

MOBILITY PROJECTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – ‘YOUTH EXCHANGES’

Under this Action¹⁰⁸, organisations and informal groups of young people can receive support to carry out projects bringing together young people from different countries to exchange and learn outside their formal educational system.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTION

Erasmus+ supports non-formal learning mobility of young people in the form of Youth Exchanges, with the objective to engage and empower young people to become active citizens, connect them to the European project as well as to help them acquire and develop competences for life and their professional future.

More specifically, Youth Exchanges aim to:

- foster intercultural dialogue and learning and feeling of being European;
- develop skills and attitudes of young people;
- strengthen European values and breaking down prejudices and stereotypes;
- raise awareness about socially relevant topics and thus stimulate engagement in society and active participation in democratic life.

The Action is open to all young people, with a special focus on those with fewer opportunities.

POLICY CONTEXT

The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 sets out a Framework for European cooperation in the youth field, based on the Commission’s Communication of 22 May 2018 on ‘Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people’. The Strategy fosters youth participation in democratic life, supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society. The EU Youth Strategy also includes a Youth dialogue process and in that context, 11 European Youth Goals have been developed in 2018. These goals identify cross-sectoral areas that affect young people’s lives and point out challenges. The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising this vision of young people. Under the core area ‘Connect’, the EU Youth Strategy is promoting and facilitating connections, relations and exchange of experience between young people as a pivotal asset for the future development of the EU. These connections are best fostered through different forms of mobility, one of which is Youth Exchanges.

https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en

Thematic strategies in the youth field

The Erasmus+ Programme seeks to promote youth participation, reinforcement of the quality of informal and non-formal learning processes and development of quality youth work. Further support in these areas is available through specific thematic strategies, such as Youth Participation Strategy, Youthpass and the European Training Strategy (ETS)¹⁰⁹.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

¹⁰⁸ The main budget of this Action is allocated to support transnational activities involving organisations and participants from EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme. However, up to 25% of the budget available can fund international mobility activities including organisations and participants from third countries not associated to the Programme neighbouring the EU (regions 1 to 4; see section “Eligible countries” in Part A of this Guide).

¹⁰⁹ The strategies can be found here: <https://www.salto-youth.net/>

Youth Exchanges

Youth Exchanges are meetings of groups of young people from at least two different countries who gather for a short period to implement jointly a non-formal learning programme (a mix of workshops, exercises, debates, role-plays, simulations, outdoor activities, etc.) on a topic of their interest, seeking inspiration from the European Youth Goals¹¹⁰. The learning period comprises a planning period before the application, preparation phase before as well as evaluation and follow-up after the exchange.

The following activities are not eligible for grants under Youth Exchanges: academic study trips; exchange activities that aim to make financial profit; exchange activities that can be considered as tourism; festivals; holiday travel; performance tours, statutory meetings, training courses by adults for young people.

Preparatory Visits

Additionally to Youth Exchanges, projects could also comprise Preparatory Visits. Preparatory visits aim to ensure high quality activities by facilitating and preparing administrative arrangements, building trust and understanding and setting-up a solid partnership between the organisations and people involved. In the case of Youth Exchanges activities with young people with fewer opportunities, the preparatory visit should enable to ensure that the specific needs of the participants can be catered for. Preparatory Visits take place in the country of one of the receiving organisations before the start of the Youth Exchange activity.

¹¹⁰ The European Youth Goals were developed in the frame of the EU Youth Strategy. These goals identify cross-sectoral areas that affect young people's lives and point out challenges. https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en

SETTING UP A PROJECT

A project is implemented by at least two organisations. Organisations involved in a project should benefit from their participation; the project should therefore be in line with their objectives and fit their needs. Organisations involved assume the roles of “sending” participants and/or “receiving” i.e. hosting the activity. One of the organisations takes also the role of coordinator and applies for the whole project on behalf of the partnership.

A project consists of four stages: planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up. Participating organisations and young people involved in the activities should take an active role in all those stages enhancing thus their learning experience.

- Planning (define the needs, objectives, learning outcomes, activity formats, development of work programme, schedule of activities etc. before submitting the application)
- Preparation (practical arrangements, set up of agreements with partners, linguistic/intercultural/learning- and task-related preparation of participants before departure etc.);
- Implementation of activities;
- Follow-up (evaluation of the activities, identification and documentation of the learning outcomes of participants, as well as dissemination and use of the project's outcomes).

A quality Youth Exchange:

- relies on the active involvement of young people and participating organisations, who should take an active role in all the stages of the project, enhancing in this way their learning and development experience;
- involves diverse groups of participants and builds on this diversity;
- is based on clearly identified needs of the young participants;
- ensures that the non-formal and informal learning outcomes of the participants are properly identified and documented;
- encourages the participants to reflect on European topics and values.

Learning process

Setting a Youth Exchange in the context of non-formal learning requires that at least a part of the desired learning outcomes is planned in advance, in order to ensure the appropriate opportunities. Young people taking part in the activity should contribute to the identification of their needs and the learning that they wish to obtain or develop through the Youth Exchange.

Participants should also be involved as much as possible in the design and development of the activity (setting up the programme, the working methods and defining the division of tasks) and think how to prepare to maximise the learning and personal development they would gain during the Exchange.

After the core activity has finished, participants should be invited to provide a feedback on the activity, reflect on what they have learnt and how they can make use of these learning outcomes. Furthermore, participants should consider possible follow-up of the activity. This can be done individually and when possible as a group.

Organisations should support the learning process, the identification and documentation of the learning outcomes, in particular through Youthpass.

Erasmus Youth Quality Standards

The implementation of all projects supported under this Action must follow the Erasmus Youth Quality Standards for organising high quality learning mobility activities. The Erasmus Youth Quality Standards cover the basic principles of the Action, as well as concrete implementation practices for project tasks such as selection and preparation of participants, definition, evaluation and recognition of learning outcomes, sharing of project results, etc. The Erasmus Youth Quality Standards are available here: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-quality-standards-mobility-projects-youth_en

Protection and Safety of participants

A Youth Exchange involves group leaders. Group leaders monitor and provide support to participants to ensure the qualitative learning process during the core activity. At the same time, they cater for a safe, respectful and non-discriminatory environment and protection of the participants. During the planning and preparation of a Youth Exchange, the issue of protection and safety of the participants should be addressed and all necessary measures to prevent/reduce risks should be foreseen.

HORIZONTAL DIMENSIONS

When designing a mobility project, the following horizontal dimensions have to be strengthened:

Inclusion and diversity

The Erasmus+ Programme seeks to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion and fairness across all its actions. Organisations that receive support under this action should design accessible and inclusive project activities, taking into account the views of participants with fewer opportunities and involving them in the decision making process.

Youth Exchanges are particularly suitable for inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities:

- Group mobility offers international mobility experience in the safety of a group;
- The short duration of Youth Exchanges makes the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities appropriate;
- Involvement of local participants facilitates first participation in European projects.

Youth Exchanges are also suitable to work on inclusion and diversity as the subject of the project, for example to support fight against stereotypes, foster understanding, tolerance and non-discrimination. The whole project should take a conscious approach towards inclusion and diversity. In the planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up these aspects should be taken into consideration.

Environmental sustainability

A Youth Exchange should promote environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour among participants, raising the awareness about the importance of acting to reduce or compensate for the environmental footprint of mobility activities. A Youth Exchange should be designed and implemented with environmental consciousness by e.g. integrating sustainable practices such as opting for reusable or eco-friendly materials, reducing waste and recycling, sustainable means of transportation.

Digital transformation in the field of youth

The Erasmus+ Programme supports all participating organisations in incorporating the use of digital tools and learning methods to complement their physical activities, to improve the cooperation between partner organisations, and to improve the quality of the activities. The introduction of digital and online elements to lower the threshold for participation of young people with fewer opportunities is encouraged. Through projects and activities that aim to boost digital skills, foster digital literacy and/or develop an understanding of the risks and opportunities of digital technology, the programme can change mindsets and contribute to developing digital and blended approaches in youth activities.

Depending on the design and objectives of the activities, the development of competences and awareness on digital issues, and the use of new technologies can be introduced in learning mobilities.

The National Agencies offer a range of training opportunities for youth workers and youth leaders through their Training and Cooperation Activities, including on supporting the digital transformation in the youth field. These offers are published in the European Training Calendar <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar/> Inspiration can also be found under the SALTO Tools <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/>

Participation and civic engagement

The Erasmus+ Programme supports all participating organisations in improving the quality of their projects by integrating a participatory dimension, offering young people relevant opportunities to actively engage and participate in the conception and implementation of project activities as a pathway to discovering the benefits of active citizenship and participation in democratic life. Resources for enhancing the participatory dimension of supported projects can be accessed i.a. via the website participationpool.eu. Links with and involvement in existing national, international or (other) EU initiatives and platforms revolving around participation and civic engagement are also encouraged.

CRITERIA USED TO ASSESS STANDARD YOUTH EXCHANGES PROJECTS

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The general criteria below apply for standard Youth Exchanges projects. For accreditations, please refer to the relevant section of this guide.

Who can apply?	Any eligible participating organisation or informal group of young people established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme can be the applicant. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project ¹¹¹ .
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¹¹¹ Participating organisations will need to sign an accession form to the applicant organisation. The accession forms should be provided at application stage and at the latest by the time of the grant agreement signature. For further information, please check Part C of this guide.

Eligible participating organisations	<p>A participating organisation can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a non-profit organisation, association, NGO; European Youth NGO; a public body at local, regional, national level; a social enterprise; a profit-making body active in Corporate Social Responsibility; • an informal group of young people¹¹². <p>established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme or a third country not associated to the Programme neighbouring the EU (regions 1 to 4; see section “Eligible countries” in part A of this Guide).</p>
Number of participating organisations	<p>Minimum two participating organisations (at least one sending and at least one receiving organisation) from different countries must be involved.</p> <p>The same organisation (one OID) cannot be involved in more than 5 applications per deadline in this action, either as applicant or partner.</p>
Duration of project	<p>From 3 to 24 months.</p>
Where to apply?	<p>To the National Agency of the country in which the applicant is established</p>
When to apply?	<p>Applicants have to submit their grant applications by the following dates:</p> <p>20 February at 12:00:00 (midday Brussels time) for projects starting between 1 June and 31 December of the same year</p> <p>1 October at 12:00:00 (midday Brussels time) for projects starting between 1 January and 31 May of the following year</p> <p>Possible additional round:</p> <p>National Agencies may decide to open an additional round. The National Agencies will inform the applicants about the opening of the additional round through their website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an additional round is organised, applicants have to submit their applications by 7 May at 12:00:00 (midday Brussels time), for projects starting between 1 August and 31 December of the same year
How to apply?	<p>Please see part C of this Guide for details on how to apply.</p>

¹¹² Group of at least four young people between 13 and 30 years old. One of the members of the group who is at least 18-years old assumes the role of representative and takes responsibility on behalf of the group. Please check the glossary for the definition of an informal group. For the purpose of this action and any provisions relating to it, “an informal group of young people” shall fit under the notion “participating organisation”. Where a reference is made to “participating organisation” it shall be deemed to cover also an “informal group of young people”.

Annexes	<p>A declaration of honour of the legal representative must be annexed to the application form.</p> <p>A timetable of each of the Youth Exchanges and Preparatory Visits planned in the project must be annexed to the application form.</p>
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Additional Eligibility criteria for Youth Exchanges

Duration of activity	From 5 to 21 days, excluding travel days.
Venue(s) of the activity	The activity must take place in the country of one (or several, in case of itinerant activities) of the organisations participating in the activity.
Number of participating organisations	<p>Minimum two participating organisations (at least one sending and at least one receiving organisation) from different countries must be involved.</p> <p>Activities within EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme: all participating organisations must be from an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme.</p> <p>Activities with third countries not associated to the Programme neighbouring the EU: the activity must involve at least one participating organisation from an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme and one participating organisation from a third country not associated to the Programme neighbouring the EU (Regions 1-4).</p>
Eligible participants	<p>Young people aged between 13 and 30¹¹³ residing in the countries of their sending and receiving organisations.</p> <p>Group leaders and facilitators and accompanying persons are not to be considered as participants of the activity, but are eligible for support under certain budget categories. They must be at least 18 years old.</p>

¹¹³ Please consider the following:

lower age limits - participants must have reached the minimum age at the start date of the activity.

upper age limits - participants must not be older than the indicated maximum age at the start date of the activity.

Number of participants per activity and composition of national groups	<p>Minimum 16 and maximum 60 participants per activity , minimum 4 participants per group. Group leaders, facilitators and accompanying persons are not to be counted in the number of participants.</p> <p>In the cases of Youth Exchanges involving only young people with fewer opportunities, the minimum number of participants is 10.</p> <p>Minimum two groups of young people from two different countries.</p> <p>Each group must have at least one group leader. Maximum two facilitators per activity</p>
Other criteria	<p>At least one of the sending organisations or the receiving organisations in the activity must be from the country of the National Agency to which the application is submitted.</p>

Additional Eligibility criteria for Preparatory Visits

Venue(s) of the activity	<p>The activity must take place in the country of one of the receiving organisations.</p>
Eligible participants	<p>Representatives of the participating organisations, facilitators, group leaders and young people taking part in the main activity.</p>

AWARD CRITERIA

Submitted applications will be assessed by assigning points out of a total of 100, based on the below criteria and weightings. To be considered for award, applications must pass the following thresholds:

- At least 60 out of the total 100 points, and
- At least half of the maximum score points in each of the three award criteria categories

<p>Relevance, rationale and impact (maximum score 30 points)</p>	<p>The extent to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the applicant’s profile, experience, activities and target population of young people are relevant for the field of youth • the project will address one or more of the priorities of the EU Youth Dialogue or the Youth Goals, • the project is suitable for contributing to the inclusion and diversity, green, digital and participatory dimensions of the Programme; • the project is relevant for the objectives of the Action • the project is relevant for the respect and promotion of shared EU values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as fighting any sort of discrimination. • the project and the proposed activities address needs of the participating organisations and participants of the exchange; • the project is suitable for producing high-quality learning outcomes for the participants • the project is likely to have an impact on participants and participating organisations during and after the project lifetime and outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project, at local, regional, national and/or European or global level. • the project introduces newcomers and less experienced organisations to the Action.
<p>Quality of project design (maximum score 40 points)</p>	<p>The extent to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal describes in a clear and comprehensive manner all the phases of the project: preparation, implementation of activities and follow-up and the involvement of young people in all phases of the activities; • the balanced representation of participants in terms of countries and gender is respected and the activities are designed in an accessible and inclusive way and are open to participants with diverse backgrounds and abilities. • the activities incorporate sustainable and environmental-friendly practices • the proposed learning methods , including of any online/digital components are appropriate for the activities • the reflection process, the identification and documentation of the participants' learning outcomes, and the use of European transparency and recognition tools, in particular Youthpass are appropriate.

<p>Quality of project management (maximum score 30 points)</p>	<p>The extent to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the practical arrangements, management and support modalities are satisfying; • the measures foreseen to ensure safety and protection of participants are adequate and effective; • the tasks and responsibilities for the activities are clearly defined in accordance with Erasmus quality standards • the plan for the cooperation and communication between the participating organisations, as well as with other relevant stakeholders provides a supporting framework for the management of the project; • the applicant has proposed an appropriate way of evaluating the different phases and outcomes of the project in relation to its objectives • the applicant has proposed an appropriate way of disseminating project outcomes within and outside the participating organisations. • the project contains measures aimed at making its results sustainable beyond the project's life-time
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