

# INCLUSION A-Z



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# SALTO YOUTH STANDS FOR...

...'Support and **A**dvanced **L**earning and **T**raining **O**pportunities within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes'. The European Commission has created a network of seven SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres to enhance the implementation of the EU Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes, which provide young people with valuable non-formal learning experiences.

SALTO's **aim is to support the implementation of the European Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps Programmes** with regard to priorities such as Social Inclusion, Diversity, Participation and Solidarity. SALTO also supports co-operation with regions such as EuroMed, South-East Europe or Eastern Europe and The Caucasus and co-ordinates all training and co-operation activities, as well as information tools for National Agencies.

In these European priority areas, SALTO-YOUTH provides **resources, information and training** for National Agencies and European youth workers. Most of these resources are offered and disseminated at [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net). Find online the European Training Calendar, the Toolbox for Training and Youth Work, the database of youth field trainers active at European level (Trainers Online for Youth or TOY), links to online resources and much more.

SALTO-YOUTH actively co-operates with other actors in the European youth field, among them the National Agencies of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, European youth workers and trainers and training organisers.

## **THE SALTO-YOUTH INCLUSION & DIVERSITY RESOURCE CENTRE**

The SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre (based in Belgium Flanders) works together with the European Commission to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Through that, it works to contribute to social cohesion in society at large. SALTO Inclusion & Diversity also supports the National Agencies and youth workers in their inclusion work by providing training, developing youth work methods, disseminating information via the newsletter, etc. By offering opportunities for training, exchange and reflection on inclusion practice and diversity management, SALTO Inclusion & Diversity works towards the visibility, accessibility and transparency of its inclusion & diversity work and resources, and towards making 'inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities' and 'positive diversity management' widely supported priorities.

For more information and resources, have a look at the Inclusion & Diversity pages at [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/) ●

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# INTRODUCTION

Imagine you work with a homogenous group of young people. They all live in the same neighbourhood, they go to the same school, they share the same racial and religious background, their parents earn more or less the same amount of money, etc. They probably also share many similar views, interests and ways of working and living. **Sounds pretty comfortable, doesn't it?**

Well, what if young people from different backgrounds joined your group? For instance, young people who go to totally different schools, or who don't have formal education? What if these young people had different skin colours from the homogenous group... different body types, gender markers, hair, voices, languages, clothing, etc. What if they brought invisible differences to the group: new kinds of beliefs, interests, values, priorities, etc.? Your work would certainly become more interesting but also more challenging.

If you are reading, you are probably already committed to making these kinds of encounters happen. However, it is not enough to just get different types of young people "into" your group. **Diversity requires that you account for, and value the ways in which people are different.** It means you must ensure that people's differences are respected within the group's systems, practices, and behaviours. To truly reach diversity, you need to actively strive for inclusion, which means intentionally removing barriers for the participation of groups and individuals with lesser opportunities. Therefore, inclusion and diversity go hand in hand. When you focus on being inclusive, you also enhance diversity. The same is true in reverse; **when you focus on achieving diversity, you have an opportunity to be inclusive.**

***“Diversity is something you count.  
Inclusion is something you feel.”*** - Desiree Adaway

The European programmes for youth offer youth workers and young people from across Europe opportunities to experience inclusive youth work and bring diverse young people together. Inclusion is no longer just a possibility or option for those already engaged with diversity. Today, inclusion has become a criteria for selection of projects assessed by national agencies for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. Priority is given to quality projects that actively address inclusion and diversity and involve participants with fewer opportunities. Besides, newcomer and grass-root organisations are also given priority in the grant awarding process.

This handbook has been created with the aim of **supporting more actors across Europe to become part of inclusive international youth work**. Drawing from different other SALTO Inclusion & Diversity publications, the handbook offers an overview of how youth exchanges and volunteering experiences can be created that give young people the opportunity to learn from and through diversity.



# HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

The booklet is both for those who would like to get acquainted with inclusive international youth work and those already active in the field. You can either read it from beginning to end or look up specific sections according to your needs.

After giving an introduction to the context and important terms, the booklet is divided into 3 main sections: **before, during and after your youth programme.**

- ***“Getting to work”*** helps you to move from the idea of an international youth experience to practice - always keeping inclusion in sight. Finding the right partners, funding and programme design are some of the elements covered.
- ***“The implementation phase”*** shares important aspects of fostering inclusion during your youth programme. How to create a safer space for your diverse participants? How to deal with conflict? What activities to do with your group? These are some of the questions addressed.
- ***“The follow-up phase”*** focuses on evaluation and learning - both for your participants and you as the organiser(s). It also discusses how to support the young people in integrating back into their lives after a transformative experience.





Throughout the booklet you are given some **“food for thought”**, helping you to better understand social exclusion and encouraging you to stop, and think about the implications of certain aspects of youth exchanges for young people with fewer opportunities.

All sections propose a participatory approach in which young people design, implement and evaluate the programme alongside the organisers - in case they are not the organisers themselves.





# UNDERSTANDING INCLUSION

Many of us have experiences, gut feelings and intuitions when it comes to inclusion. Yet, no one is immune to stereotypes and biases. To help you consciously reflect on how to make your youth programmes inclusive, you need to intentionally look at what inclusion means... and gain a shared understanding of some important terms.

- Inclusion
- Young people with fewer opportunities
- Social exclusion
- Diversity
- Equity
- Power and Privilege
- Biases

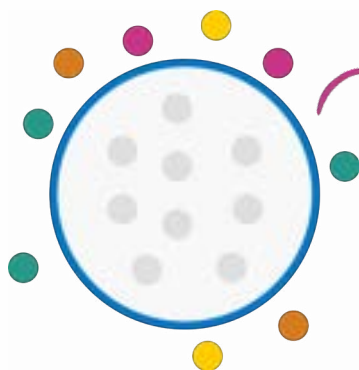


## IMPORTANT TERMS

### INCLUSION

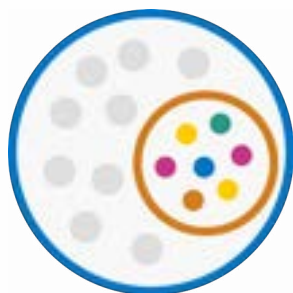
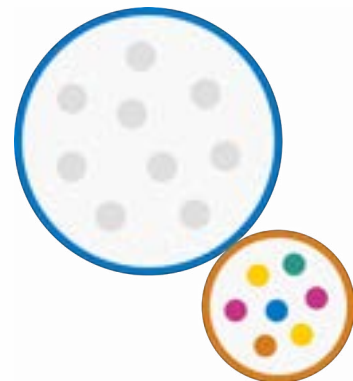
Inclusion means **respecting and valuing diverse identities and experiences, and enabling full participation of everyone**. Note that the term itself implies that the people you are trying to include were likely previously excluded.

Within the framework of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, the focus of inclusion lies on young people with fewer opportunities who are disadvantaged compared to their peers because they face one or more of the exclusion factors and obstacles.



**Exclusion** describes the state in which those who are different from the norm are not allowed to participate.

**Segregation** means creating separate spaces for those who differ from the norm.

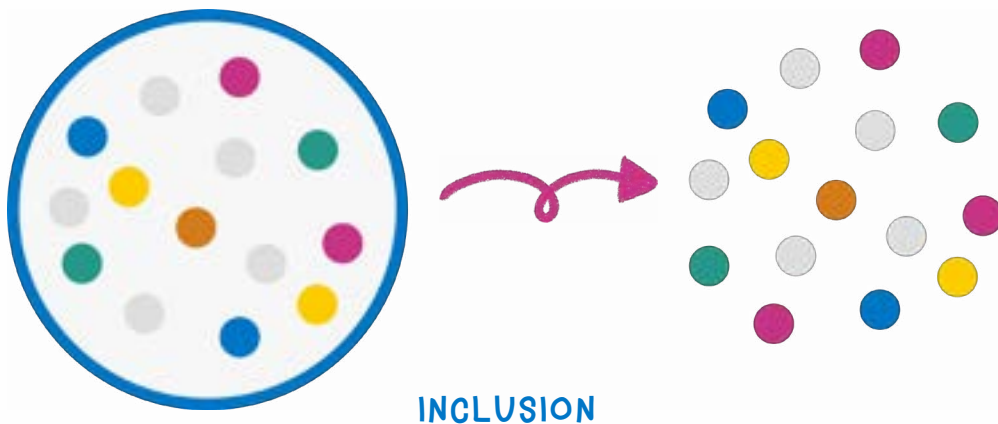


**Integration** means creating a sub-space within the group for those who are different.



**But what is inclusion then?** Is it simply about allowing everyone to join without separating the group in any way? When creating inclusive youth activities you need to ensure that previously excluded groups are included which means removing barriers of participation.

**INCLUSION MEANS REMOVING THE BARRIERS OF PARTICIPATION**



For inclusion to be successful, it requires a paradigm shift towards openness and accountability for historic and systemic oppressions. It requires you to **understand the dynamic of social exclusion and how differences in power and privileges influence young people with fewer opportunities.**



## YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

The European Commission defines “(young) people with fewer opportunities’ as (young) people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme”.<sup>1</sup>

Barriers may be structural, policies, practices, and beliefs that limit or prevent a set of people access to opportunities that are available to others. There are several types of barriers and they can hinder participation both as a standalone factor and in combination.

Whilst clarifying that the list is not exhaustive, The European Commission lists the following as barriers:

- **Disabilities**
- **Health problems**
- **Barriers linked to education and training systems**
- **Cultural differences**
- **Social barriers**
- **Economic barriers**
- **Barriers linked to discrimination**
- **Geographical barriers**

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<sup>1</sup> European Union: [Inclusion & Diversity Strategy](#).





## SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. People affected by social exclusion have little access to decision-making bodies and often feel powerless, and unable to take control of the decisions that affect their day-to-day lives. **Put simply, social exclusion is the combination of policies, systems, structures, attitudes and behaviours that result in some individuals being sidelined, left out or left behind.**

Social exclusion can affect all age groups, but it demands particular attention in the youth field, as young people are most vulnerable. Social exclusion produces deep and long-term damage to the living conditions, education, social and economic participation, emotional life, and health status of young people. It also contributes to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. When young people experience insecurities in terms of living standards, political or social isolation, feelings of estrangement and unhealthy lifestyles these can aggravate pre-existing conditions of social exclusion. This results in a vicious cycle where socially excluded young people are in even more danger of suffering from additional material deprivation, social and emotional marginalisation, and health issues. Unfortunately, these, in turn, expose them to more serious risks of exclusion.

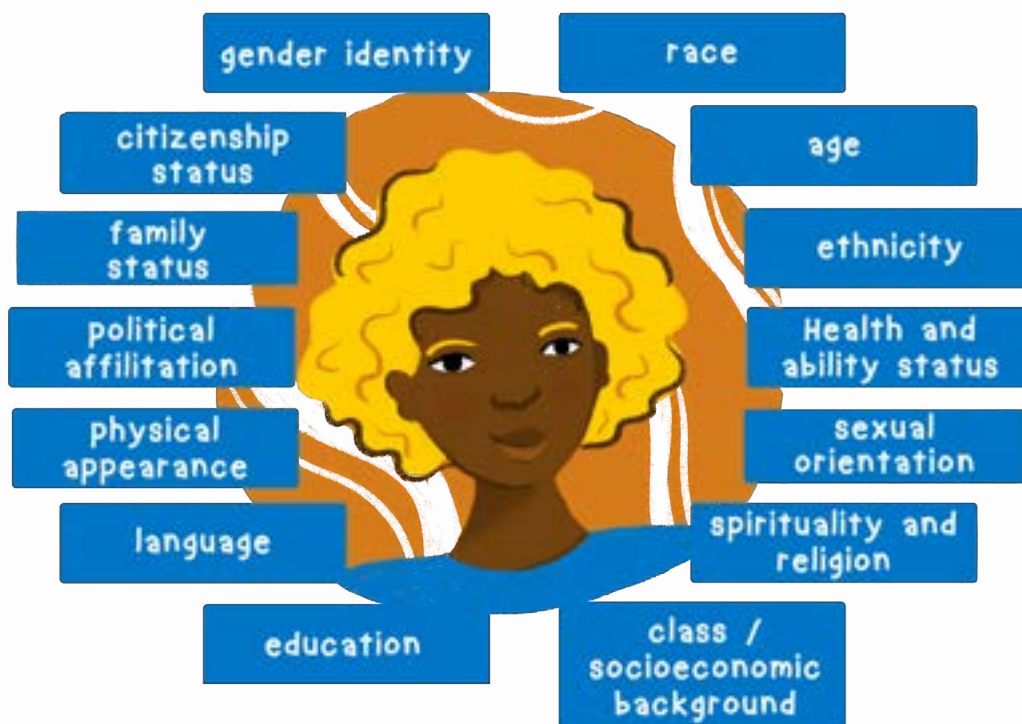


The policy debate on social exclusion is often dominated by issues of **employment and education**. Indeed, young people have been particularly affected by economic crises with unemployment and inactivity rates consistently higher than other age groups. However, some disadvantaged groups of young people face exclusion in the longer term for reasons beyond short-term crises. Remaining outside the labour market has far reaching consequences beyond economic hardship, such as:

- a) a loss of confidence;
- b) an undermining of trust and expectations;
- c) an increasing risk of social exclusion;
- d) disengagement from society.

## DIVERSITY

Diversity - in organisations or in society - describes all the ways in which people differ. It encompasses all the variations of attributes that make individuals or groups of people different from each other.



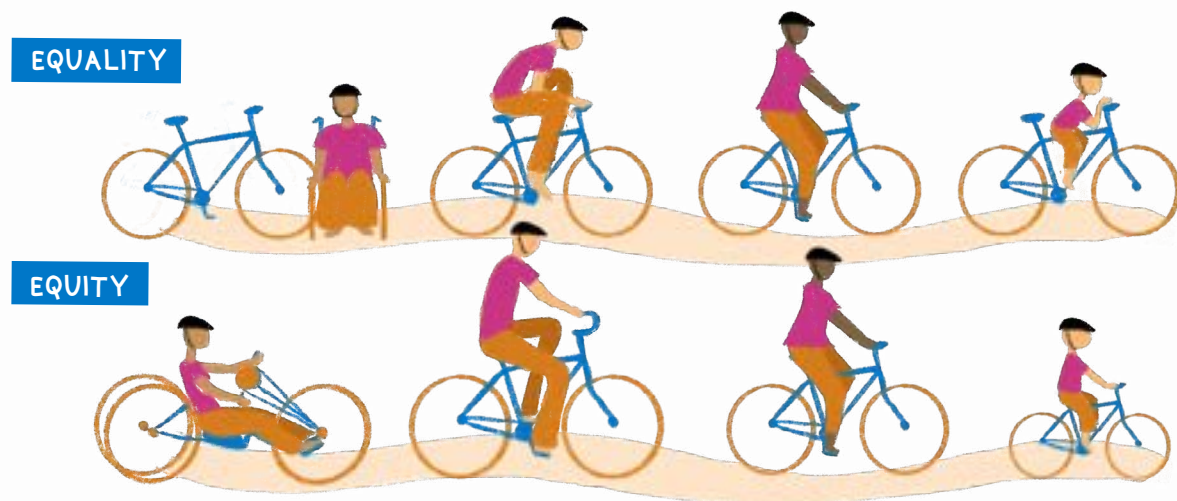


A diversity lens in your youth work requires understanding and valuing these human differences. Diversity does not just refer to gender, race, age, ethnicity, ability status or sexual orientation. It also includes religion, socioeconomic status, education, language, physical appearance, marital and family status, as well as differences in perspectives, political or cultural affiliation and values, among other things.

Working with diversity requires us to understand the concept of [equity](#) as well as understanding systemic oppression of lesser privileged groups and identities.

## EQUITY

Equity means giving all people the access and resources they need to succeed. It stands in comparison to equality, which means giving everyone the same access and resources. As such, equity **takes into account the structural factors that favour certain groups and marginalize others**. As a result, justice might often require an unequal treatment for different groups or individuals to make sure that each of them has access to the same opportunities. Without equity, one cannot truly say inclusion of people in organisations and programmes is happening especially when you are not accounting for their differences in privilege.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup>Adapted from SALTO ID: [Embracing Diversity](#).



Understanding the differences between equity and equality can help you to recognise and respond to differences in a young person's personal situation which may be unfair, avoidable and changeable. This is an important aspect of the social inclusion process.

The irony of striving for equity is that it is a way of working which often implies a degree of unequal treatment compared to other ("mainstream") young people. **Equity requires positive discrimination when meaningful differences exist.** (E.g. selecting a young woman to join an activity rather than a young man in order to achieve gender balance; providing a young person with learning disabilities with a language coach while the "student profiles" fend for themselves, etc.) It is up to project organisers to distinguish who is, and who is not, in need and what those specific needs are to ensure equity.

## POWER AND PRIVILEGE

The historic and systemic oppressions that marginalise people have two strong mechanisms, which you can call "power" and "privilege". Privilege can be defined as the unearned advantages, benefits and rights given to people who belong to certain social groups.

Privilege often takes the shape of inequitable treatment by institutions and unequal access to opportunities. Often these inequities are rooted in biases and systemic inequities.

Privilege is something easy to notice when you don't have it, but when you belong to a social group that has a lot of privilege, you can easily be oblivious to it.



People who have more privilege also have more power. Power can be understood as one's ability to influence or control people, events, processes or resources. Individually, you have different levels of power in different situations.<sup>3</sup>

## BIASES



Biases are **mental shortcuts** that occur consciously or unconsciously. For example, when you are at the supermarket and choose vegetables, your brain automatically directs you towards the red tomatoes, inferring that these would be the ripe ones. However, these kinds of shortcuts are dangerous when it comes to judging other people rather than tomatoes. Biases are created over your lifetimes through socialisation and media. Oftentimes, **these biases function without you even being aware of having them** - that's why they are called unconscious or implicit bias. It's important to note that everyone has unconscious biases. The first step is to gain awareness of the biases you hold.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3,4</sup> Adapted from SALTO ID: [Embracing Diversity](#).





## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

To better understand what is meant by “social exclusion”, young people with fewer opportunities and power and privilege, **try this short exercise.**

Consider the young people you work with. Think about how they compare to other young people in their school, in their community or in their country as a whole. Would you say they have equal or fair access to things like:

- Decent housing?
- Healthy food every day?
- Regular medical and dental care?
- Good schools with caring teachers?
- Pocket money?
- Affordable activities in their free time?

What about other factors? Would you say that they:

- Have a loving and supportive family?
- Have positive friendships and relationships in general?
- Are able to make career choices and follow their dreams?
- Are able to be themselves fully and valued for it?
- Live in a community where their language, religion and culture are respected?
- Live in a community where they are safe from harm and violence?
- Have a voice on social and political matters and that they are listened to?
- Have role models and references in media, politics and others spheres that share their identities?
- Have, in general, an interesting life and reason to feel positive about their future?





If you answered “yes” to most of the questions above, your young people enjoy a certain amount of [privilege](#) in life. In these categories. If some or more of your answers were “no”, then, the young people you work with are less privileged and have fewer opportunities.

This short exercise is a good demonstration of how social exclusion is about much more than not having a lot of spending money or not having a job. Our place in society, the quality of our personal relationships, our possibilities to participate and our future perspectives are just as important to our sense of well-being and belonging as the amount in our bank account.

## POLICY DIMENSION

Between 2012 and 2019, the risk of social exclusion and poverty of young people in the European Union fell from 11.6% to 5.8%. However, the situation of young people in Europe was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic hitting them hard in terms of employment, education and training, social life and mental well-being.



Tackling social exclusion is one of the goals of the EU Youth Strategy which aims at:

- Creating more and equal opportunities for all young people to participate in education and in the labour market.
- Supporting the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.
- Realising the full potential of youth work and youth centres as a means of inclusion.
- Encouraging a cross-sector approach to address exclusion in areas such as education and employment.
- Supporting the development of intercultural awareness and combatting prejudice.
- Supporting information and education for young people about their rights.
- Promoting access to quality services – e.g. transport, e-inclusion, health, and social services.<sup>5</sup>

Among the different aspects of the EU Youth Strategy, the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes and its inclusion strategy, outline one of the approaches to reduce social exclusion of young people in Europe.

### **INCLUSION IN ERASMUS+ AND EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS**

Inclusion is a key cornerstone of the European programmes for youth. The 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme cycle has moved inclusion into a very prominent light: being inclusive is now explicitly in the application criteria. The programme guide states that:

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<sup>5</sup> European Union: [EU Youth Strategy](#).



*“When designing their projects and activities, organisations should have an inclusive approach, making them accessible to a diverse range of participants”.<sup>6,7</sup>*

The programmes encourage transdisciplinary cooperation and the involvement of institutions that do not yet have any experience with Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. The application process stresses inclusion and diversity elements and when applying you are asked how you will make your programme inclusive.

Different formats and funding streams are available within the programmes, you can read more about them in the section [Funding](#).

A more detailed description of the tools and mechanisms of inclusion for **Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps** can be found in the Commission Implementing Decision - framework of inclusion measures of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps 2021-27.<sup>8</sup>

The new Inclusion Strategy aims at making examples and best practices of inclusive youth programmes prominently accessible.<sup>9</sup>

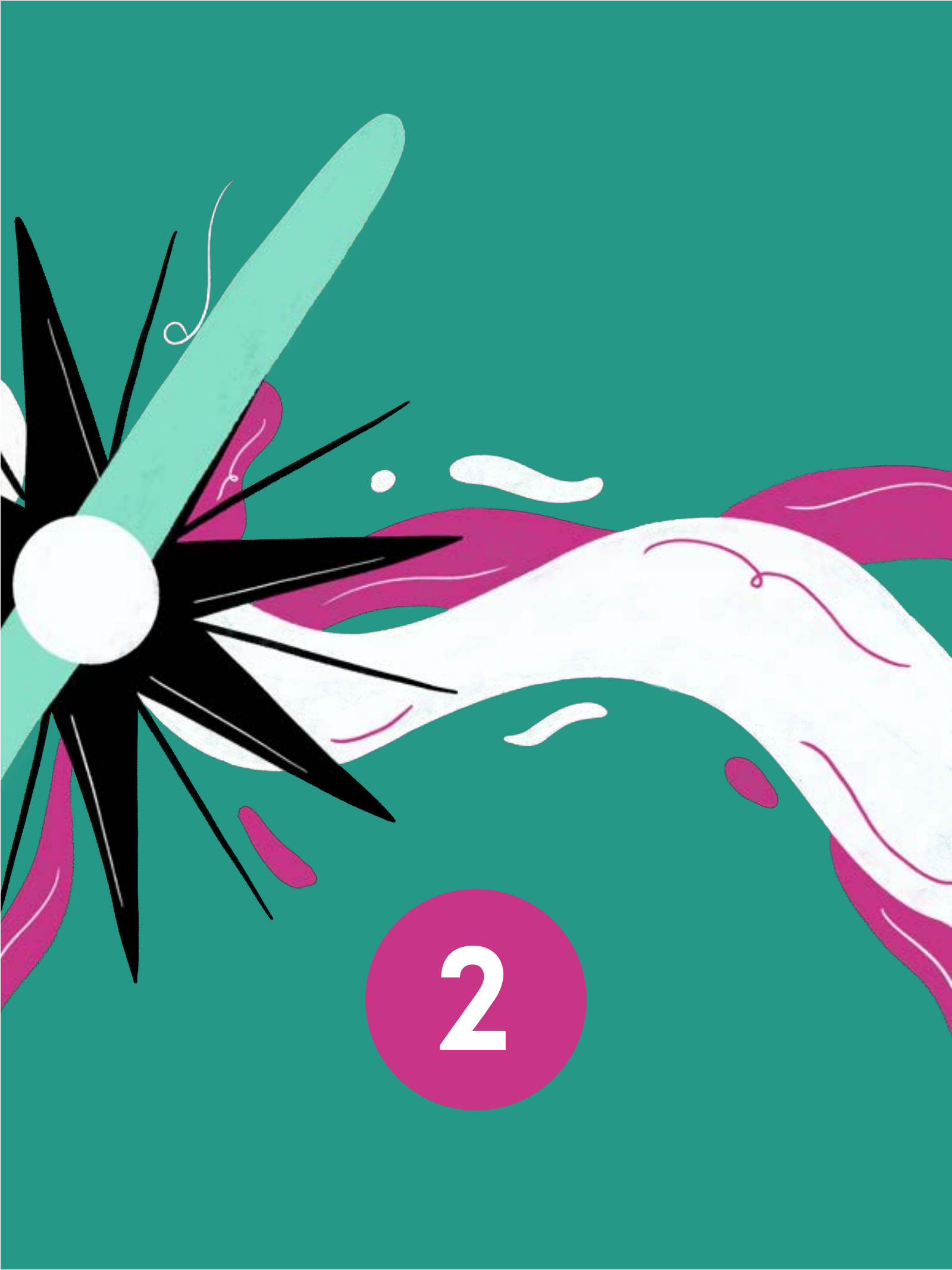
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<sup>6</sup> Erasmus+ Programme Guide: [Priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme](#).

<sup>7</sup> ID Forum New ID Strategy panel with stakeholders: A panel discussion with a multi-angle perspective on the new ID strategy, its meaning and ways to connect cross sectoral – with youth sector. Discussion of the new E+ and ESC programmes in the context of the new ID Strategy and its consequences/implementation.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission: [Commission Implementing Decision - framework of inclusion measures of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps 2021-27](#).

<sup>9</sup> Consult the [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#) to find out more.



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# PREPARING YOUR INCLUSIVE YOUTH ACTIVITY

Preparation is not just about packing your suitcase; it involves much, much more.

For the purposes of an Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps project, the preparation phase encompasses **everything that needs to happen before the young people travel abroad**: practical arrangements, the linguistic/intercultural/task-related preparation of participants before departure, and so on.

In this section we will look at the different building blocks you need to put that foundation together, including:

- Defining the scope
- Partner-finding and partnership-building
- Funding
- Finding the right participants
- Designing the programme
- Risk assessment
- Preparing the participants
- Preparing the practical aspects



## DEFINING THE SCOPE



Before you start to “build” your inclusive youth programme it is important to first establish a clear understanding of what you are hoping to achieve. A key aspect of that task lies in understanding the needs and expectations of the young people you would like to work with in this programme.

Depending on your situation, a needs assessment can also be useful with project partners and the local community. To be of real value, your project should reply directly to one or more of the needs you discover.

### NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

**For many young people with fewer opportunities, an Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps project will be their first experience abroad.** They will have certain fears but also certain expectations, all of which need to be identified and addressed.





It is important to spend sufficient time to exchange and discuss the different impressions, hopes, and concerns the young people may have. It is vital to help the youngsters create as clear a picture as possible of what is going to happen and what their project programme involves. Just as important is to dispel any myths or exaggerated expectations that the project cannot live up to.

If you are planning a youth exchange with young people that you are already working with, a good guiding question can be “**What do I want to get out of this?**” This can be a good way to start discussions with the youngsters on how the project programme should take shape, and a way to help the participants make an individual action or learning plan. You can also come back to the question in the follow up phase as part of your evaluation.

Generally, the following aspects are great guidance for you when assessing the needs and expectations of young people:

- Wishes expressed by the young people at that moment
- Wishes expressed by the young people in the past
- Suggestions from family and friends or support staff
- Suggestions from youth workers



Bear in mind that **it is not always easy for young people to express their wishes, needs and fears**. If you ask them directly, you may not get an answer. Many young people - not just those with fewer opportunities - have difficulties projecting themselves into the future. They often don't have a clue what their life will look like in a year's time or even next week. Nevertheless, the more you can create the programme in a participatory way, the more value you will be able to generate. **Assessing needs is the first step in that process.**

#### LEARN MORE



*Read more about needs assessment, especially when working with young people with disabilities or health conditions in Strategic Partnership on Inclusion, 2021: [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects](#).*

*For exercises on the future, check out the [ID Talks Future article](#) and [video](#).*

*To learn more about creating European Solidarity Corps projects with young people with fewer opportunities, check out the SALTO Inclusion and Diversity publication [Use your Hands to Move Ahead 2.0](#).*

*There are several SALTO Inclusion & Diversity publications about the specific experiences of [young people in NEETs situations](#), young people with experiences in correctional facilities, [young people in urban areas](#), [young people in situations of unemployment](#) and [young people in rural areas](#), among others.*



## PARTNER FINDING AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

You might already have connections with organisations in other countries that you would like to organise this inclusive programme with. If not, check out the section below to read about how to best go about in finding a partner organisation that fits.

### PARTNER FINDING



International co-operation often starts off by means of personal contacts between youth workers or board members from similar youth structures abroad. If you yourself don't have such personal contacts (yet), you can find some tools and networks to finding partner organisations below.

Within Erasmus+ there are a variety of tools to help you find a partner youth group (for an exchange) or a host project (for European Solidarity Corps projects):

- The **SALTO partner-finding page Otlas** allows you to search for partner organisations, register your group or organisation so others can contact you and create projects and request partners. You can access it at [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Otlas/](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Otlas/).
- You can ask your **National Agency (NA) for the Erasmus+ Programme** to help you find a suitable partner (from past programmes, through their newsletter, etc.) A list of NAs can be found on the Erasmus+ homepage at <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/national-agencies>.



- If you are looking specifically for a host organisation for a European Solidarity Corps project, you can consult the **host organisation database** at [https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/projects\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/projects_en).
- SALTO and some other centres for Regional Co-operation can help you **connect with youth organisations in so-called “partner countries”** with whom Erasmus+ projects are possible. E.g. [SALTO Eastern Europe & Caucasus](#), [SALTO South East Europe](#), [SALTO Youth EuroMed](#).
- Another option is to take part in **international training courses or partnership building activities** organised within Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. At these training activities you will meet other youth workers who are also (thinking of) doing international youth projects. Some of these partnership building activities focus specifically on working with young people with fewer opportunities. For an overview of European youth work courses see [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Training/](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Training/).

#### TIP



*If you are new to the world of organising international youth projects for your young people with fewer opportunities, consider participating in a [Mobility Taster](#) organized by **SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre**.*



- Thinking about working with young people with fewer opportunities, you can also consider **working with a new organisation** that might not yet be involved with the European programmes for youth. Googling organisations that work with a similar group of young people than yourself can be a great starting point.
- If you are working with a particular focus audience (young people with disability, LGBTQIA+ youth, specific national, religious or ethnic groups, etc.) you can often find potential partners through corresponding **international umbrella organisations or national federations** (and their member organisations).
- There are also a number of other international platforms you can use including:
  - [Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations](#)
  - [Youth Express Network](#)
  - [Yes Forum](#)
  - [Dynamo International Street Workers Network](#)

## PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

It is not enough to just find one (or more) partner organisations which are interested in setting up projects together. Your partners will likely be from **different cultural and educational backgrounds** and as a result have different approaches to working with young people. Therefore, it is important to clarify with any potential partners what it is that you do (and do not do) in your daily work and with which profile of young people. **What are your regular activities? What is your usual approach?** Remember that what is obvious to you in your context is not necessarily so for someone from another country.



**Deciding which organisations may or may not be a suitable partner is not easy. Here are some guideline questions which can help:**

- ✓ Do your organisations share common aims? If not, are they at least somewhat compatible?
- ✓ Are you working with a similar type of young people (age, mix, gender, educational background, geographical situation)? If not, will the differences pose any serious concerns?
- ✓ Do your organisations have similar activities? Can you define a common programme for the project that both organisations are happy with?
- ✓ Do you have similar organisational capacities (size of the organisation, number of paid staff/ volunteers, budgets, available networks)? If not, can you find ways to work together on an equal footing?





- ✓ Do you have similar organisational cultures or working spirit... or at least an openness to adapt to different ways of working?
- ✓ Do you have common educational principles? Can any differences in approach be reconciled?
- ✓ Do you have efficient channels of communication? A common working language?
- ✓ Do you have similar legal requirements (health and safety, required qualifications, alcohol and drug policies, etc.)? Are they compatible?
- ✓ Do you have the organisation's support to join such a partnership? Is it agreed internally that the necessary time and resources will be freed to work on this co-operation and this programme?

If your answer to most of these questions is "yes", you may be well on your way towards a productive new partnership but keep in mind that it is not necessary for partner organisations to be completely identical to one another. **Working with an organisation quite different from your own can bring an extra degree of richness to an inclusion project.** Determine in which areas you feel you must share common ground and in which areas you can be flexible **BEFORE** you agree to carry out a project together.



When getting to know each other and throughout the co-creation of the project, it is important to explore and consider the expectations of the organisations and youth workers involved. Be sure to budget adequate time to exchange and discuss motivations, approaches and what you hope will come out of the project together with your partners. Your challenge will be to **define a common approach in which individual values and beliefs are respected.**

A well-prepared team is a key element for a successful project. Here are some approaches for preparation and needs assessment between partners:

- Send each other documents about your **working principles** and methods, start discussions online, write down any concerns you may have and pass them along, share the good and difficult experiences you have while preparing your young people, etc.
- **Case studies** are a helpful way of getting a clearer idea of how a potential partner organisation works. Send each other some examples of situations you regularly come across and ask what your partner would do in such a case.
- Promotional materials like **videos and reports on past projects**, etc, all offer some insight into the work of an organisation and help give a clearer indication of the type of young people they work with.
- You could also consider exchanging **policy texts or legislation** that you adhere to or are bound by.
- A **preparation meeting** between partners in the early planning phase is an important step in building trust and getting to know each other personally and professionally.



## SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES

Once you have found a suitable partner (or partners), the next step is to clarify between you how you will share responsibilities during the project and in what timeframe activities will happen.

This should include:

- The development of the project and programme (with the active involvement of the young people)
- Writing and submitting the funding application(s)
- Preparing the participants (ideally done in parallel in the different participating countries)

If creating an in-person exchange:

- Organising the travel (sending organisation)
- Selecting and booking the venue (hosting organisation)
- Checking and preparing the venue for accessibility (hosting organisation)

If creating an online exchange:

- Choose platform and communication channel and check for accessibility
- Implementing the programme (all partners and young people together)
- Reporting and follow-up (all partners and young people together)



This process should give all the parties involved a clear picture of who does what and when. There should be an **equitable and satisfactory division of tasks**. Do not forget to talk about legal issues (health and safety) and rules and regulations that you and your organisation are bound by!

Some of this work can be done long-distance (by e-mail, video call) but face-to-face meetings between partners can be very beneficial for trust-building. It can be helpful to see each other in context and maybe to see the place(s) where the project is potentially going to take place, instead of basing everything on assumptions. This is all the more important if the venue needs to fulfil certain criteria of accessibility or have specific facilities which you cannot improvise or organise in different ways.

#### LEARN MORE

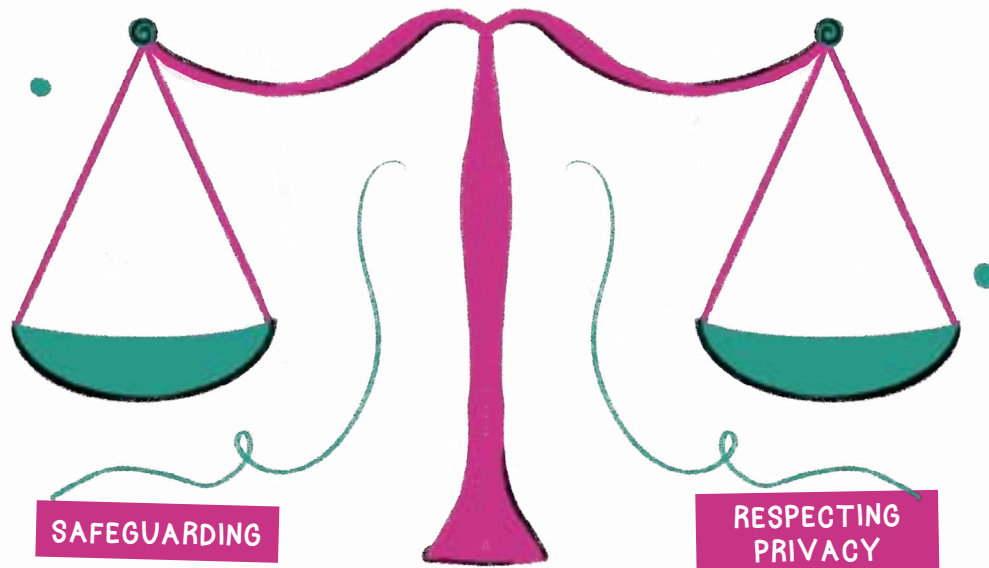


*Erasmus+ offers project partners the possibility to organise **preparatory visits** (with or without the young persons, or with parents). These visits help in facilitating administrative arrangements, building trust and understanding and assessing the individual needs of the participant. More details on funding Preparatory Visits can be found in the [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#).*

*It is also possible to do a period of **job-shadowing** in the partner organisation to get better acquainted with their way of working and the young people they work with. Learn more about this and other mobility projects for youth workers also in the [Programme Guide](#).*



## CONFIDENTIALITY



One extremely important aspect in the work with young people with fewer opportunities is confidentiality. One vital issue to be carefully considered and agreed upon between all the project partners is what information about the participants need to be collected and shared. This involves **walking a fine line between giving enough information to safeguard a young person and those around them while still respecting their privacy and preventing labelling.**

Some types of personal information (for instance educational background, current living situation, future goals, etc.) are more or less harmless and most young people would have no problem sharing them, knowing that it is in their own best interest to do so. Other information, however, like serious medical conditions, a difficult past, a chaotic family situation, etc, is far more sensitive.



In any case, it's important to **be in touch with GDPR responsibilities in all participating organisations to ensure following the guidelines and handling personal data with the needed care.** This also means requesting the young people (or their parents/guardian/tutor if they are under age) for consent for disclosing any sensitive information about their personal situation and/or special needs to the relevant persons in the partner organisations.

If a young person does not want to disclose certain information about themselves this might, in some cases, be a reason for you as a youth worker not to include them in the project. However, there may be ways around the issue. For instance, a young person unwilling to disclose a medical condition could be accompanied abroad by a trusted person who acts as a personal assistant. This could provide a sort of safety net in case something should go wrong. Ultimately, **you as group leader are responsible for the safety and well-being of ALL the young people in your project.**

In keeping with the aims of personal empowerment and active participation, consider involving the young person in describing their situation and any special needs which should be addressed during the project, then in communicating this to the project partner(s). It is best to send such information proactively, before the project starts, to give the partner organisations time to take any necessary steps.





## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Often, in inclusive youth work, you need to strike a balance between respecting everyone's privacy and enabling everyone to participate fully. Of course, you know that being singled out because of a special need, an illness or a troubled past can immediately label an individual as "different" or as being "out". Young people may not appreciate special treatment, even if they need it.

Young people have a right to their privacy. They are not obliged to disclose information about themselves that may put them at a disadvantage or influence how others see them. A young person may take the attitude of "if others don't know it and can't see it, then I don't have to talk about it". This head-in-the-sand approach is extremely risky. Some situations, attitudes and conditions can be dangerous, for the individual but also for others, if not dealt with properly.

Think about the following examples. If you were about to take a group abroad (or, conversely, welcome a group to your country) would you advise a young person to disclose this information to a partner organisation... or to keep it to themselves?

- A young person suffers from obsessive compulsive disorder. Most of the time the disorder can be kept under control but it can worsen when the young person feels stressed.
- A young person is long-term unemployed and has never had a job. Neither one of their parents has ever had a job.



- A young person has a history of heroin use. They have been clean for 6 months.
- A young person with a refugee background suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. They regularly have extreme nightmares and wake up screaming.
- A young person is trans and suffers from gender dysphoria. However, their parents do not support their transition and they do not have any legal framework to change their gender identity in their country.
- A young person has recently become much more religious and has talked about converting others.
- A young person has been incarcerated several times throughout the past years for small offences.

Cases like these seldom have easy answers. Much depends on the type and duration of the project, the experience-level of the partner organisations, the level of trust between the young person and their youth worker, and so on. In the end, it's important that both you and the young feel comfortable about the information shared and the way it is being shared.



## FUNDING

International inclusion projects cost money. The good news is that **there are many foundations or institutions which fund projects**. The bad news is that you have to apply for this funding – and this will take planning, time and cooperation from all of the partners involved.

The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes offer various opportunities for young people to set up projects with an international dimension. It also provides funding for support activities for youth workers to increase the quality of their youth projects.

There are several types of projects that can receive funding. The funding rules are largely based on a simple system of flat rates and fixed amounts, depending on the number of participants, the activity, its duration, etc.

It is possible to apply for funding for different types of projects:

- **Youth Exchanges:** Youth exchanges allow groups of young people (ages between 13 and 30) from different countries to meet, live together and work on shared projects for short periods (between 5 and 21 days). The young people can do workshops together, but also debates, role-plays, outdoor activities and more. Find out more [here](#).

**Example:** [The "Roma \(S\)heroes" workshops](#) brought together young Roma and non-Roma aged between 16 and 30 to explore the figure of the heroine / hero through Roma theatre and games of improvisation promoting self-awareness and awareness of others.



- **Mobility projects for youth workers:** These mobility projects aim at the professional development of youth workers. Mobility projects can be study visits (job shadowing, youth worker exchanges, peer learning), networking and community building projects, training courses to develop competences as well as seminars and workshops for knowledge-building and sharing for best practices. Projects can last 3 to 24 months. Find out more [here](#).

**Example:** “Outdoor Activities for Inclusion” offered youth workers from across Europe an opportunity to develop their competences linked to using outdoor activities as a tool supporting inclusion in youth work. The training focused on developing, prototyping and testing outdoor activities and creating a toolbox as a result.

- **Youth participation activities:**

Erasmus+ also supports youth-driven projects aimed at increasing engagement in civil society and raising young people’s awareness about European values and rights.

Projects can also focus on developing young people’s digital competences and media literacy. Youth participation activities can be international or national, and happen face-to-face or virtually. The activities can take the form of workshops, encounters, simulations, awareness raising campaigns, consultations processes, among others. Find out more [here](#).



**Example:** “[Unaccompanied minor refugees united: Democratisation, participation and self-organisation of unaccompanied minor refugees](#)” focused on connecting young people with migrant backgrounds from all over Austria and empowering them to participate actively in their own realities and the political scenario in the country. As a result, the participants created their own organisation “Bunt”, to have a say in Austrian and European politics.

- **European Solidarity Corps:** With the European Solidarity Corps programme, organisations can host international volunteers that support them to carry out projects for the good of communities and society as a whole. Volunteer projects can last from 2 weeks to 12 months and be individual or in groups.

The European Solidarity Corps programme can also support groups of young people in carrying out an initiative in their local community. Grants support costs for preparation, implementation of activities, evaluation, dissemination and follow-up activities. To implement these solidarity projects, the young people can also be assigned a coach to support them. Find out more [here](#).

**Example:** [De Wissel](#) is an organisation for Special Youth Care, situated in Leuven, Belgium. The organisation provides care and coaching to girls in vulnerable situations as well as children from 12 years upwards who have dropped out of school. De Wissel runs a youth day-centre located on an old farm. The organisation welcomes European Solidarity Corps volunteers who support their tasks on the farm (caring for therapy horses, gardening, attending the day-centre and doing activities with the young people, etc.). Volunteers can try out different activities and learn more about their interests and competences.



# TIP



The **QualityMobility.app (Q! App)** is a great tool to help you build a quality mobility project. It guides organisers with 16 easy questions and tons of Q! Resources. Write your project together with your partners and download it to apply for funding. [www.qualitymobility.app](http://www.qualitymobility.app).





## EXTRA SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

The Erasmus+ programme and European Solidarity Corps recognises that young people with fewer opportunities often need extra support to take the step into an international project. As such, several financial possibilities increase equity and aim at reducing barriers to access the programmes. Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps make additional funding available to cover costs of specific needs of participants experiencing fewer opportunities. This includes, among others, costs linked to adapted travel and accommodation, personal assistance or specific intercultural or linguistic preparation. Additional financial support is also available for organisations to cover staff costs linked to actively fostering inclusion in their projects.

It is possible to apply for funding for different types of projects:





**Inclusion and diversity are now important selecting criteria** when project submissions are assessed. For that, it is crucial that you dedicate time to explain your inclusion strategy and the group of young people that you want to work with. Your National Agency can support you in writing your application, following the so-called supportive approach.

**TIP**



More information about the supportive approach can be found in the [Erasmus+ Inclusion & Diversity Strategy](#).

Learn more about it at: Go Inclusive! Leaflet & video with a short overview of Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps support for inclusion and diversity projects. [www.salto-youth.net/inclusionstrategy/aboutid/](http://www.salto-youth.net/inclusionstrategy/aboutid/).

For organisations who have at least two years of experience implementing activities in the youth field, applying for **Erasmus+ accreditation in the field of youth is an opportunity to work more strategically and implement learning mobility activities (youth participation activities**, mobility projects for youth workers and youth exchanges) on a regular basis. The accreditation gives you as an organisation working with fewer opportunities more flexibility, because you're not depending on application deadlines for projects.



## OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

Besides the Erasmus+ programme, other funding opportunities for inclusive youth projects exist. Bear in mind that a funder never funds a project 100%, so you will always need to rely on more than one source of funding.

### KEEP IN MIND



***It is not allowed to combine two European Union funds to finance the same project.*** So, if you receive Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps funding, you will need to find non-European Union money for your co-funding (e.g. from the Council of Europe, national-level funding, bilateral or multilateral programmes, private foundations or other institutions).

Some possible funding organisations include:

- [Eurodesk Opportunity Finder](#) and [Up2Europe](#) are platforms that offer an overview of currently open grants.
- The [European Youth Foundation](#) (Council of Europe) funds international youth projects (minimum 4 European partner countries).
- The [House of Europe](#) offers its Creative Youth Grants to support creative projects and collaborations.
- [Interact](#) is financed by the European Development Fund for social cohesion and supports cross border trans-national and interregional cooperation.



- The [European Cultural Foundation](#) is an independent non-profit organisation that promotes cultural cooperation in Europe and gives funding for projects with a strong cultural component (e.g. concerts, theatre, etc.).
- [Rotary](#) & [Lyons Clubs](#) are associations of professionals that sometimes give money to projects which respond to challenges in communities around the world.
- Embassies & Cultural Institutes: Some embassies and cultural institutes (e.g. Goethe Institut, British Council, Alliance Française, etc. are actively involved in supporting local projects in different countries.
- The [Open Society Foundations](#), founded by George Soros, work to build vibrant and tolerant societies whose governments are accountable to their citizens.
- There are **funds for bilateral or multilateral youth projects** between specific countries: e.g. the [Franco-German Youth Office \(OFAJ/DFJW\)](#); [German-Turkish Youth Bridge](#); the [International Visegrad Fund for Central and Eastern European initiatives](#); [German-Czech youth exchanges](#); [German-Polish Youth Office](#); [Nordic Cooperation](#), etc.

There is also **private money available from foundations and companies**. Research foundations active in the youth field in your country and check their funding criteria. For companies, contact them directly to inquire about their sponsoring and/or Corporate Social Responsibility policy and activities.



You can also come up with creative ways of raising funds in your local community (e.g. bake sales, auctions, raffles, organising events, offering services, etc). A crowdfunding campaign can also be a great approach. Check out the [Kickstarter Creator Handbook](#) for more information.

Fundraising can be a great opportunity to increase ownership among the young people that are hoping to participate in the project. For ideas, have a look at the fundraising ideas at [Safe The Children](#).

#### LEARN MORE



*For more information on getting and managing money for youth projects, have a look at the [T-Kit on Funding & Financial Management](#).*



## FINDING THE RIGHT PARTICIPANTS

A key question many organisations active in youth work and international projects keep asking themselves is: how can we reach young people with fewer opportunities? If you are not working directly already with the type of young people you'd like to reach, this is an important question to ask yourself well in advance.

Of course, **it is not enough to just say “everyone is welcome” or “we are looking especially for young people with a migrant background” or “with a disability”, without actually developing strategies to reach those young people and take down the barriers that could keep them from applying and participating fully.** That is why a participatory process and understanding the [needs and expectations of the young people](#) are so important.

Different organisations that are successful in this have developed strategies that include offering low threshold opportunities for young people to get to know the organisation and partnering with other organisations that are already working with the group they are hoping to reach. Another possibility is to look for institutions (like schools or social services) that serve a diverse audience and ask for their help in distributing a call for participants.





- What language do you use in your materials? Is it only in English or also in local languages? Are you making your materials available in minority languages?
- If you use English in non-English speaking context, are you using simple, easy-to-understand language and short texts?
- Are your materials and online presence accessible for people with disabilities?
- Who do you represent in your communication material? Do young people with fewer opportunities see themselves in those images? Does it help them feel confident to apply?
- In the application form, are you asking questions that might make people feel uncomfortable? Are these questions really necessary?
- Are the questions you ask - and the answers you offer - inclusive? For example, if you need to ask people about their gender identity, are you providing options for trans and non-binary people to answer?



Other barriers that require attention when communicating programme offers are linked to economic barriers. **Are you communicating clearly if there are any costs involved and what kind of financial support is available?** Even if the programme is free, do the young people have to cover their visa fees? What about the costs of traveling to the embassy for their visa interviews (if required)? Is food, transport and accommodation fully covered during the programme? You might think that some of these answers are obvious but they are not.

#### LEARN MORE



*For more reflections on inclusive communication and recruitment check out the publication [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects](#) by the [Strategic Partnership on Inclusion](#).*



## DESIGNING AN INCLUSIVE PROGRAMME

A useful concept when designing our programmes is “universal design”. **Universal design means designing things in order “to be usable to the greatest extent possible by people of all ages and abilities”.**<sup>10</sup>

A common example for universal design are automatic doors or ramps, which are essential for people who are in a wheelchair, but also benefit other groups of people like parents with a stroller, elderly people, people who are carrying something, etc.



**The concept of universal design can also be applied to the space of learning.** There, universal design summarises approaches that give all learners an equal opportunity to succeed. When planning an inclusive youth exchange, besides applying universal design to the space and other logistical aspects of the work, this concept invites us to consciously design the space, programme and activities in a way that all participants can succeed.

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<sup>10</sup> Center for Universal Design: [The 7 Principles](#).



The daily programme of your project should clearly link in with the specific [needs of the young people](#), organisations and communities involved. These needs will make your project unique so it is not possible to say here exactly what your programme should look like or what the precise content/themes should be. You can, however, offer some general tips on how to structure your programme. Filling in the content gaps is then up to you and your partner organisation together with the young people.

- **Consider routines:** When planning your timetable, take different personal habits, particularly eating and sleeping patterns, into account. These can vary according to different cultural backgrounds and it can be difficult for the young people to adjust. Try to compromise when possible and create clear daily routines for participants to recognise. Accommodate for differences when needed.
- **Plan plenty of “down” time without any activities in the timetable:** A youth exchange can be very tiring for young people, especially those who might have never participated in anything similar and who are exercising a language they might not yet master fully. Having games available and offering unstructured group activities spontaneously allows those young people who prefer so to keep engaging with each other.
- **Be flexible and transparent:** The programme should be clearly organised and easy to see so the young people know what is going to happen and what they should expect.



- **Diversify activities:** Allocate space in the programme for games and exercises as well as “serious sessions”. Have a back-up plan in case the group does not feel comfortable with a specific method.
- **Allocate enough time:** Putting the young people under pressure can be counterproductive. You may have definite ideas about what you want to do or achieve in a specific session or workshop but remember that for the young people in most cases the process is more important than the result.
- **Considering multiple learning approaches:** People learn differently. That is why it is important that you diversify the way you deliver content and the way you invite participants to engage (for example, in writing, speaking, moving their body, drawing etc.) For each activity or session, consider the questions: whose participation is this favouring? Whose participation is it limiting?
- **Being aware of your own bias:** Reflect on some of the assumptions you have about certain activities and ways the young people will engage. Reflecting on your biases and assumptions together with your partner organisations can be a very powerful step in [partner building](#).
- **Knowing (and owning) the limitations of our sessions:** It’s important to acknowledge and accept that there are always limitations of space, resources and time. You also need to be aware of the limitations in terms of knowledge and experience within your team. The earlier you do that, the more opportunities you have to learn more.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Some points inspired by: ACPA: 10 Steps for Designing and Facilitating Inclusive Presentations at Conventions/Conferences (no longer available online).



## LEARN MORE



*For more general insight into programme design, methods and methodology consult the [T-Kit Training Essentials](#).*





## RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk is an integral part of an international inclusion project. No matter how well you have prepared things can still go wrong so it makes sense to take time to anticipate the possible risks and problems which may occur during your project.

**During your project, you will, of course, want to push your youngsters out of their usual comfort zone... but not so far that you endanger their physical and mental health and safety.** Therefore, it is a good idea to prepare a Risk Assessment Plan to help prepare for the unexpected. Such a plan can serve as a kind of first aid kit and provides you with guidelines on how to act and the steps to take when events take you by surprise.

Together with your young people, make a list of the possible accidents, mistakes and mis-understandings that might occur during your project. Be as realistic as possible (but don't go so far as to frighten people off!), then look at ways in which you could minimise the risk of these occurring. A contact list with emergency phone numbers, a copy of the list of participants, insurance and other relevant documents, or a pre-activity briefing with all those involved may be all you need to manage the risk. On the other hand, if you identify what you consider to be situations of high risk (like, for example, a canoeing activity involving a group of non-swimmers) you may have to seek external advice, take further action or even consider the situation too high a risk to become involved in.



## TIPS



*If you are planning an outdoors activity, you can make the risk assessment part of the experience. Government and NGOs working in the area of Outdoor Education, other specialists and organisations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent may be able to offer professionally facilitated risk simulation experiences.*

*Invite your participants to be co-responsible for safety. For example, by having a daily safety assistant to support the youth workers in assessing risk and reminding everyone about agreements related to keeping everyone safe.*

To get started, consider the general framework of your project and the content of your daily programme (as far as you know it). Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have clear protocols in place to deal with COVID-19 which are in line with local rules? Is everyone informed about mask use, vaccination and/or test requirements, etc.?
- Are there any risks in the various programme elements planned? How can these be dealt with/ controlled/ minimised?
- Are there special situations or circumstances in the programme which could lead to strong emotions for a participant? (E.g. travelling, not having enough individual space, homesickness, alcohol...)
- Might there be particular challenges in the group-building process?



- Are there any potential “dead moments” in the programme where the young people risk getting bored?
- Are there enough group leaders available in case of sickness, emergency or if the young people need extra support and guidance?
- Are there times and methods built into the programme to help the young people process and digest their many new experiences?
- Do you have clear guidelines that all partner organisations agree on preventing sexual, emotional and other forms of abuse? Are these guidelines also ensuring safety of LGBTQIA+ youth?

Take time to also think about the location and setting of your project. (For instance, will it take place in a big city or a small village? Will the young people be staying in a secular venue or a religious venue? etc.)

- Are there extra risks (beyond the usual) involved with things like alcohol or drug use (taking into account ‘availability’ and the possibility of different laws existing in the host country and/ or venue where the project takes place)?
- Are there cultural or personal behaviours/expressions that might conflict with the social norms or habits of the host country and/or venue where the project takes place? (For instance certain language, certain clothing, specific activities, religious practices, dietary observances, personal relationships, etc.)



And of course also consider the profile and background of the young people taking part:

- Do the participants have any special needs or requirements? (E.g. medicines, special diets, allergies, etc.) Are extra medicines/equipment/devices available in the host country if necessary?
- Is any special paperwork or travel documents needed for the young people? (E.g. signed consent forms, insurance information, proof of vaccination, PCR tests, police report/declaration of good conduct, etc.)
- Is there an action plan in place in case a young person:
  - fails to observe the project rules or code of behaviour
  - becomes seriously ill or is injured
  - needs to return home early
  - gets in trouble with the law while abroad?

The resulting information can be summarised and presented in a **Risk Assessment Plan or Safeguarding Policy** to be shared with both partner organisations, parents and the young people themselves.

#### LEARN MORE



For more background information on risk assessments see the [T-Kit on Project Management](#).

For safeguarding in an online setting, consult [Safeguarding and Online Youth Work – Digital Safeguarding](#) by the Ann Craft Trust.



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When we think about reducing risk, some dangers are easily recognisable (for instance, walking alone down a dark alleyway at night). However, safeguarding also includes looking at dangers that might arise from within the group - such as bullying, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, etc. These topics can be even harder to spot and address in an intercultural setting.

Did you ever stop to think that the way you physically interact with others might be a source of misunderstanding and potential risk? For instance:

- Think about the way people greet one another. What is normal in some cultures might feel very uncomfortable for people of other backgrounds.
- In some cultures public displays of affection (petting, hugging, kissing, etc.) are considered normal while in others they are frowned upon. In some cultures a man may not touch or speak to a woman who is not a blood relative; other cultures may see this as a sign of contempt and disrespect towards women.
- Members of the LBGTOIA+ community may feel mostly safe to be themselves and talk about their gender identity and sexual orientation in some places, in others they are actively discouraged to speak out and even violently persecuted.



- In some countries (particularly Ireland and the UK) child protection rules can be strictly interpreted, meaning that there may be restrictions on the way children and teenagers are permitted to physically play together (to prevent physical injury, bullying, etc.) and also on the way teachers/coaches/youth workers/group leaders/volunteers/etc. are permitted to physically interact with minors (to prevent abuse). Breaches of these rules can be taken very seriously and may be reported to the police, with far-reaching consequences.

When preparing to travel abroad, young people (and group leaders as well) may not know in advance exactly what the “home rules” are or how they should or should not behave in their host country. This brings a considerable degree of risk - risk of behaving “inappropriately”, risk of negative judgements, risk of losing the trust and good will of the host community, risk of personal liability or even risk of personal injury.

When making your risk assessment, do not focus only on “obvious” elements like possible sickness, missing a flight or losing a passport. Consider aspects like cultural expectations, standards and codes of behaviour as well. Start a dialogue with your partner abroad to try to spot any cultural differences which may cause problems down the road and prepare your young people accordingly.





## PREPARING THE PARTICIPANTS

Preparing the young people for an international inclusion project is no small task and there are many different elements to be dealt with. In this section we will focus on a small number of key points to help you get started.

To decide when to start preparing your participants, consider the experience level and any special needs your young people may have.

### COMMUNICATION

It is important to establish open channels of communication during the planning stages of an international inclusion project. This is obvious in the case of the partner organisations but it is just as important for the young people as well. **Seeing, hearing and getting to know (some of) the young people they will later meet face to face is a good way to boost your youngsters' motivation levels and keep them interested in the project.** Setting up a zoom call, sending each other video or audio messages or creating a shared messaging group on Telegram, Whatsapp, or the like can be some of the ways of creating that contact beforehand.

#### KEEP IN MIND



*If you decide to work with video and share it with the partner group through public spaces like Youtube, Vimeo or any other format which can be accessed publicly, make sure you discuss privacy issues and, in the case of minors, be sure you obtain consent from the parents or guardians.*



## TIP



*Establish guidelines and etiquette if the young people join a shared messaging group. They might not be aware of the dangers of the virtual space, the implications of bullying or sharing pornographic or other explicit content. Besides, you can raise their awareness about differences in access and ability to use online channels. Discussing codes of conduct and accountability beforehand is an important step of [safeguarding](#).*

Make sure to also prepare a document (virtual or printed) in which participants can find all necessary information about the event.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Did you notice that there is an underlying assumption in the points discussed in this chapter on preparation? It assumes that the young people have easy access to you, the group leader, and that you have easy access to them.

Indeed, if, for example, you are working in a neighbourhood youth club where youngsters drop in three or four times a week, then it is relatively easy to engage them in steps like individual action planning, defining needs and expectations, intercultural awareness, language learning, risk assessment and so on. In this type of context, active participation is very realistic.



But what if this is not your situation? What if your young people live many kilometres away and have no easy access to transportation (like some rural youth)? What if they face obstacles which limit their mobility (like some young people with physical disabilities... or young people in correctional facilities)? What if they have little or no free time (like carers or young parents)? How do you then carry out important steps like assessing needs, defining expectations, and so on?

The answer? Be creative! Sometimes you might be able to reach them online on platforms they use regularly, and sometimes, you might have to visit them where they live, work or study. Make use of whatever methods and resources are available to you. Remember that in the preparation stage it is vital for you to keep in touch with the young people (and to encourage them to keep in touch with each other).

## LANGUAGE PREPARATION

One of the main reasons why young people with fewer opportunities hesitate to participate in international projects is because they lack the skills to communicate in a foreign language. Language and communication are key aspects of an active participation. Learning or practicing a new language can be an important part of gaining new perspectives and learning about other cultures.

It can be helpful to organise an exchange where the common language used to communicate is no one's mother tongue. This way all the young people are on the same level and everyone has to make the effort to speak a foreign language.



In any case, it may surprise you to know that **there have been many international projects which involve young people who do not speak any foreign languages at all.** These projects use creative methods to support the participation of young people through mostly non-formal methods (for example art, music, dance, sports, etc.). The options are limitless and contact between the young people can be just as strong as with a common language.

Nonetheless, it can be a challenge for the participants to go through an entire project without understanding any words at all, so you may want to consider other options like:

- Carrying out your project together with a group who speaks the same language (e.g. UK and Ireland, Germany and Austria, France and French-speaking Belgium, etc.).
- Carrying out your project with a group who share the same language group (e.g. Romanic, Germanic, Slavic, etc). There are many similarities within the same language group – enough, usually, for people to get the gist of what others are trying to convey.
- If you don't share any common language, consider having interpreters at your event. Translation doesn't have to be expensive. Perhaps you have a resource person in your group who is good (enough) in a foreign language so as to do a bit of interpreting when needed. In some cases you can make use of online translation programmes.



#### KEEP IN MIND



*Working in and around different languages can take a lot of mental energy. Be sure you plan time in your programme where the participants can “take time off” from having to speak and think in a foreign language. For instance, carry out some exercises or discussions in national groups (in the native language) or activities where no language is necessary (games, sports, etc.)*

## LANGUAGE LEARNING

Trying to get young people interested in learning foreign languages is not always easy. This can be particularly true for young people who dropped out of school at an early age or who have intellectual or mental disabilities. These young people may have been told that they are “slow”, “stupid”, or “not able to learn”. They may think that language learning is “boring”, “too difficult” or “not cool”.

Past inclusion projects have shown that, given the right conditions and support, **virtually any young person can start to learn a foreign language.** The challenge lies in finding ways to make language learning relevant and fun.

As a first step, it is important to dispel the myth that “language=school”. You can do this by putting “formal” techniques (like grammar exercises) to the side and focusing instead on helping the young people to practise speaking. The methods listed above are good ways to get started. You can also help to boost a young person’s confidence by:



- ✓ Creating an atmosphere where they feel safe enough to speak.
- ✓ Setting a good example by speaking and making mistakes in the foreign language yourself.
- ✓ Working in smaller groups or pairs whenever possible.
- ✓ Focusing on the interests of the young person (e.g. if the young person likes skateboarding, learn vocabulary in the foreign language around skateboarding).
- ✓ Using a variety of simple and fun methods like tongue twisters, learning song texts, learning some new word every week, etc.
- ✓ If you know a native speaker in your community (e.g. an au pair, European Solidarity Corps volunteer, exchange student) invite them to give an informal talk to your young people once a week (either at your organisation or in a local café, etc). This way your young people can try out the language before they actually go on the exchange.
- ✓ Focusing on words and phrases the young person can easily use while abroad (e.g. vocabulary to describe their activities, their tasks, the clothes they will wear, the food they will eat, etc; phrases to say hello/goodbye, phrases to use at the dinner table, phrases to use in the bar, etc).
- ✓ Provide “support tools” that can be used during the project (e.g. a translator on their cellphones or a mini-dictionary to remind them of the words and phrases learned).
- ✓ Provide a back-up system (e.g. match up a participant with good language skills with one with poorer language skills so that one can help the other and translate if needed).





Remember that “language learning” does not mean a young person must become fluent. Rather it means encouraging a young person to learn what is suitable, useful and relevant to them and their situation. It is about stimulating their curiosity to learn, their openness to things that are different and their self-confidence to try things that are new.

#### LEARN MORE



Give your participants access to the [online language support platform OLS](#). It has been designed to assist Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps participants in improving their knowledge of the language that will be used in a youth exchange or in which they will work, study or volunteer abroad so that they can make the most out of this experience.

#### PREPARING FOR THE DIVERSITY DIMENSION





A big part of your inclusion project will involve encountering differences – **other ways of living, thinking and doing**. This is part of the excitement, but sometimes also a reason for frustration. This process is not always easy for young people who may have had little or no real contact with people from different backgrounds before and could find it challenging to face their stereotypes and feel comfortable with differences. That is why it is a good idea to spend some time on this in the preparation phase.

It is important to prepare yourself and your young people for this confrontation of differences. An important message within this process is that different cultures and perspectives are not “right” or “wrong”, nor are they “good” or “bad”. Rather they provide different answers to the same challenges in everyday life. **When young people are able to see things from different perspectives, not only does it widen their horizon, it also gives them a more varied set of possible answers to the challenges that they meet in their lives.**

In preparing a group for their encounter with differences, it is crucial to approach these differences from an intersectional lens. It's important that participants and team members understand that no one is ever only one thing. Which means that if you meet with another group from another country, they are not a homogeneous cultural group and that each of these young people will have many different identities. The same goes - for example, if you will encounter a group of people with a certain disability or young people from the LGBTQIA+ community. Discussing how everyone has many different identities is also an important preparation for your young people because they might encounter stereotypes about one of their own identities or feel like they are reduced to one identity only.



## LEARN MORE



The TED Talk "[\*The Danger of a Single Story\*](#)" by [\*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie\*](#) offers a great starting point for a conversation about this.

For more information see the [\*T-KIT on Intercultural Learning\*](#) and the SALTO publication [\*Embracing Diversity\*](#) and [\*video\*](#).

For more food for thought, check out the [\*ID Talks Diversity Article\*](#) "We strive for equality in our societies, but do we appreciate the diversity that comes with it?" or watch the [\*recorded live session\*](#).

## TALKING ABOUT POLARISED ISSUES

Learning to deal with differences is no longer just about people's cultural, racial or ethnic background, our gender identity, ability status or religion - to mention a few. One of the most challenging aspects of our time is to deal with polarisation. Accelerated by social media and online communication, many of us struggle to connect to people with different political or ideological views. Vaccinations, climate change, migration, social justice, these are just some of the topics that have divided many of today's societies.

In that sense, when preparing your young people for encounters with differences, do also approach the topic of polarised views.



Practising **Non-Violent Communication** can be a great way to prepare young people and youth workers alike to better deal with difficult situations and diverging opinions. From a Non-Violent Communication perspective, **rather than two clashing opinions, in each encounter there are two (or more) people meeting with their feelings and needs.** You can use an iceberg to introduce this topic to your youngsters in which in the visible part is someone's political views or perspective on a controversial topic - and in the invisible part under water (which knowingly is much bigger) there lies the person's life story and background, beliefs, fears, needs and expectations.

It can also be useful to offer opportunities to train active listening - especially when disagreeing and looking for opportunities to create common ground and see that your youngsters may have more in common with people who they disagree with on some topics than it may seem at first.



## LEARN MORE



Read more about Non-Violent Communication in the [introduction of the Center for Nonviolent Communication](#).

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Remember that as group leader/project leader your role is to create an environment that celebrates difference and unites the group in its diversity. Before you begin addressing diversity-related issues with young people it is important that YOU have a clear understanding of the topic and have taken some time to critically examine your own thoughts, opinions and prejudices and how they might impact on the learning experiences of the young people. The following questions can be a starting point:

- *How do you react when confronted with different approaches and perspectives?*
- *What are the differences of [privilege](#) between you and the young people?*
- *Which of your identities are you actively bringing to your work? Which ones not? Why?*
- *Which groups or cultures are you biased against? (Try out the [Harvard Implicit Bias Test](#) to find out, if you are not sure).*



## PREPARING THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS

The many practicalities involved in going abroad offer a wealth of opportunities for the young people to get directly involved in the planning and organisational aspects of their project. Make sure you address the following topics with the participants before departure:

### MONEY

Money is an important topic to discuss beforehand with the young people both in order to reduce anxieties and to avoid misunderstandings. **Some young people with fewer opportunities might not even want to get engaged with an activity out of fear or not being able to participate due to financial reasons.** That's why it is important to communicate very clearly if participants are expected to pay for anything or bring money to the activity - and how much.

Start by going through your project programme and identify the moments when there will be costs for the group and when (or if) there are moments when there will be costs for individuals. (For example, the group pays for items like food, accommodation, transportation, excursions, etc. Individuals pay for their own private telephone costs, souvenirs, food & drinks during free time, etc.).

Work out what this means in terms of how much money the whole group (youth workers and young people) is going to need in a specific foreign country. Do the same to calculate what individuals should bring with them in terms of their own pocket money. (Be careful!! There can be quite a difference in the costs of items like food, drinks, alcohol, public transportation, etc, between different countries).









- **Important documents** – passport, visa (if necessary), parental/guardian consent forms, police report/declaration of good behaviour (if necessary), copies of the Risk Assessment plan, a general guide to the laws of the host country.
- **Travel details** – tickets, flight/train numbers, departure and arrival times, vaccination certificate and/or COVID-19 test results, travel insurance, etc.
- **Contact details** – emergency contact details (at home and abroad).
- **Health** – any relevant medical information and medication; any aides, special equipment, health insurance details, etc.
- **Clothing & toiletries** – check the proposed programme for any activities which may require something beyond the young person's usual day-to-day clothing (e.g. bathing suit, sport shoes, sanitary products, working clothes that can get dirty, rain gear, etc.).
- **Pocket money** – in the currency of the host country, see [money](#) for more considerations.
- **Personal belongings** – mobile phone, camera, personal diary or notebook, etc.
- **Items for intercultural sharing** – photos from home, typical food or drink, music, games, etc.
- **Miscellaneous** – check with the partner organisation if the young people need to bring any additional items like a sleeping bag, their own towel, etc, or if these will be provided.



## TRAVEL

For young people who may never have ventured out of their own neighbourhood, the jump to travelling to a foreign country can be quite daunting.

Before the actual inclusion project itself, **consider organising some simulations like local excursions or weekend camping trips.** These are good opportunities to get the young people used to different forms of public transport and to being on their own. This can, in turn, help preparing them for a longer period away from home.

Before you book a ticket, stop to consider the pros and cons of different types of transportation. Should the travel go by car, by van, by bus, by train, by plane, ...? Besides considering sustainability, there are also other reasons that speak in favour of traveling by land: it might allow participants to see more of the countryside and adapt slowly to the changes in landscape, traveling by land might also offer more learning opportunities, for example.





If you decide on travelling by public transport with people with physical disabilities, **inform yourself about available assistant services, accessible doors and toilets beforehand.** Call the company beforehand to inform them about the need for assistance to ensure the service is available on the day and in the place that it will be needed.<sup>12</sup>

**Keep in mind that travelling costs a lot of energy. Don't put the young people at an immediate disadvantage through overly-long travel or uncomfortable conditions** (especially in the interest of saving money). This is a false economy which could negatively impact the start of the project (i.e. if the young people arrive exhausted, hungry and grumpy).

#### LEARN MORE



*To learn more about travelling with young people with a disability, see the SALTO Inclusion & Diversity publications ["No Barriers, No Borders"](#), the chapter on logistics in [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects of the Strategic Partnership on Inclusion](#) and [Beyond Disability: European Mobility for ALL - A practical guide for organisations interested in European mobility activities involving young people with disabilities](#).*

<sup>12</sup> Some elements adapted from Strategic Partnership on Inclusion: [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects, 2021.](#)



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If you have ever travelled you have very likely experienced frustrations like delays, unclear information, feeling unsure about where you are supposed to go, the stress of last-minute changes and so on.

Have you ever wondered what it may be like to travel with a physical or mental disability or other impairment? Stop and consider for a moment what is involved in “simple” things like getting to the airport, carrying luggage, finding your way, making yourself understood. What if things go wrong? How much extra time and energy are necessary for these young people to get what so-called “normal” travellers take for granted?

For those who have never travelled before (whether abroad or in their own country) it can be difficult to anticipate the many details that need to be checked to ensure a smooth travel experience. To get a better insight into exactly what needs to be done, consider doing one or two “dry runs” to the airport, train station or wherever your young people will be departing from. This is a good way to help the young people get familiar with new surroundings and take away a lot of the stress due to “unknowns”.



During a “dry run”, look at aspects like:

- How will the youngsters get to the airport/station/etc.? Can they do it on their own or will they need some assistance?
- Once at the station/airport, where do they need to go? Can they make their own way? Are there services available to help (e.g. in carrying luggage, in getting to your departure gate, with boarding, etc.)? Do these need to be arranged in advance?
- What rules, arrangements or procedures are in place for support devices or special equipment like walking aids, wheelchairs, guide dogs, etc.? Will these require extra time to deal with?
- If things go wrong while travelling (e.g. delays, lost luggage) do the young people know who and where to turn to for help and advice?

Travelling can be a nerve-wracking experience for young people, no matter who they are or what their background. Although it makes sense to prepare thoroughly, it is impossible to anticipate everything that might go wrong. Instead, prepare yourself to be surprised and improvise – go with the flow and make travel part of the learning experience.



## PREPARE THE VENUE

The process of making our spaces as safe as possible for participants starts before the programme even begins. **Young people are only going to apply for a programme or join if they are sure that they will be safe there.** For some, that might include having certainty that the food offered will be inclusive; that they will have barrier-free access to all rooms and activities; that they will be able to communicate with others and that they will not face discrimination of any kind. Young people with fewer opportunities might be extra cautious in that sense due to previous experiences in life.

In case you don't know who will be attending at the time of selecting the venue, aim at picking a venue that is as inclusive as possible.

Besides, try to satisfy basic needs concerning safety, private space and meeting places. An inclusion project can be a full-on 24-hour-a-day experience. The young people will need places to get together as well as quiet spaces to be on their own. Having outdoor space for people to go for a walk is also important for people's wellbeing. The meeting and working places should offer many opportunities for movement and action (e.g. a sports field nearby). Games and other materials (paper, pens, ...) should be accessible and it is a good idea to create a special corner (or if possible a separate room) for physical activities. (Pay attention to safety.) Besides, bedrooms should allow for a distribution that makes everyone feel comfortable.





## ACCESSIBILITY

The choice of venue for a youth encounter is one of the key elements in making the logistics of the project inclusive. Being barrier-free, meaning that all spaces are accessible for people with specific mobility needs, is a crucial element. Some elements to consider include:

- Check your venue for step-free entrances (or alternatively for lifts or ramps). Also check if guide dogs are allowed at the venue.
- Seminar rooms should have good acoustics and do not have any loud noises which could make participation difficult for people with certain disabilities.
- It's also important that the room allows for everyone to see flipcharts or other tools and to see each other and potential sign language interpreters.
- Check if lighting is adjustable on the one hand because good lighting is crucial for Deaf or hard of hearing and rely on lip reading or sign language translators and on the other hand because some people might be light-sensitive. Flickering light can cause problems for people with epilepsy.
- It's important to also make sure that the safety protocols of the venue (fire-escape, etc.) are accessible for people with disabilities.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Strategic Partnership on Inclusion: [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects, 2021.](#)





You can ask for additional Erasmus+ or Europeans Solidarity Corps [funding](#) for accessible accommodation.

#### LEARN MORE



The chapter *What to consider when planning logistics* in the publication [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects](#) gives you important information and guidelines to make sure your venue and general logistics are well thought-through and inclusive for people with disabilities.

## BATHROOMS

Bathrooms (close to all parts of the venue) should be both accessible and inclusive. Everyone during an in-person event needs to feel comfortable using the bathroom.



**GENDER  
NEUTRAL**

Besides looking for accessible toilets, make sure you can provide gender-neutral toilets. That might sometimes mean re-arranging bathroom distribution and putting up your own signs. Keep in mind that not everyone might feel safe in a bathroom that is shared among everyone. Yet, gender neutral toilet are crucial for trans, non-binary and questioning people. That is why you should have designated female, male and gender neutral bathrooms. It's important to check beforehand if that is possible at the venue.



## KEEP IN MIND



*When it comes to the LGBTQIA+ community, not everyone might be “out”, some youngsters might only feel comfortable within sharing their gender identity or sexual orientation with the group after some time - or not at all. Being intentional with topics like inclusive bathrooms and #pronouns can be an important message for them that they are welcome to show up as their full selves.*

## FOOD

The food you offer during in-person events is crucial for people to feel well. Besides **looking out for sustainability and health, food also has an important element of inclusion.** People can have food restrictions for different reasons. Rather than singling people out for their food restrictions by offering things apart, **we should aim at cooking meals that everyone can eat together.** It might not always be possible to offer food that is halal, kosher, vegan, gluten-free and that takes other allergies and needs into account, but we can certainly aim at having at least some meals that are suitable for everyone. Some food items - like meat or milk products - don't need to be in all meals, for example, making the food a lot more inclusive. You might even want to consider making all food at your youth exchange vegetarian or vegan - for [sustainability](#) reasons and to already make it more inclusive from the get-go. If you do want to offer animal-products, offer these food items on the side, so that everything else can be enjoyed by everyone. In any case, make sure everything is well labeled.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Some of the aspects in the section are adapted from: NOW Association: [NOW Journey Blueprint](#).



## LEARN MORE



The chapter “The Catering” in [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects](#) can guide you in making the dining area at your event for people with disabilities.

Also check out [ID Talks Gender Article](#) “How do society’s standards and expectations impact our self-image? Why are these standards gendered?” or [watch the recorded live session](#).

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Have you ever felt uncomfortable in a place, project or an event? Many young people, especially those with fewer opportunities have had such experiences, making them more hesitant to go into the unknown. Think for a moment if you ever asked yourself before going somewhere if:

- You will be able to get into the venue?
- You will be able to eat the food that is served?
- You will be able to go to the toilet?
- There will be other people there that look like you?
- People might stare at you or ask you uncomfortable questions?
- etc.

To avoid the youngsters questioning themselves about these things, be very transparent and upfront about the inclusion measures that you are already considering and invite them to share other needs or fears.



## SUSTAINABILITY

Just like inclusion, making youth exchanges sustainable and promoting competences linked to green sectors is one of the priorities and a selection criteria of the 2021-2027 programme cycle. **A strong focus lies on sustainable travel, aiming at making the Erasmus+ projects carbon-neutral.**

*"The Programme supports the use of innovative practices to make learners, staff and youth workers true actors of change (e.g. save resources, reduce energy use, waste and carbon footprint, opt for sustainable food and mobility choices, etc.). Priority will also be given to projects that – through education, training, youth and sport activities – enable behavioural changes for individual preferences, cultural values, awareness, and more generally support active engagement for sustainable development."<sup>15</sup>*

Therefore, **put on a sustainability lens right from the beginning when planning your project to be able to incorporate green practices in all different realms and phases of the project** – from travel to food and material, etc. For that, it's important to have buy-in from your participants and encourage them to keep you as organisers and themselves accountable.

For traveling, you can access additional funding for sustainable travel, the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and the European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide give you more information about that.

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<sup>15</sup> Erasmus+ Programme Guide: [Priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme](#).



## LEARN MORE



Check out the [T-Kit Sustainability and Youth Work](#) for more ideas on making your project sustainable.

## TIP



Virtual exchanges can be a more sustainable alternative to in-person and the online space can offer new tools for inclusion. Why not consider doing your programme or parts of it online? You can read more about that in *Inclusion & Diversity in Digital Youth Work*.  
[www.salto-youth.net/digitalinclusion](http://www.salto-youth.net/digitalinclusion).





## THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

You've done it! You and your young people have arrived safely at your venue or online event. This section looks at the different elements at play during the implementation phase of your project. In this section we will look at the different building blocks you need to put that foundation together, including:

- Launching the programme
- Safer space
- Facilitation
- Further into the programme
- Dealing with conflicts
- Endings and goodbyes





## LAUNCHING THE PROGRAMME

The initial moments in an inclusion project can be full of contradictions. The young people will be curious about one another but possibly a bit shy at the same time. They may want to make contact and say hello but may not want to risk looking foolish or “uncool”. It is not uncommon for an international group to experience inertia in its ‘forming stage’. When young people are introduced to each other they cautiously explore the boundaries of acceptable group behaviour. This is a stage of transition from individual to member status, and of testing the youth workers’ guidance, both formally and informally.

The forming stage of a group can include:

- Excitement, anticipation, and optimism
- Suspicion and anxiety about the project
- Defining the tasks and how they will be accomplished
- Determining acceptable group behaviour
- Long discussions about ideas and issues, and for some young people, impatience with these discussions

Because there is so much going on to distract young people’s attention in the beginning, the group may accomplish little, if anything, that concerns its aims. Do not panic - this is perfectly normal! Don’t spend too long talking (or worrying). Get the first activity under way as soon as you have introduced and explained its purpose.



## LEARN MORE



For more information on group dynamics and fostering interaction, consult the [T-Kit Training Essentials](#).

Here are some suggestions for methods for getting the group started:

- The first encounter (the forming stage) is the moment for hopes and fears to be revealed and to explore and challenge attitudes. Icebreakers, energisers and name games are useful tools for the first encounter:
  - **Name games** are simple activities that help groups getting to know each other and hearing and practising each other's names in a fun and not threatening environment.
  - **Icebreakers** are short fun activities to help participants to get to know each other. They are intended to be light-hearted in order to get young people to feel comfortable with one another before moving on to other activities. They also aim to encourage interaction, develop communication skills and encourage young people to work cooperatively.
  - **Energisers** are methods that encourage and legitimise interaction. They often take the form of fun “get-to-know-each-other” exercises or light-hearted ways to re-open a session after a break. Energisers can be used for different purposes: to help the young people feel comfortable with each other, to provide quick exercise, to attract and focus the group's attention, and/or to help introduce the next subject/topic/activity in the programme.



There are many different types of icebreakers, name games and energisers available; choose those which fit your group's abilities, the timing and the topics of discussion. Be aware of different cultural and religious backgrounds and differences in terms of personal space. Some young people might not feel comfortable with an energizer or icebreaker that includes physical contact.

Also bear in mind that while some young people swear by icebreakers and energisers (because they enjoy them), others swear at them (because they find them irritating or silly). Make sure to always give participants the option of observing at first, rather than pushing anyone to participate in something they might not feel comfortable with. Set a good example by enthusiastically taking part in icebreakers and energisers yourself. If you pick fun activities where people enjoy themselves, it usually doesn't take long for everyone to join.

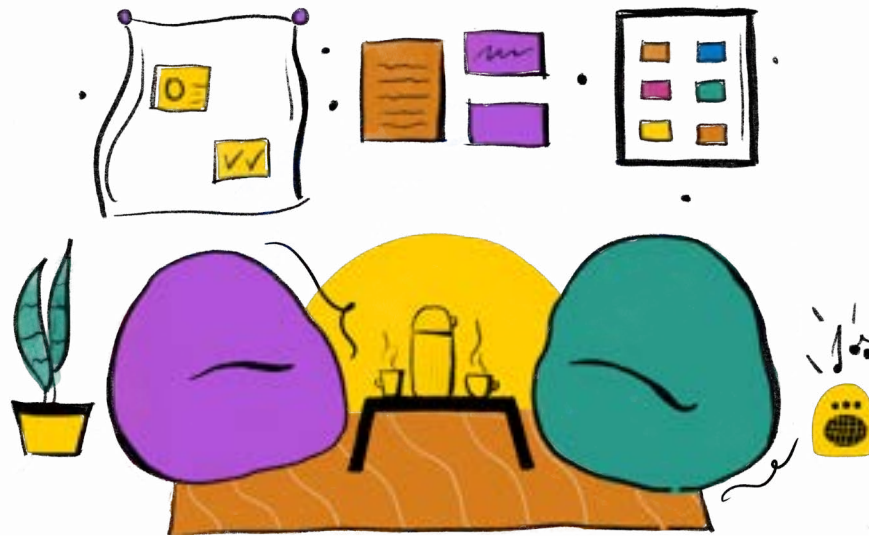


## LEARN MORE



For a variety of Icebreakers and Energisers have a look in the SALTO Toolbox for Training at [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/)

## SAFER SPACE



Right from the beginning (and actually even beforehand when [recruiting](#) and [communicating](#) with participants), it is important to aim at creating a safer space. A safer space can be described as a supportive, non-threatening environment that encourages everyone to be respectful and learn from one another. **It's a space in which all participants feel comfortable to express themselves and share their experiences.** A safer space requires critical awareness about the [power](#) structures that influence the people present in the space and people's different [privileges](#). Using the word "safer" space rather than "safe" space means acknowledging that safety is relative and that not everyone feels safe under the same conditions.



When it comes to creating a safer space, **it's important that we learn from and with our participants about what they need to feel safe.** It's key that we are able to listen without judgment and without wanting to influence how a person feels. The following guidelines which connect to many of the points mentioned in this handbook are a good starting point for working on creating a safer space:

- Both for physical and virtual encounters: choosing a space/platform that is appropriate for people's needs, accessible for everyone and where everyone's physical safety can be guaranteed.
- Welcoming people in a warm and open way, showing that we care about people's wellbeing. Music, decoration, food, all of this can make a big difference.
- Having clear guidelines on COVID-19 safety and keeping everyone accountable for it.
- Learning and respecting everyone's names and pronouns. Not assuming anyone's gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, background, health, religion, etc.
- Having clear rules of engagement, for example in the form of a group contract.
- Respecting everyone's physical and emotional boundaries. Not forcing anyone to participate in any activity. Asking first before touching or posing questions that may make people vulnerable. When someone expresses discomfort, apologising, listening and changing behaviour.



- Using different methods to allow people to participate in different ways. Silent discussions or small group conversations may make it easier for someone to feel at ease to contribute.
- Respecting people's opinions, beliefs, experiences and differing points of view.
- Not forcing anyone to share their story and never sharing things participants share with people who were not there.
- Being responsible for actions and for what is communicated through them. For example, being aware of the gender distribution in talking time. If, for example, boys and young men talk more than other participants, this should be addressed.
- Inviting everyone - including the team - to be aware of prejudices and privileges and work actively to overcome them.
- Checking with participants before using cameras or recording devices means respecting their privacy.
- Creating space to openly talk about mistakes (misgendering someone, asking insensitive questions, talking for someone else, engaging with someone in a way that does not make them feel comfortable, using hurtful language, etc.) and keep each other accountable (more about that in #dealing with conflict).
- Taking care of your own safety and boundaries as youth workers.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Adapted from SALTO ID: [Embracing Diversity](#).





## FACILITATION

Facilitators of group processes have a crucial role in making programmes inclusive. Many of the reflections shared in the [inclusive design](#) section are also important for facilitators to consider. Holding space for diversity means that **your objective as facilitator is to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and safe, can learn and contribute**. For that to be possible, we need participants to be able to trust us and feel safe (see [safer space](#)).

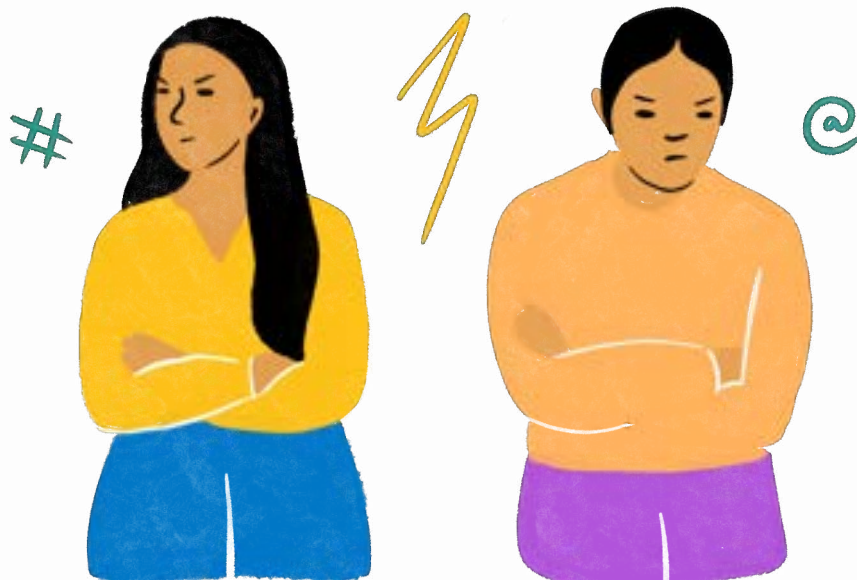
Facilitating diverse groups requires you to be open to adapt your language and methods to the group. Like with any group, you need to constantly review the way you are conducting the processes and communicating with the group. Using **inclusive language** and creating **space for the group to make suggestions or give feedback** are two ground rules that work in most settings.

**Humbleness** is an important competence of facilitators: generally - but especially when linked to people's experiences and identities - you are as much a learner as your participants. Do not present yourself as owner of wisdom, but as co-learner. Otherwise, you risk shutting out participants or making them feel uncomfortable to share and participate. Besides that, you should always **be aware of your own biases and assumptions** while facilitating and interacting with people. Remaining open and curious to get to know the actual people you are working with (and not a previously conceived idea of who they are and what they need) is essential.





## DEALING WITH CONFLICT



Inclusion projects rarely go exactly the way you expect them to. Conflicts can occur at any time; their causes can be many and varied, predictable or unpredictable. Human nature dictates that we cannot and will not all agree with each other all of the time so expect that at some point during your project you will likely experience (and have to deal with) some degree of conflict.

Bringing people of different backgrounds together can lead to clashing values or perspectives. **Stereotypes and prejudices** can easily lead to hurtful comments or discriminatory actions and it's important to deal with it as it emerges - also to benefit from it for a learning opportunity for the group.



Conflicts can occur between groups or between individuals. They can involve not only the young people but the group leaders as well. Handling disagreements, expressing frustration, dealing with confusion, lacking basic resources... is not easy and young people may lack the skills and competences to manage these situations and feelings. Yet, in any conflict there is potential for growth and change. Conflict does not have to be destructive, if handled properly. It can serve as a valuable tool in building up skills and personal strengths: when acknowledged and explored in a safe environment it can provide powerful situations and reactions to refer to and follow up on after the project.

However, there are many conflicts that we can avoid with careful preparation and ongoing observation.



## COMMON CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN INCLUSION PROJECTS AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM

**TIMING:** Too many late nights, long sessions or excursions can lead to late starts, low energy levels and lack of interest in the focus of the project. The use of evaluation tools like “Mood Meters” (see image) will help you to check out feelings and energy levels regularly and adapt your programme or activity to meet the current mood.



**FEEDBACK:** Poorly delivered feedback can be misunderstood or perceived as criticism even though this was not the intention of the speaker. When giving feedback, it is important to respect the feelings of others, to focus on what they said or did and to give reasons for your point of view. It is better to say, “I have a different perspective to what you have just said because....” rather than “How can you be so stupid, don’t you see that....?”

**INAPPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES:** Not all activities will suit all young people all of the time. Be aware of the needs of all the individuals in the group and of any sensitive emotions which might be triggered by a particular activity (or part of it). Make sure everyone knows that they are at no time under any pressure to say or reveal anything about themselves that they do not feel comfortable with. Allow young people time to warm up before and wind down afterwards. Remember to allow enough time for debriefing and discussion so that everyone feels that their opinions and participation are valued.



**RESPONSIBILITIES:** Some people thrive on responsibility while others avoid it like the plague. Some individuals have a lot of responsibility at home while others have very little so keep in mind that for some participants the “empowerment” aspects of an inclusion project may be a completely new and very scary experience. Make sure that all young people are comfortable and understand what they are being asked to do. Don’t hesitate to intervene if you think that something is inappropriate. Remember that the young people are experts on their own lives, strengths and capabilities so never impose anything. Let the young people decide what they want to be responsible for and support them through the process.

**POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS VIEWS:** non-facilitated conversations about controversial topics can easily lead to conflicts. Some participants might feel very strongly about certain topics - even more if they have a personal link to it (think about migrant policies for people with migrant background, LGBTQIA+ topics for members of the LGBTQIA+ community, gender equality for women, beliefs for religious people etc.). It can be useful to address how to address polarising topics already when creating your group contract and remind the young people about the difference between opinions and people (see [Talking](#) about polarised issues). Always emphasise the need for a safer space and respect of each person, even if views are not the same.

#### LEARN MORE



*For more information on the origin of conflicts in an intercultural situation, check the [T-Kit on Intercultural Learning](#).*



## ADDRESSING HURTFUL COMMENTS AND DISCRIMINATION

Addressing discrimination and pointing out biases and differences in privilege require you as facilitator to train your ability to facilitate difficult dialogues. Topics around diversity can be challenging to discuss. In a conflict situation, the group leader's role is to be open, non-judgemental and positive. It's important that you accommodate the young people's vulnerability and foster their openness. You should help the young people to recognise that confronting conflicts is a step forward in their relations to others and will give them an experience they can use in their daily life back home. You also need to be ready to facilitate conflicts that might include some team members, requiring even more calmness.



**In a group with young people with fewer opportunities it is especially important that discriminatory or hurtful comments or acts do not pass unaddressed.** If someone - no matter if participant or facilitator - says something that crosses a boundary, Teaching Tolerance<sup>17</sup> suggests a **“zero-indifference policy” as opposed to a “zero-tolerance policy”**. In other words, rather than silencing or punishing participants for any harmful behaviours and speeches, “zero-indifference” suggests gently letting them know why what they did or shared was problematic. As such, you need to make sure that no harmful behaviour or speech goes unaddressed to keep committed to creating a [safer space](#). Remember that everyone is learning.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Teaching Tolerance: [Let's Talk - Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students](#).

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from [SALTO ID: Embracing Diversity](#).



Some good practices in dealing with conflict:

- Find a situation or environment where the young person feels safe and can speak freely: privately, or in a group; open air or in a closed environment.
- Listen to the young person and don't take sides (any side).
- Encourage the young person to talk and LET them talk (don't saddle them with your own conflicts and experiences).
- Help the young person explore where the roots of the conflict might lie: different values, habits, norms, cultural backgrounds, etc.
- Try to understand how the young person feels and thinks.
- Try to find out which roles or strategy both parties are using (if there are parties involved, depending on the conflict).
- Ask the young person if you could help in any way.
- Help the young person to clarify the situation; the conflict might stem from a misunderstanding. Avoid judging what you don't understand and promote tolerance of ambiguity.
- Don't impose your cultural norms, but try to understand the cultural rules on both sides.
- Ask the young person whether s/he has an idea about how the opposite party might be feeling.



- Encourage the young person to formulate possible solutions for the problem. In this way they will feel more involved in the solving phase and support their own proposals for solution.
- Encourage the young person to talk to the other party in the conflict if both are ready for this, help establish a fearless atmosphere where open communication is possible (neutral territory, with an external mediator, etc.).
- Be open to feedback (even if poorly delivered) and don't justify any actions without hearing the young person / people out.

#### LEARN MORE



*Find more information in conflict management and ideas on addressing conflict with young people in the [T-Kit Youth Transforming Conflict](#) and [T-Kit Training Essentials](#).*





## METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

Once the young people have gotten over their initial anxieties and begin to feel comfortable with one another, you can start using other types of methods in your programme. For example:

- **Small group work** encourages everyone to participate and helps develop co-operative teamwork. The size of a small group will depend on practical things like how many young people there are all together and how much space you have. A small group may be two or three young people but they work best with six or eight. Small group work can last for fifteen minutes, an hour or a day depending on the task at hand. Whatever the topic, it's essential that the work is clearly defined and that young people are focused on working towards a goal that requires them to feedback to the whole group. It's rarely productive to tell young people simply to "discuss the issue"; give them instead a specific task that leads to a result. For example, assign a task in the form of a problem that leads to a result. For example, assign a task in the form of a problem that needs solving or a question that requires answering.

### KEEP IN MIND



*People naturally feel comfortable with what they know and some may prefer to stay within the comfort zone of their national group. Unless it is absolutely necessary, don't let young people choose their own sub-groups. There are a number of ways of ensuring that national groups mix with each other: by nominating at random, giving numbers or cards or arranging by rainbow colours.*



- **Project Café:** It often happens that the strongest relationships in a project are built during breaks and informal moments, so it can be a good idea to organise some activities around a cup of coffee. Project Café space can lead to increased interaction, create the foundation for possible further co-operation, improve participation and motivation and contribute to group creativity and self-organisation.
- **Simulations and other activities that discuss human rights and intercultural topics.** The Council of Europe resources [Compass](#) and [All Different - All Equal](#) offer plenty of methodologies as well as the [SALTO Toolbox](#).
- **Living library:** Don't judge a book by its cover. Living Libraries allow people to learn more about their respective realities.
- **Co-operation Activities** are about participation and involvement. These activities are often referred to as “games” because they are fun (like dressing up, parachute games, etc.). But they are more than this; they are about challenging the individual, building group cohesion and keeping the young people interested and “on board”. Co-operative games are usually:
  - *Adaptable* - the best can be adapted to fit any situation and reinforce several different points. Most games can often be modified slightly and still retain their original flavour and character.
  - *Brief* - they can range from a one-minute visual illustration or verbal vignette up to a half hour group discussion exercise.



- *Inexpensive* - they usually do not require a lot of materials or equipment (many require none at all) and you do not need professional knowledge to run them.
- *Low-risk* - if matched to the right context and applied in a positive and professional manner, they will almost always succeed.
- *Participative* - they involve young people physically through movement or psychologically through visual and mental attention; they connect with young people by making them think, react or have fun.





When using co-operative games or simulations, be careful that you do not choose a format or content which may alienate the young people from the start (like introducing a game requiring very individualistic behaviour from a group of highly peer-orientated young people). Similarly, don't choose an activity simply on the grounds that "it has always been effective in the past". Past circumstances may have been completely different. Young people may have real-life situations that you have little or no experience of and consequently they may become frustrated if you work to an agenda that is irrelevant to their needs.

#### TIP



*If at all possible, always co-facilitate an activity. There are practical advantages in that there will be two to share the responsibility of helping with small group work or dealing with individual needs. Two facilitators can support each other if things don't go as planned and it's also more rewarding to conduct a review with someone else than to do it alone.*

Make sure to also leave plenty of space for young people to simply interact, explore the surroundings or play a board game. You can also offer optional activities to explore the local culture, play sports and interact in a more relaxed way.

#### LEARN MORE



Read more about inclusive learning environments in Strategic Partnership on Inclusion: [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects.](#)



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As a group leader/facilitator, you probably do your best to treat all the young people in your group equally. But have you ever asked yourself if you are treating them equitably as well? (See [equity](#) for a definition).

Be aware of the working methods you choose throughout the duration of your inclusion project and try to make them as equitable as possible.

For instance: if you bring all your young people together for a meeting, you are practising equality (because all the young people are in one place and in theory have equal opportunities to participate) but not necessarily equity. There are always one or two young persons in a group who have no trouble speaking out, who come up with the right answers right away, or who are never short of a comment or a joke. But there are others who rarely say anything. Keep in mind that this may have different reasons: These young people may lack self-confidence or be more introverted. They may lack language skills. They may have learning disabilities which make it difficult for them to process information as quickly as others do. They may be dyslexic. Etc.

One simple way to deal more equitably with such situations is to **wait 5 or 10 seconds** after asking a question. Give everyone in the group time to process the question and think up a response – not just the quick and spontaneous youngsters. As facilitator, do your best to give all members of the group the time and space they need to participate fully.



Another way is to **diversify your working methods to be more inclusive**. Often you choose for traditional or “academic” ways of learning (like reading, writing, group discussions, etc.) because it is what you are used to. Remember, though, that different people learn in different ways. Some learn best through visual representation, some through numbers, some learn best while using their hands, some learn best while moving around. To work as equitably as possible, try to use a range of methods that respond to a range of learning styles and give participants a range of different ways to respond or contribute. This is also relevant in online settings where not everyone feels comfortable participating with their cameras on or by speaking up. Raising hands, contributing to a survey, writing on the chat, talking in small groups can all be alternatives.

In a physical setting, it can sometimes make sense to **go around in circle**, hearing out everyone or having other kinds of rules that help diversifying voices. Just make sure everyone can easily opt out of talking or contributing and pass it on to the next person.



## DEBRIEFING

When you do a simulation or cooperation activity, make sure you also allow participants to reflect about it. **Never just “do” an experiential activity; it’s essential to follow them with debriefing to enable young people to make sense of what happened, evaluate their experience and go on to decide how to act or behave in the future.** That is, debriefing is crucial for people to extract learning from an experiential activity.

Spend time at the end of each activity talking over and analysing what happened and how they see it relating to situations in their own lives. Without reflection, young people do not gain nearly as much from their experiences. Try to go through the debriefing and evaluation process in sequence by asking young people questions that help them relate to what happened during the activity and how they felt, what they learned about themselves, what they learned about the issues addressed, how what happened in the activity relates to real life, and how they can move forward and use what they have learned.

### LEARN MORE



You can read more about Debriefing at: <https://scottnicholson.com/pubs/completingexperience.pdf>.





## REFLECTION

Ideally, self-reflection is a process that needs to start at the very beginning of a project and continue throughout the implementation. This can be done, formally and informally, by encouraging the young people to self-reflect in various ways and at various moments throughout the activity. Here are some tips and methods to set the process in motion:

- If some of the young people are fond of writing, have them keep a daily diary. If the young person has difficulties with writing, they can also draw a daily picture, or make a weekly collage out of images in magazines to represent events and emotions.
- For youth exchanges, holding daily reflection group meetings in smaller groups can be a great tool to help participants pause and reflect on their emotions, learnings and challenges. Make sure everyone feels comfortable to share and that each young person gets time to talk and listen.
- Especially for longer international experiences, encourage the young people to think about their future throughout the project; don't wait until the very end to do that.
- For some participants it might be helpful to collect "moments" or "pictures" that had a big impression on them.



## LEARN MORE



Read more about the importance of reflection and tips and tricks for reflection groups in the [NOW Journey Blueprint](#).

For tools and tips for self-reflection, check out [SALTO Youth: Youthpass for ALL!](#)

## MONITORING

Not just for participants it is important to pause and reflect, it's just as crucial that the team of facilitators of the project evaluate activities on an ongoing basis. For in-person youth exchanges, it's a good idea to have team meetings each night and discuss which activities worked out well, which ones didn't and what might make sense to change in the programme for the next day.

## LEARN MORE



Consult the section on "[Daily and Ongoing Evaluation](#)" of the [T-KIT Training Essentials](#) for more information on this.

Make sure you give participants opportunities to share about their experience with the training not just at the end but also during the training so that you can take that feedback into account as the programme progresses. Of course, it is usually a good idea to include the young people in any decisions about the programme that you might have to make along the way.



## LEARN MORE



*The upcoming chapters will give you more information and ideas about evaluation.*

## ENDINGS AND GOODBYES

An inclusion project can be a powerful and emotional experience. When a project is completed successfully, everyone can move on to new things, feeling good about what's been achieved. Recognising and being sensitive to people's feelings in the final phase is extremely important, particularly if members of the group have closely bonded.

Endings and goodbyes can be stressful so to help you ensure your project closure is a happy and positive one we conclude this section with some ideas for evaluating, validating and celebrating the young people's learning experiences.



## LOOKING BACK

Besides the ongoing monitoring within your team, ideally you can have a moment for evaluation at the end of your project with participants still present, while everything is still fresh.

It can be very powerful to end the active phase of the project giving the young people a moment to look back and reflect on everything that happened. Some methods include:

- **Guided visualisation:** To refresh people's memories of recent events, ask the young people to make themselves comfortable (sitting in a chair, lying on the floor, etc.) and close their eyes. Play some soft background music. Then, in a quiet voice, ask the young people to relax and go back in their minds to the day before the project began. Ask them to think about when they started their journey, what they expected, who they met. Remind them of all the different activities in the project programme; include some questions or funny anecdotes here and there. Once people's memories have been "jogged", you are ready to start collecting the participants' feedback and impressions (see the methods below).
- **Remembering sessions:** Event after event, in chronological order, the young people recount one after the other what impressed them most during the project (good and bad moments).



- **Symbolising the vision:** Have the young people draw a symbol in the sand or on paper that represents their opinion or vision of the project. When everybody is finished drawing, the young people take it in turns to explain their symbol in one sentence or with 2-3 keywords.
- **Positive gossiping:** Have the young people divide up into small groups of three. For three minutes, two members of the group pay the third member a series of compliments. (Only positive comments allowed!). After the three minutes are up, the roles are switched and a new person is given compliments.
- **Candles:** With everyone sitting in a circle, put 10 lit and 10 not lit small candles in the middle of the circle. Ask participants to either light a candle and share a good moment or blow out a lit candle sharing a not so good moment. Let the activity go for as long as young people share moments.

## CELEBRATION

Just like it is important to give attention to the [beginning](#) of the project, you should put a lot of intention into the closing. The closing should give participants an opportunity to celebrate what they have accomplished, the connections they have made and their personal growth. It's also a great opportunity to evaluate the project together while the emotions and impressions are still fresh.



Besides allowing participants to think back on everything (see [evaluation](#) for ideas on how to do that), celebrating also means having a fun and light closing party or something similar. This can be around a (virtual) fireplace, with music and dance and / or with special food. An inclusion project involves a long journey full of ups and downs... but in the end it is all worth it. Go ahead - throw yourself and the group a good farewell party. You deserve it!

And when it's time to say goodbye, **make sure the departing moment is not rushed and everyone has enough time to say goodbye** - something that might be very emotional and even difficult for some of the young people. Bye-bye rituals like a final group cheer, playing the group's favourite energiser or singing a song that emerged during the time together can help.









## THE FOLLOW-UP PHASE

The follow-up phase is your opportunity to make the most of your project and use it as a resource in the long-term development of the young people. It's all about making them aware of the outcomes of the project and helping them apply their new skills, enthusiasm and interests back in their local environment.

The follow-up of an inclusion project involves looking forwards AND looking back. It includes:

- Evaluating the activities (to recognise the participants' learning outcomes)
- Evaluating inclusion and diversity
- Reintegration
- Validating participants' learning
- Disseminating the project outcomes

It is also the moment to begin monitoring how the experience impacts on the future pathways of the young people. The last day of an inclusion project should not be the end of the experience but rather the beginning of a new road ahead.



## EVALUATION

A lot of time and effort went into making your project possible - now it is time to identify what went well, what didn't and why. Were the original aims of the project achieved? Were the expectations of the young people met? What could have gone better? This information is useful as it can help you to make improvements in the future.

There is a vast array of evaluation methods available (questionnaires, surveys, checklists, etc,) but it is important to choose those which are appropriate for your group and which allow for both the young people and the group leaders to have a voice in the process.

### EVALUATING THE ACTIVITIES

You and your young people have just successfully completed your project. You all made a big investment of time and energy to get this far. Now is the time to stop and look at what exactly you have achieved and where improvements need to be made next time.

Evaluation is about collecting and analysing information that reflects the outcomes of actions and how these outcomes relate to our original aims and objectives. It is a planned process that aims to **measure how far actions have achieved what they intended: to visualise what the experience meant to the young people.** Evaluation is a participative process that empowers all those involved in the actions, young people, youth workers, members of the young people's support networks, to reflect on and learn from their experiences.



Evaluation should not be something that you “just do” at the end of an international project because you have to. This is a valuable learning moment for everyone who was involved so give it the time and space it deserves. A good evaluation process should start right at the beginning of a project and continue on right through to the end.

## EVALUATION METHODS

There are many different and fun ways to evaluate your inclusion project. The process need not be overly complicated or challenging. Choose methods and tools that are suitable and interesting for your young people.

When working with young people with fewer opportunities, you may wish to **use a variety of interactive methods** (group and individual exercises like games, open discussions, brainstorm, etc). If appropriate, you could also consider using more formal methods like interviews, surveys and questionnaires.

If your young people feel comfortable, they will likely have a lot to say in the evaluation stage. Keep in mind, however, that not everyone is at ease speaking out in large groups. Also, in some cultures it is considered extremely rude to openly criticise, even within a safe constructive atmosphere. So when planning your evaluation, be sure to use a mix of methods which give people the chance to speak their opinions (all together, in small groups, one-on-one) and to show their opinions (with more active methods which don't necessarily involve speaking out – again all together, in small groups, one-on-one, individually and possibly even anonymously).



## LEARN MORE



*You can find many evaluation methods in the [T-Kit Educational Evaluation](#) and [T-Kit Training Essentials](#) as well as the [SALTO Toolbox](#). Most methods can be used either during the project or when the young people have returned home.*

## SELF-EVALUATION OF PARTICIPANTS

It is also important to **create space for participants to evaluate their own journey**. Here you can nicely build on what you have done in terms of [reflection](#) during the project. If you used a diary, photographs or drawings, you can ask participants to review what they have written to see if they can identify any changes in their behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, skills, etc.

Another nice approach is to help the young people make an inventory (list) of the skills they learned. Help them identify how that learning can help them take their next steps along the pathway (in finding a job, gaining a qualification, within their family situation, etc.). This connects nicely to the process of validating participants' learning. You might already want to use the Youthpass at this stage to help participants grasp their learning more concretely (see [validating participants' learning](#)).



## EVALUATING INCLUSION

When you are organising inclusive programmes, **it is crucial that you also evaluate your efforts in including diverse young people in the programme.** This should be done together with your partner organisations. This step is crucial because it allows for learning and improving your inclusion and diversity approaches for future projects. The following questions can help in this conversation:

- Have you been able to reach the group of young people you were hoping to reach? If no, why not?
- Were you able to include participants in the design of the programme?
- According to your own observation and the evaluation by participants, do you feel like all participants were equally able to participate in all aspects of the programme?
- What inclusive approaches worked well, which ones need to be re-thought for the next time?
- Where did you discover potential biases or lack of awareness within the team? How could you explore them further?
- Did you encounter any unexpected barriers? Were you able to remove them?
- What would you do differently in the future?
- What have been your key insights as a youth worker?



## REINTEGRATION

The end of an inclusion project is by no means the end of the process. Reintegration is an important stage for the young people as chances are that, due to their experiences and learning gained on the international project, they can arrive home a changed person to the one that left. Consequently the young people may have difficulty fitting back into the position they previously held within their peer or family group setting. **To facilitate a “smooth landing” upon returning home, high levels of personal support from you, the youth worker, and other professionals may be required.**

The word “reintegration” can sound somewhat heavy, giving the impression that it is a bleak and difficult process. But this is not at all the case. In the context of an international project, **reintegration means helping the young people to make sense of all they have seen and experienced abroad, to understand the impact this had** (and may still be having) on them, to find ways to use the skills and competencies they may have gained and to plan the next steps towards new future goals.

Reintegration involves transformation. However, it must be kept in mind that while a young person may have changed, the home environment has not. **There can be tension between the “old” and the “new” ways of thinking, doing and living** (within the family, the peer group, and even within a young person’s own mind). Old habits, in particular, die hard so for those young people who left chaotic or problematic lifestyles behind during the project itself, good reintegration is crucial. A young person’s reintegration should be as inclusive as possible, involving, when possible, representatives from all areas of the young people’s personal and professional support networks (family, friends and professionals).



## WHAT IS INVOLVED IN REINTEGRATION

Reintegration can take different forms depending on how long your young people have been abroad. Re-integrating after one week on a youth exchange may not be all that difficult but re-integrating after 3 or 6 or 12 months abroad on an European Solidarity Corps placement can be much more complicated.

There are different aspects and practical details that an individual needs to “pick up again” after returning home from a (extended) period abroad. For instance:

- **Practicalities:** does the young person have a place to live when they return home? Do they have any income? What is their current state of health (mental and physical)?
- **Personal relationships:** how have personal relationships with family and/or friends changed during the time abroad? Have they become more positive, more negative? Are there dangers involved in restarting certain relationships now that the young person has returned home? How to stay in touch with the new friends and connections made abroad?
- **Newly-gained skills and competencies:** are there outlets or opportunities available where the young person can put the skills they have gained/developed to use (e.g. paid work, apprenticeship, volunteering in the community)? Does the young person know that such opportunities exist? Are they able to take advantage of them on their own or do they need some support?





- **Reconnecting with professionals:** are there people, departments or institutions that the young person needs to make contact with once they return home? E.g. the employment office, social work departments, the police, the court system, etc.
- **Future plans:** what will the young person concretely do now that they have returned home? How will they apply their new learning? Is there an action plan in place? Does it involve school, work, volunteering, further training...? Is there a risk that the young person will go back to doing exactly whatever they did before the project?

Of course, sorting out these questions is the responsibility of the young people themselves but that does not mean that you, as their youth worker/youth leader cannot lend a helping hand by anticipating areas where the youngsters may run into difficulties and being prepared to help them along the way.

Be aware that the longer the project abroad, the greater the chance that an individual may have substantially changed (in terms of their personality, their outlook on life, their plans for the future and so on). These are complex processes that all take time to be expressed and understood and it can easily take as much as a year or more to do so. Be sure that YOU budget enough time to guide your young people through the reintegration phase properly.



## ACTIVE STEPS TO FACILITATE REINTEGRATION

As a youth worker/group leader, you can have a positive impact on the reintegration process by:

1. working with the young people to create opportunities to share their learning and experiences, and

2. helping members of their social networks understand how and why the international project has influenced them.

This can be done in various ways. For instance:

- **Create opportunities for the young people to “report back”.** These should be moments where a young person can inform their peers, family, community members and others committed to their cause about the learning outcomes of their experience. To do this, the young people can share their diaries, videos, written reports, personal records of achievement, Youthpass certificates, newspaper and magazine articles about the project, etc. They can write articles for the organisation’s newsletter or website or be interviewed by local newspapers, TV and radio stations.
- **Arrange possibilities for the young person to “give back” by volunteering in their own community.** Similarly, you can empower the young people to act as resource persons in your own organisation. For instance, after having gained experience in a youth exchange, ESC programme, etc, they can motivate other young people (within your organisation, city or region) to do similar projects and support them in their first steps. As well, they can play a part (and take on new responsibilities) in organising the next round of international activities.



- **Give young people chances to implement the skills they learned during the international activity** (for example, if they took part in a dance project, encourage them to give a short performance or organise a dance workshop).
- **Help establish peer support networks.** These are a good way to keep the young people involved in the international arena. Informal social networks such as e-groups, which can be established at the end of the inclusion project, allow the participants (youngsters AND group leaders) to identify common reintegration issues and to work together to solve them.
- **Reserve time to revisit and reconsider the young person's personal pathway.** If you still have the young people's drawings of their pathway from the preparation stage, use them as a tool to start a discussion towards how these took shape during and after the project? Where is the path leading to now? What interests are they hoping to follow in the future? What do they need to help them do this?

#### KEEP IN MIND



*The reintegration process should never be rushed. Young people need time to “digest” the learning and experiences they have made during their time abroad. Revisit the personal pathway only after the young people have been back at home for some time (e.g. 1-2 months or more). Be patient; allow the young people to step away from the project itself and look at their learning from a more balanced longer-term point of view.*



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When preparing to send young people abroad, you expect that they will experience a certain degree of “culture shock” during their project. Often, however, one forgets or underestimates the impact of “reverse culture shock” which can occur when a young person returns home and begins to try to somehow fit their “new self” into their old environment.

This is particularly the case for young people who could be considered to be “at risk” or “in severe difficulty” – for instance young people who have drug or alcohol problems, who come from a background of violence or abuse, who have drug/alcohol problems or who are exposed to bad influences in their area (criminal behaviour, extremism, etc). An inclusion project can have a big impact on these young people and lead to many positive changes. For instance, they may make many new friends. They may learn many new skills. They may become more independent. They may develop new attitudes and beliefs. They may set themselves new future goals. They may have an increased sense of confidence and pride in themselves and what they have achieved.

These types of positive changes are precisely what inclusion projects are designed to achieve. But what happens when a young person “at risk” returns home? The changes in their perspective, attitudes and behaviour may not always be understood or appreciated by family and friends. In some cases, they may even be seen as a threat to the established order. The home environment may give out clear messages to the young person that their new behaviour is not wanted or accepted by the group. An individual may be pressured to go back to their old ways, resume bad habits, reconnect with negative influences, etc.



Young people “at risk” face a range of additional challenges in the reintegration process compared to their peers. If you work with “at risk” profiles, ask yourself:

- What specific challenges might your young people face when they return from an inclusion project abroad?
- As a youth worker/youth leader, what can you do to make the reintegration process as easy as possible? Are you able and willing to invest the extra time and resources needed to support these young people?
- Is it just the project participants who might need support... or might there be other stakeholders to consider as well? Are you able and willing to spend time with a young person’s family, friends, peer group, teachers, coaches, etc, to help them come to terms with the changes brought about by the inclusion project?

For a young person “at risk”, a successful reintegration may be the most important aspect of their inclusion project. Be aware so as not to underestimate the degree of commitment needed from you, your organisation and other important stakeholders to make this happen.



## VALIDATING PARTICIPANT'S LEARNING

You can help maximise the impact of your project by helping the young people to recognise specifically what they have learned and what they have gained in terms of their own personal development.

There are different ways to identify and categorise the learning gained by young people during an inclusion project. Traditional methods of recognition include attendance certificates, letters of recommendation, and invitations to further projects. You might want to use a method, scheme or instrument which has proven effective in your organisation in the past, or... you might find it interesting to use a competence-based approach.

You can support the participants' awareness gaining on their developed skills and competences by guiding their reflection on:

- **Intercultural skills:** language abilities, understanding diversity, tolerance of ambiguity, trying to learn not to judge and interpret behaviour wrongly, learning to see things from different perspectives.
- **Knowledge:** how to work in a team, how to make decisions, how to be flexible.
- **Life experience:** ability to navigate different situations, curriculum, etc.
- **Soft skills:** abilities to communicate and cooperate, to create contacts and partnerships.
- etc.



Erasmus+ has an instrument called **Youthpass** which can be used throughout the project cycle to identify specific aspects of a young person's learning. Youthpass is based on a European framework of 8 key competences:

- communication in the mother tongue,
- communication in foreign languages,
- mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology,
- digital competence,
- learning to learn,
- social and civic competences,
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship,
- cultural awareness and expression.

When you use Youthpass, you work with the young people to identify and develop certain competencies. You dedicate time in each of the different phases of the project to assess the impact of various activities on a young person's learning. Of course to do this you will need to find working methods which are appropriate to your group's needs, abilities, etc.

#### LEARN MORE



*All participants in an Erasmus+: Youth in Action activity are entitled to receive a [Youthpass](#) certificate. Using the Youthpass allows them to integrate that learning into their CV and cover letter. For ideas on how to include the Youthpass, check out the Salto ID publication [Youthpass for all!](#)*





## DISSEMINATING THE PROJECT OUTCOMES

The previous pages of the “Follow-up” section have focused mainly on what you as project organiser can do to help your young people round off their inclusion project abroad and start looking forward to the future. Now, **how can YOU take this experience forward? How can you inform others about your results? How can you share the knowledge and experience you have gained?**

You can do this by disseminating the results of your project as widely as possible and making the outcomes visible to a much larger audience than just those who took part.

Ideally, you will start to think about how you plan to share the results of your project already in the preparation stage. If you know in advance the concrete products and outcomes you want to have by the end, you can take steps during the project to get what you need. But if you only manage to consider dissemination and visibility at the end of the project, here are a few steps to help you get organised.

Ask yourself (and your young people):

- **WHAT** exactly do I want to share about our project (and what do I concretely have)? Statistics? A film I have made? Written accounts? Evaluations? Examples of Youthpass certificates?
- **WHO** do I want to share it with? Other young people in your organisation? The parents or guardians of the young people? Your board of directors? Your sponsors? Your local city council?



- **WHY** do I want to share it? To make publicity and raise our profile? To recruit new participants for a future project? To show the sponsors what their financial support has achieved? To share our knowledge with others?
- **HOW** will I do it? An open day? A formal meeting? An informal evening get-together? A travelling caravan? Will I make a report, publish flyers, set up a website, produce a video, put together a podcast, an art exhibition...?

The possibilities for disseminating the results of your project are limited only by your imagination. Make use of all forms of media and technology that are available to you to maximise the impact.

#### KEEP IN MIND



*Just like in the Confidentiality chapter, you need to have participants' (or their legal guardians') consent for publishing images and all information shared should be in line with GDPR guidelines.*



Here are some concrete suggestions:

- Document the outcomes of your project. This can include both visible results (e.g. a film of the theatre play by the participants, a report, a collection of artworks, ...) and invisible results (e.g. learning points, conclusions, recommendations, new methods used during the activity, ...) Connect with your audience by personalising the outcomes as much as possible. Think of ways to use reports, diaries, recordings, drawings, photos and real-life testimonials from the young people.
- Get the local media involved (TV, radio, newspapers) and make headlines with your international project. to share and spread your documentation. Post information on your organisation's website.
- Give the participants space to develop networking and follow-up projects themselves (through discussion, "open space", action plans, etc).
- Offer guidance and training to young people who want to get more involved in your organisation.



- Share your methods, funding opportunities and good practices to make the lives of “newcomers” to the field a lot easier. Add them to existing databases (e.g. [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/)) or circulate them via relevant networks.
- Use social media or other communication tools for future contacts and exchanging good practice.
- Thank all your supporters (authorities, funders, families, local community members, ...) for their contributions and keep up the new contacts established.

Be creative! This is your opportunity to showcase your work, to celebrate your achievements, to let other people benefit from and use your project results and to seek and obtain support for your future projects.

No matter which methods you use, keep in mind that you want people to actually USE the information and knowledge you are giving them. It is not supposed to just disappear into someone’s desk drawer!! Be proactive – offer support on how to use your products and results. Actively seek out interested organisations or youth workers/youth leaders and get them enthusiastic and involved.

#### LEARN MORE



*For ideas on how to disseminate learning, check out the SALTO Inclusion & Diversity publication [Making Waves - more impact with your projects](#).*



## FURTHER READING

**DARE:** [Practical Guide for Inclusion](#)

**Dawn Bennett-Alexander (TED talk):** [Practical diversity: taking inclusion from theory to practice](#)

**EU-CoE Youth Partnership:** [Social inclusion for young people: breaking down the barriers](#)

**EU-CoE Youth Partnership:** [The politics of diversity in Europe](#)

**EU-CoE Youth Partnership:** [T-Kit 8: Social Inclusion](#)

**EU-CoE Youth Partnership:** [T-Kit 4: Intercultural Learning](#)

**EU-CoE Youth Partnership:** [Some still more equal than others? Or equal opportunities for all?](#)

**EU-CoE Youth Partnership:** [Learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education. Access, processes and outcomes](#)

**National Youth Council of Ireland:** [Let's act on inclusion](#)

**NewStatesman:** [Kimberly Crenshaw on Intersectionality](#)

**Peggy McIntosh:** [Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Inclusion and Diversity resources](#)



**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Europe in Transition – Diversity, Identity and Youth Work](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Inclusion by design](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Ideas for Inclusion and Diversity](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity (video):** [ID Talks Organisational](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity: ID Talks Organisational:** [Ok, your projects are inclusive, but is your organisation too?](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [International youth projects benefit most those with fewer opportunities](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [How to make the European Youth Programmes more inclusive](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Clever ways to measure the impact of your EU Youth project on inclusion and diversity](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [ID Talks](#)

**Salto Inclusion & Diversity:** [Embracing Diversity](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Use your Hands to Move Ahead 2.0](#)

**Salto Participation and Information:** [Resource Pool](#)

**SALTO-YOUTH:** [The European Training Calendar](#)

**Teaching Tolerance:** [Guideposts for Equity](#)



## RESOURCES ON WORKING WITH SPECIFIC YOUTH EXPERIENCES:

**Council of Europe:** [Barabaripen - young Roma speak about multiple discrimination](#)

**EU-CoE Youth Partnership:** [Between insecurity and hope. Reflections on youth work with young refugees](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Beyond Disability: European Mobility for ALL - A practical guide for organisations interested in European mobility activities involving young people with disabilities](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects \(Strategic Partnership on Inclusion, 2021\)](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [ID Talks Gender](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [ID Talks LGBTQIA+](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Village International - international rural youth projects](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [No Offence!](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [On track - Different youth work approaches for different NEET situations](#)





**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [Urban Solutions - tapping the talents of urban youth](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [E.M.power - young ethnic minority women](#)

**SALTO Inclusion & Diversity:** [No Barriers No Borders - Mixed-Ability Projects](#)

**Strategic Partnership on Inclusion:** [Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects](#)



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