



Erasmus+



Youth Exchange

One of the most important parts of the Erasmus+ project is the content of the work and finalization of the outputs. In our opinion there is a fundamental problem with such kind of work.

The purpose

The first thing that one needs to consider with such an approach is **the purpose** of this work. Why are we doing it? Is it made in a pure *larpourlartistic way* or do we really want to build on the results of these debates. In our opinion the main purpose of the group work is the exchange of opinions, experience, learning about each other, being a part of a multi-cultural group, learn about cultural differences in practice.

To achieve the purpose of the exchange and to motivate young people of different backgrounds to be able to join with joy and interest, one needs to consider specifics of the group. For certain a group of younger participants (ages up to 16 years) needs a more structured approach, very well defined goals and not much requirements for abstraction. Also – debate is, in our opinion, by far the worst method to work in such a group. If we have for example a youth exchange with a common language, that is bound to healthy live and living with the nature, we should take advantage of such a frame. Youngsters are much more responsive to activities, where there is more action. Also – they could very well be engaged in an activity with a practical goal – why would they not organize an outdoor activity for the rest of the group by the end of the meeting? This would force them to form a group, to choose a leader, to distribute the work and to learn about group dynamics. Afterwards an analysis could be done by an expert, pointing out the roles that they have taken within a team and they would have a very positive and educational activity.

The topics

Working on the general topics with not much prior introspection into the subject is difficult also for the built-up persons. The results, prepared in such a way, are shallow. In our opinion there is nothing wrong with having a specialized topic, bound to the “common language” of the youth exchange. There is also nothing wrong, to bring experts on the topics, to introduce the subject and to guide the working process. For example – why discussing the topic “food” in general, when we could learn about healthy food for an active person, about the food, that is good for regeneration, about the nutritionist guidelines for before/after activity and general nutrition. In our opinion it is much better to give the youngster some substantial guided input and let them – if younger – just summarize what they’d learned and apply the new knowledge to their own life.

Topics, in our opinion, do not necessarily need to be bound to some general topics that are usually discussed in many youth exchanges. They can be very specific and they can still achieve the purpose of the exchange. They could require outputs in many different forms – a report and/or presentation not being the most preferable among them.

The group

In our past experience with the application of the Youth Projects we have learned, that supporting of very focused projects (for example – sport related activities) is strongly discouraged by national agencies. In our opinion this is a very shortsighted approach.

The reasoning behind such a claim is quite simple. One of the main goals of the organization of youth exchange projects should be the aftermath. What impact did the exchange have to the youngsters?



Will they remain in contact after the project is finished? What will be the things that will make them collaborate in the future?

Doing a general project might be fun. It might bring together really different kinds of people. But in our opinion (and experience) this remains a nice EU sponsored camp in a memory of participants. If you support a group of people with specific interest – let us take orienteering for example – you will connect the people, who are actually interested in the same thing. With the youth exchange they will learn about one another and they will already have common goals for the future. This will make such a group much more likely to stay together and to work together in the future. For them, this would be a natural consequence of the project and not something, that would need any additional external motivation – this in our opinion is the formula for success.