, what is true and what is good will be challenged, and the borders will not always be clear. “Should we kiss when we meet?”, “should we invite people to our place?”, “how late can we be?”, “can we openly talk about religion?”, “how is waste sorted in this city?”, “what do carbon-free zones mean here?” are just some examples. Hence, young people must be able to cope with a certain level of ambiguity.

Fortunately, there are plenty of tools to help with these aspects of preparation.

[T-KIT 4 – Intercultural learning](#)

[Education pack](#)

[Erasmus+ online language support](#)

[Publications and resources](#)

## Indicator 93

*Have participants been informed in due time about any preparatory work they need to do?*



As for other aspects of learning mobility projects, applicants and participants have to be well-informed about what is required of them before they sign up. Preparation is a crucial element in the learning process and it is not something that can be skipped or done half-heartedly. This should already have been signalled clearly in the recruitment material, so that they come with the right attitude from the start and are also prepared to put in the necessary effort in this phase.

These efforts consist of more than just showing up, for preparation is not only about passively receiving information – it also requires that participants are active in the process and contribute to it. This may happen, for example, by being ready to openly express their motivation, expectations and fears so that these can be addressed; by researching relevant content-related topics further and sharing this information with other participants in presentations and discussions; and by producing material which can be used to introduce themselves to other participants and partners in the host country. Many projects also require from participants that they learn as much of the language as possible, for example through online tools, or that they take a test to assess their level of proficiency in the language of the host country.

There are many advantages to be gained by involving participants as co-creators in the preparation process, notably that you are able to make it more targeted and responsive to individual concerns and that you can reach further out than you would otherwise be able to. It also brings benefits at a meta-level, insofar as it requires

participants to demonstrate their commitment beforehand by investing their energy and resources in the project, helping you to spot people low in motivation prior to departure (see also indicator 60).

Self-evaluate your language skills

Hundreds of useful tools for learning: for youth work and training activities



## Indicator 94

*Have participants been adequately prepared on how to deal with potential psychological issues arising from their learning mobility experience?*

It is not uncommon for a participant in a mobility project at some point to contemplate breaking off their stay and returning home prematurely, because they feel psychologically unable to cope with the experience of living in a foreign environment away from family and friends. This mechanism is known as homesickness and the results can have serious consequences for the learning process. The intensity of this feeling varies from one young person to another and some might need more support than others to go through it. Dealing with homesickness should therefore constitute an integral part of preparation. Be aware, though, that homesickness, once you encounter it, may mask much more serious psychological problems, which may require the intervention of professionals.

Certain things can prepare young people for homesickness and encourage them to develop coping mechanisms and use support networks. A valuable part of this consists of simply telling them about the phenomenon of homesickness as a natural reaction to being away from home and that everybody will be affected by it at some stage. Even if young people are convinced that homesickness is not going to happen to them, it is advisable to talk them through it, so that they recognise it if/when it happens and understand it as something natural and something that they should not be ashamed of. Homesickness often goes hand in hand with frustrations and cultural and other shocks in the new environment. What can help is comparing their expectations with the reality and identifying possible sources of frustrations in advance.

The more they understand their host community and perceive it as a home away from home, the better prepared they will be to deal with homesickness. At the same time, it is equally important to have a support system at home – family, friends, sending organisation. With the connectivity nowadays, home is just one call or chat away. Nonetheless, young people should be aware that living their life online can prevent them from truly integrating into the new environment and that does not help homesickness go away.

Finally, young people should be prepared and encouraged to ask for help if things become overwhelming, or if they feel anxious and depressed. There is no shame in it and it can help them move forward.

10 ways to deal with homesickness

Mental health in youth work

Stories of mental well-being when studying abroad

## Indicator 95



### *Are participants instructed on how to minimise the impact of the activity on the environment?*

Regardless of the type and topic of a learning mobility, the impact of the activity on the environment concerns them all. Therefore, during the preparation phase young people should be made conscious of their own impact on the environment and the ways to minimise and/or compensate it – during their stay abroad and at home.

The first step in this process is to create awareness on how activities can influence environmental sustainability. One way to raise awareness is by calculating one's ecological footprint, which can be done online. Young people preparing to go on a learning mobility could take the test, determine their ecological footprint and, based on the results, begin to reflect on how it can be reduced. They can also track their progress during the activity.

The biggest impact on the environment comes from travel arrangements (even though these may be determined in advance). Travelling by plane is perhaps the most damaging thing a person can do at an individual level and hence exploring alternative means of transport is a good place to start. Researching more environmentally friendly ways to travel can be a delegated task through which they can develop different competences. And if a young person will continue travelling during their mobility project, they might start changing their mindset and opt for cycling, hitchhiking, trains, etc. To reduce the impact on the environment, certain activities could be done online, for example preparatory meetings, debriefing after the programme and technical preparations.

Calculating one's ecological footprint will also point out other aspects of lifestyle, besides travelling and means of transport. As a general rule of thumb, young people should think along the lines of the magical triangle: reduce, reuse, recycle – the three approaches that save money, energy and natural resources, and help to fight against climate change. Reducing consumption is one of the first steps and the most desirable one, since it also reduces the need for reusing and recycling. This could include: being rational with electricity, refusing unnecessary packaging or thinking twice before buying new outfits for the trip abroad. This kind of reasoning can happen at an individual level but also when thinking about the activity and the way it will be implemented. For example, limiting the use of paper and, when using it, making sure the paper is recycled. Or buying locally grown or produced goods, rather than those which have travelled long distances.

[Global Footprint Network: advancing the science of sustainability](#)

[Ecological footprint calculator](#)

[Compass: manual for human rights education with young people](#)

[Greening the youth sector – Sustainability checklist](#)

[Protecting the environment using human rights law](#)

[Guidelines towards environmental sustainability for projects supported by the European Youth Foundation](#)

[T-KIT 13 – Sustainability and youth work](#)



## Section: accompaniment and support

Target groups differ and therefore, the needs for support during the process – especially during the time abroad – will differ, too. Some participants are insecure and require someone they know and trust from their home environment to accompany them during the stay abroad; others are fine on their own and it is sufficient that someone from the hosting environment is available for support in the event of a problem for which outside help is required. As an organiser, you need to reflect and decide on what kind of support is needed to create the safe (physical and online) spaces most conducive to participants' well-being and learning, and whether this is best done by sending an accompanying person along or relying on the support provided by the hosting environment.

Accompaniment and support, however, are not about making the stay as hassle-free and pleasant as possible. As part of the learning process, participants should try to tackle problems and resolve conflicts on their own. It is about the right intervention at the right moment in time to help participants successfully overcome challenges using and developing their own problem-solving skills.

There are five indicators in this section.



### Indicator 96

*Is adequate (monitoring/mentoring) support available in the hosting environment?*

Learning in a mobility project does not necessarily happen by itself, even though you have a learning-conducive environment. In most cases, it needs some type of underpinning to ensure that it happens and that the learning potential is adequately exploited. From a learning perspective, it is possible to distinguish between two different types of support: monitoring and mentoring. They are not mutually exclusive and you do not have to choose between them. In many projects, they are used side by side.

**Monitoring** means systematically observing and keeping track of the progress of participants' learning trajectory towards the achievement of the objectives of the stay. You can do this at regular time intervals (daily, weekly or monthly) but you can also have specific monitoring points after each major activity or project stage. By monitoring participants, you know whether things are going in the right direction and you can intervene if you see that they are not. One person can monitor many participants.

**Mentoring** goes a step further and is a system of supervision and guidance whereby one person (the mentor) shares their knowledge, skills and experience with others (mentees) to help them make progress. It is more than giving advice or passing on experience: it is about motivating and empowering the mentees to identify their objectives, needs or challenges and helping them to find ways of reaching them. It implies a much closer relationship and is often done on a one-to-one basis.

These two forms of support are not carried out by the same person. Monitoring is often done by the project leader or by co-ordinators at the hosting end and in some cases also by an evaluator carrying out an accompanying evaluation (also known

as a formative evaluation) of the project. Mentoring, on the other hand, is done by a person in the hosting environment, typically at a workplace or in an organisation where the participant is doing a placement. It is frequently seen in connection with long-term volunteering but is also used in short-term mobility, particularly regarding target groups who need closer support and help to cope with the challenges of a stay abroad.

Adequate monitoring (and mentoring) also means that early warning signs of problems – e.g. with health and mental well-being – can be detected in time and taken care of before they develop in a way that threatens the entire purpose of the activity.

[ME+NTOR – The Compendium for youth work](#)

[Meant to be a mentor – Workbook for EVS mentors](#)

## Indicator 97



*Are the particular requirements of young people with special needs supported during the activity and are possible extra costs for this covered in the budget?*

Diversity and inclusion are among the core values underlying many European programmes for learning mobility. Young people with special needs (or fewer opportunities) is an elastic concept whose meaning can vary with the context. Besides obvious issues like young parents or people with disabilities, it may also refer to educational difficulties, cultural differences, economic obstacles, health problems, social issues, geographical location and other barriers which may prevent specific young people from participating in what we may call mainstream mobility projects. If you want to give all those in your target group an equal opportunity to participate, you should therefore try to identify the factors that may stand in the way of some young people's possibilities for joining the project and see what you can do to eliminate these. If you fail to do so, you may effectively exclude those for whom such an experience would perhaps mean the most; and you are thereby lessening the potential impact of your project, both at a personal and a societal level.

Sometimes, you are able to address these issues in the design phase of your project. For instance, some projects that are reciprocal (which involve a return visit from abroad) operate with home-stays, where participants are accommodated with each other's families during the time abroad. However, some young people from less affluent backgrounds may not have a spare room in their home to put up their counterpart from abroad and this may mean that they are unable to sign up. By recruiting some extra host families in your area and holding these in reserve, you may be able to allow these young people to participate even though they cannot be hosts.

Very often, though, inclusion has an economic dimension. It can be quite costly to arrange adequate transport if you have a wheelchair user among your participants, or you may need to provide childcare facilities if one or more of your participants is a single parent and does not have the possibility to have the child looked after while they are abroad. Also, some participants – for example with learning disabilities – may need special support during their stay, such as an accompanying person, which again adds an extra layer of costs. Yet you should be aware that inclusion is a concern in

many funding schemes and that it is possible to ask for additional funding for participants with special needs. This means that you will need to include this dimension in your project at the time of sending in your application and make allowance for it in the accompanying budget.

Youth Knowledge Book 22 – Learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education. Access, processes and outcomes

Growing inclusion and participation



## Indicator 98

*Are minors accompanied by an adult or under adult supervision during the activity?*

A minor is usually defined as someone who has not yet turned 18. In a legal framework, they are also sometimes referred to as children or underage (even though they themselves may prefer to be called otherwise). Minors are not able to take the decision about going abroad on their own – they will need formal permission from their parent(s) or guardian(s).

As a project organiser working with minors/underage participants and children, you have a special responsibility, as you will be in their parents' place, so to speak, during the time abroad. Irrespective of their level of maturity, you can be held responsible for the consequences of their actions or what happens to them, if you fail to provide adequate supervision during the time they are in your care. Therefore, you need to ensure that this supervision is provided, either by accompanying adults or by adult staff in your partner organisation abroad.

Adequate supervision and adult supervision are not necessarily synonyms, however. Those in charge of looking after minors must be capable to do so, which means that they must have the right background in terms of training and/or experience. In many organisations, there is a child protection policy in place, which means that any person in contact with children – no matter whether they are staff or volunteers – must undergo a background check before they are allowed to take up their duties. You should check whether your partner organisation has such a policy in place (in some contexts it is a legal requirement), especially if you (or an accompanying person) cannot be around all of the time. In some organisations, this policy also extends to host families.

However, no matter how well your participants are supervised, you cannot keep complete vigilance 24/7. You therefore also need, as part of your preparation process, to agree on a code of conduct with the participants, so that they have clear guidelines on what they can and cannot do during the activity, and will know what to do in situations where they may come in harm's way.

An example of a child protection policy



## Indicator 99

*Are language support and translation services available if and where required?*

As well as being an important learning objective in most mobility projects, language (or the inability to communicate) can also constitute a significant barrier to learning.

In case foreign language proficiency is a problem for achieving the objectives, it is therefore an important part of quality assurance to try to reduce this obstacle as much as possible by offering participants help and support.

Arguably, the most important work in this respect is done during the preparation phase, where linguistic preparation is an important element. In the time before departure, participants can work either in groups (language classes) or individually (through online language courses) to build up or improve their proficiency in the language of the host country (see also indicator 92 on linguistic and cultural preparation). However, support may also be needed during the stay itself, where language training can continue alongside the other activities (or as the key activity if language proficiency is the main objective of the project).

In some cases, it may be relevant to offer translation and interpreting as part of the support package but this can be very costly and is usually reserved for emergency situations, unless there are people in the project team with the competences to do this. Machine translation is available on electronic platforms (for example, mobile phones) but this is not without challenges and is usually reserved for ad hoc situations.

In some projects, where participants have no prior knowledge of the language of the hosting communities and vice versa, a third language known by both parties is used as the preferred vehicle of communication and linguistic support offered to participants is focused on improving proficiency in this language. This means that both parties are speaking in a foreign language when interacting, which may impoverish communication but at the same time also have the consequence that two groups find themselves on a more equal status in terms of language proficiency.

Transnational projects target countries, regions or communities which speak the same language as the sending country/region/community. An obvious example here is Germany and Austria but it could also be between, for example, France and the French-speaking parts of Belgium, or between emigrant communities in different countries. Obviously, linguistic support is usually not an issue here.

## Multilingualism in the European Union

European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe

Language learning in mobility projects

## Indicator 100

*Is there an awareness of issues regarding participants' mental health and well-being, and are contingency plans in place in case problems occur?*

Being young is never easy. It is a period of transition and development, and with it come feelings of doubt and insecurity, which may manifest themselves as a decline in mental health and well-being. This is quite normal, and generally is temporary and does not seriously affect a young person's ability to function in social and educational contexts. At times, however, it may take a more serious turn, requiring some sort of outside intervention.



You should be especially aware of mental issues in connection with physical mobility projects – in particular, those where participants are away on their own and for longer periods of time. For all its good sides and developmental opportunities, a stay abroad can also (initially, at least) be a time of social isolation, caused by the necessity to communicate in a foreign language where proficiency may be poor, and clashes with norms and customs that may differ substantially from those of the home environment. Couple this with the absence of friends, family and other sources of support, as well as general feelings of unpredictability and loss of control, and you have a perfect case of culture shock. Again, this is normal and subsides after a period of adjustment in most cases – but not all. For some participants, it ends up with a premature return and for others, it may have even more dire consequences such as depression and the development (or reinforcement) of anxiety disorders. Another reason is paradoxically enough rooted in the successful efforts of many organisers to promote inclusion and attract more young people with fewer opportunities to participate. Although this term covers many types of target groups with different characteristics, they will as a rule be more fragile and have less resources to mobilise, and hence will be more likely to experience problems with mental health and well-being.

As with many other problems in life, the best coping strategy is often prevention: taking care that there is a close match between participants and the nature of your project before departure; a thorough preparation process that provides them with competences and tools to cope with the challenges they are likely to encounter; and not least a monitoring strategy that ensures that no one is allowed to sit in isolation and brood over their problems for too long. Once the project is over, the topic of mental health should be addressed in the debriefing process to induce participants to come forward with any unpleasant experiences they have had in this respect, so that they can be taken care of. Most cases will not require professional intervention but in the few that do, you must have a contingency plan to deal with the situation before it gets out of hand.

There are several things you can do as an organiser. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Testimonies of ex-programme participants about challenges and ways to overcome them. Often, it can be a great relief to know that others have had problems, what these were and how they coped with them. If you have no previous participants to draw on, try the internet.
2. Targeted workshops organised by the host and/or sending organisation to highlight problems with mental health and well-being, and coping strategies for these. Culture shock is experienced by most in one way or another and may strike even those who consider themselves immune, so this is relevant to all.
3. External, professional support. Several programmes and organisations have external psychologists, therapists and/or coaches attached to them that can be called in when and if the need arises. Having already designated these professionals as part of your contingency planning means that you do not have to spend valuable time in identifying one once the problem occurs, and using the same professional again and again means that there is a build-up of competences that increases the quality of the interventions. Counselling can be done live or virtually, individually or in groups, depending on needs and challenges.

## Section: the learning process



Quality is not about whether participants think it was a pleasant experience when they return home – quality is when they have achieved the learning objectives that formed the rationale for the project. This is the difference between holidays abroad and learning mobility. These learning objectives can vary from project to project and the aim of this section is not to enumerate them all, as it would arguably double the number of pages in this handbook. Instead, this section draws attention to two factors that are absolutely crucial for the learning process: firstly, that there is a clear understanding among both participants and others in the project environment about what these learning objectives are and how they are reached; and secondly, that spaces for what we may call assisted reflection are made available to participants, so that they can transform their experiences (good or bad) into valuable learning processes.

There are five indicators in this section.

### Indicator 101



*Is there a clear understanding of desired learning processes among both participants and team members?*

Living away from home, in another country and immersed in another culture, presents many exciting informal learning opportunities in itself: interacting with people from different backgrounds and origins, discovering new ways of working, living on a limited allowance, washing one's own clothes, and so on. However, just sending young people abroad and getting them back alive is no guarantee of learning, and therefore, you will have formulated specific learning objectives and organised learning-conducive activities. Even this may not be enough to bring about the intended outcomes, if participants and team members are not aware of objectives and processes, and are not actively contributing to them along the way.

Mere information is not enough. Learning objectives must reflect real needs of the target group, and participants must understand what they are about and take ownership of them. This is best achieved if they have actively contributed to the process of formulating the objectives – the desired outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills acquired and attitudes changed – and understand why it is important they are reached. This is especially important because much learning in mobility projects happens through facing challenges and on the border of their comfort zone. If there is no understanding, it can be tempting to pull out and stop investing the necessary energy: participants may then spend their time on social media with friends and family from home or hang out with others from their own group, rather than engaging in learning processes.

This understanding should not just be concerned with objectives but also with methods. Why is it necessary that participants do this activity and how does it fit into the overall process of reaching the objectives? This does not necessarily mean having to explain complex learning theories but it is part of the overall educational challenge to ensure there is a basic understanding of the meaning of what has been organised. This element should be an integral part of the preparation process (we may call it educational preparation) but it should also happen during the implementation phase.

This requirement of understanding and awareness is not just an issue for participants but also for the team. As part of the teambuilding process, all members need to have a common and shared understanding of aims, objectives and methods, so that all messages going out from individual team members are consistent. Although programmes may have different goals, programme participants should be aware of the core values underpinning all learning mobility projects.

[The Youthpass process and learning to learn](#)

[Council of Europe youth work portfolio](#)

[ETS competence model for youth workers to work internationally](#)

[Handbook for facilitators: learning to learn in practice](#)



## **Indicator 102**

***Do participants have time to reflect on their learning process before, during and after the activity?***

Young people will experience a lot during their learning mobility but to transform these experiences into solid learning, they need time and space for reflection. This reflection will enable them to extract conclusions and to plan how they will integrate them into their learning mobility but also in their life in general.

Once the learning process is structured and planned around a young person's needs, corresponds to their interests and with some kind of learning objectives in place, there is already a very solid base to create a learning magic out of all these experiences before, during and after the activity. What can elevate the learning process even more is ensuring that there is time for continuous (self-)reflection, when young people assess their learning and competence development, also modifying and adjusting their learning objectives along the way.

For the reflection to work, time needs to be allocated on a regular basis, where the intervals will depend on the type of learning mobility and the young person(s) themselves. In any case, the time will ensure that they are reminded of the importance of reflection, and slowly they will integrate this reflection time into their habits and routines, and will make the time for it themselves. This reflection process will, in most cases, need to be facilitated. It does not necessarily come by itself and the role of the team is quite important here. Developing reflection abilities and habits can and should start before the learning mobility activity, and be slowly developed all the way to the end.

In addition, learning mobilities have unexpected occurrences that can sometimes be even more instructing than planned learning opportunities. There should be flexibility allowing learners to respond to the unexpected and make the most of those opportunities.

## Indicator 103



### *Is there a plan for how and where the reflection process will take place?*

To develop the ability to reflect effectively (and efficiently), it is helpful to have a plan ensuring that reflection happens and that there will be time and space allocated to it. Reflection can happen daily, weekly, or be connected to significant learning mobility milestones.

The plan can be very detailed or only contain the most important points. This will depend on the young person, the type and duration of the learning mobility, and the team supporting the young person in planning their learning. Regardless, it should be taken seriously to make sure that the reflection is happening on a regular basis and that there is space allocated to it. The space could be physical, digital and/or hybrid. The decision about this should include the most appropriate method for reflection, costs and impact on the environment.

This planning and the reflection itself could be done by young person(s) alone but it would be even better if mentor support were available, as well as peer support. The plan could be set in the preparation phase of the learning mobility and some initial reflections could involve the mentor as well. In some learning mobility projects, the mentor role is continuous and one of the key roles is to support the reflection process and ensure its continuity. At the same time, if possible, it is also very helpful to have peer support, share with other young people who are in the same situation and help each other discover learning insights. Because, while the learning (or rather the experience part of it) happens out of the comfort zone, the reflection usually happens in the centre of it. The support and the fact that time and place are specifically allocated will often be vital to ensure that it happens.

When it comes to the ways in which reflection can take place or even the tools that can be used to support the reflection, the options are very diverse and depend on the preferences of each young person. This is why you should take a diversity of approaches and tools into consideration when planning the reflection, to make it as engaging and smooth as possible. Some of the options are:

- ▶ a learning journal accompanying the young person through their learning mobility experience;
- ▶ a photo or video blog, kept at regular intervals, and which can, in the end, be edited into a holistic learning story;
- ▶ tailored reflection questions, designed by the young persons themselves, their peers or their mentor;
- ▶ metaphorical cards and/or images, which can help in expressing experiences and feelings associated with them;
- ▶ smartphone apps supporting this process.

In addition, certain instruments are available. One of them is Youthpass, a recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth projects (within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme). It is based on eight key competences for lifelong learning and the process facilitates issuing a certificate based on self-assessment. There are a number of tools supporting reflection on learning from the very start of the learning mobility all the way to the end.

Youthpass



## Indicator 104

### *Are adequate facilities available for the reflection process?*

Learning spaces are an essential element to support learning and, in particular, to reflect in different phases of a learning mobility. This applies to every aspect of a learning mobility – from experiencing, through reflection, to conceptualisation and transfer or future planning. Experiencing has its own considerations when it comes to the learning environment, since it does not always happen when planned and it can happen in a great variety of different contexts and challenging environments. On the other hand, reflection does require young person(s) to be comfortable to be able to settle down to the learning. Planning the facilities in advance, in particular for group reflection sessions, is an important step in the learning process and should be given adequate attention.

Being comfortable and feeling safe are important preconditions for the reflection process. While experiences often have a certain degree of challenge in them, to extract learning from those experiences, young person(s) need to be brought back to their comfort and safety. Only then will they be able to process what happened and how to generate learning insights. However, comfort and safety are not the same for each young person. Hence, when thinking about how to arrange physical facilities and virtual spaces for reflection, this needs to be taken into account.

There is no exact recipe to arrange facilities or digital spaces for reflection and this choice can be approached in different ways. One example of organising reflection spaces during a short-term mobility includes three learning spaces for daily reflections. In one learning space, at the end of each day, there is a “gallery” of the day’s sessions, with different outcomes and reminders of the activities. Participants enter this room to remind themselves of the day and try to understand what the day was trying to tell them – what was the message to be taken on board. In another room, there is a selection of different tools to stimulate reflection – papers with questions, colouring-in mandalas, metaphorical cards, cubes, diaries, etc. Participants use this room to get extra stimulation for reflection, as well as to have conversations with their peers and reflect in smaller groups. Finally, there is the “silent” room, where those who need it go to reflect in silence. They could have their reflection process there or use the room to be on their own and let the insights in. All three rooms are used at different times and by different participants.

This is just one example of how a space could be organised to cater for different reflection needs. It is important to always try to provide designated learning spaces that will provide safety and comfort, as well as stimulate reflection and, if possible,

be able to cater for different needs. In addition, there should be no external disturbance, and young people need to be able to take their time and engage in the reflection process.

Another thing to consider is the potential of different outdoor spaces in stimulating reflection, since reflection is often stimulated by physical movement. Either by going for a walk and talk, having a silent reflection in the wilderness, or having a group reflection on the beach, nature has its way in supporting reflection and stimulating additional insights.

New forms of mobility, including digital mobility, imply digital platforms on which (some) activities may take place. You need to develop a plan for the adequate use of online meetings, taking into account the objectives of the workshops, privacy issues, data protection and the limits of such forms, among other aspects.

## Outward Bound

[Learning space design poster by trainers toolbox](#)

[Youthpass learning agora report](#)

## Indicator 105

*Is the reflection process facilitated and supported by the team before, during and after the activity?*



It is a natural tendency to try to make sense of things we do not understand. However, we do not always find a plausible explanation for the phenomena we observe or experience when abroad, and sometimes we are so coloured in our thought processes by preconceived attitudes and perspectives that we jump to the wrong conclusions. At other times, we simply stop reflecting when we return home and are no longer directly confronted by the situations that caused them, even though we never managed to make sense of things at the time. This means that learning opportunities are missed, and for this reason it is important that the team is facilitating and supporting these reflection processes until they are concluded.

Supporting reflection processes is about two things: space and input.

**Space** implies making room – physically, digitally and not least timewise – for participants to discuss and reflect on their experiences and make meaning of them. Often, programmes are as tightly packed with events and activities as possible to make the most of the time abroad but there should also be moments where participants, alone or together, can reflect on what they have experienced and the questions this has raised. Physically, the team must ensure that rooms or spaces are available where this can happen in an organised fashion (see also indicator 104).

**Input** is about facilitating the process through timely interventions – not by telling participants what to think but by asking questions and stimulating discussions, and at times feeding in bits of factual knowledge that participants lack to be able to process their experiences and questions. This is a delicate task, since it requires the facilitator to walk a tightrope between their personal intentions and the need to respect young people's own thought processes.

Reflection should be stimulated and facilitated before, during and after the stay abroad. In the preparation phase, the participants should reflect on their expectations and any possible prejudices they may have; and during the stay, they should be encouraged to constantly think about, and try to make sense of, their observations and experiences. After returning home, they should be encouraged and supported to continue these reflections and work out how the outcomes can influence the way in which they are going to think and act in the future. Ideally, the same team members should follow this process throughout the project, or at least be responsible for making the plans and arrangements that allow it to happen.

Supporting students to reflect on their group work

REFLECT



### Section: debriefing

A learning mobility project consists of three phases in a temporal succession: before, during and after, corresponding to preparation, the time abroad and the debriefing process. There has been a tendency in the past to focus on the first two phases and take the third – debriefing – more lightly but research has shown that this third phase is an absolutely crucial link in the learning process. During debriefing, experiences are described and discussed, their implications in terms of learning formulated, and participants are induced to reflect on them and the possible impact on their future life trajectory. Without a structured debriefing process, many participants may simply just go back and resume their old lives, and all their experiences and potential learning are figuratively speaking placed in an old shoebox, stored in some remote corner of their brain.

Finally, debriefing not only involves participants but also surroundings: the hosting and sending communities and any other stakeholders involved. As a minimum, these should be informed about project outcomes and asked to reflect and comment on these.

There are three indicators in this section.



### Indicator 106

*Is a structured debriefing process conducted after the activity?*

As mentioned above, there is sometimes a tendency to focus on the preparation phase (before) and the actual stay abroad (during), and disregard the time after homecoming. Yet research has shown that the after-phase – known as debriefing – is just as important as the other two. You can, in fact, lose more or less everything you have achieved with the participants if you do not pay adequate attention to this part of the learning process.

The debriefing process contains several elements:

- ▶ **reflection:** now that the stay is over, participants need to continue the reflection process, mop up any outstanding issues and make meaning of these. This can be done individually or in a group but it is important that it is assisted by the team with relevant inputs (see indicator 105).

- ▶ **evaluation:** this is also the time to sum up their experiences and assess their worth in relation to their future life trajectory. Often, this is done in connection with the overall evaluation process accompanying the project and can be done orally (in an interview, possibly a focus group interview) or in writing (in a participant report).
- ▶ **recognition:** learning outcomes – knowledge, skills and competences – acquired or strengthened as a result of participation in the project should be identified and documented. If possible, they should be formally recognised so that they can be exploited in connection with education and training.
- ▶ **guidance:** participants should receive information and advice that can help them put their learning outcomes to good use in their continued life trajectories.
- ▶ **retention:** it can be tough to return if you have changed during the stay but your home environment is expecting to get the same person back. It may be tempting to quietly forget about everything that happened to you and just revert to the role you played before you left (this is known as the shoebox-effect). Participants should therefore be supported in retaining these learning outcomes as part of the debriefing process.
- ▶ **re-entry:** some young people – especially those who have been away for a long time – experience a kind of reverse culture shock and have difficulties in settling back in, sometimes experiencing periods of depression and feelings of loss, for which they need psychological help to overcome them.

The interventions required need not be very sophisticated. In relation to problems with, for example, re-entry, the most effective remedy is to find forums where participants can talk about their experiences in a legitimate way; for example, by giving presentations to other young people about their stay. Incidentally, this can also be a valuable input in their motivation and preparation process.

### Supporting non-formal education and youth work

#### The missing linkage: the process of integrating orientation and re-entry

## Indicator 107

*Do participants have a chance to meet after the activity to share their experiences and reflections?*



Participants often experience a great need to gather with others in the group, or – for those that went abroad individually – to meet with others who have had a similar experience. This is not merely a social phenomenon but actually an important part of the debriefing and reintegration phase. Reflection processes are stimulated and outcomes easier identified, and by mutually supporting each other, participants can help overcome feelings of dejection after what for many has been a very exciting period in their life, and which is now over.

If participants went abroad as a group, they will also return as a group, and this is an opportunity to take some time – a day or two – to remain together and engage in debriefing activities. Reunions, where participants meet up some time after returning from abroad, can therefore have a significant educational value but they can also

be costly to organise. However, online meetings, while perhaps not quite the same as a physical reunion, are still vastly better than nothing.

Participants should be encouraged to think about and understand what has changed as a result of their participation. Change is sometimes defined as the result of an experience transformed into learning, which in turn has made a person change their ways. This can certainly be the case in mobility projects, where the impact of new experiences and perspectives is often so strong that family and friends regularly make remarks about participants being a totally different person after homecoming.

Change may not necessarily always be for the better. Negative feelings stemming from isolated happenings may get to dominate, especially in short-term projects, where there may not be enough time to compensate for a bad first impression. This could, for example, lead to participants returning home with prejudices confirmed rather than dispelled, which is exactly the opposite of what mobility projects try to achieve.

Participants should therefore be stimulated to develop self-awareness and helped to identify impacts and what they are doing to them. Concretely, this is done through a process called assisted reflection, where experiences and impressions are identified, discussed and processed, and possible implications drawn out; in group sessions and/or individually (for example, with a mentor). What these impacts are varies from person to person – what is a life-changing moment for one would hardly make another bat an eyelid. To track changes, participants can complete a questionnaire at the beginning, middle and end of the programme related to learning outcomes, and measure learning outcomes by themselves. It is desirable to keep a diary or notebook about progress and experiences.

**Asking good questions. A framework for learning, evaluation and continuous improvement**

Stories

12 people, 12 life-changing Erasmus stories

Youthpass unfolded – Practical tips and hands-on methods for making the most of the Youthpass process



## Indicator 108

*Is the debriefing process supported by the team, considering the needs of individual participants?*

Debriefing must take into account the experiences and capacities for introspection of individual participants. A failure to do so may mean that important learning outcomes are not acted on and may never develop any further, or that negative aspects of the entire experience get to dominate and stimulate a kind of learning that is not constructive for participants in their continued life trajectory. It must also be integrated into project planning from the start and supported by the entire team.

The individual elements of debriefing (reflection, evaluation, recognition, guidance, retention and re-entry, see indicator 106) require different sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Despite their importance, however, you are not likely to find any courses

exclusively dedicated to this aspect of mobility, even though it does often feature as an element in general courses about project management in mobility contexts. Fortunately, debriefing processes do not necessarily require sophisticated methods and tools but they do require that team members are aware of their importance and prepared to make it happen.

Individual requirements in terms of debriefing vary considerably, depending on personality and the kind of experience participants have been through. Despite this focus on the individual, however, debriefing activities organised with groups often carry a significant added value, since participants are likely to bring different aspects of the commonly shared experience to attention. One participant may have noticed something another has missed, and which may throw a completely different light on an incident. Also, they will have different interpretations, something that can be highly beneficial to reflection processes.

### The European training calendar

## Section: outcomes and social impact



There are at least three different levels at which you can discuss the outcomes and social impact of a learning mobility project:

- ▶ the actual participants (what did they learn and how relevant is this to their future life trajectory?);
- ▶ the organisation (what experiences did you harvest that can be used to improve future activities?); and
- ▶ the hosting and sending communities (what potential impact is there on the environments at either end of the project?).

This section is thus related to the section on evaluation (indicators 38-45), which is about identifying outcomes. The emphasis in this section is on how outcomes are used to make the impact bigger at personal, professional and social levels.

There are five indicators in this section.

### Indicator 109



#### *Are individual participant's learning outcomes (intended and unintended) identified and assessed?*

Having participated in a learning mobility project may have a great impact on an individual's career, as well as life trajectory in general. When employers make a choice between different candidates for a position, they will in many cases opt for the one who can provide something extra in terms of learning – like competences acquired in a mobility project. But it requires that this learning is visible, namely that it has been identified and assessed, and this should happen in all quality projects. However, when doing so, we should take into account both intended and non-intended learning outcomes.

Intended outcomes form the rationale for the project in the first place – the reason why we organised the project. These have been formulated as a set of learning objectives, which together with the target group form the point of departure for

nearly everything in the project – the form of mobility chosen, the methods used and, of course, the evaluation. In the evaluation, we look at learning objectives again and try to measure (or estimate) whether they have been reached and to what degree.

Non-intended learning outcomes (also called informal learning) is what happens over and on top of the learning that was targeted from the start. These, too, should be identified and assessed but we do not really know what they might be, so it can be hard to pinpoint them for individual participants. However, they may be equally important as the intended outcomes (see also indicator 40). It may be helpful to use a competence framework in this task, such as, for example, the key competences for lifelong learning (see below), with which you are able to capture most forms of learning.

The assessment process is significant for the individual, since it leads to some form of recognition of achievements, and can be very empowering and stimulating for further development. How learning outcomes are assessed depends on the kind of learning we are talking about. Foreign language proficiency may be assessed in a precise way by letting the participant take a test at the beginning of the activity and again at the end, and vocational skills can also be assessed with some precision. Others – for example, personal competences or soft skills – are fluffier and there are no official standards by which they can be measured. Here, it is more a matter of making them visible and you can use methods that are themselves based, fully or in part, on self-assessment.

Whichever way, it could still be a good idea to incorporate an element of self-assessment, because this is an important part of the learning-to-learn process, where individual participants develop an awareness of their own learning and learning processes.

Lifelong learning – Key competences

Youthpass

Development of self-assessment questionnaires



## Indicator 110

***Will participants receive a certificate documenting their learning path and competence development?***

A certificate should not just be a piece of paper testifying the attendance and completion of the learning mobility. It should contain a description of both the learning environment (the project) and a detailed listing of all achieved learning outcomes. While it is not the certificate as such but the actual competences that count, the certificate can empower young people by giving them confidence and something to show when, for example, applying for a job or seeking admittance to education and training.

An important function of a certificate is (or should be) that it translates individual learning outcomes into a language that is also understood by people who are not

familiar with youth work or mobility projects, namely the language of competences that is also used in the labour market and education contexts. Identifying and assessing learning outcomes takes time and effort, and so does articulating them in a way that makes learning understandable.

One example of this kind of certificate, based on key competences for lifelong learning (see indicator 109) is the Youthpass. Youthpass is both a certificate and a tool that structures learning, reflection and awareness of learning outcomes into a process that can be carried out by young person(s) themselves, with the support of their mentors and/or teams. It also supports the translation of learning outcomes into the language of competences, making it easier to communicate personal and professional development, and competences acquired, to relevant actors and stakeholders.

Similarly, if the project has produced learning outcomes of a vocational character, you can use the methodology of the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) which provides a template for documenting – and possibly recognising – learning outcomes in relation to vocational or occupational standards.

Youthpass

The ECVET toolkit

## Indicator 111



*Is guidance available to help participants capitalise on their learning outcomes in their further career trajectory or civic life?*

Having identified learning outcomes for – and with – participants, they should also be equipped to capitalise on them, for it is not always obvious what should be done with these achievements. They may point in a direction which is radically different from what an individual thought they were heading towards and where they do not know any landmarks. Or they may indicate potential for further improvement, which should be followed up.

This is likely to happen with participants, for being abroad and in environments where nobody knows them or has any expectations beforehand can be a liberating experience, where they are encouraged to pursue other interests and aspects of their personality than they have done at home. Once they are back, they need help to clarify choices and to find information that can take them further down the new pathways they are pursuing. This is where guidance comes in as a quality indicator.

This guidance need not necessarily be dispensed by a trained guidance counsellor, even though knowledge of guidance and counselling methods is often an asset in this situation. It may be enough to refer the participant to external guidance services or sources of information.

It can happen that young people have become so fascinated by the hosting country that they want to go back there to work or study. In these cases, local guidance and counselling services may not be of much help but there are specialised guidance networks and sources of information with a particular focus on mobility, where help is at hand.

Guidance: supporting youth to manage their careers

Euroguidance network: linking lifelong guidance and international mobility across Europe

Information on living, studying and working abroad: Eurodesk and EURES

## Indicator 112



### *Will outcomes of the activity be used to develop sending and hosting organisations?*

Just as individuals can learn, so can organisations. Even though it is the fifth time you are organising the same type of mobility activity, the participants are different every time and each of them brings new ideas, dreams, work habits, world views and challenges to the project. Every time you run the project, something will be different, and these differences hold great potential for further developing your organisation and its practices. To become a learning organisation, however, requires that you are open to learning and that you have ways to capture any relevant experiences and analyse them to bring out their potential for quality improvement.

Openness to learning means that your organisation has a culture where it is OK to ask questions, to challenge established ways of doing things and a willingness to embrace new methods. Also, it should be OK to take calculated risks and make mistakes (unless you make the same mistake twice), and mistakes are seen as a source for learning rather than a punishable offence.

Another aspect of being a learning organisation is the constant knowledge sharing between team members and the documentation of practices. If that knowledge becomes compartmentalised within the heads of certain individuals, it runs the risk of disappearing altogether if that person finds another job or retires. This means that you have to devote energy to reinventing the wheel – energy that otherwise could have been used to further improve and refine practices.

Organisational learning finds a very practical expression in the way you evaluate your project. Your evaluation plan should not just focus on participants but also on organisational issues (see also indicator 39). Throughout the project's lifetime, you should gather information on its functioning and how it responds to new challenges, and at the end, this should form a specific section in your evaluation report. In this case, it can be a great advantage to have an external evaluator from outside the organisation without a preconceived idea of how things should be done.

### Learning organisations



## Indicator 113

### *Will outcomes be used to further improve sending and hosting communities?*

Learning mobility projects are rooted in the needs of communities and their results are likely to have an impact on these. This goes both for the sending and the hosting ends. Exactly how big this impact may be depends, of course, on the size of

the community. Projects based in a village youth club are potentially much more likely to leave a footprint in the community than projects where participants are recruited nationwide.

The impact on sending and hosting communities is in many cases only a by-product in mobility projects, something that happens on the side while organisers are focusing on the learning processes of the participants. However, if you deem that the project has potential to also benefit communities, you should think about this aspect from the start of your project and reflect on what you can do to promote this.

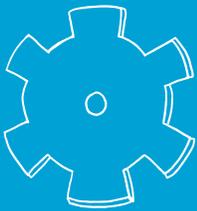
First of all, you need to reflect on what kind of change you would like your project to effect or contribute to. Once done, there are a number of actions you can take as an organiser to ensure that your outcomes are known and taken up by relevant actors and stakeholders in the community. You could for instance:

- ▶ ensure that key persons from the community are involved up front in the project and take ownership, e.g. in a steering group;
- ▶ ensure visibility by organising project activities in the community, involving local actors and using local suppliers;
- ▶ ensure that information about the project and its results is disseminated to as many as possible in the community;
- ▶ (for incoming mobility) engage in activities that leave a concrete trace in the community, e.g. by making a product as an outcome of an activity that will also last after participants have returned.

Whether you succeed in making lasting improvements in the community is, of course, ultimately not something you can exercise control of, like you can in your organisation. However, you can do your best to ensure that the conditions for this to happen are as favourable as possible.



# DIMENSION – VIRTUAL MOBILITY



Section: points of attention



## Dimension – Virtual mobility

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**W**hat is virtual mobility? How does it relate to physical mobility? What resources are required to engage in virtual mobility projects? What are the points of attention, both from a pedagogical perspective and in terms of risks?

Virtual mobility is a term used to denote facilitated and systematic, peer-to-peer interaction between young people in different countries, conducted in real time and through the medium of IT. In its pure form, participants only meet on-screen; and yet underlying values and learning objectives are similar to those of physical learning mobility projects. As a phenomenon, it has been around since appropriate technology was invented and made accessible to the public in the early 2000s but it gathered momentum when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in 2020. Travel was suddenly not possible anymore and a lot of projects, originally planned as physical activities, were converted into virtual mobility to enable cross-border contacts to continue. It is now a regular feature of international youth work and the latest version of the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme contains provisions for virtual exchanges in the field of youth.

Research has shown that many of the same learning objectives used in physical mobility projects can be achieved (or enhanced) through virtual mobility. However, compared to physical mobility, there are both drawbacks and advantages. The major issues in favour of virtual mobility are a much-reduced carbon footprint (since there is no travel involved), the possibility to include target groups which for some reason are not able to leave home (e.g. single parents with no access to childcare for the duration of the project, young offenders, etc.), and economic issues (since there are no costs for travel, accommodation, food, insurance, etc.). The drawbacks are connected to the absence of the high degree of immersion that is possible in a physical project. In virtual projects, participants only receive oral and visual inputs from the screen, and in most cases only for a limited period of time per day, as screen fatigue sets in.

Generally, there is a distinction between three forms of virtual mobility. Blended mobility is when virtual elements are incorporated into physical mobility projects to enhance the duration of contacts or improve aspects of the project set-up, e.g. during the preparation and debriefing phase. Hybrid mobility is when – within the same project – some participants go abroad physically whereas others participate online in activities from home. Finally, online mobility is when activities are conducted purely through the medium of IT. In terms of quality, virtual mobility shares many of the same features with physical mobility, except, of course, those that are directly related to travel, accommodation, etc. Yet the medium itself (IT) requires some additional considerations, which can be translated into specific quality indicators for online encounters.



## Section: points of attention

Some people maintain that virtual mobility is not real mobility, because it does not imply the full cultural immersion that can be achieved in physical projects. But even in physical mobility projects – especially those carried out in groups – immersion is rarely total. Also, social media allow participants to be in almost constant contact with friends and family in the home country during their time abroad. And while the direct contact and dialogue with peer groups abroad is limited to a couple of hours per day in purely online encounters, these usually cover a longer stretch of time than, e.g. a two-week physical mobility project. Physical and virtual mobility are merely two sides of the same coin and many of the indicators included in this handbook (apart, of course, from those directly related to the physical relocation) are equally valid for both. There are, however, a number of issues that are particular pertinent to this kind of learning mobility.

There are four indicators in this section.



### Indicator 114

*Have the necessary precautions been made to ensure adequate protection of participants?*

In online projects, data are constantly produced and exchanged between organiser and participants, and there is always a risk that these may be harvested and exploited by outsiders. Issues of privacy and data ownership should therefore be carefully considered when engaging in virtual mobility projects. Many of these are covered by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the EU, which prescribes how sensitive information must be handled. The GDPR is often seen as being only for enterprises but it also applies to associations, societies and indeed all types of membership organisations. You as an organiser must therefore reflect beforehand about the implications for your project and make provisions that ensure that data are handled accordingly: how they are stored, who owns them and how online privacy can be ensured.

However, misuse of data by outsiders is not the only risk that needs to be considered when engaging in virtual mobility – the concept of cybersecurity is much broader and also encompasses protection from phenomena like bullying, sexting, hate speech, grooming, radicalisation, etc. These are not restricted to virtual mobility but may also occur in physical mobility projects. When it is foregrounded here in connection with virtual mobility, it is because the medium of IT creates some specific conditions that may facilitate processes leading to the above phenomena. It depends, of course, on how online encounters are organised and implemented but generally it is easier for predators to present a certain image of themselves that may mask their true nature and intentions when this happens through IT rather than through real-life encounters (e.g. in connection with grooming, radicalisation, etc.).

Also, the fact that activities take place in cyberspace can lead some participants to adopt a more aggressive or degrading attitude towards other people than they would normally have if they had met them face-to-face, and this may develop into things

like cyberbullying and hate speech. When this happens, it is not necessarily because it was intended from the onset but it may occur as a result of misunderstandings that were not cleared up at an early stage and which have escalated from there. If they are allowed to go unchecked, however, you will have achieved exactly the opposite of what is one of the key underlying values of the European programmes supporting these cross-border encounters, namely that of promoting intercultural understanding. Therefore, you must be on your guard against any signs of harmful behaviour during the activity and be ready to intervene, lest it develops and spreads. And, even more importantly, you should make sure to build up an awareness of these risks, both among participants and staff attached to the project, as part of your preparation process already before the actual encounter is initiated.

[General data protection regulation \(GDPR\)](#)

[Social inclusion, digitalisation and young people](#)

[General advice on internet behaviour for youth](#)

[Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment](#)

## Indicator 115



### *Is the necessary equipment available to all participants?*

Most young people have a smartphone and access to cheap or even free internet connection, which makes going online – even across borders (at least in Europe) – an easy thing to do. But whereas smartphones often play an important role in virtual mobility projects, they do so as an accessory and rarely as a self-standing instrument, because they can be inconvenient for more protracted sessions involving groups of young people. This is not to say that it cannot be done but in most cases, you will need more in terms of equipment to properly implement your virtual mobility project. The exact requirements vary from project to project but there are at least three things to consider: hardware, software and the physical environment.

- ▶ **Hardware.** The size of a smartphone is an advantage as well as a drawback. It is ideal for, e.g. making footage of field activities or individual dialogue of a more informal character but it can be tiring to use for conducting a structured dialogue involving more than a few people and for more than a couple of minutes at a time because of the size of the screen and keyboard. Especially for purely online mobility, you should ensure that computers with normal-sized screens and keyboards (as well as cameras and microphones) are available to participants. Other pieces of hardware that may come in handy are headsets and more professional, mobile cameras, so that you can film, e.g. group sessions or physical activities. Another thing we can list under hardware is the need for cheap, fast and reliable internet connections.
- ▶ **Software.** There are a lot of computer programmes available that are (or can be) relevant to virtual mobility projects – from simple icebreaker activities to more sophisticated platforms – and new ones are added almost on a daily basis. Many of these are distributed as freeware and can be downloaded at no cost whereas others require licences and can be quite expensive to use.

- ▶ **Physical environment.** If your project requires participants to sit for longer periods of time in front of a computer, the physical environment is important. What this means is comfortable seating, adequate lighting, and peaceful and quiet surroundings with no distractions. Other issues that may come into play here are access to nearby toilet facilities, breakout rooms or the possibility to make tea or coffee.

You need to reflect about your equipment requirements before implementing your project, because it is a vital ingredient of your learning environment and to achieving your learning objectives. You should also think in terms of inclusion/exclusion: if you count on making do with what participants already have, you may make participation difficult – or even impossible – for groups who have no or limited access to relevant equipment. Therefore, setting up a virtual mobility project may involve some investments and virtual mobility projects are rarely cost-neutral, even though you save on things like travel, accommodation, etc. in comparison with a physical project. In many mobility programmes, there are no funding provisions for virtual activities but in others it is possible to cover at least some of the costs for virtual elements.

#### Virtual exchanges in higher education and youth

List of electronic platforms available in the [virtual facilitation guide](#)



### Indicator 116

#### *Is the screen interaction structured, varied and of an appropriate duration?*

It can be very intensive to sit and concentrate in front of a computer screen for longer periods at a time, which anyone who has attended a virtual conference or seminar can testify to. After a while, attention may falter and so-called screen fatigue sets in. You should therefore not plan any sessions in your virtual mobility project which require that participants are online for more than a couple of hours at a time, otherwise you risk that they disconnect – mentally or even physically (muting microphone, switching off camera). Even then, it is a good idea to introduce moments of change and distraction, like small energisers or elements of gamification.

This does not mean that you should limit project activities to two hours a day, for there is a lot of work that can be done offline. In one project, for example, a subtheme was culinary traditions and participants in one partner country cooked a specific dish typical for their country, filmed the entire process and then sent the footage to participants from the other country. These watched the video clip, reflected on what they saw, whereupon participants from both countries met online and discussed issues that arose both in a culinary and wider cultural context (what is the history behind this dish? Is it very popular and why? Are there any specific techniques used for preparing it? Why these ingredients? Do we have any similar dishes in our country?, etc.). In total, the process took one week with participants from both countries submitting one dish to each other but the direct online interaction was only six hours of that time. However, they learned a lot about the culture of each other's countries – and not just the culinary aspects of this – during these sessions.

The fact that the total time used for direct, online interaction may only be a couple of hours a day (or less) does not make your job as a project organiser any easier. You will need to prepare very carefully for these brief moments so that the time is used to the best effect and none of it wasted on idle chit-chat that leads to nowhere. It requires careful planning to put together a coherent and varied programme that ensures high-octane discussions.

Examples of virtual projects:

[A virtual multilateral youth exchange](#)

[Erasmus+ virtual exchange](#)

[DINA – A digital meet-up platform for international youth work](#)

[Facilitating, learning, organising and welcoming – A critical training of trainers](#)

## Indicator 117



### *Are adequate resources available for monitoring activities?*

Just like a physical project, meaningful content must be carefully planned and activities monitored for virtual activities, so that the interaction is constructive in relation to the stipulated values and objectives. Online encounters are more vulnerable as there is no direct contact, which means that misunderstandings are more likely to happen and become counterproductive if not detected and addressed at an early stage. The type of monitoring needed depends very much on the profile of the participants. Well-functioning young people with a good foreign language proficiency and previous international experience may require very little effort in this respect, whereas vulnerable groups with little – or negative – previous exposure to other cultures will need to be followed carefully, simply because the risk of misunderstandings arising and developing is bigger here. Monitoring, however, does not imply that you have to sit in on all sessions and listen for possible misbehaviours and intervene every time a conflict looms.

A good starting point for all monitoring activities is to discuss and agree beforehand with participants (and of course your partner abroad) on a code of conduct for the interaction – what you can do and cannot do, and what the signs of, e.g. bullying and hate speech are. Then you can ask participants to come to you if at any stage they feel that this code is not being adhered to during the encounters. When the virtual activities are carried out, observe your participants carefully to detect any changes in behaviour and moods that may indicate an unpleasant experience, and always be open to the possibility that your own participants may not only be innocent victims but can also be the ones committing the misbehaviours. Select a few sessions when the entire group is present and listen in on these – are the vibrations good, do all contribute or is there a hint of aggression in the air? If you hear anything you are not comfortable with, take it up with the group or the concerned individual(s). When the direct encounters are over, also include the issue in your debriefing discussions. The harm may be done at this stage but if you detect it immediately after, you may still limit the damages it may have caused.

In virtual mobility – be it blended, hybrid or online mobility – monitoring is arguably the item that requires most resources. Often this is not reflected in grant schemes, which either do not offer any funding at all for virtual activities or earmark funding for hardware and software. This means that, in many cases, you will have to cover this from your own resources. If you work in an organisation, make sure that this issue is reflected in the budget already in the planning phase, and that the necessary time is made available to you and your colleagues.

[Starting points for combating hate speech online](#)

[Inclusion and diversity in digital youth work](#)

[Best practices for virtual youth programming](#)

The importance and relevance of learning mobility in the youth field – the mobility of young people across regions and countries for a specific period of time, consciously organised for educational purposes – have been reinforced through the increasing number of projects and activities in Europe over the years. Good quality learning mobility can bring about positive outcomes for individuals, organisations and communities. For this reason, maintaining the focus on quality is of the utmost importance.

This handbook, first published in 2019, is the result of the work and discussions of experts, young people, youth workers, researchers, policy makers and donors. It is intended to support the organisers of learning mobility projects in the youth field at all stages of a project, from design to evaluation, and aims at providing immediate, clear and useful answers to questions on how to organise learning mobility projects with and for young people.

This second edition of the handbook has been prepared as a result of the changing context of youth learning mobility during the Covid-19 pandemic, including “virtual mobility”, and also takes into account other considerations such as environmental sustainability, mental health and the well-being of participants in youth mobility projects, and the values and attitudes reinforced by learning mobility.

<http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>  
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The member states of the **European Union** have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

<http://europa.eu>

The **Council of Europe** is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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