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ERASMUS+ YOUTH WORKER MOBILITY PROJECT

THE NFE LAB

Designing the Future of Youth Participation

TRAINING COURSE HANDBOOK

4-9 August 2026

Balvi, Latvia

Programme • Methods • Practical Outputs • Learning Impact • Testimonials

Project number 2026-1-LV02-KA153-YOU-000391494

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More information about the project

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2026-1-LV02-KA153-YOU-000391494>

ABOUT THE PROJECT

A laboratory for participation

The NFE Lab: Designing the Future of Youth Participation was a six-day Erasmus+ training course held in Balvi, Latvia. It brought together youth workers, youth leaders, trainers, facilitators and youth-organisation representatives from eight countries.

The course combined experiential learning, reflection and collaborative method design. Participants explored education and NFE principles, connected them with the ETS competence model, and designed and tested activities addressing youth participation and civic engagement.

Activity	Erasmus+ Youth Worker Mobility - Training Course
Dates	4-9 August 2026 (arrival 3 August; departure 10 August)
Venue	Balvi, Latvia
Participants	23 participants and two trainers
Countries	Latvia, Republic of North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Türkiye, Spain and Italy
Host	Raibais kaķis
Trainers	Tony Morabito and Sergejs Andrejevs

Project objectives

- Strengthen participants' competences in non-formal education and experiential learning.
- Improve participants' ability to design, test and evaluate educational methods.
- Increase practical skills related to youth participation and civic engagement.
- Develop teamwork, communication, intercultural cooperation and reflective practice.
- Support participants in applying new approaches in their local youth work contexts.

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

Six days from exploration to application

Day	Date	Focus
Day 1	4 Aug	Group formation, goals, teamwork, Erasmus+ and ESC
Day 2	5 Aug	Learning design, types of education, NFE principles and ETS competences
Day 3	6 Aug	Good practices in youth participation and method creation
Day 4	7 Aug	Implementation by groups 1-3, feedback and improvement
Day 5	8 Aug	Implementation by groups 4-5, improvement and group-work evaluation
Day 6	9 Aug	Open Space, action planning, Youthpass and final evaluation

DAILY RHYTHM

Four 90-minute learning blocks, regular breaks, daily self-reflection and intercultural evening activities. Learning buddies, reflective questions, Post-it notes and competence mapping supported continuous evaluation.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The handbook documents the learning journey, presents participant-created methods, highlights learning impact and shares participant reflections.

TRAINING PROGRAMME • DAY 1

Building the learning community

09:30 - 11:00 Getting to know each other

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Build group cohesion and positive dynamics.

First circle

Each participant introduces themselves by saying their name, the country they come from, and their connection to youth work.

Name game

Participants take part in activities to learn each other's names. Working in groups, they prepare a short performance based on the theme "Don't Forget My Name."

Speed dating

Each participant writes a question they would like to ask the others. Later, they ask and exchange these questions during short conversations. At the end, everyone comes back to the circle and shares what they learned about the other participants.

11:30 - 13:00 Programme, expectations, contributions and learning goals

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Set individual learning goals.

The trainers present the training-course programme and establish the group rules. Participants then share their intended contributions, concerns and expectations and write up to three learning goals. A SMART goal-setting activity helps them refine and prioritise these goals.

Finally, participants present their learning goals in small groups.

14:00 - 15:30 Team building and intercultural simulation

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Strengthen group dynamics and explore intercultural learning through simulation.

Participants take part in the Barnga intercultural simulation. A detailed activity description is available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IUVkTnmlaJeGsufiObeqR8NCtRIUvw1x?usp=sharing>

16:00 - 17:30 European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and Erasmus+ Youth programme priorities and opportunities

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop knowledge of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and Erasmus+ Youth programme priorities.

Participants are introduced to the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and Erasmus+ Youth programmes. They are invited to share experiences from projects in which they have previously participated. The programme priorities are then presented, together with examples of how participants have applied them in practice.

17:30 - 18:00 Self-reflection

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Evaluate learning outcomes.

Participants are introduced to different methods for evaluating the day:

Competence-based learning evaluation

House of Feelings

Learning diary

Action planning

Learning buddies

Daily reflection questions

21:00 - 00:00 Intercultural table games

Participants from Countries 1 and 2 present traditional table games.

TRAINING PROGRAMME • DAY 2

Understanding learning and non-formal education

09:30 - 11:00 Learning activities

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Identify the key elements and stages of an educational activity.

Working in groups of four, participants discuss the following questions:

- 1) What steps can you identify when designing an educational activity (e.g. preparation, development and evaluation)?
- 2) What stages do you identify when organising a debrief? Translate those stages into concrete questions.
- 3) Which external elements can influence an educational activity, and how can they be used intentionally (e.g. music, space or atmosphere)?
- 4) Where does power lie in these educational activities, and what can that power be used to do?

After the discussion, all groups reconvene. One group is selected at random to present, while the others may ask a question, add a point, express disagreement or choose not to comment.

11:30 - 13:00 Different types of education

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Compare formal, non-formal and informal education.

Participants are randomly divided into three groups and rotate between three learning stations representing formal, non-formal and informal education. They spend 20 minutes at each station.

Formal: learning basic phrases in Latvian through teacher-led instruction.

Non-formal: making origami with guidance from a facilitator.

Informal: participants choose what and how they would like to learn.

At the end, each group presents its results and discusses which approach worked best for each participant. The facilitators then summarise the three types of education: formal, non-formal and informal.

14:00 - 15:30 NFE definition, principles

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Understand key definitions and principles of NFE.

Different definitions of NFE are placed on the floor. Each participant stands beside the definition they identify with most. Participants discuss their chosen definition in groups and then reconvene to share what NFE means to them.

Each group receives a list of NFE principles and identifies where and how these principles appeared in previous activities. The groups then share the outcomes of their discussions.

16:00 - 17:30 ETS competence model

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Understand the ETS competence model.

The trainers introduce the ETS competence model. Participants work in nine groups of two or three people. Each group explores one competence and presents it creatively to the others.

17:30 - 18:00 Self-reflection

Participants reflect on the following questions:

Session 1

What did I learn today about educational activities? What characteristics can an educational activity have? How do individual and group learning needs influence the design of an educational activity? What did I discover about the role of power and responsibility in educational activities? How can external elements (e.g. music, space, atmosphere) influence learning?

Session 2

What differences did I notice between formal, non-formal and informal education? In which type did I feel most comfortable, and why? What kind of learning suits me best? How can these three types of education complement each other in youth work?

Session 3

What does non-formal education (NFE) mean to me after today's session? Which NFE principles did I recognize in today's activities? How were these principles implemented in practice? How can I apply NFE principles in my own future educational activities?

Session 4

What are ETS competences, and why are they important? Which competence do I relate to the most, and why? What new insights did I gain from the creative presentations of other groups? How can ETS competences support my personal development or youth work practice?

After writing their learning outcomes, participants form groups and share them with each other. Afterwards, they write five learning outcomes of the day and add them to the corresponding competences using Post-it notes.

21:00 - 00:00 Intercultural table games

Participants from Countries 3 and 4 present traditional table games.

TRAINING PROGRAMME • DAY 3

Designing methods for youth participation

09:30 - 11:00 Good practices in youth participation

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Share good practices in youth participation.

Everyone has an opportunity to share a good practice related to youth participation. During the preparation phase, participants select a relevant example from their own experience.

11:30 - 13:00 Designing an NFE method for youth participation

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop skills in designing an NFE method.

Participants begin designing an NFE method focused on youth participation. They explore methods from their own experience, the SALTO Toolbox and other resources and share their findings within the group. By the end of the session, each group defines the intended learning outcomes and begins drafting the activity description.

14:00 - 15:30 Designing an NFE method for youth participation

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop and prepare an NFE method for implementation.

Participants complete the activity description and prepare to implement their NFE method.

16:00 - 00:00 Free time

If needed, participants use part of their free time to continue preparing the activity.

TRAINING PROGRAMME • DAY 4

Testing, feedback and improvement

09:30 - 11:00 Implementation of an NFE method - Group 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop skills in implementing NFE methods.

Participants implement their NFE method and receive electronic feedback on what worked well and what could be improved.

11:30 - 13:00 Implementation of an NFE method - Group 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop skills in implementing NFE methods.

Participants implement their NFE method and receive electronic feedback on what worked well and what could be improved.

14:00 - 15:30 Implementation of an NFE method - Group 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop skills in implementing NFE methods.

Participants implement their NFE method and receive electronic feedback on what worked well and what could be improved.

16:00 - 17:30 Feedback and improvement

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Use feedback to improve the quality of an NFE method.

Participants receive feedback from trainers on their implemented methods. All groups improve their methods based on this feedback; groups that have not yet implemented a method also make improvements based on the feedback provided.

17:30 - 18:00 Self-reflection

Participants are given reflective questions:

Session 1-3: Implementation of NFE Methods

What did I learn about implementing a non-formal education (NFE) method in practice?

Which parts of our method worked well, and why?

What challenges did we face during implementation?

How did participants' reactions influence the flow of the activity?

What did I learn about my own role as a facilitator during the implementation?

Session 4: Feedback and Improvement

What does high-quality implementation of an NFE method mean to me after today?

What common strengths and weaknesses did I identify in the implemented methods?

How did the feedback from trainers and peers help me understand quality in NFE practice?

What concrete changes can improve our method?

How can I apply today's feedback to future educational activities?

After writing their learning outcomes, participants form groups and share them with each other. Afterwards, they write five key learning outcomes of the day and connect them to the relevant competences using Post-it notes.

21:00 - 00:00 Intercultural table games

Participants from Countries 5 and 6 present traditional table games.

TRAINING PROGRAMME • DAY 5

Implementation and team evaluation

09:30 - 11:00 Implementation of an NFE method - Group 4

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop skills in implementing NFE methods.

Participants implement their NFE method and receive electronic feedback on what worked well and what could be improved.

11:30 - 13:00 Implementation of an NFE method - Group 5

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Develop skills in implementing NFE methods.

Participants implement their NFE method and receive electronic feedback on what worked well and what could be improved.

14:00 - 15:30 Feedback and improvement

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Use feedback to improve the quality of an NFE method.

Participants receive feedback from the trainers on the implemented methods. All groups revise their methods in response to the feedback.

16:00 - 17:30 Evaluation of group work

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Evaluate group work and collaboration in an international team.

Participants first rate the product or result, their personal involvement and the working process on a scale from 1 to 10. They discuss their scores in small groups and then reconvene to share a summary of their discussion.

17:30 - 18:00 Self-reflection

Participants are given reflective questions:

Session 1-2: Implementation of NFE Methods

What did I learn from implementing our non-formal education (NFE) method?

Which elements of the method were most effective in practice?

What unexpected situations occurred, and how did we respond to them?

How did facilitation, timing, and group dynamics influence the activity?

What feedback did we receive, and what does it tell us about quality in NFE implementation?

Session 3: Feedback and Improvement

What are the key characteristics of high-quality NFE method implementation?

What common patterns did I notice across different group implementations?

How did trainer and peer feedback help improve our method?

What concrete changes did we make based on the feedback?

How can this feedback support my future educational practice?

Session 4: Evaluation of Group Work

What influenced the scores I gave in each category?

What differences did I notice between individual and group evaluations?

How did working in an international team affect communication and cooperation?

What did I learn about teamwork in a multicultural environment?

After writing their learning outcomes, participants form groups and share them with each other. Afterwards, they write five key learning outcomes from the day and connect them to the relevant competences using Post-it notes.

21:00 - 00:00 Intercultural table games

Participants from Countries 7 and 8 present traditional table games.

TRAINING PROGRAMME • DAY 6

Transfer, Youthpass and closure

09:30 - 11:00 Open Space**LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

Address outstanding learning needs and exchange practical expertise.

Participants revisit their learning goals and identify outstanding needs. They then lead peer-learning activities on: how to be a good facilitator; how to build and grow a powerful social media platform; innovative teaching methods; how to start an NGO; and how to develop project ideas for Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes.

11:30 - 13:00 Future action planning and cooperation**LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

Develop an action plan for future practice.

Each participant develops an action plan for after the training course and presents it in 30 seconds. Participants then discuss opportunities for future cooperation.

14:00 - 15:30 Learning testimonies, Youthpass**LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

Evaluate learning outcomes.

The trainers present a video about the Hero's Journey. Participants record their resolutions, identify which competences they will use, and return to Youthpass to reflect on their learning.

16:00 - 17:30 Final evaluation**LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

Evaluate the overall training experience and learning outcomes.

Participants complete an online evaluation form. In the closing circle, each person chooses one or more Dixit cards that represent their experience and shares a reflection. The session concludes with the Youthpass certificate ceremony.

21:00 - 00:00 Goodbye party!

Participant-created NFE methods

Working in international teams, participants designed and tested original non-formal education activities focused on youth participation. The following six outputs are presented in a consistent format so that youth workers can adapt them to their own contexts.

ADAPTATION NOTE

Before reuse, adjust the duration, group size, language level and safeguarding arrangements. Each method should end with a debrief that connects the experience to participants' lives and local youth-work realities.

PRACTICAL METHOD 1 OF 6

The Solutions Lab

TARGET GROUP

Young people aged 18-30

Planned learning outcomes

- Skills: presentation, critical thinking, communication and collaborative problem-solving.
- Attitudes: openness towards different perspectives and cultural backgrounds; motivation for teamwork.
- Knowledge: community challenges, their causes and effects, the 11 EU Youth Goals and forms of participation.

Step-by-step implementation

1. Divide participants creatively into groups of three or four and introduce the 11 EU Youth Goals.
2. Each group selects one Youth Goal and defines a clear social problem connected to it.
3. Groups answer: What would your solution be, how and when would you implement it, and why? Who would you involve as a partner?
4. Each group selects one or more concrete forms of participation to support its proposed solution.
5. Groups present the selected problem and solution to the full group.

Reflection questions

- Did you encounter cultural differences while discussing the topic, and how did the group navigate them?
- How did choosing specific forms of participation change the way you approached the problem?
- What is one action you could take in your own community after this activity?

Materials needed

Pens, paper, printed lists of the 11 EU Youth Goals and selected forms of participation.

PRACTICAL METHOD 2 OF 6

The Neighborhood Remastered

TARGET GROUP

Young people aged 18-29

Planned learning outcomes

- Knowledge: the relationship between local engagement, everyday action and active global citizenship.
- Skills: observation, reflection, creative mapping and identification of realistic local improvements.
- Attitudes: active citizenship, curiosity, empathy and non-judgmental awareness of different living environments.

Step-by-step implementation

1. Welcome participants, introduce the session goals and facilitate a short warm-up.
2. My World, My Place: each participant creates a visual map of their neighbourhood using drawings, symbols and keywords.
3. In groups of three or four, participants share their maps and discuss what they like or dislike without judging each other's environments.
4. Steps for Change: on a second sheet, participants draw an 'After' map with concrete improvements such as green spaces, recycling hubs or youth meeting points.
5. Participants use an AI image generator to transform the 'After' drawing into a realistic image and upload both versions to a shared folder.
6. Facilitators connect small local actions with active global citizenship during the plenary debrief.

Reflection questions

- Which differences between the Before and After maps stood out?
- What is one concrete step a young person could take to initiate that change?
- How does responsibility for the local environment connect with active global citizenship?
- Which successful local initiatives could inspire others?

Materials needed

Two half-size flipchart sheets per participant, markers and coloured pens, internet-enabled devices, and a shared upload folder or QR code.

FACILITATION NOTE

Prepared by Bonnie, Çağla, Azra, Matej and Theodore.

PRACTICAL METHOD 3 OF 6

Simulation of Youth Parliament

TARGET GROUP

Young people aged 18-29

Planned learning outcomes

- Active participation in democratic decision-making.
- Critical thinking, active listening and public speaking through structured debate.
- Analysis of civic practices and development of local advocacy strategies.

Step-by-step implementation

1. Mark three areas of the room: YES, MAYBE and NO.
2. Read a statement. Participants have five seconds to choose a position and move to the corresponding area.
3. Each group discusses its reasoning for one minute and appoints a spokesperson. The MAYBE group identifies the conditions that would change its position.
4. Each spokesperson has two minutes to present the group's perspective.
5. After the debate, everyone chooses a position again. Changes in position provide immediate feedback on the usefulness of the discussion.
6. Open the floor for participants to propose statements connected with issues they care about.

Suggested debate statements

1. Climate action may require young people in wealthy countries to accept less resource-intensive lifestyles.
2. To make housing affordable, governments should limit ownership to one home per person or company.
3. Young people should prioritise practical and digital skills over university degrees.
4. Governments should strictly regulate social media platforms to protect mental health and limit misinformation.
5. Young people leaving villages for cities should contribute financially to rural regeneration.
6. A four-day working week with five-day pay would weaken Europe's economy.

Reflection questions

- How did it feel to make quick decisions on complex topics?
- How did your opinion become more nuanced during the discussion?
- How did group members complement each other's arguments?

Materials needed

Three chairs and tape for marking the YES, MAYBE and NO areas.

FACILITATION NOTE

Keep statements relevant to the participants' ages and realities. The movement-based format makes the debate accessible and visible.

PRACTICAL METHOD 4 OF 6

Mission: Youth Active

TARGET GROUP

Young people aged 13-30

Planned learning outcomes

- Understand local community dynamics and identify youth needs through direct field research.
- Practise advocacy, civic co-design, active listening, interviewing, pitching and negotiation.
- Develop solidarity, environmental responsibility, teamwork, time management and route planning.

Step-by-step implementation

1. Create small teams and give each team a mission kit, local map, emergency contact details and a fixed return time.
2. Teams move through the local area and complete as many community missions as possible.
3. Each completed mission requires authentic visual, audio or physical evidence.
4. Teams return to the base station, present their outputs and compare what they learned about youth participation.
5. Conclude with a 30-minute guided reflection focused on community needs, impact and possible follow-up projects.

Mission list

1. Interview two young pedestrians about their dream youth centre and combine their ideas in a one-minute sketch.
2. Draft a three-point Youth Manifesto and photograph local people who support it.
3. Visit an NGO, youth club or community centre and find out how a young person can volunteer.
4. Write a one-sentence petition for a realistic local improvement and collect five signatures or pledges.
5. Create a public prompt such as 'Youth voices matter because...' and collect three responses.
6. Design a youth-participation poster and ask a café, library or youth centre for permission to display it.
7. Help a stranger in a small, meaningful way or leave a motivational note in a public place.
8. Write and deliver a thank-you note to a community worker.
9. Spend ten minutes collecting litter and document the location before and after.
10. Interview a local young person about the main issue facing youth in the community.
11. Ask a local business about youth discounts or entry-level opportunities.

Reflection questions

- Which interaction felt most uncomfortable, and how did the team respond?
- What was the most surprising insight shared by a local resident?
- Which form of participation - volunteering, advocacy or research - seemed most impactful?
- Which mission output could become a longer-term project, and what would be the first step?

Materials needed

Clipboards, pens, A4/A3 paper and cardboard, markers, tape, work gloves, rubbish bags, smartphones, printed mission sheets, local maps, badges, timer, scoreboard, projector and spare supplies.

FACILITATION NOTE

Safeguarding is essential: obtain consent before recording, never photograph minors without parental permission, keep teams together and accept refusals respectfully.

PRACTICAL METHOD 5 OF 6

Islands Parliament: Navigating Youth Perspectives

TARGET GROUP

Youth workers, youth leaders and active young people aged 18-30

Planned learning outcomes

- Knowledge: systemic challenges, policy decisions and stakeholder perspectives in the youth field.
- Skills: critical thinking, public speaking, negotiation and multicultural communication.
- Attitudes: empathy, flexibility and openness to opposing viewpoints.

Step-by-step implementation

1. Use colour-coded role cards to form four Island Delegations representing Youth NGOs, municipalities, commercial allies and unorganised youth advocates.
2. Present a realistic youth-policy dilemma, such as allocating municipal funding between a traditional youth centre and youth-led environmental action.
3. Each island develops a position from its assigned stakeholder perspective and delivers a two-minute opening pitch.
4. Open a ten-minute diplomatic caucus in which delegates move between islands, negotiate and form temporary alliances.
5. Introduce a crisis, such as an emergency funding cut. Islands reassess their positions and enter a structured parliament debate.
6. Allied groups co-design a practical youth participation project and present the joint solution.

Reflection questions

- How did it feel to argue from a perspective different from your personal beliefs?
- Which arguments from other islands were most compelling?
- How did the caucus affect your group's strategy and openness?
- How can negotiation and empathy support real conflicts in youth work?

Materials needed

Colour-coded role cards, scenario sheets, paper, Post-it notes, pens, markers, scissors, chairs in four island formations, flipcharts or whiteboards.

FACILITATION NOTE

Monitor pitch times closely, while keeping caucus time flexible. Keep pathways between the islands open and inviting.

PRACTICAL METHOD 6 OF 6

Forum Theatre: Imagine Your Future Without Youth Active Participation

TARGET GROUP

Young people aged 18-30

Planned learning outcomes

- Understand Forum Theatre concepts: anti-model scenes, spect-actors, interventions, power dynamics and the Joker role.
- Strengthen civic agency and awareness of barriers to youth participation.
- Develop creativity, stage expression, active listening, critical thinking and solution testing.

Step-by-step implementation

1. Participants choose one of four symbolic superpowers. Balloons reveal their group and assigned participation scenario.
2. Facilitators explain Forum Theatre and the role of spect-actors, interventions and the Joker.
3. Each group prepares a two-minute anti-model scene showing a protagonist whose attempt to participate is blocked. The first version must end without a solution.
4. The scene is performed once without interruption.
5. During the replay, spect-actors call 'Stop!', replace a character and test a different strategy. The Joker guides the intervention and may introduce a plot twist.
6. Facilitate a short debrief after each scene. At the end, participants regroup according to the issue most relevant in their own communities.

Scenarios

1. A city council rejects a youth proposal to convert an abandoned building into a youth centre and sells the site for parking.
2. A school rejects a student campaign against single-use plastics and threatens organisers with conduct sanctions.
3. Rural young people cannot attend youth council meetings because public transport ends too early and online access is refused.
4. A school censors a student article about mental-health support gaps and threatens to close the student media team.

Reflection questions

- What oppression or barrier was shown, and who held power?
- Could the protagonist change the situation alone? Why or why not?
- Which intervention shifted the power dynamic most effectively?
- Which issue is most common in participants' communities, and how could the tested strategies be applied?

Materials needed

Balloons, Post-it notes, string, paper, tape, tables, chairs, coloured paper and simple costume pieces or role markers.

FACILITATION NOTE

The activity follows Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre framework and requires skilled Joker facilitation to keep interventions safe, realistic and focused on action.

Learning impact



The learning indicators were consistently strong. Every respondent reported improved NFE competences, a better understanding of youth participation, stronger communication and teamwork, the ability to identify learning outcomes, and readiness to apply the learning locally.

Most frequently reported learning

- Designing, structuring and facilitating non-formal education activities.
- Time management, clear instructions and flexibility in facilitation.
- Teamwork, active listening, empathy and intercultural communication.
- Debate, advocacy, networking and youth-participation approaches.
- Learning by doing, reflection and the value of co-creation in small groups.

What participants valued

- The opportunity to design and facilitate original activities.
- Practical group work, simulation, role play and the YES/MAYBE/NO debate.
- The Barnga intercultural simulation and sessions comparing types of education.
- Information about Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps opportunities.
- Daily reflection, energisers and exchange with international peers.

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

Participant reflections

What participants are taking forward from The NFE Lab

Здравейте, приятели! (Hello, friends!)

My name is Anton, and I come from Bulgaria's beautiful capital, Sofia. Participating in The NFE Lab was a valuable and inspiring experience that helped me grow both personally and professionally. Throughout the project, I learned how to work with people, take responsibility, communicate effectively and turn ideas into concrete actions.

One of the most important things I developed was my teamwork skills. Working with people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds taught me how important it is to listen to different perspectives, respect different opinions and find solutions together. I learned that a successful team is not about everyone thinking in the same way, but about combining different strengths and ideas to achieve a common goal.

The project also helped me develop my leadership skills. I became more confident in taking initiative, sharing my ideas, motivating others and accepting responsibility when something needed to be done. At the same time, I learned that leadership is not about being the person who always gives instructions. A good leader knows when to listen, support others, delegate tasks and create an environment where everyone feels that their contribution matters.

Another important lesson was communication. Through discussions, group activities, presentations and non-formal education methods, I learned how to express my ideas more clearly and adapt my communication to the people I am working with. I also became more comfortable speaking in front of others and defending my ideas.

Most importantly, the project reminded me that young people have the power to create change when they are given the right knowledge, space and support. I realised that participation is not simply about having an opinion - it is about being willing to take action and contribute to the community.

I am leaving this project with new skills, new perspectives and much more confidence in my ability to work with others and take initiative. I also gained new friendships and connections with people who share the same motivation to make a positive difference. For me, The NFE Lab was not only a project about active youth participation. It was a learning experience about teamwork, leadership, communication, creativity and responsibility - and, most importantly, about believing that our ideas can become real actions.

- Anton

Merhaba! (Hello!)

My name is Çağla Nisa. I recently graduated from law school, where everything is usually very traditional and formal. I joined this training to learn about non-formal education tools, but I ended up learning a lot about myself, too.

I realised that I really like being involved and active, but creating something myself is what I enjoy most. Working in smaller groups suited me best, especially when everyone was as involved as I was. What I love about NFE methods is that we learn by doing. We absorb useful things without even realising that we are learning until we stop and reflect. I also really enjoyed listening to others; when people explain their ideas, you feel much more connected.

It was also a valuable opportunity for personal growth. Looking back on these six days, I can see how much I have grown, both personally and in the way I approach teamwork. This training did not just teach me new methods; it gave me a new perspective on learning through action, reflection and genuine connection.

In the future, I want to use these NFE methods in my own work and upcoming projects. I am leaving with greater confidence, wonderful memories and connections that I hope to maintain for a long time. I am excited to bring these insights into my future projects and continue building on what I have learned here.

- Çağla Nisa

Hello!

For me, the most impactful part of this training course was realising how powerful non-formal education can be in bridging the gap between hard and soft skills. In the engineering and technology world, we usually focus purely on technical problems, but this experience showed me that true innovation happens when people know how to collaborate effectively.

Designing and facilitating our own interactive sessions was a major highlight. It taught me how to manage group dynamics, think on my feet and create an engaging learning environment. Collaborating with people from many different countries and cultures was another incredibly rewarding part of the project. It taught me the true value of active listening and perspective-taking. I realised that a successful team is about combining different strengths and ideas.

I am leaving Latvia with wonderful memories, new friendships and a fresh perspective. When I return home, my goal is to implement these NFE methods in my university's engineering clubs and technology communities. I plan to organise fully interactive workshops that help young people in STEM fields develop their social competences and teamwork skills. I am very grateful for this experience and for the connections I made along the way!

- Emrullah Enes

Participating in The NFE Lab was an inspiring experience that fuelled my personal and professional growth. I discovered how to turn ideas into action effectively. Collaborating with peers from diverse cultures sharpened my teamwork and communication skills.

The experience also redefined leadership for me, teaching me that true leaders empower others and ensure that every voice is heard. Ultimately, this project proved that empowered young people can drive real change. I am leaving with lasting friendships, renewed confidence and practical skills that will help me make a positive impact in my community.

- Filip-Andrei

My name is Krista, and I am interested in working with and supporting young people. I joined this training to develop new skills, learn from others and find better ways to connect with young people in my community.

One of the most important topics covered during the training was teamwork. I learned how important it is to listen to others, work together and share ideas. The training helped me realise that collaboration allows us to achieve better results. I will use the skills I learned both in my studies and at work when collaborating with others.

The training was a positive experience for me. I enjoyed working with the other participants because we could share ideas and learn from one another. The facilitators were helpful and explained the activities clearly. Sometimes it was difficult to express my ideas, but the group activities helped me feel more confident. One of my favourite aspects was working together and sharing different opinions.

Overall, this training was a valuable experience. I learned new skills, became more confident and understood the importance of teamwork and communication. In the future, I plan to use what I learned in my studies, work and everyday life. I am grateful for the experience and the people I met.

- Krista

Apart from the obvious benefits, I joined this Erasmus+ project because I wanted to learn more about innovative teaching approaches and how to incorporate non-formal education into formal education. I learned that the best lessons can combine these approaches and should also include methods such as communication and debate, creative games and learning through introspection.

Although I had tried different approaches before, I had never really focused on introspection. I now believe it is one of the most important ways for children to reflect on what they have learned during a class. I found the debating activity, the icebreakers - such as the balloon activity - and the creative games especially useful. They taught us about trust, communication, relationships, empathy and emotional support, and I intend to use them in my career.

I am very grateful to have participated in such a playful initiative. I believe everyone had a great deal to learn from it, including lessons that can also be applied in everyday life.

- Miruna-Maria

I am the founder of an NGO, and I applied to participate in this project to learn more about youth participation and how I could apply the topic in my own organisation and projects. Before the project, I expected to learn how to involve all participants and manage activities effectively.

I gained many learning outcomes from the project. From my perspective, the most important were time management and giving clear instructions. I developed these skills during one of the best activities I took part in: creating our own activity from scratch around the project's theme of youth participation.

In this activity, we introduced Forum Theatre as a non-formal education method. Our initial explanation was not clear enough, so the activity became a little chaotic. However, we managed to respond during the session and guide the participants. We also worked as a team with people we did not know well. This was valuable because it required us to deal with situations that may not arise when working with friends, whose strengths and weaknesses are already familiar.

To sum up, I will try to apply all the knowledge I gained from this project in my own projects, and I hope these learning outcomes will help me support others.

- Pablo Francisco

One of the most important things I learned during the training was how effective non-formal education can be. Through activities, discussions, games and practical exercises, I realised that learning does not always have to happen through lectures or textbooks.

I especially enjoyed activities involving teamwork, role play and problem-solving. They encouraged me to communicate with others, listen to different opinions and think creatively. The mock courtroom activity was particularly interesting because we had to work together, take on different roles and present our ideas. The training also helped me become more comfortable speaking in front of others. I learned that it is important not only to express your own opinion, but also to listen to and understand other people's perspectives.

Working with participants from different countries and backgrounds was one of the best parts of the experience. At first, communicating with people I had just met felt a little uncomfortable, but the activities helped us become close very quickly. Everyone had different ideas and ways of approaching problems, which made the discussions more interesting. The facilitators created a comfortable and friendly atmosphere, encouraged everyone to participate and ensured that different opinions were respected. I appreciated that the activities were interactive rather than based on listening to someone speak for hours.

One challenge was stepping outside my comfort zone, especially when I had to speak in front of the group or perform a role. With the support of the other participants and facilitators, however, I became more confident. One of my most memorable moments was the mock courtroom activity. It was fun, but it also taught us about cooperation, preparation, communication and presenting an argument. I also enjoyed the informal moments when we talked, laughed and got to know one another outside the activities.

Overall, this training was a valuable experience. I gained new knowledge and practical skills, but I also learned more about myself. I became more confident in communicating, working in a team and expressing my ideas. The experience showed me that people from different countries and backgrounds can learn a great deal from one another when they are open-minded and willing to cooperate.

After the training, I want to continue using the skills I learned, especially communication, teamwork and creative problem-solving. I also hope to participate in more international and non-formal education activities in the future. I am grateful for still the people I met, the experiences I had and everything I learned during these six days. This training was not only about gaining new skills, but also about stepping outside my comfort zone, connecting with others and creating memories that I will carry with me.

- Petra

I am a musical theatre acting student in Milan, Italy. Although my career path is quite different from the project's topic, I still had the opportunity to learn about something I care deeply about: active citizenship. I came here expecting to learn more about non-formal education methods, and I am glad to say that the project met my expectations. The facilitators were always available to discuss ideas and exchange feedback.

I am involved in an organisation that works with students aged 15-18. The activities that my colleagues and I experienced were well delivered and inspiring. When I return to Italy, I plan to start developing a project on active global citizenship for peace, combining my new knowledge with my passion for theatre.

In my opinion, it is important to use the things we care about as tools for delivering significant and meaningful training sessions. Thanks to this experience, I am even more eager to continue on this path and become a well-prepared and experienced trainer one day. This was the first of many steps ahead of me, and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to take part.

- Sara

I love playing the clarinet and tennis. I teach Spanish to international learners, and I also collaborate with an NGO in Madrid that supports refugees during their first steps in Spain.

I joined this training course to continue learning about group dynamics and team-building activities. These were important parts of our week, and I plan to apply what I learned in a project that we are developing within the Spanish NGO.

For me, it is important to understand how a group should be led and which practices should be avoided in order to create a positive environment. I think this is my main takeaway from the training.

- Sinai

I decided to participate in this Erasmus+ training course because I found the topic of youth participation interesting and relevant to my future work with children and young people. I currently work at summer camps, where I spend a great deal of time with young people, and I believe that understanding how to involve them more actively can be very useful in my work.

During the training, I learned different ways to encourage young people to express their opinions, share ideas and take an active role in activities and decisions that affect them. I particularly enjoyed the practical activities and non-formal education methods, as they showed me that youth participation does not have to be complicated. Simple actions - such as giving young people real choices, listening to their ideas, creating group discussions or allowing them to take responsibility for an activity - can make a significant difference.

I also learned about the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment where every young person feels comfortable participating, including those who are usually shy or less confident. This is especially important at summer camps, where young people come from different backgrounds and have different personalities, interests and needs.

One of the most valuable parts of the project was exchanging experiences and ideas with participants from different countries. Hearing how youth participation is encouraged in other contexts gave me new perspectives and inspired me to try some of these approaches in my own work. For example, I would like to give young people more opportunities to help choose activities, suggest ideas, take on small responsibilities and evaluate activities afterwards.

Overall, this training gave me practical tools and a better understanding of what meaningful youth participation really means. I believe I can use many of the methods and ideas from the course at summer camps and in other activities with children and young people. Beyond the knowledge and skills I gained, the Erasmus+ experience also helped me become more open-minded, confident and motivated to continue working with young people.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to take part in this project. It was a valuable learning experience that I will be able to use in my future work, and I hope to continue applying the principles of youth participation in the activities I organise and support.

- Teresa

I joined this training to learn more about non-formal education and how I could use it in real activities with young people. One of my main takeaways was that learning can happen through participation and experience, not only through someone explaining information.

Creating our own activity using drawing, storytelling, teamwork and reflection helped me understand how important good facilitation and structure are. Working with people from different countries also gave me new perspectives and showed me the value of collaboration in an international environment.

After the training, I want to put what I learned into practice by organising a small NFE workshop, potentially combining creative activities with AI. My goal is to test it, collect feedback, improve it and eventually use it in future local or Erasmus+ activities.

- Theodor

My participation in the Erasmus+ training course The NFE Lab: Designing the Future of Youth Participation in Balvi, Latvia, was a very positive and valuable experience. During the six-day training, I had the opportunity to learn, exchange ideas and work with participants from different European countries. This international environment made the experience even more meaningful because we were able to share different perspectives, experiences and approaches.

One of the most important things I learned was how non-formal education can encourage young people to participate actively. I gained a better understanding of NFE principles and, most importantly, experienced how these methods work in practice. The training showed me that learning does not have to happen only through lectures. Group work, discussions, games, practical activities and reflection can create an engaging environment where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

I particularly appreciated the learning-by-doing approach. Instead of discussing methods only in theory, we had opportunities to experience them, practise them, receive feedback and consider how they could be improved. This helped me understand the importance of reflection and evaluation when designing activities for young people.

Another valuable part of the project was intercultural cooperation. Working with people from Latvia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Türkiye, Spain and Italy helped me improve my communication and teamwork skills. It was interesting to see how people from different backgrounds could approach the same topic in different ways and still work towards a common goal.

The atmosphere during the training was supportive, interactive and motivating. I appreciated the trainers' contribution and the opportunity to learn not only from them, but also from the other participants. The group activities and discussions encouraged us to exchange ideas openly, step outside our usual ways of thinking and learn from one another.

After this project, I feel more confident about using non-formal education methods in future activities with young people. I would like to adapt some of the methods we experienced to the needs of the young people I work with, create more opportunities for active participation and continue sharing what I learned with others. I also hope to stay connected with the people I met during the project and explore future Erasmus+ opportunities together.

Overall, The NFE Lab was much more than a training course. It was an opportunity to learn through experience, meet inspiring people, exchange ideas across cultures and gain practical tools that I can use in the future. I am grateful for the experience, and I am leaving the project with new knowledge, new connections and strong motivation to put what I learned into practice.

- Gergana