



# LISTEN

## COMMUNICATION BOOKLET

by LISTENers, with LISTENers, for LISTENers

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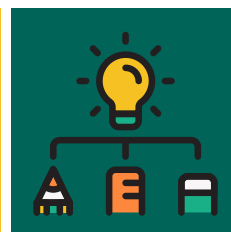
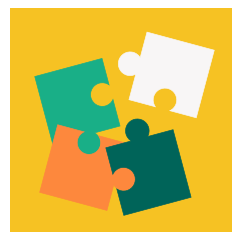
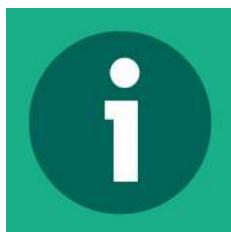
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# Introduction

## Context of the Youth Exchange

LISTEN Youth Exchange was created because of a common interest of answering the question:

"What are the communication needs of young people?"

In 2023, at Ommen NL, a group of youngsters came together in a YE. The aim of it was to improve teamwork skills through cooking. Their special journey shaped a unique bond and, despite the distance, their ties held beyond it. This sparked a quest to discover what nurtured their connections.

They wanted to share the experience that they had, all while exploring a topic that would significantly improve others' lives.

Before *LISTEN* began, we ran a survey to understand the needs of young people. The results showed that:

- Nearly 50% of respondents were not aware of techniques for problem-solving.
- Many could adapt their communication style to different contexts but struggled with confidence, listening skills, and practicing in real-life situations.
- Barriers such as economic, social, and geographical challenges made it harder for some to access opportunities to develop these skills.

Our response was to create a space where communication could be explored through real experiences, with a mix of structured workshops, creative challenges, intercultural exchanges, and hands-on activities in the community. But we also wanted to create the space and the chance to create a bond among them for future initiatives to build up led by this new group.

This is how they transformed from participants to torchbearers.

The project idea became reality in Leporano (Taranto, Italy), where from 4th of April to 15th of April 35 young people and group leaders from seven countries came together for 10 days of learning, sharing, and creating.

The group was international and diverse with participants bringing different cultures, languages, and life stories into one shared space. Importantly, the exchange included 20 young people with fewer opportunities (excluding group leaders) who faced economic, geographical, social, and other barriers. This mix of perspectives created an environment rich in intercultural learning, empathy, and real-world challenges to communication.



## Aim and Objectives

The aim of the YE was to enhance the youth's communication and problem solving skills. Although communication is all around us, people (especially youngsters) can struggle to express themselves and to filter the information from their surroundings, which they may find overwhelming.

Good communication is at the heart of building relationships, solving problems, and working together, and in today's fast-paced, digital, and multicultural world, it's more important than ever.

Using the tools that were implemented and learnt through this process, and that can also be found in a later section of this booklet, everyone could improve their problem solving skills, reducing the conflict in any aspect and develop communication skills, essential for daily tasks.

Therefore, the main objectives of this youth exchange were to:

- Help participants become more confident and effective communicators.
- Give tools and techniques to improve active listening, teamwork, and conflict management.
- Explore the role of digital communication and cultural awareness in modern interactions.
- Create space for reflection, sharing, and peer learning.



In order to achieve those objectives, the project team guided the group in creating a schedule full of workshops created from the participants. The workshops were aiming to help the youth to learn through an active methodology, using experiential learning and non-formal education as a way that makes activities more engaging, motivating and fun.

To prepare our workshops we worked in national teams coordinated by our Group Leader. We chose specific topics according to the day that we chose to facilitate our activities in and prepared each of our workshops in the months before the mobility.

What's more, international reflection groups were formed in order to gather together at the end of the day and discuss what they learned, how they felt and any other topic that arose.

Last but not least, every night participants celebrated a cultural night for one of the participating countries. Those nights were dedicated to strengthen the bond of the community that was created, understanding better our differences and our similarities as well.

Taking all of the aforementioned into account, it can be said that the project had different phases. On the Initial one, we started creating a safe space for communication, getting to know each other so that the second phase (the main core of the project activities) could be developed efficiently.

This second stage was developed on the days that followed, when we dove into important strategies for better communication and other topics: Emotional Regulation, Channels and Active Listening; Communication and Problem Solving Skills; Career Development and Conflict Management using Assertiveness; Digital communication and, last, how to address cultural differences.

The final phase of the project included producing the main outcomes of this experience that were the way that we found to put into practice what we learned here. The main outcomes of the project were:

1. Community Event at the University of Taranto.
2. Street Interviews with locals in the city.
3. Follow-up local activities in each partner country.
4. This booklet, created collaboratively by participants and collecting together all the knowledge that we have acquired, both as a team and as individuals.

## **How This Booklet Was Created**

The process of writing this booklet happened in three steps:

- **Step 1 – Session 4, Day 7**

We decided to take a broader approach to creating the booklet, summarising all activities, experiences, and knowledge gained during *LISTEN*. We called it the "Communication Booklet".

Participants developed the strategy for the work and selected a Coordination Team,

led by Kinga and supported by Ana and Kiril, to manage communication between groups, moderate content, and monitor progress. Then, 10 smaller teams were formed, each responsible for one topic. These included: communication channels, active listening, teamwork & problem-solving, assertiveness & conflict management, communication at work, digital communication, cultural awareness, project description, and conclusion & closure.

Each team's task was to provide information, tips, testimonials, reflection questions, and any other creative ideas. The Coordination Team used the rest of the session for brainstorming and creating action plans. In the end, each group gave a short progress report. This step allowed participants to practice teamwork, communication, role distribution, and time management while revisiting and reanalysing topics from earlier in the exchange.

TEAM	WHAT?	WHO?	STRUCTURE	ROLES	RESEARCH	DRAFT	FEEDBACK
COORDINATION & MODERATION	COORDINATING COMMUN. AMONG TEAMS, MODERATING CONTENT, BUILDING THE INDEX ...	KINGA K.:1 Ana max 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...	...	<input type="checkbox"/>
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	CONTEXT OF LISTEN YE, PARTNERS, ADM & OBJECT, METHODOLOGIES, PHASES, OTHER ...	GONIA, NIKOLAI Merdim, Fera max 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMM. CHANNELS	• INFORMATION	NIKOLAI, HELICA Ana max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ACTIVE LISTENING	• TIPS	SARA Olga, Elana max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TEAMWORK & PROBLEM-SOLVING	• TESTIMONIALS ON THE TOPIC	IVANA JERENA, KAMIL max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ASSERTIVENESS & CONFLICT MANAGEMENT	• REFLECTION (QUESTIONS FOR READERS)	MILAN TIVA max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMMUNICATION AT WORK	• OTHER IDEAS... BE CREATIVE	WILLY, KORN max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DIGITAL COMMUNICATION		TOMY, RAZVAN ROBERT max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CULTURAL AWARENESS		DARIO, KAMIL GABRIEL max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOOLS	MAIN TOOLS FROM OUR YE FOR EACH CHAPTER	ELIANA PRIMA max 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONCLUSION & CLOSURE	CONCLUSION ON PROJECT, LEARNINGS AND REPLICABILITY	ACREIM, FLORIN AVY max 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Step 2 – Session 1, Day 8  
With the structure and plans ready, participants now turned ideas into content. The Coordination Team led the session, setting time frames for writing and then organising exchanges between groups. Teams reviewed each other's work, shared feedback, and explored ways to enrich their materials.
- Step 3 – Final Refinement  
The ARCAS team gathered all their insights and transformed them into a practical tool, this booklet, to be used for the dissemination of project results and as an educational and promotional resource for others.

### A Note to the Reader



This booklet is participant-made. All content comes directly from workshops, discussions, and reflections during *LISTEN*.

It's both a memory of an unforgettable exchange and a tool for anyone who wants to explore and improve their communication skills.

# Foundations of Communication

Communication is more than just talking. It's a mix of words, tone, gestures, expressions, and choices about how and when to connect.

In *LISTEN*, we explored communication from different angles like verbal, non-verbal, digital, or intercultural. We tried to understand not only how to express ourselves but also how to understand others.

We identified different types of communication channels:

- **Verbal communication:** Exchange of information through spoken words;
- **Non-verbal communication:** Conveying messages without words, using body language, facial expressions, and gestures;
- **Written communication:** Sharing information through written symbols;
- **Visual communication:** Using visual elements to convey information;
- **Digital communication:** Utilizing digital platforms to exchange information.



## Verbal Communication – How It Works and Why It Matters

Verbal communication is the process of sharing information using words. It's not just about what you say, but how you say it. The tone, volume, and pace of your words can completely change their meaning.

You can say the same sentence with a different tone and it will sound friendly, sarcastic, or even angry. This is why choosing your words carefully and being mindful of your tone is so important.



Verbal communication is key to expressing ideas, feelings, and needs. It helps solve problems, avoid misunderstandings, and build relationships. When you use clear and respectful language, you show that you value the person you're talking to.

## Non-Verbal Communication & Body Language

Non-verbal communication is everything you communicate without words. This includes facial expressions, gestures, posture, body movements, and eye contact.



A smile can make someone feel welcome, while crossed arms can signal discomfort or defensiveness. Posture can show confidence or uncertainty. Eye contact can create trust but too much, or too little, can make the other person feel uneasy.

Non-verbal signals can differ between cultures. In some countries, direct eye contact shows confidence and respect, while in others it can be seen as rude or aggressive. Being aware of these differences can help you avoid misunderstandings and show respect.



**"You use words to influence a person's conscious mind, and intonation and body language to influence the subconscious"**

— Way of The Wolf, Jordan Belfort



During *LISTEN*, we experienced how challenging it can be to coordinate verbal and non-verbal communication through the “Be My Hands” roleplay. In pairs, one person spoke while the other, standing behind, used their hands to act out the actions being described. It was funny and chaotic at times, but it showed us how much clarity, timing, and trust are needed when words and actions don’t naturally flow together.

Words is only 10% of communication. In conversations or debates, clear and well-structured speech helps people understand us better. When we speak with confidence and use simple, strong words, we build trust and sound more professional. A good example is Kamil, our Greek Group Leader, who used simple words and good intonation on purpose to convince the audience.



### **Reflective question**

Have you ever misread someone’s body language? What happened?

# How to choose the best communication channel based on the situation

Achieving effective communication with your audiences depends on selecting effective methods of communication.

To evaluate the effectiveness of a channel to your given message, consider the following questions:

- Is the channel appropriate for the issue and messages?
- Will the target audience find the channel credible and accessible?
- Does the channel fit the program purpose (inform, allay fears, influence attitudes, or change behavior)?
- Is the channel feasible, considering your schedule and budget? How many can you afford?

## Cultural awareness & differences in communication

Communication styles can vary greatly across cultures, affecting how we speak and interpret non-verbal cues.

- Oral Communication: In some cultures, being direct and straightforward is seen as a sign of honesty and clarity (e.g., in the U.S. or Germany). However, in other cultures, indirect communication is preferred to maintain politeness and avoid confrontation, such as in Japan or many Middle Eastern countries. In these cultures, the way something is said is just as important as what is said.
- Non-Verbal Communication: Non-verbal cues—like facial expressions, gestures, and body language—also differ widely. For instance, in many Western cultures, making eye contact is considered a sign of confidence and trustworthiness. Yet, in some Asian cultures, too much eye contact may be seen as aggressive or disrespectful. Similarly, gestures that are perfectly normal in one country, like a thumbs-up or a “peace” sign, can be offensive in others (e.g., in some parts of the Middle East or Asia).



These differences in both oral and non-verbal communication highlight how important it is to be culturally aware. Without understanding these variations, we might unintentionally misinterpret someone's message or convey the wrong impression.



## Tips from LISTENers for Intercultural communication

Ever noticed how a simple “hello” can feel totally different depending on where you are? That’s because the way we communicate—through words, gestures, tone, and even silence—is shaped by our culture. What feels normal in Spain might be confusing in Estonia, and what’s polite in Greece could be too direct in Poland. But don’t worry! With a little awareness and a few easy tips, we can all become better at connecting across cultures.

- Adjust your style – Some people go straight to the point, others prefer to dance around it politely—know the vibe!
- Read the room (and the face) – A smile, frown, or eyebrow raise might mean something totally different depending on where you are.
- Mind your volume – Loud and lively in Spain or Italy might be too intense for Estonia—match the energy!
- Respect personal space – Not everyone enjoys a close-up conversation—give people room if they seem to want it.
- Don’t fear silence – In some cultures, quiet moments are thoughtful, not awkward.
- Skip the slang – Local expressions are fun, but can leave others confused—keep it simple and clear.
- Watch your hands – A friendly gesture in one country can be offensive in another—learn before you wave!
- Be curious, not shy – If you’re unsure, just ask—most people love sharing their culture.
- Forget stereotypes – Not everyone from a country acts the same—people are full of surprises!
- Really listen – Pay attention to tone, expressions, and what’s not being said.
- Be patient and chill – Misunderstandings happen—just laugh, learn, and move on.

# Skills for Connection

Communication isn't only about talking and listening — it's also about working with others, solving problems together, and expressing yourself in a way that's both confident and respectful. These skills help us build trust, prevent misunderstandings, and create space for everyone's voice to be heard.

## Active Listening – Being Fully Present

Active listening is a communication skill where the listener fully concentrates, understands, and responds to the speaker in a meaningful way. Psychologically, it involves more than just hearing words, it requires attention, empathy, and feedback. The goal is to make the speaker feel truly heard and understood, which strengthens trust and reduces miscommunication.

Our team's insights:

- Ola: "during the activities I learned that it's important to hear the other person's perspective, not interrupt, let them finish their sentence to understand what he/she means"
- Sara : "I realized how difficult it is not to express empathy and other body language signals while someone is talking. It made me feel like I wasn't fully present in the conversation."
- Elene : "I never thought about how important it is to be active listener not only with others, but with yourself too. During the silent walk to the beach I learned so much more about myself. It was the first time that I actually asked myself what do I need, how am I and what I want and truly answered."



Tips that you could use to be better active listener :

- Be interested in what the other person is saying
- Focus on the conversation
- Use your body language/ facial expressions to signal that you're listening
- Let someone finish their sentence
- Don't try to guess the other person's response

Reflection questions : Would you call yourself an active listener? How could you improve in that field? How can active listening help with your daily communication?

### Reflective questions



Would you call yourself an active listener?

How could you improve in that field?

How can active listening help with your daily communication?

## Teamwork & Problem-Solving – Building Trust and Finding Solutions

Working in groups can always be challenging. Some people find it difficult to push their ideas, while other people are the complete opposite. In the end it always happens that the first category feels unheard while the second one feels exploited and this might lead to conflicts.

Conflicts are normal and common, that's why all the members of any group should know how to handle them.

With this scheme you'll be able to understand the basics to conflict resolution.

Teamwork is the ability of people to collaborate to reach a common goal. It requires communication, active listening, shared responsibility, trust and compromise.



Problem solving is the capacity of identifying a problem and analyzing its root causes in order to find effective solutions to solve it.

It requires critical thinking skills, creativity, the ability to keep your temper and good decision making skills.

Good Practices:

- Effective teamwork and problem solving require strong leadership, clear organization, and respectful communication.
- Using I-messages, practicing active listening, and showing assertiveness help express ideas clearly, understand others, and resolve conflicts. These skills foster collaboration and lead to better solutions.

Group dynamics, especially when approached through games and interactive activities, help build trust, communication, and cooperation in a natural and engaging way. These playful methods boost motivation, break down social barriers, and enhance team performance. Integrating game-based group dynamics into formal education can make learning teamwork more effective and enjoyable, preparing students for real-life collaboration.



## Mission Impossible

During Mission Impossible, participants faced timed creative challenges that required clear communication, quick decision-making, and trust in each other's abilities. Success wasn't just about completing the tasks — it was about how teams adapted, encouraged each other, and made space for everyone's input.

## University Event

Preparing for the University of Taranto event was another real-life teamwork challenge. Participants had to design interactive activities, divide responsibilities, and set up everything in a limited time. Working with people from different cultures and communication styles meant learning to compromise, delegate, and support each other under pressure.

### Reflective questions



- What is the synonym of the word 'teamwork'?
- How can we contribute to a better communication?
- Why is effective communication important in a team?
- How can active listening improve group collaboration?
- What are some ways to build trust within a team?

## Assertiveness & Conflict Management – Speaking Up with Respect

Being assertive means communicating with others in a direct and honest manner without intentionally hurting anyone's feelings.

Assertiveness can help manage conflicts, build self-confidence and enhance work and personal relationships. It is a skill that anyone can learn!

### How to be assertive and manage conflicts effectively?

Before making any changes, assess your style. Are you quick to judge? Do you often say yes even though you would like to say no? Do you find it difficult to speak your mind?

- Practice saying no – add something about assertiveness
- Rehearse what you want to say
- Use body language (Be mindful of your posture to come across)
- Keep emotions in check (Do not let them take control)
- Start small (One step at a time).
- Identify the problem: Talk openly about what's not working (e.g., missed deadlines, uneven tasks).
- Stay calm and respectful: Focus on the issue, not on blaming people.
- Listen to others: Make sure everyone feels heard before proposing solutions.
- Use "I" statements: Say "I feel overloaded when..." instead of accusing ("You never help").
- Suggest solutions: Offer ideas and ask for feedback instead of imposing.
- Be clear and honest: Say what you need (e.g., more help, clearer instructions) without fear.
- Say "no" respectfully: It's okay to refuse extra work if you're overwhelmed.

- Ask for support: Don't keep silent ask your team or mentor when needed.
- Reflect as a team: After solving a problem, discuss what you learned for next time.

## That time when I was assertive...



- At my previous job, a team member frequently interrupted me during meetings, which affected my ability to contribute. I addressed it by speaking to them privately, calmly expressing how it made me feel and asking for space to finish my thoughts. We had a respectful conversation and agreed on better communication moving forward.
- We split the project into smaller groups, but there was confusion because nobody was updating the others. I suggested we use a shared document and short weekly check-ins. I said: 'I think it would help if we all stayed in sync, even if we're working on different parts. Everyone agreed, and this small change avoided a lot of misunderstandings later.'

## Assertiveness vs. Acceptance Reflection

In *LISTEN*, we explored this balance through the "Assertiveness vs. Acceptance" reflection activity. Participants placed themselves on a diagram showing how much they contributed assertively and how much they accepted others' ideas during group challenges. This visual helped us understand our natural tendencies and how to balance them for better teamwork.



# Communication in practice

Communication skills become truly valuable when we use them in real situations — at work, online, and in multicultural settings. In *LISTEN*, we had plenty of opportunities to put theory into action, learning how to adapt our style depending on the context and the people we were communicating with.

## Communication at work – Roles, Debates, and Presentations

In professional and formal settings, clear and structured communication is key. Whether you're giving a presentation, taking part in a meeting, or joining a debate, knowing your role helps the whole team succeed.

In debates, roles might include:

- **Speaker** – presents the team's arguments clearly and persuasively.
- **Moderator** – keeps the discussion balanced and on track.
- **Note-taker** – records important points for reference.
- **Timekeeper** – ensures each speaker stays within their time limit.

When speaking, make sure your points are clear, supported by evidence, and easy to follow. Listen to others, be ready to respond to questions or counterarguments, and keep a respectful tone even when you disagree.

## Body Language – Why It Matters

The way you use hand gestures and body movements plays a big role in how visible, confident, and credible you appear — especially at work or during debates. Nonverbal communication shapes how others respond to you, even before you speak.

Hand Gestures:

- Open palms – Honesty, openness, and receptiveness.
- Steepling (fingertips touching) – Confidence and authority; often seen in leaders.
- Pointing – Directive or aggressive; can come off as rude if overused.
- Crossed arms – Signals defensiveness, discomfort, or disagreement.
- Hand on chin – Reflects thoughtfulness or evaluation.
- Using hands while speaking – Shows engagement, energy, and helps emphasize key ideas.

Body Movement & Posture:

- Upright and open – Displays confidence and professionalism.
- Slouched or hunched – Suggests low energy, disinterest, or insecurity.

Facial Expressions:

- Smiling – Signals approachability and warmth.
- Frowning or furrowed brows – May show confusion, stress, or disapproval.



## Eye Contact:

- Balanced eye contact – Builds trust and shows confidence.
- Too much – Can feel intense or aggressive
- Too little – May signal nervousness, disinterest, or lack of confidence.

## Summary

- Nonverbal cues – like hand gestures, posture, facial expressions, and eye contact – are powerful tools for influencing how others perceive you. They shape the emotional tone of your message and often speak louder than words.
- Hand gestures show confidence, clarity, or openness when used purposefully (e.g., open palms, steepling).
- Posture and body movement signal your energy and engagement. Upright = confident; slouched = disinterested.
- Facial expressions and eye contact help build connection and trust. A smile and balanced eye contact go a long way.
- Tone of voice and clarity matter more than words alone. Your intonation influences how your message is felt and remembered.
- Words are only 10% of communication – the rest is how you say them. Confident delivery with strong body language creates presence and persuasion.

In LISTEN, we experienced this first-hand through the Oxford Debate activity. Participants stepped into different roles, learned to structure their arguments, and practiced thinking on their feet while keeping the discussion respectful and engaging.



## Digital Communication – Connecting in the Online World

Imagine this: You're sending a message to a friend across the globe. You whip out your smartphone, type a quick text, attach a funny GIF, and hit send. Within seconds, they reply with an emoji. That's digital communication in action!

But it also requires awareness and responsibility. Your tone can be misread in messages, your online presence shapes how others see you, and what you post often stays online permanently.

### Why use digital communication?

- Speed and Accessibility: Communicate instantly with anyone worldwide.
- Efficiency: Save time by automating messages or using pre-made templates.
- Engagement: Build stronger relationships with personalized and interactive content.
- Flexibility: Share anything from text to videos on multiple platforms

### When could you use digital communication?

You're working remotely with teammates in different countries. You need to brainstorm ideas for an upcoming project. A video call lets you see their reactions in real-time while sharing your screen... perfect timing for digital communication!

- Real-Time Collaboration: Video calls for brainstorming sessions or virtual meetings.
- Quick Updates: Instant messaging for urgent communications.
- Information Sharing: Emails for detailed reports or newsletters.
- Feedback Collection: Online forms and surveys for gathering opinions.

## Digital Communication Tools

There are many categories of tools someone can use for digital communication. Each tool has its advantages and disadvantages as well.

- Messaging Platforms - are the most simple form of communication. Can be used formally or informally.
- Phone calls - A traditional way of digitally communicating. Very useful if you want to exchange information with another person.
- Video calls - Used in more complex situations. Both visual and audio interaction can satisfy the needs of the conversation.

As part of this project, participants explored digital communication through hands-on workshops and interactive activities. Here are some of the questions we asked them:

- What is one key insight or skill you took away from the digital communication workshop?  
"I learned the importance of tone in digital communication. Now I use emojis to add warmth and clarity." Razvan, Romania
- How did the workshop change the way you think about communicating online?  
"I used to treat online messages as quick exchanges. Now I see them as opportunities to build stronger connections." Elena, N. Macedonia
- How will you apply what you learned during the workshop in your daily or professional life?  
"Honestly, I have been that person who sends way too many texts. I learned the value of being clear and precise, and I will respect people's time and attention more." Antonis, Greece

In LISTEN, the Scroll Me workshop showed us how easily people can form assumptions based on what they find online. By researching our facilitator's digital footprint, we realised how important it is to control our own online image.



### Reflective questions

?

How has digital communication shaped the way you connect with others, both personally and professionally?

What boundaries do you set (or wish to set) when it comes to digital communication in your daily life?

Looking to the future, how would you like to see digital communication evolve in your work or community?

## Cultural Awareness – Understanding Differences & Avoiding Misunderstandings

Cultural awareness means recognising and respecting that people from different backgrounds may have different ways of expressing themselves, solving problems, and working together. It helps avoid misunderstandings and builds stronger connections.

Be open to learning, ask questions when you're not sure, and adapt your style when needed. Sometimes, what feels natural in your culture may be unusual or even impolite in another – and the same goes the other way around.

In *LISTEN*, cultural awareness wasn't just something we talked about – we lived it daily. Mixed-nationality teams, **Intercultural Nights**, and collaborative projects gave us constant opportunities to learn from each other's traditions, habits, and ways of communicating.



# Experiential Learning in LISTEN

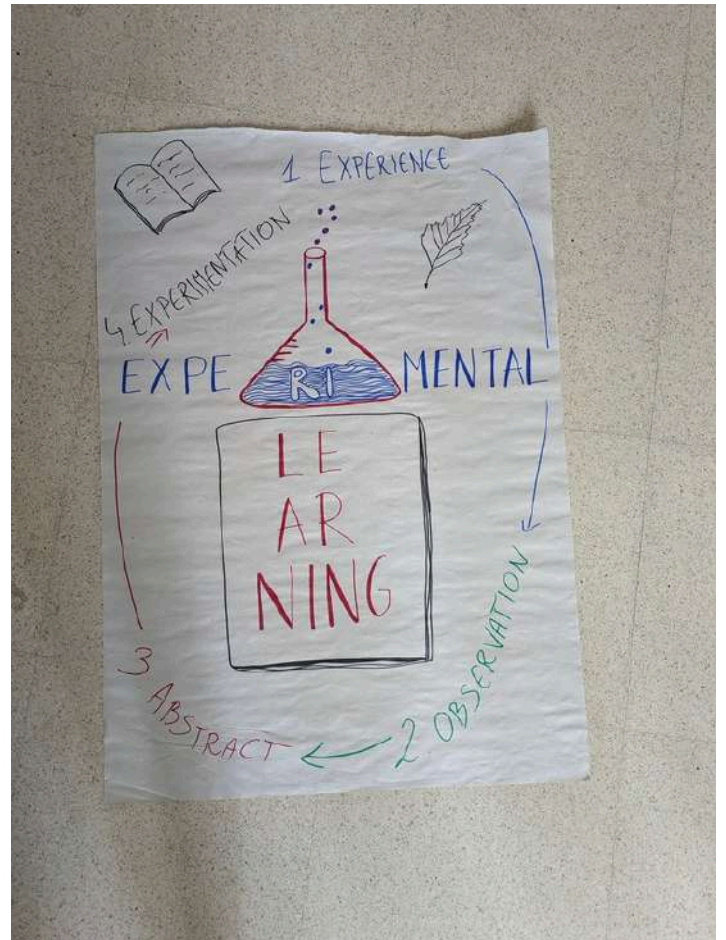
In LISTEN, we didn't just talk about communication skills, but we lived them in a hands on approach. Every day was filled with activities where we learned by doing, reflected on what worked (and what didn't), and tried again. This is what we call experiential learning, a way of learning that's active, practical, and deeply connected to real-life situations.

## The Experiential Learning Cycle – Learning by Doing

The experiential learning cycle has four stages:

- Experience – You take part in an activity.
- Reflection – You think about what happened and how it felt.
- Conceptualisation – You understand the lessons behind the experience.
- Experimentation – You try those lessons in a new situation.

In LISTEN, this often happened without us even noticing. For example, in one teamwork challenge we struggled to coordinate our actions. Later, in our reflection circle, we realised we hadn't agreed on a plan before starting. The next day, in a different challenge, we took a few minutes to plan first and it made all the difference.



## Why We Chose Experiential Learning for Communication Skills

Communication isn't something you can fully learn from a book or a lecture. You need to experience it: to speak, listen, misunderstand, clarify, and adapt. That's why our activities were designed to put participants in situations where communication was key to success.

Through games, creative challenges, and real community events, participants practiced verbal and non-verbal communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and conflict management. The safe environment meant mistakes were not failures – they were opportunities to grow.



## The Role of Non-Formal Education in Youth Work

Non-formal education is learning that happens outside traditional classrooms. It's flexible, participatory, and shaped by the needs of the group. In Erasmus+ youth work, it's the main way we help young people gain new skills while building confidence and connections.



In LISTEN, non-formal education meant:

- Safe space – Everyone felt free to share ideas without fear of judgment.
- Peer learning – We learned from each other's experiences, not just from facilitators.
- Inclusion – Activities were adapted so everyone could take part, regardless of background or ability.
- Creativity – We could explore, experiment, and bring our own ideas into the process

## Methods for Communication Skills

In LISTEN, we used a mix of methods to develop communication skills. Here's how each type helped us grow:

### 1. Icebreakers & Trust-Building Activities

These helped us get comfortable with each other, break down shyness, and create a



sense of belonging. Feeling safe in the group made it easier to speak up and share ideas.

## 2. Creative Expression & Personal Sharing

Art, storytelling, and other creative forms gave us new ways to express ourselves. Sharing personal stories built empathy and helped us connect on a deeper level.

## 3. Cooperative Challenges & Gamified Learning

Games and problem-solving tasks taught us how to listen, coordinate, and make decisions together – all while keeping the energy high and the atmosphere fun.

## 4. Communication Skills Workshops

Focused sessions gave us space to learn specific techniques, like active listening or assertive speaking, and then try them out straight away.

## 5. Intercultural Learning & Public Engagement

We learned how to adapt our style when talking to people from different cultures, whether they were our teammates or members of the local community.

## 6. Digital & Media Literacy

Exploring our online presence and how we use digital tools made us think critically about how we communicate in the virtual world.

## 7. Reflective Practices

Daily reflections and feedback circles helped us process what we learned and see how we were improving over time.





# Tools



## A Snapshot of My Life

**Method & Learning Goals:** Storytelling and empathy-building activity that encourages participants to share meaningful aspects of their lives and practice active listening.

**Group Size:** Any (ideal in small breakout groups of 5–7 participants).

**Materials:** Printed personal photos brought by participants (or digital photos shown on phone).

**Time:** 45 minutes.

**Description:** In small groups, participants take turns showing a personal photo and telling the story behind it. The rest of the group listens actively, asks respectful questions, and reflects on what they learned. This activity deepens personal connections and promotes mutual understanding.



## 3 Truths & 1 Lie

**Method & Learning Goals:** Icebreaker activity to encourage self-expression, attentive listening, and building curiosity about others.

**Group Size:** Any (works best in groups of 8–15).

**Materials:** Paper and pen for note-taking.

**Time:** 20–30 minutes.

**Description:** Each participant prepares three true statements and one false statement about themselves. Taking turns, they share all four statements in random order while others guess which one is the lie. This activity creates fun surprises, sparks conversations, and helps participants remember personal details about each other.



## Human Bingo

**Method & Learning Goals:** Active mingling game that promotes interaction with many different participants and builds awareness of shared or unique experiences.

**Group Size:** Any (adaptable).

**Materials:** Bingo-style sheets with personal facts in each square (e.g., "Has been to more than 3 countries," "Can play a musical instrument"), pens.

**Time:** 20–25 minutes.

**Description:** Participants move around the space trying to find people who match the facts on their bingo sheet. When they find a match, that person signs the square. The first to complete a line (or fill the sheet) shouts "Bingo!" This energetic activity is ideal for the first day to break down social barriers quickly.



## Wheel of Emotions

**Method & Learning Goals:** Emotional literacy exercise to help participants recognise, name, and share a wide range of feelings, enhancing self-awareness and empathy.

**Group Size:** Any (works best in small discussion groups of 5–7).

**Materials:** Printed copies of the Wheel of Emotions diagram (Plutchik's or adapted version).

**Time:** 30–40 minutes.

**Description:** Participants explore the Wheel of Emotions, identifying emotions they have experienced recently. In groups, they share an example of when they felt a certain emotion and reflect on how it was expressed. This builds vocabulary for emotions, helps recognise emotional cues in others, and strengthens non-verbal communication skills.



## Captain's Log

**Method & Learning Goals:** Daily reflection method for mixed-nationality teams ("Pirate Crews") to track learning, share experiences, and strengthen group identity. Encourages summarising key moments and expressing personal insights.

**Group Size:** Small teams of 5–6 participants.

**Materials:** Large sheet of paper or a "logbook" template, markers, pens.

**Time:** 20–30 minutes per port.

**Description:** Each Pirate Crew meets at the end of the day to reflect on what happened, what they learned, and how they felt. Together, they create a short "Captain's Log" entry summarising these points in a creative way – using words, drawings, or symbols. Logs are then shared with the larger group, helping everyone see the day from multiple perspectives and reinforcing collective memory.



## Yes, Let's Do It

**Method & Learning Goals:** Energetic warm-up that builds positivity, spontaneity, and group cohesion. Encourages saying "yes" to ideas and collaborating to make them happen.

**Group Size:** Any (best with 12–30).

**Materials:** None.

**Time:** 10–15 minutes.

**Description:** One participant suggests an activity (e.g., "Let's pretend we're climbing a mountain!"). The group enthusiastically responds with "Yes, let's do it!" and immediately acts it out together for a few seconds. Then another person makes a new suggestion. This playful format promotes openness, flexibility, and positive group energy.





## What Are Emotions?

**Method & Learning Goals:** Introductory emotional awareness activity to explore the meaning, purpose, and diversity of emotions.

**Group Size:** Any (works best in groups of 6–12 for discussion).

**Materials:** Flipchart paper, markers.

**Time:** 20–25 minutes.

**Description:** The facilitator asks participants to define “What are emotions?” and collect answers on a flipchart. The group discusses how emotions influence behaviour, relationships, and communication. This activity sets the stage for deeper emotional literacy work, such as the Wheel of Emotions or Feeling Sculptures.



## Communication Style World Café

**Method & Learning Goals:** Rotating discussion format to explore different communication styles through creative and interactive tasks. Encourages adaptability, perspective-taking, and awareness of personal preferences.

**Group Size:** Any (divided into small groups of 4–6 per table).

**Materials:** Tables with different station setups, flipchart paper, markers, props for creative tasks.

**Time:** 60–75 minutes (including rotations).

**Description:** Participants rotate between themed stations, each exploring a different communication style (e.g., direct vs. indirect, formal vs. informal). At each station, they take part in a short interactive challenge and then discuss when that style might be most effective. Notes are recorded on flipcharts, and key insights are shared in plenary.



## Mission Impossible

**Method & Learning Goals:** Timed creative challenge designed to test teamwork, communication, leadership, and problem-solving under pressure.

**Group Size:** Teams of 5–8 participants.

**Materials:** Variety of task-specific materials (e.g., balloons, string, paper, tape, markers, small props).

**Time:** 60 minutes (including task explanation and debrief).

**Description:** Teams are given a list of creative challenges to complete within a strict time limit. Tasks may involve building, acting, solving puzzles, or performing mini-presentations. Teams must delegate roles, manage time, and coordinate effectively. The activity ends with a debrief to reflect on teamwork and communication strategies used.



## Agora

**Method & Learning Goals:** Open-space debate method where participants take a position on controversial statements and discuss their views. Aims to develop active listening, respectful argumentation, and awareness of multiple perspectives.

**Group Size:** Any (ideal with 15–35 participants).

**Materials:** Large open space, signs indicating “Agree” and “Disagree” positions, list of prepared statements.

**Time:** 45–60 minutes.

**Description:** Facilitators read a statement (e.g., “Social media does more harm than good”). Participants position themselves physically along an “Agree–Disagree” line in the room based on their opinion. Volunteers share why they chose their position, and others can change positions if persuaded. The focus is on listening as much as speaking, creating an open and respectful exchange of ideas.



## Silent Walk

**Method & Learning Goals:** Mindfulness and observation exercise to enhance non-verbal awareness, presence, and connection with the environment.

**Group Size:** Any.

**Materials:** None.

**Time:** 15–20 minutes.

**Description:** Participants walk together in silence, focusing on their surroundings and their own thoughts. The aim is to slow down, notice details, and become aware of non-verbal cues from others. After the walk, the group gathers to reflect on the experience — how it felt to communicate without words and how silence can be a form of connection.



## Oxford Debate

**Method & Learning Goals:** Structured debate format that develops argumentation skills, active listening, and respectful disagreement. Encourages critical thinking and quick response under time constraints.

**Group Size:** Two debate teams of 3–5 participants each, plus audience and moderator.

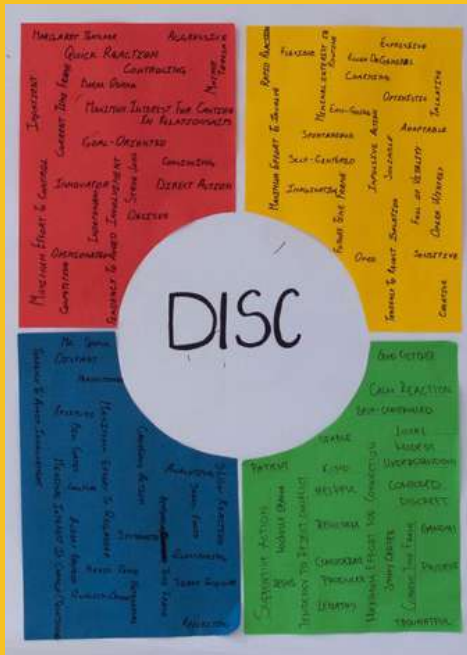
**Materials:** Debate topic, timer, role cards (speaker, moderator, note-taker, timekeeper), bell or signal for time.

**Time:** 60–75 minutes (including preparation and debrief).

**Description:** Participants are split into two teams — one “for” and one “against” a given statement. Each side prepares arguments, supported by examples and evidence. Teams present opening statements, rebuttals, and closing arguments, while the moderator ensures fairness and time management. Audience members can ask questions or vote on the winning team. A reflection follows on the importance of structure, evidence, and tone in persuasive communication.



## DISC Model Workshop



**Method & Learning Goals:** Interactive session to explore the DISC personality model and understand how different behavioural styles influence communication and teamwork.

**Group Size:** Any (breakout groups for exercises).

**Materials:** DISC model overview chart, self-assessment worksheets, scenario cards.

**Time:** 45–60 minutes.

**Description:** Facilitator introduces the four DISC personality styles: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. Participants reflect on their own style using a quick self-assessment, then discuss how each style prefers to communicate and collaborate. In small groups, they role-play scenarios adapting their approach to different styles. The session ends with tips for working effectively with all personality types.

## Flying Pot



**Method & Learning Goals:** Outdoor teamwork challenge focused on coordination, non-verbal communication, and balancing assertiveness with cooperation.

**Group Size:** Teams of 5–8 participants.

**Materials:** A large cooking pot or container, ropes attached around its edge, water to fill the pot, markers or cones to define the course.

**Time:** 30–45 minutes.

**Description:** Teams use ropes to lift and carry a water-filled pot across a defined course without spilling. Participants must communicate clearly, adjust to each other's pace, and coordinate movements while keeping the pot balanced. The challenge highlights the importance of patience, clear instructions, and shared leadership. A debrief follows on teamwork and balancing different communication styles under pressure.



## I-Messages Workshop

**Method & Learning Goals:** Communication technique training to help participants express needs and feelings assertively without blaming or judging.

**Group Size:** Any (small breakout groups for practice).

**Materials:** Flipchart with I-message formula, example scenarios on cards.

**Time:** 45–60 minutes.

**Description:** Facilitators introduce the I-message formula: “I feel... when... because...”. Participants practice rewriting “you” statements (blaming) into “I” statements (assertive). In small groups, they role-play scenarios and give each other feedback. The workshop ends with a reflection on how I-messages can prevent escalation in conflicts.



## Aggressive Behaviour Workshop

**Method & Learning Goals:** Awareness-building session on recognising aggressive and passive-aggressive behaviours, their impact, and strategies for de-escalation.

**Group Size:** Any (works well in 5–7 person groups for discussions).

**Materials:** Flipchart, markers, example behaviour cards.

**Time:** 45–60 minutes.

**Description:** Participants discuss examples of aggressive and passive-aggressive communication, identifying their signs and emotional impact. Small groups brainstorm strategies to address and de-escalate such behaviours. The workshop concludes with tips on maintaining assertiveness while staying respectful.



## Scroll Me

**Method & Learning Goals:** Media literacy and self-awareness exercise exploring digital footprints, online image management, and assumptions made from online content.

**Group Size:** Any (best in groups of 5–7 for discussion).

**Materials:** Access to facilitator's social media profile or curated screenshots, discussion questions.

**Time:** 45–60 minutes.

**Description:** Participants browse a facilitator's public online presence to form impressions. They then share what they assumed about the person, discussing how online content shapes perceptions and the risks of judging without full context. Reflection connects this to their own digital presence and responsible online behaviour.



## Critical Thinking & Ground News (Day 5)

**Method & Learning Goals:** Media literacy workshop on recognising bias, misinformation, and unreliable sources, with a focus on comparing news coverage across outlets.

**Group Size:** Any (ideal in 5–6 person groups).

**Materials:** Internet access, devices, Ground News platform or printed articles from different outlets.

**Time:** 60–75 minutes.

**Description:** Participants examine how different media outlets cover the same story, noting differences in framing, word choice, and facts highlighted. Groups discuss how bias and perspective influence public opinion, and brainstorm strategies to evaluate sources critically.





## Street Talks

**Method & Learning Goals:** Public engagement activity where participants practice approaching strangers, asking clear questions, and actively listening to responses. Aims to build confidence, adaptability, and real-world communication skills.

**Group Size:** Any (teams of 2–4 participants for fieldwork).

**Materials:** Pre-prepared interview questions, clipboards or notebooks, pens, optional camera or phone for recording (with consent forms).

**Time:** 60–90 minutes (including preparation, interviews, and debrief).

**Description:** Participants form small teams and go into public spaces to interview local residents on topics linked to the project (e.g., perceptions of communication, cultural understanding, or Erasmus+ awareness). They practice introducing themselves, explaining the purpose of the interview, and asking open-ended questions. After gathering responses, teams regroup to share findings, reflect on challenges faced, and discuss how to adapt communication for different people and contexts.

# Conclusion & Next Steps

LISTEN was more than just a Youth Exchange.

It was 10 days of learning, laughing, experimenting, making mistakes, and finding new ways to connect with ourselves, with each other, and with the world around us.

We didn't just talk about communication. We practiced it, in workshops, in games, in the streets of Taranto, in late-night cultural nights, and in the quiet moments in between. We learned that communication isn't about always having the right words. It's about listening, showing up, and being willing to understand someone else's point of view.

This booklet is the result of that journey.

It's a mix of our tips, our stories, and the activities that helped us grow. It's here for anyone who wants to explore communication skills in a hands-on way — whether you're a youth worker, a teacher, a community leader, or simply curious.

## What's Next for Us

- Sharing what we learned – We're bringing these tools and ideas back to our schools, youth clubs, and communities.
- Trying new things – We know that skills grow when you keep using them, so we'll keep practicing.
- Staying connected – LISTEN was a start, not an end. Friendships and collaborations born here will keep going.

**And probably...building a new edition of this. STAY TUNED FOR THAT ;)**

Your Turn. Now it's over to you.

Try the activities. Adapt them. Add your own twist. Share them with your friends, classmates, or colleagues. Communication is a skill you can always improve — and the best way to do it is together. So... *are you ready to **LISTEN**?*



# Credits & Acknowledgements

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# Partner Organisations



**ARCAS Puglia APS – Italy** 🇮🇹 – [www.arcaspuglia.it](http://www.arcaspuglia.it)

ARCAS Puglia APS is a non-profit based in Taranto, South Italy, promoting active citizenship and international mobility among young people. Founded in 2005 in response to local economic and social challenges, it brings together a dedicated team of youth workers and volunteers. Through non-formal education, training courses, cultural events, and Erasmus+ projects, ARCAS empowers youth to engage with European values, develop skills, and create positive change in their communities.



**SuperYouth – Poland** 🇵🇱 – [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/superyouth)

SuperYouth is an informal group of young people from Poland, Greece, and North Macedonia who met through an Erasmus+ youth exchange. United by their shared passion for non-formal learning, they design and deliver workshops that promote creativity, teamwork, cultural understanding, and self-confidence. Their aim is to give other young people, especially those facing obstacles, the same empowering opportunities they experienced.



**Asociatia Bridge To Unity – Romania** 🇷🇴 – [btounity@gmail.com](mailto:btounity@gmail.com)

Bridge To Unity is a young NGO dedicated to creating opportunities for personal growth, cultural exchange, and social inclusion. Based in Zărnești, it runs Erasmus+ projects and non-formal learning activities that empower young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, to build skills, broaden horizons, and engage as active European citizens. Their approach blends creativity, intercultural dialogue, and community engagement.



**Zdruzenie izvidnicki odred Mirko Mileski Kichevo – North Macedonia** 🇲🇰 – <https://www.kicevoscouts.org/>

The Mirko Mileski Scout Unit, one of the oldest scout groups in North Macedonia, develops young people's skills through outdoor education, non-formal learning, and community service. Active since 1953, they focus on inclusion, environmental stewardship, and active citizenship, working with both local and international partners to empower youth and promote cooperation.



**Wheeling2Help MKO – Greece** 🇬🇷 – [info@wheeling2help.com](mailto:info@wheeling2help.com)

Wheeling2Help MKO is a Greek NGO that uses sports, volunteering, and community events to inspire social change. It promotes inclusion, environmental awareness, and active citizenship through hands-on projects and youth mobilities. Their philosophy centers on connecting people through action, building empathy, and creating sustainable impact at both local and international levels.



**Associació pel Foment Intercultural i la Mobilitat Internacional Youth TGN – Spain** 🇪🇸 – [youthtgn@gmail.com](mailto:youthtgn@gmail.com)

Youth TGN is a non-profit association from Tarragona that promotes intercultural exchange, international mobility, and critical thinking among young people. Through Erasmus+ projects, local events, and partnerships across Europe, they create opportunities for youth to travel, learn, and share their cultures. Their activities range from hosting youth exchanges to leading initiatives on mental health, sustainability, and inclusion.



**Brainbow – Estonia** 🇪🇪 – [brainbowngo@gmail.com](mailto:brainbowngo@gmail.com)

Brainbow is an Estonian NGO working on mental health awareness, inclusion, and personal development. They design workshops, youth exchanges, and campaigns that encourage open dialogue, fight stigma, and provide tools for emotional well-being. Their projects often combine creative expression with non-formal education, fostering empathy and resilience among young people.

## Participants

A huge thank you to all the young people who contributed their ideas, energy, and creativity to make this project and booklet possible showing that barriers can be broken with teamwork and determination.



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## Disclaimer

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Enriching lives, opening minds.



# Building bridges

INSPIRING GROWTH

**You got any questions? Interested on LISTEN or any of our youth projects? Get in touch with ARCAS Puglia!**



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