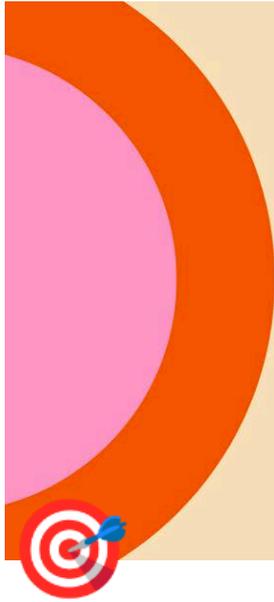


# Inclusive Career Navigation Guide



## Inclusive Career Navigation Guide

### ▼ Introduction

This guide was created by the participants of the Erasmus+ youth exchange **“Empowering All Youth - Inclusive Career Navigation” (Project No. 2024-3-LV02-KA152-YOU-000289071)**, held in **Saulkrasti, Latvia, from 22-30 October 2025**, and co-funded by the **Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union**.

The project was implemented by **Youth Line (Latvia)** in partnership with **Youth Line Sweden (Sweden)**, **ASSOCIAÇÃO YOUTH LINE PORTUGAL (Portugal)**, and **Youth Association Step (Croatia)**.

Twenty-eight young people from **Latvia, Sweden, Portugal, and Croatia** came together to explore how inclusion, career development, and intercultural understanding can empower every young person to find their professional path.

The exchange nurtured a supportive environment where participants learned from each other, shared experiences, and worked collaboratively to design practical tools for career growth. This guide captures their insights and methods - **created by youth, for youth**.



## ▼ Why This Guide Was Created

Across Europe, many young people face uncertainty when trying to enter the labour market and build their professional future. Even for motivated and capable young people, the transition from education to employment can be challenging.

Participants in this youth exchange shared that many young people struggle with questions such as:

- How do I discover the career path that suits me?
- How can I build the skills employers are looking for?
- How do I present myself confidently in a CV or interview?
- How can I access opportunities if I come from a disadvantaged background?

In addition to these practical challenges, many young people experience **barriers that limit their access to opportunities**. These may include economic difficulties, social exclusion, living in rural areas, language barriers, or simply a lack of information about available programmes and support.

During the youth exchange in Saulkrasti, participants discussed these challenges openly and explored how young people can support each other in navigating their career journeys.

### 💬 Participant reflection

"Confidence = a big part of finding your path."

### 💬 Participant reflection

"Learning how to accept 'no' is important. Sometimes you just don't fit a certain job - and that's okay."

Through workshops, discussions, and non-formal education activities, participants developed practical tools that can help young people strengthen their skills, build confidence, and better understand the opportunities available to them.

At the same time, participants realized that many young people are **not aware of programmes like Erasmus+**, which can offer valuable experiences, international learning opportunities, and personal development.

For this reason, the group decided to create this guide as a way to **share what they learned with others**.

This guide aims to:

- share the key insights and experiences from the youth exchange
- provide practical tools for career development
- highlight inclusive approaches to career navigation
- support youth workers and organisations working with young people
- inspire more young people to explore opportunities such as Erasmus+

By documenting the methods, reflections, and lessons learned during the project, the participants hope that this guide will help other young people **navigate their careers with more confidence, awareness, and support**.

## ▼ Who This Guide Is For

The **Inclusive Career Navigation Guide** was created to support a wide range of people who are interested in empowering young people and promoting inclusive access to career opportunities.

While the guide was developed during a youth exchange, its tools, reflections, and methods can be useful for many different audiences.

### Young People

This guide is primarily designed for **young people who are exploring their career paths** and looking for ways to better understand their strengths, interests, and opportunities.

Young readers may find support here in:

- building confidence in their abilities

- developing important career skills such as communication, networking, and CV writing
- learning how to prepare for job interviews
- discovering opportunities for personal and professional growth
- understanding that challenges and setbacks are part of the journey

#### **Participant message**

“Fun adventures, awesome people and great experiences. Find out new things about yourself and make new friends.”

## Youth Workers and Educators

Youth workers, trainers, and educators can use this guide as a **source of inspiration and practical methods** for supporting young people in their career development.

The guide includes examples of:

- non-formal education activities
- workshops used during the youth exchange
- reflection methods
- exercises that build teamwork, communication, and confidence

These activities can be **adapted and replicated** in youth projects, workshops, or educational settings.

## Youth Organisations and NGOs

Youth organisations and NGOs working in the fields of **youth empowerment, inclusion, and employability** may also find this guide useful.

It offers insights into:

- how international youth exchanges can support career development
- how to create inclusive learning environments
- how peer learning and intercultural dialogue can strengthen youth work

The guide also demonstrates how **collaborative international projects** can create meaningful learning experiences for young people.

## Anyone Interested in Inclusive Career Development

Finally, this guide can also be useful for **anyone interested in creating more inclusive opportunities for young people** - including community leaders, project coordinators, and organisations working in education or employment support.

The ideas presented here aim to encourage **open dialogue, cooperation, and the sharing of opportunities**, helping more young people feel confident about their future.

### ▼ Career Development Skills

During the youth exchange, participants explored several key skills that can support young people in navigating their career paths and preparing for the labour market. These skills are not only important for finding a job but also for personal development, confidence building, and long-term professional growth.

Through workshops, discussions, and practical activities, participants reflected on the abilities that help individuals succeed in different professional environments. They also shared experiences from their own countries, discussing what young people often struggle with and what strategies can help them overcome these challenges.

The exchange focused on five main areas of career development:

#### Soft Skills

Soft skills such as **communication, teamwork, and problem-solving** are essential for success in any career. These skills help individuals work effectively with others, adapt to challenges, and build positive relationships in the workplace.

During the exchange, participants explored how soft skills influence everyday professional situations and how they can be strengthened through collaboration, reflection, and practice.

#### Networking

Networking involves **building and maintaining professional connections** that can open doors to new opportunities. By attending events, joining

professional communities, and using platforms such as LinkedIn, individuals can expand their networks and gain valuable insights from people working in different industries.

Participants discussed how networking can help young people learn from others, discover opportunities, and develop their professional confidence.

## CV and Interview Skills

A strong CV and good interview preparation are key to making a positive first impression on potential employers.

During the exchange, participants worked on practical strategies for **structuring a CV, highlighting relevant skills and experiences, and preparing for common interview questions**. Interview simulations allowed participants to practice presenting themselves and receive constructive feedback from peers.

## Digital Skills

In today's job market, **digital literacy is increasingly important**. Knowing how to use online tools, communicate effectively through digital platforms, and maintain a professional online presence can significantly improve career opportunities.

Participants explored how digital tools can support job searching, professional networking, and personal branding.

## Green Careers

Green careers focus on **sustainability and protecting the environment**. As industries increasingly move toward eco-friendly practices, new opportunities are emerging in fields such as renewable energy, environmental protection, and sustainable development.

During the exchange, participants discussed how young people can explore careers that contribute to a more sustainable future.

## ▼ Inclusive Practices in Career Navigation

Career development is not the same for everyone. While some young people have access to education, networks, and support, others face barriers that

make it more difficult to enter the labour market.

During the youth exchange, participants explored what **inclusive career navigation** means and why it is important to create equal opportunities for all young people, regardless of their background.

They discussed the different challenges young people face in their countries and shared ideas on how these barriers can be reduced through support, awareness, and collaboration.

## Barriers Faced by Marginalised Youth

Participants identified several common barriers that can limit access to career opportunities. These barriers may vary depending on the country or context, but many of them are shared across Europe.

Some of the challenges discussed included:

- discrimination in the labour market
- lack of opportunities or limited access to resources
- language and cultural differences
- economic difficulties
- lack of guidance or career support

### Participant insight

"Discrimination, opportunities, language and cultural misunderstandings all play a role."

These barriers can affect not only access to jobs but also **self-confidence and motivation**, making it even harder for young people to take the first step in their career journey.

## The Role of Peer Support and Mentorship

One of the key solutions discussed during the exchange was the importance of **peer support and mentorship**.

Participants highlighted that learning from others - especially from people with more experience - can make a significant difference in career development.

### Participant insight

“Guidance, preparation, and learning from previous experiences are very important.”

Mentorship can help young people:

- better understand career opportunities
- gain practical advice and insights
- build confidence in their abilities
- expand their professional networks

Peer support is equally important. Sharing experiences with others who face similar challenges can create a sense of belonging and motivation.

## Strategies for Promoting Inclusion in the Workplace

Participants also discussed how workplaces and organisations can become more inclusive and supportive environments.

Some strategies mentioned included:

- promoting diversity and equal opportunities
- providing cultural awareness and sensitivity training
- encouraging open communication and respect
- creating policies that support inclusion

### Participant insight

“Cultural understanding and awareness are key to working together.”

Inclusive workplaces not only benefit individuals but also create stronger, more innovative teams by bringing together different perspectives and experiences.

## Entrepreneurship as a Tool for Social Change

Another important topic explored during the exchange was the role of **entrepreneurship in promoting inclusion**.

Participants shared that creating projects, NGOs, or initiatives can be a way to address social challenges and support communities.

### **Participant insight**

"Projects and NGOs can connect people from different backgrounds and support career development."

Entrepreneurship allows young people to:

- create their own opportunities
- respond to challenges in their communities
- promote inclusion and cooperation
- develop leadership and problem-solving skills

Inclusive career navigation means recognising that not everyone starts from the same place - and taking active steps to ensure that **all young people have access to opportunities, support, and resources.**

By understanding barriers, supporting one another, and promoting inclusive practices, young people and organisations can contribute to a more equal and supportive labour market.

## ▼ **Reflections & Best Practices**

One of the most valuable parts of the youth exchange was the opportunity for participants to reflect on their experiences, share personal insights, and learn from one another.

Through daily reflection sessions, group discussions, and informal conversations, participants explored not only practical career skills but also **mindsets, attitudes, and personal challenges** connected to career development.

This section brings together the key lessons, reflections, and best practices that emerged during the exchange.

## **What We Learned About Career Navigation**

Participants discovered that career development is not a fixed or linear process. It is shaped by experiences, choices, and the ability to adapt to different situations.

Many participants emphasized the importance of:

- understanding how different career paths work
- learning from people in different professional fields

- being open to new opportunities and experiences

 **Participant reflection**

"How do people from different job fields think? How can they help us?"

By sharing perspectives from different countries and backgrounds, participants gained a broader understanding of how careers can develop in different contexts.

## Building Confidence and Resilience

Confidence was identified as one of the most important factors in career development. At the same time, participants acknowledged that building confidence is often a challenge, especially when facing rejection or uncertainty.

 **Participant reflection**

"Confidence = BIG PART."

Participants discussed how learning to deal with rejection is a key step in professional growth.

 **Participant reflection**

"Learning how to accept 'no' is important."

"Sometimes you just don't fit a certain job - and that's okay."

These reflections highlight an important mindset: rejection is not failure, but part of the process of finding the right opportunity.

## Practical Tips for Entering the Labour Market

Based on their experiences and discussions, participants identified several practical tips that can support young people when starting their careers:

- build confidence by practicing communication and self-presentation
- be open to feedback and continuous learning
- don't be afraid to try different paths and explore opportunities
- understand that setbacks are part of growth
- seek support from peers, mentors, or networks

These insights show that career development is not only about skills but also about **attitude and persistence**.

## The Importance of Intercultural Dialogue

Another key learning outcome of the exchange was the importance of **intercultural understanding**.

Participants realized that learning about different cultures, traditions, and perspectives can improve communication and create stronger connections in both personal and professional environments.

### Participant reflection

"Knowing the culture helps you understand people better - their values, habits, and ways of thinking."

Intercultural dialogue helps young people:

- develop empathy and respect for diversity
- communicate more effectively in international environments
- build confidence in working with people from different backgrounds

The reflections shared during the exchange show that career navigation is not only about finding opportunities, but also about **developing the mindset, resilience, and openness needed to grow in a changing world**.

## ▼ Tools & Activities for Youth Workers

One of the main outcomes of the youth exchange was not only the development of participants' skills, but also the creation of **practical methods and activities** that can be used by youth workers, educators, and organisations.

Throughout the project, learning was based on **non-formal education**, meaning that participants learned through experience, interaction, and reflection rather than traditional lectures.

These methods helped create a safe, engaging, and inclusive environment where young people felt comfortable sharing ideas, making mistakes, and learning from each other.

## Non-Formal Education Approach

The activities used during the exchange were designed to:

- encourage active participation
- build trust within the group
- develop communication and teamwork skills
- simulate real-life situations
- support reflection and personal growth

Participants highlighted that learning through practice was more effective than simply receiving information.

### **Participant insight**

“You learn more when you experience it yourself, not just listen.”

## **Icebreakers and Energizers**

At the beginning of the youth exchange, icebreakers played an essential role in helping participants get to know each other and feel comfortable in the group.

## **Example Activities**

### **Name and Movement Circle**

Participants say their name together with a movement. Each next person repeats all previous names and movements before adding their own.

 Helps build memory, energy, and group connection.

### **Blanket Game**

Participants are divided into two groups separated by a blanket. When the blanket drops, each participant must quickly say the name of the person in front of them. The faster person “wins” the round.

 Encourages focus, interaction, and quick thinking.

These activities helped create a positive atmosphere and break initial barriers between participants from different countries.

## **Role-Play and Simulation Activities**

Role-play was used as a powerful method to simulate real-life professional situations and allow participants to practice important skills.

## Example Activity

### Job Interview Simulation

Participants took part in mock job interviews, where one person acted as the employer and the other as the candidate.

➔ Skills developed:

- communication
- self-presentation
- confidence
- ability to respond under pressure

Participants received feedback from peers, which helped them understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

## Teamwork and Communication Activities

Group-based activities were used to develop collaboration, trust, and problem-solving skills.

### Example Activities

Participants rotated through different stations, each focusing on a specific skill:

- **Poem Writing**

Encouraged creativity and self-expression

- **Tower Building (paper and tape)**

Developed teamwork and problem-solving

- **Blindfold Guidance Task**

One participant was blindfolded and guided by others

➔ Built trust, communication, and cooperation

### Participant insight

“Working together showed us how important communication really is.”

These activities demonstrated how different roles, perspectives, and communication styles influence teamwork.

## Career Development Workshops

Several sessions focused directly on career preparation and personal development.

### Example Activities

#### SMART Goal Setting

Participants learned how to set realistic and achievable goals for their personal and professional future.

➔ Helps:

- create direction
- increase motivation
- improve decision-making

#### CV Workshop

Participants shared their CVs, discussed improvements, and learned how to present their skills and experiences effectively.

➔ Encourages:

- peer learning
- critical thinking
- self-reflection

## Reflection and Feedback

Reflection was an essential part of the learning process during the exchange. Each day included time for participants to reflect on what they had learned and how they felt.

Reflection sessions helped participants:

- process their experiences
- identify personal growth
- share feedback with the group

- connect learning to real-life situations

## Recommendations for Youth Workers

Based on the experience of the exchange, participants suggest the following when working with young people:

- use interactive and participatory methods instead of lectures
- create a safe and inclusive environment
- encourage peer learning and collaboration
- adapt activities to different needs and backgrounds
- include reflection as a key part of the learning process

### Participant recommendation

"Activities should include everyone, even if they communicate differently."

These tools and activities show that effective youth work is not only about delivering information, but about **creating experiences that allow young people to learn, grow, and support each other.**

## ▼ Practical Resources & Opportunities

In addition to the skills and insights shared in this guide, it is important for young people to know **where to find opportunities and how to take the next step** in their career journey.

This section provides useful platforms and resources that can support young people in exploring opportunities, gaining experience, and entering the labour market.

### Erasmus+ Opportunities

Erasmus+ offers a wide range of opportunities for young people, including youth exchanges, training courses, volunteering, and internships.

You can find Erasmus+ opportunities here:

- **European Youth Portal**

<https://youth.europa.eu>

→ Main platform for Erasmus+ opportunities, volunteering, and youth activities in Europe

- **SALTO-YOUTH Platform**

<https://www.salto-youth.net>

→ Training courses, youth exchanges, and partner-finding opportunities

- **Erasmus+ National Agencies**

→ Each country has its own agency that shares local opportunities and open calls

Participant message

"Erasmus+ is the key for unlocking opportunities."

Participation in Erasmus+ projects not only provides valuable experiences, but also allows young people to receive formal recognition of their learning through the Youthpass certificate.

## Youthpass Certificate

Participants of Erasmus+ projects receive a **Youthpass certificate**, which recognises the learning outcomes gained during non-formal education activities such as youth exchanges, training courses, and volunteering projects.

Youthpass is an official European recognition tool that helps young people **identify, understand, and communicate what they have learned** during their participation in a project.

During this youth exchange, participants developed a wide range of competences, including:

- communication and teamwork
- problem-solving and critical thinking
- intercultural understanding
- adaptability and collaboration
- initiative and self-confidence

The Youthpass process encourages participants to reflect on their experiences and describe their learning in a structured way. This makes it easier to:

- include the experience in a CV

- talk about skills during job interviews
- demonstrate personal and professional development
- better understand one's own strengths

Youthpass is not only a certificate — it is also a **self-reflection tool** that helps young people become more aware of their learning journey and future goals.

### **Participant insight**

“You don't always realise how much you learn until you reflect on it.”

For many young people, Youthpass can be a valuable first step in recognising their competences and gaining confidence when entering the labour market.

 *You can learn more about Youthpass here:*

<https://www.youthpass.eu>

## Job Search Platforms

When starting your career, it is important to explore different platforms where job and internship opportunities are published.

Some useful platforms include:

- **LinkedIn**
  - Build a professional profile, connect with others, and search for jobs
- **EURES (European Job Mobility Portal)**
  - <https://eures.europa.eu>
  - Job opportunities across Europe
- **Local job portals**
  - Each country has its own job platforms (e.g., national employment services, job websites)
- **Company websites**
  - Many organisations publish job offers directly on their websites

## Opportunities for Young People

In addition to jobs, young people can explore opportunities that help them gain experience and develop skills:

- volunteering projects (e.g., European Solidarity Corps)
- internships and traineeships
- youth exchanges and training courses
- local NGO activities and community projects

These experiences can help build confidence, develop skills, and improve future employment opportunities.

## Tips for Taking the First Step

Starting your career journey can feel overwhelming, but small steps can make a big difference.

- be proactive and search regularly for opportunities
- don't be afraid to apply, even if you are not 100% confident
- use your network and ask for advice
- start with small experiences to build your confidence
- stay open to learning and new possibilities

### Participant reflection

"Be yourself, be open, and take every opportunity you can."

## ▼ Conclusions & Next Steps

The youth exchange "**Empowering All Youth - Inclusive Career Navigation**" was more than a learning experience - it was a space for growth, connection, and reflection.

Throughout the project, participants not only developed practical career skills but also gained a deeper understanding of themselves, their strengths, and the opportunities available to them. By working together in an intercultural environment, they learned how to support each other, share perspectives, and approach challenges with greater confidence.

### Participant reflection

"For a week we became a family, and families try to better each other."

## What We Take With Us

The experience of the exchange showed that career development is not only about knowledge or qualifications. It is also about:

- confidence and self-belief
- openness to new experiences
- the ability to adapt and learn
- support from others
- understanding diversity and inclusion

Participants leave the project with new skills, new perspectives, and a stronger sense of direction for their future.

## Applying the Learning

One of the most important goals of the project is to ensure that the learning continues beyond the youth exchange.

Participants are encouraged to:

- apply the skills they developed in their personal and professional lives
- share their experiences with peers in their local communities
- organise activities or workshops inspired by the project
- support other young people in navigating their career paths

Youth workers and organisations can also use this guide to:

- implement similar activities
- create inclusive learning environments
- support young people facing barriers in accessing opportunities

## Continuing the Journey

This guide is not the final result - it is a starting point.

The ideas, methods, and reflections shared here are meant to be adapted, improved, and used in different contexts. Each reader can take what is relevant to them and apply it in their own way.

 **Participant message**

“Be yourself, be open, and take every opportunity you can.”

## Discovering Erasmus+ Opportunities

For many participants, this youth exchange was also an introduction to the possibilities offered by the Erasmus+ programme.

Erasmus+ provides opportunities for young people to:

- participate in international exchanges
- develop skills through non-formal education
- meet people from different cultures
- gain confidence and independence

### Participant message

“Erasmus+ is the key for unlocking opportunities.”

We encourage all young people to explore these opportunities and take part in projects that support their personal and professional development.

## Final Message

Inclusive career navigation means creating a world where every young person has the chance to grow, succeed, and feel valued.

By sharing knowledge, supporting each other, and promoting inclusion, we can build stronger communities and more accessible opportunities for all.

This guide is an invitation - to learn, to share, and to take the next step.

## ▼ Contacts

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