

PRE-DEPARTURE & SUPPORT

FOR THE YOUTH EXCHANGES OF THE NETWORK
FOR INCLUSION OF ASSOCIAZIONE JOINT

|GUIDELINES FOR THE SENDING ORGANIZATIONS|



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Joint

Preparation process for the Youth Exchanges of the Network for Inclusion of Associazione Joint - Guidelines for the Sending Organizations -

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A- Pre-departure meeting

The pre-departure meeting is a vital preparation step for a Youth Exchange. It ensures that everybody, especially participants, are well-informed, comfortable, and ready for the exchange experience. Below is a detailed outline of how the pre-departure meetings could be structured, according to the expectations of our Network for inclusion and of our Quality Standards.

I - Amount and modalities of pre-departure meetings

Each Sending Organization is expected to implement at least 2 pre-departure meetings, involving the group leader(s) and all the participants of the national team.

Preferably at least 1 of the meetings is implemented in person. It is possible to use other channels - like platforms for video-calls - too.

II - Topics to be addressed during the pre-departure meeting

In order to ensure that every national team has a similar degree of preparation, we defined some basic topics to be addressed during the pre-departure meetings. The time and modalities of addressing these topics are defined by each Sending Organisation, according to the profile of the participants, the context and the internal practices of the organisation. These are the basic topics to be discussed in the meetings:

a. General introduction of the topic and objectives of the project

As a basis for the rest of the work, we should ensure participants understand the overarching theme and goals of the project. Explain how the project aligns with the participants' interests and how it benefits their personal and professional development. Outline specific goals and expected outcomes of the project.

b. Activities and methodologies

Provide details on the activities planned and the methodologies to be used helps to better understand the project and facilitate the proper preparation of the group. Share a detailed agenda or schedule of activities, including all the workshops, cultural visits, free time... Explain the educational approaches and methodologies that will be used, remarking on the use of non-formal education, with peer learning and experiential learning. Emphasize the importance of active participation and personal commitment in the process.

c. Fears and expectations of participants

The purpose is to address and acknowledge any concerns or expectations participants might have about the youth exchange. For that is necessary to create an open and safe space for participants to voice their feelings. This can be done in different ways: through group discussions, anonymous submissions, individual conversations, etc. Provide reassurance by sharing examples, past experiences, and how challenges were managed. Expectation management is very important: clarifying realistic expectations about the program, living conditions, cultural differences, and activities.

d. Learning outcomes and Youthpass

Highlight the youth exchange as an extensive and intense learning process and all the learning opportunities that it will enable. Describe the skills, knowledge, and competencies participants are expected to gain and start working on how to reflect on their learning experiences. It is the moment to explain the Youthpass, as a certificate, its sections, and how it serves as a tool for recognizing and documenting learning outcomes.

e. Participants' needs for safety

Address safety concerns and the needs the group has to ensure a safe environment for all participants. Discuss the measures in place to ensure physical and emotional safety and explain the procedures (more detail in the next point) for dealing with emergencies or unexpected situations. Inform participants about available support resources, such as contact persons or emergency contacts.

f. Present the safeguarding protocol (*in the case of minors, this is done with guardians*)

One priority of the youth exchange is to ensure that all participants, especially minors, are protected and feel safe during the exchange. For this, there is a safeguarding policy that everyone should know. Present the safeguarding protocol, including guidelines and procedures to protect participants from harm. Explain how participants can report any safeguarding concerns or incidents. Ensure guardians of minors are fully informed and have given their consent for participation.

g. Discuss the participant's agreement

To participate in the exchange there are a series of agreements that everyone must know and agree to. Review the terms and conditions of participation to ensure mutual understanding and agreement. Go through all the details of the participant's agreement, which outlines roles, responsibilities, code of conduct, and expectations. Address any questions or concerns participants may have about the agreement and ensure all participants and, if applicable, their guardians sign the agreement.

h. Present the role of the group leader and of the caregiver

Clarify the responsibilities of the group leaders and caregivers to ensure smooth coordination and support. Explain the responsibilities of the leader, including providing support, facilitating the learning process and ensuring the well-being of participants. But also make it clear what your responsibilities are NOT (they are not a parent, they do not have to comply with all the participants' wishes, they do not exempt the participants from their responsibilities, etc.). If young people with special needs and/or minors participate in the youth exchange, the figure of a caregiver may exist. Outline the role of the caregiver(s) in providing additional support and supervision. In all cases, provide contact details for leaders and caregivers and explain how participants can reach out to them if needed.

III - Define the leaders' role in organizing the meetings.

The preparation of the meeting is ideally done in collaboration with the group leader(s) and the organization. The leader(s) must be aware of the entire process, but they do not have to assume the tasks of the organization (administrative management, paperwork, etc.).

B - Support to the participants during the pre-departure phase

I - Identification and communication of special needs

Identifying the special needs of participants in a youth exchange involves a comprehensive approach that includes thorough pre-exchange communication and assessment.

This can be made possible through interviews, questionnaires and consultations with third parties.

- Sending organizations are asked to collect information about the profile of the participants they will involve, through interviews, questionnaires and any other tool that they use. This includes barriers participants are facing, any medical conditions, disabilities, or other specific requirements.
- In case of participants selected through youth centers, schools or any other local entity, it can be useful to discuss with the teachers and/or the educators about the profile of the participants.
- Only in the case of participants coming from very peculiar backgrounds (psychiatric conditions, antisocial personality, young people in the care of juvenile services etc.) it has to be considered the involvement of other professionals.
- Furthermore, in the case of minors, it is important to discuss the profile with legal guardians, who will be also asked to fill a consent form where they will need to report any information about medical conditions and special needs.
- Finally, sending organisations will make sure that participants fill an anonymous questionnaire, in which they will have the opportunity to openly declare any special need. This has to be complementary (and not alternative) to the work of the sending organizations listed above.

II - One to one meetings with participants

This measure can be applied in case you need to discuss something very personal about the profile or the behaviour of a participant that you want to involve in a Youth Exchange, as well as to provide extra support. It can be a 1 to 1 meeting between a participant and a responsible member of the Sending Organisation, as well as between the group leader and a participant.

However, this measure should be used sparingly and only when strictly necessary, because it has 2 major cons:

- it could be embarrassing for some participants, who would feel more comfortable exposing themselves in a group situation, rather than in an individual discussion;
- It greatly increases the workload for the Sending Organisation.

III- Involvement of Legal Guardians

In the case of minors, it is important to involve legal guardians during the pre-departure process, in order to provide them with any information about the project, safeguarding protocol and their own responsibilities during the whole process. Therefore, we ask to

implement at least 1 pre-departure meeting involving legal guardians. This meeting should focus at least on:

- Safe-guarding policy
- Legal guardians' consent form
- Participants' Agreement and participants' responsibilities
- Role and responsibilities of the group leader(s)

However, apart from this specific meeting, it is also important to keep in mind that a Youth Exchange is an opportunity of individual growth and development for young people, as well as a step of becoming autonomous from families and any other adult. Therefore, it is important to balance the role of legal guardians, in order to avoid them intruding more than necessary into the experience of the young participants.

IV - Travel Arrangements

In the case of minors, it is mandatory for the national team to travel with the group leader(s). In the case of adults, instead, even though it is not mandatory, the experience of travelling together can boost the team spirit inside the national team, contributing to team-building, mutual trust and empowerment of the group leader and the of the participants, as well as preventing conflicts afterwards.

Therefore, inside our network, when it is possible, we invite Sending Organisations to support participants in checking all together the travel itineraries, discussing and deciding the best one, during a pre-departure meeting.

V - Financial Support

During the pre-departure meetings it is important to clarify to the participants what are the costs that are covered and not covered by the programme during their period of mobility, as well as the limits of coverage. This will prevent any misunderstanding later on. In the case of minors, it is important that also legal guardians are aware of the covered costs.

Furthermore, in order to make the programme more inclusive (as in the spirit of our network), Sending Organisations are asked to totally or partially cover the costs for the travel of the participants who cannot afford anticipating the costs. In case the SO is not able to cover them, the Hosting Organisation will be in charge of it.

In order to avoid (or mitigate the risk of) the participant eventually not departing, leaving the sending organisation in a financially uncomfortable situation, we suggest you either ask for a symbolic deposit (depending on the participant's possibilities) or to sign an agreement with the participant/legal guardians.

VI - Creation of communication channels

Creating a communication channel for the national team can help participants and group leader(s) to easily communicate during the pre-departure period, easing the preparation of the Youth Exchange.

The choice of the channel to be used should be left to the participants and the group leader(s), that may be using platforms that are unknown to the responsables of the Sending Organizations, due to age gap. Therefore, the channel will be chosen by each national team, according to the trends of the country they are from.

In the case of the general communication channel of the Youth Exchange, created by the Hosting Organisation, it will be defined together with the group leaders during the preparatory meetings, taking into account the preferences of the national teams.

In general, however, it is important that the responsables of the Sending Organisations and the group leaders explain the aim of the communication channel, also addressing the content that is proper or improper to share on it.

C - Reporting of the pre-departure meetings

In order to monitor the results of our networks and to review the Quality Standards, we ask the members of the network to report about their activities. It is done in the spirit of collecting information and drawing conclusions, rather than controlling the activities of the organisations of the network.

For this reason, we expect organizations to fill the reporting modules honestly and, in case of any, to be opened to discuss about any issue or faced problem, in order to improve the Quality Standards of the network.

This chapter is aimed at listing the information and proofs you will be asked to provide about the pre-departure phase, so that you already know what to collect during the process.

I - About the Profile of the participants

About 1 month before the beginning of the Youth Exchange, you will receive a questionnaire with 2 questions about the profile of the participants. You will be asked to send it back by 10 days before the beginning of the Youth Exchange. One question will focus on a short profile of each participant; the other one will focus on the challenges that, according to the information that you have, they could face in an international context.

The questions should be answered for each participant and for the group leader(s).

At the same time, as already written in Section B, participants will receive an anonymous questionnaire in which they will be asked to provide information about their profile and the barriers they face. This questionnaire has to be considered complementary (and not alternative) to the form filled by the organisations.

II - About the Pre-Departure Meetings

About 3 weeks after the end of the Youth Exchange you will receive a questionnaire that will also have few questions about the pre-departure meetings.

In particular you will be asked to report about:

- Amount of implemented meetings
- If the meeting(s) were implemented in-person or online
- If guardians were involved (in the case of minors)
- Topics that were addressed (*see section A*)
- Pictures (or screenshots in the case of online meetings) of the meeting(s).

III - Information asked to the group leaders and to the participants

The last day of the Youth Exchange, participants will receive a questionnaire in which they will be asked to evaluate both the implementation of the Youth Exchange and the pre-departure phase. In particular, they will be asked to evaluate their level of satisfaction about the received preparation and how much they felt involved and empowered during this phase.