

THE STAR OF EUROPE

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Start a European adventure! The goal of this game is not to be the first to reach the end but to help you and your team to carry out an Erasmus+ Youth Exchange step by step. So, it's worth going through all the steps: you'll be guided through all the phases of planning an exchange and you'll understand the whole process.

A Youth Exchange is an international meeting of youth groups, designed by the young people themselves on a topic they've chosen. As the game progresses, you will be given advice on how to design a project, how to prepare for it, how to carry it out and how to apply for funding.

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide includes all the rules concerning projects. Before you start planning a project, it is good to understand the context.

The objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme youth activities provide a framework for contents of projects. The projects can then contribute to achieving these big objectives, for example, by

- giving young people opportunities for learning new information, skills and perspectives through international activities
- involving disadvantaged young people
- helping young people participate actively in democratic life
- tackling social issues, such as employment of young people, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social empowerment and solidarity for other nations, people and disadvantaged groups.

MORE INFORMATION OVERLEAF

YOUTH IN ACTION (YIA) INFO

You will find plain facts under this title. The info box will tell about the official rules of the programme and explains the quality requirements of projects.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER

Under this title you will learn from other people's experiences. Youth workers who have carried out youth exchanges give concrete tips and tools about how young people can be involved in the process. You will also learn the difference between group leaders and participating young people.

PITFALLS

Under this title, you will learn about experiences that should be avoided. These are genuine examples from real projects. Don't make the same mistakes!

FILLING IN THE APPLICATION

Here we discuss what to fill in where in the application form.

SEE YOU AT THE PITFALL!



1 BUILDING THE TEAM

YIA INFO

■ Young people of 13 to 30 years of age can participate in youth exchanges.

■ Each participating group must include at least 4 young people and 1 adult group leader. The combined number of young people from all the participating countries in the project must be at least 16 people and at most 60 people.

■ The projects are open to all young people, including those who are disadvantaged and may need more support than others to participate.

■ Young people participate in projects voluntarily and out of their own interest.

■ Young people are involved in the project from the very beginning of the process: they cannot be selected only at the end stage of the planning or after the funding has been granted.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER TIMELINE

Write the different stages from the front of the board on separate pieces of paper and let young people put the project stages in the correct order. Go through the correct order from building the group to final reporting together. Discuss the different stages of a project, clarify schedules and what participation in a project involves.

NEWS HEADLINES

Collect a pile of newspapers over a week. Ask each group member to find and cut an article or news picture that interests them, or makes them wonder or angry. Then everyone can tell what the topic of the article or picture was and why they chose it. This exercise can be used as an icebreaker and to provoke thoughts and discussions. Does a topic cause uncertainty, does the group want to understand something better?

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Ask the group members to choose a pair and to ask them a question: What would you do to make the world a better place if you could? After a conversation with the pair, everyone can share their issue with the group. Make notes of the issues, you might need them in the next steps.

PITFALLS

■ When your topic starts to take shape, compare it to the general objectives of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme: Is your topic relevant to them?

■ Don't hide anything from the young people during planning: involve them in all situations.

■ Get permission from your employer for the activity – this will allow you time for your work.

■ Always try to make your group somewhat larger than the minimum required – there are many changes in young people's lives and even if somebody drops out, you can still carry out your project.

■ Don't get involved in a project that you know nothing about and in which the participation requires nothing more than signing a mandate. If the young people don't have ownership of the project, they are less interested in it. They will be less satisfied, more likely to cancel and drop out.

APPLICATION FORM

D., E. E.1

2 FINDING A PARTNER

YIA INFO

■ The partners must come from a programme country or a neighbouring country to the EU.

■ Applicant can be, for example, a youth department of a village/town or a church, a youth organisation, a social enterprise or an informal group of young people operating without a backing organisation, but not an individual young person or a youth worker.

■ A good partnership is willing to cooperate and is committed to the project, there is a

clear division of tasks between group leaders and young people from the different countries.

■ The partners agree on a shared topic and shared goals.

■ Make an Activity Agreement with your partner, covering the most important issues, such as the finances, safety, division of tasks and responsibilities.

■ People have different ways of doing things in different countries – make sure that you all understand things and terms used in the same way and agree on common practices.

■ You can easily find partners from international training events of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme.

■ You can also find partners from the OTLAS database and through other national and international networks: <https://www.sal-to-youth.net/tools/otlas-partner-finding/>

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER VIDEO PRESENTATION

Make together a video, in which the young people introduce themselves, tell about their free time activities and hobbies etc. Present a topic that your group is interested in and what they want to know more about it. This will also help the young people clarify their thoughts about what they want from the exchange and what is important to them. The video is easy to share with the partners and helps starting to build a common project.

FLIGHT TICKET

Give the young people flight tickets and a map with all the participating Erasmus+ countries. With the help of the flight tickets, the young people can tell what they know about each country and what kind of image they have of them. With the help of this exercise, you can consider whether the young people want to go to a country they already know about or to a country or culture they wish to learn about. You can also create your own flight ticket, listing countries in which you already have contacts in.

A HELIUM STICK

Give the participants a long stick, such as a broom stick or a tent pole. Each person should extend their index finger and the stick is placed on top of the fingers so that all the extended fingers touch the bottom side of the stick. The aim is to lower the stick on the ground so that nobody loses contact to it at any point. When the stick is on the ground, ask what the important point of the exercise was. The exercise helps understand what a good partnership is. Everybody knows what the common goal is, all are participating and communicating actively. Could the young people of your partner country do the same exercise and share their thoughts with you?

PITFALLS

■ Be prepared to encounter cultural differences: people will misunderstand each other and do things differently – make sure people understand each other, talk to each other, and explain terms and practices by giving concrete examples.

■ Share a schedule that everybody should adhere to: if people don't keep to the schedule, submitting the application may have to be postponed.

■ Choose appropriate means of communication: some things are better to be had in writing but sometimes a telephone call is more effective than an email.

■ All established practices are not necessarily good – your partner may find it strange to involve young people at this stage. Insist on this, this leads to better quality.

■ There are many different ways to do youth work: in the northern countries, youth workers are professional, in the south of Europe often volunteers – use working methods of both partners and learn from each other.

APPLICATION FORM

D., E., G.1

3 DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

YIA INFO

■ The duration of the youth exchange is at least 5 days and at

most 21 days, with 2 travel days added on top.

■ All partners should be involved in planning – young people from each country should participate in choosing the topic, setting the goals, choosing methods...

■ Discuss the difference between your topic and the method – don't choose music as a topic but instead think which topic you can address with the help of music.

■ Design a programme, relevant to the set goal and that deals with the chosen topic every day.

■ Preliminary exercises of each group will create content, share responsibilities and help groups commit to planning.

■ The exchange has to be planned in advance: in addition to the programme, you need to have a plan on how to assess reaching your goal, how to use the Europass, how to have an impact locally and how to tell others of the benefits of the project – plan ahead the methods, responsibilities and roles.

■ Agree on practical issues, such as the schedule, accommodation, materials needed, the venue etc. before submitting the application.

■ If the partnership is new or if participating young people need extra support, it is a good idea to include a 2-day advance planning visit (APV).

■ Calculate yourself how much support you can get from the Erasmus+ programme: information can be found in the Programme Guide.

■ Think about the co-funding required from the partners – how much of your own money will be needed and how will you raise the money needed in each country?

■ Submit your application on time – remember that projects can start at earliest 3 months after the application deadline, but it is better if it can start only after 4 months or even later.

THESE ARE EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES IN PROJECTS:

■ The programme of the exchange is active and diverse and it takes into account different needs and ways of learning of young people. It is concrete and explains clearly the methods used.

■ It is easy to see that activities will help young people learn about their chosen topic.

■ The application demonstrates that you have thought about learning from other perspectives, too: young people learn languages, social skills, initiative, intercultural skills, confidence, solidarity, understanding of differences, civic skills, tolerance etc. – activities teaching these skills are present in the application and in the programme.

■ Young people should participate actively, not be objects of activities or consumers of bought services.

■ The programme includes feedback discussions and assessment of experiences.

■ A youth exchange is about learning that has been planned in advance: it cannot be just about spending free time together, nor a tourist trip, a concert or other performance, a training camp or a meeting.

■ Each part of the project has been planned in advance at a concrete level: if one part of a project is not planned (e.g. dissemination of results), it can result in rejection of the whole application.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER TOPIC-SUN

In the first step of the game, we presented the News Headlines and Making the World a Better Place exercises to gather ideas for the topic of the exchange from young people. Choose your own topic but ask your partner groups for topics, too. After this, select just one topic together, by voting online, for example.

When you have selected your topic, think about concrete things connected to the topic together. Write them on notes and add them as sun rays around the topic note. Ask for more ideas from your partners and add them to your sun. When you have collected all ideas, you can start planning the programme.

When planning activities, select one of the sun rays and think what kind of activities

would help you learn new information, skills or perspectives about the thing written on the ray. Each group can choose the rays they are most interested in and plan a part of the programme relating to the topic selected.

DIVERSE METHODS

Write down different types of methods that you could use to deal with the selected topic. Young people can select the ones they are the most interested in and ones they can actively help implement or supervise during the exchange. Methods can include photography, visits, comics, plasticine, use of newspapers, participation of people outside the partner groups, debate, online quizzes, opinion polls on the street, competitions, outdoor events, music, theatre, interviews, team work, designing a poster, production of flyers, environmental art, comparison of things, videos, role plays, a demonstration...

PROGRAMME

Design a template for a daily programme, for example, with Word or Excel programmes. Divide a day in parts, each including the activity you plan to use. Give each activity a learning objective (why), contents (what) and designate a person/group responsible for the activity (who). This will help ensure that each activity has a clear link to the topic selected, that it has a goal and you will know who is responsible for its implementation. This will also help the assessor to understand the purpose of the project. The programme needs to be attached with the application.

PLANNING THE PROGRAMME TOGETHER ONLINE

Share interesting issues in a Facebook page created for the exchange or by using WhatsApp. You can comment on each other's ideas and see what other people have suggested. Download a programme template to Google Drive so that everyone in the group can contribute to it. Share exercises on, for example, Dropbox and think what other online applications can help you cooperate.

PITFALLS

■ The project funding will not cover 100% of your expenses:

think how you can contribute to the funding – selling things, clearing snow, applying for grants – doing things together will help you commit to the project.

■ Make sure that there is enough co-funding to complete the whole project because you will only receive the final 20% of the grant after you have submitted your final report!

■ Sometimes people think that participation means young people participating in a programme designed and led by adults – this is not the case. If it looks like that in your programme the young people are put in a bus and taken somewhere to listen to a lecture given by somebody else, you are on a wrong track. Buying services is not participation.

■ You can do visits but young people could actively find information about places to visit and present them to others. Participants can be active during the visits, for example, by asking local people about their opinions on the selected topic or by documenting activities so that they can be continued after the project ends.

■ Make sure that the attached programme reflects what has been said in the other parts of the application form. Make the programme detailed enough: If you will address the topic through dance, explain how it will help you understand your topic.

APPLICATION FORM

D., E., E.2., G., G.1., I., J.

4 WRITING THE APPLICATION

YIA INFO

■ The application is electronic and is downloaded online.

■ Check the application deadline and make sure that you have the latest version of the application form.

■ You cannot fill in the application before the applicant and all the partners have a PIC code.

■ Each partner also needs to provide a signed mandate.

■ You don't need to complete all the information in the application form at one go. You can save the application as a draft.

■ Share the writing of the application with your partners. Each partner can write about

the activities and responsibilities of their group.

■ Read the questions carefully and answer each of them.

■ Support your answers with concrete examples of your plans and implementation.

■ Describe the backgrounds of the young people in each group clearly, including ages, genders, special needs, international experiences and other necessary background information.

■ If necessary, explain terminology and methodology used.

■ Don't drone on abstractly, stick to concrete facts and explain them clearly.

■ The application needs to meet the eligibility criteria: e.g. it must be submitted by the deadline, include signed mandates from partners and a programme and be signed by your manager (Declaration of Honour).

■ The Erasmus+ Programme Guide is full of useful information, including the award criteria, for example.

■ Always ask for advice from your National Agency before submitting your application – they cannot help after the deadline has passed.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER BREAKING DOWN THE APPLICATION INTO PARTS

It is best to start with the big picture and go into detail later: you cannot finish it at one go. The group leader can break down the questions into smaller parts, making them easier to answer. An adult can also translate the questions into more simple language. Young people can answer the questions in their own way, in their own language. The application does not need to be written in "project-speak". Young people can answer the questions first in pairs and then as a whole group as your plans progress.

WRITING TOGETHER

The young people of the partner group can contribute to writing the application using, for example, Google Drive or Facebook, answering basic questions needed, such as age, gender, background, how the group was formed and previous experiences of projects. Each group can write about their own activities and other important details as they know them best.

PITFALLS

■ Don't exclude your partner group from the writing process.

It is good that everybody knows what you plan to do and what the aim of the exchange is. It is important to share responsibilities from the start so that there will not be too much to do for one person.

■ Fill in the application little by little, over a long period of time and submit it a few days before the deadline.

■ Don't expect one word will say it all. Make sure that you will explain special terminology, the selected methods, the jargon used in your group and other necessary things. A programme repeating the title WORKSHOP without explaining their content will not get many points.

■ Make sure that the attached programme reflects what has been said in the other parts of the application form. Make the programme detailed enough: If you will address the topic through dance, explain how it will help you understand your topic.

■ You learn by sharing experiences and by saying things out loud – make sure you communicate with each other, get together to talk and to say what you think.

■ It takes time to get the signatures from your manager and partners. Start getting them on time.

■ The application and all attachments are submitted online. Ensure that you have all the attachments and scanning done in advance and that you know how your office's firewall and Internet connection work.

■ Things can go wrong with computers. Make sure that you always have a copy of the latest version of your application save.

APPLICATION FORM

K., M., N.

5 WAITING FOR THE DECISION

YIA INFO

The funding decision takes about 3 months: The National Agency will first check the eligibility of the application and then evaluate its quality.

Projects are always assessed by an employee at your National Agency and an external evaluator.

If your application wasn't up to scratch this time, go back to the drawing board and improve it. Ask your National Agency for help.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER GUIDE BOOK

Learn about your partner country by designing your own version of a travel guide. Find information from different sources. Write about the history and culture of the country, food and sights, from different perspectives, for example. You can also be in touch with the young people in the partner country and ask them questions.

A TASTING TRIP

Make a dish from your partner country with your group. Find a number of different recipes and vote for what you wish to prepare. Go to the shop and cook together. You can also send recipes from your own country to the young people in your partner country and suggest they organise their own tasting trip.

TRAVEL FUND

While waiting for the decision, you could arrange a sale or another event to raise funds for the exchange. People like to support young people's own initiatives and it will also give publicity to your project.

KNOW YOUR YOUTHPASS

Learn about the Youthpass certificate. What kinds of areas of learning can you identify? What goals do the young people want to set for themselves? Have you already learned something? Make yourselves learning diaries in which you can write down your experiences during the exchange.

PITFALLS

■ Don't leave the group alone.

Continue to meet and think of things to do together. This will raise team spirit and maintain the group's motivation during the waiting period.

■ Keep in touch with your partners and do things together. If a group is not active, find out why and try to help. If trust in a partner is lost, you don't have to continue to work together.

■ If your application is rejected, it is not a catastrophe. It just means that your group needs to work more and do more planning. You need to prepare a new schedule.

APPLICATION FORM

E.2.

6 PREPARATION FOR THE EXCHANGE

YIA INFO

■ After signing the agreement, the project will receive 80% of the awarded funding.

■ Make sure that all the planned practical arrangements are in place, confirm bookings and start putting plans in motion.

■ Start making a plan for the safety and protection of participants with your partners. Agree on common rules with the young people.

■ If your project has an APV, it will be carried out at this stage.

■ Check the schedule and agreements with your partners.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

How to involve young people in the practical arrangements? They can check travel schedules, collect information of dietary needs of participants, organise information events for parents, prepare advance exercises, etc. You can learn at this stage, too!

WHO DOES WHAT?

Did your programme plan include something that the young people are responsible for

taking care of? Now is a good time to practice leading ice-breaking activities, prepare for photography events or to collect material for a recycling workshop.

ARE PEOPLE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES STRANGE?

Are participants concerned about how to relate with people from other countries? Do they have preconceptions about food, religions or other countries? Are the preconceptions valid? Make a list of stereotypes attached to your partner country and those of your own country. Share these with your partners and correct misconceptions. Practice the language and ways of communicating while you still have time.

PITFALL

■ Nobody can do everything alone so share responsibilities with the partners and the young people. Participation of the young people will help the group leader in the preparation of the exchange. Working together builds trust, and the group leader can support young people when necessary.

APPLICATION FORM

F.1., F.2., F.3.

7 PARTICIPATING IN THE YOUTH EXCHANGE

YIA INFO

■ Contact your National Agency If there are big changes to the project (a partner cancels their participation or is changed, the size of the group decreases or something in the plan changes significantly).

■ If the dates of the exchange change but the total duration remains the same and it will still take place within the contract period, it is enough to mention this in the final report.

■ If the exchange dates need to be pushed further back, contact your National Agency to ask the project period to be extended.

■ Make a participant list and collect signatures of all participating young people and group leaders.

■ Write down your learning experiences and your ideas in the Youthpass and share them with all.

■ Agree with your partner about what needs to be done regarding writing the final report, such as writing the participant evaluations and collecting receipts.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER STEAMING HOUR

The young people have daily conversations with their own group in which they can share their feelings in their own language in their own group. Wondering and saying things aloud will help understand them. This time can also be used for evaluating learning and filling in the Youthpass diary.

MAKE SOME NOISE

You should include activities in the youth exchange, the results of which can be used in dissemination. If you put up a performance or an exhibition in your exchange, make them public. Think where you could get publicity for your group and where you could meet local people.

PEAS IN A BOTTLE

Share your ideas during the exchange. Place an empty bottle on a table, and a bowl of peas and post-it notes next to it. When a young person thinks of something new during a feedback session, s/he can put a pea in the bottle and write his or her idea on a note. Notes can put on a wall for others to read. The peas present the learning results of the whole group. You can share photos in social media.

YOUTHPASS GALA

You can put up a gala night for the last evening to present the Youthpass certificates to all participants. You can arrange music, performances, presenters, and catering. In the end, each person will be invited to accept their certificates on stage. Maybe your nearest and dearest can come to watch your performance?

PITFALLS

■ Cultural clashes are bound to happen! This is the point. Don't try

to sweep the experiences under carpet but discuss them together and try to understand what the clashes result from. Share your experiences first in your own country groups, then with the young people from other countries, find out what the reasons for the clashes were and discuss how people act differently in different situations.

■ Support the young people at this stage – things are getting real: the new people are interesting and scary, leading exercises and presentations that they took upon themselves now seem daunting. Talk to the young people and support them, and when things work, give them space to work things out themselves.

■ Don't form camps – agree on common rules that everybody needs to follow and do a lot of icebreaker activities to begin with.

■ Don't treat groups from different countries differently. The group leaders should agree on common rules, too: adults should not only support, help or discipline young people of their own group but act as adults to all young people.

APPLICATION FORM

E.2., F.2., G.

8 TELLING OTHERS

YIA INFO

■ Evaluation measures how your goals were achieved. Think how you are going to measure your success.

■ Think how the exchange will impact on the participating young people, the locality where the exchange takes place and the participating organisations – how could you increase the impact?

■ The ideas generated during the exchange will help you figure out what to tell about the project to other people – the so-called dissemination activities need to be presented already in the application form. What do you want to tell others and how are you going to do it? In each country?

■ It is not enough to create a Facebook group or give a photo album to the parents: you should tell why the project was good to other young people outside your group, too.

■ It is recommended that group leaders spread good practices and information about opportunities provided by youth exchanges to their managers, colleagues and other people involved in youth work.

■ The name of the programme (Erasmus+ Youth in Action) should be visible in all communications and products.

TIPS BY A YOUTH WORKER INTERNATIONAL PARTY

Organise a party together in a youth club, a school etc. the theme of which is the culture of the country you visited. The young people can cook food and play music of the country. You can decorate the room with photos from the exchange and present a video filmed during the exchange. A little show will make people happy and young people can answer questions.

THIS IS WHAT WE DID!

If you used, for example, photography, dance, video, theatre or similar in your exchange which resulted in a product or production, use it in your dissemination activities. You can put up a photo exhibition that shows what you learned during the exchange and you can translate all captions into the languages of all participating countries. If you have a video, you can always show it when you're giving a presentation of the project, and through dance young people can express issues important to them. The voice of young people will be heard and they'll enjoy what they're doing.

PITFALLS

■ Don't keep your experiences to yourselves – share your stories and encourage other young people to join.

■ The young people will disappear in their own directions after the exchange even though you should still engage in the dissemination activities. Have you decided on schedules in good time, have you got the contacts in place, for example, in another youth club

where you wish to present your project, could you do more marketing about an event, could you compare your experiences with young people from other countries, etc.?

It is important to make sure that people don't lose their enthusiasm to complete the project. It will help if you have already made concrete plans about dissemination of results in the planning stage, such as set dates and venues. It is easier to hold onto well-made plans!

APPLICATION FORM

H.1., H.2., H.3.

9 WRITING THE REPORT

YIA INFO

■ The report is produced using an online tool called Mobility Tool+.