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YOUTH PROTECTION CONCEPT IN THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK

Co-produced by the City of Gothenburg and the City of Cologne within the framework of the Erasmus+ Small-Scale Partnership project KA210-YOU-306DDC6A.

This project received funding from the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme under Grant Agreement No. KA210-YOU-306DDC6A. Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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This publication is a joint result of the Erasmus+ project Youth protection concept in the international youth work, developed by Social Services Southwest, City of Gothenburg (Sweden) and Stadt Köln (Germany) in collaboration with Youth Workers and Youth in the two cities.



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MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION

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Module 1: Introduction

This Youth Protection Concept has been produced by youth workers and young people from Social Services Southwest, City of Gothenburg (Sweden), in collaboration with colleagues and young people from City of Cologne, Linoclub, Zurück in die Zukunft e.V. represented by the Youth Center Dachlow, Roots & Routes Cologne, CJG, Jugendzentren Köln gGmbH representing Youth Center ENBE (Germany), as part of an Erasmus+ funded Small-Scale-Partnership project.

Going forward, when we write YPC, we mean the common guidelines, policies and procedures that have been developed to protect the well-being, privacy and security of all participants. The aim is to create a common baseline of expectations regardless of cultural background.

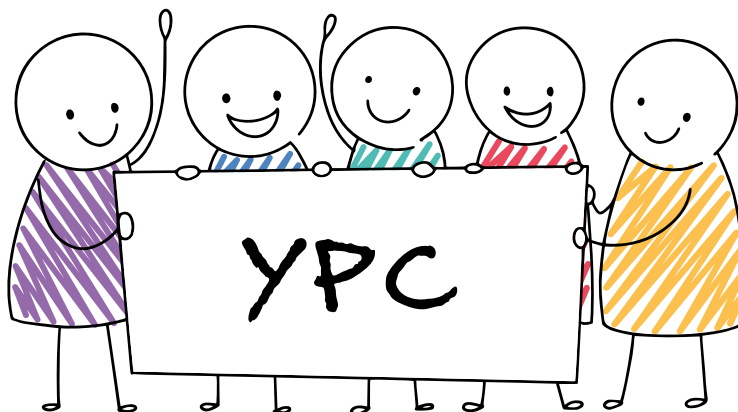
What is this document? This is our joint Youth Protection Concept of International Youth Work (YPC) to create a safe and respectful environment during our international youth exchanges. Since we meet from different countries with different laws and cultures, we need to be extra clear about what we expect from each other.

Our goal: that everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, religion or other belief, ethnicity, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation or economic conditions, should feel safe and welcome. We want to create an exchange where everyone feels safe enough to try new things, but also safe enough to speak up if something feels wrong. This YPC should also be easy to use and apply for different exchanges and organizations to help ensure the safety of participants, youth leaders and organizations.

What will you find here? In this material, we will present various topics structured under areas, so-called modules. These explain various forms of risks or other things that should be paid attention to before and during an international youth exchange. Each module explains:

- Why the topic is important.
- Common guidelines (rules).

Checklists: To make the YPC as practical as possible, we have developed a series of checklists which can be found in the Appendix. These lists are structured into three phases: Before, During, and After the exchange. Each item also includes a recommendation for who should be responsible for that specific task.



Please note that these checklists are intended as a supportive toolbox rather than a rigid requirement. We recommend that you:

- **Select and adapt:** Choose the checklists that are most relevant to your specific exchange.
- **Coordinate:** Decide together with your partner organization which parts are most important for your joint project.
- **Customize:** Adjust the level of detail based on the group's specific needs and the nature of the activities.

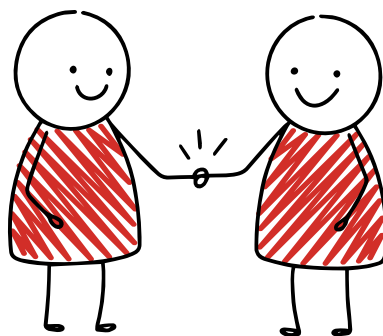
Review and update of the concept

We recommend that the YPC is reviewed and updated every two years. Since this concept is designed to be used by various organizations across different countries, this regular review is crucial to ensure its continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with current international best practices in youth work. The reviewing organization should assess the continued suitability of the guidelines and procedures, and integrate any necessary adjustments based on lessons learned and operational feedback from participating youth workers and young people.

EU anchoring – our core values

YPC is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the fundamental values of Erasmus+. These values form the common, non-negotiable basis of the European Youth Work Agenda. It also ensures that our exchange contributes to social inclusion and democracy. These fundamental values are:

- **Inclusion & diversity:** We ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, religion or other belief, ethnicity, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation or economic conditions, can participate on equal terms.
- **Democracy and participation:** We promote young people's active citizenship and the right to express their opinion.
- **Respect & tolerance:** We build our environment with mutual respect and zero tolerance for discrimination and violence.



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Module 2: Laws and regulations

Conducting international youth activities means that you are constantly at the crossroads between different national and international legislations. Our mission is to prioritize the safety and well-being of young people (the best interests of the child), but we must do so without violating binding laws in either the sending or receiving country.

This legal complexity means that staff must constantly navigate in environments where laws and obligations such as age, alcohol and professional secrecy vary between countries. The organization can never choose to ignore a country's laws, but it must at the same time uphold the project's *highest* standard of protection – the principle of the best interests of the youths.

To navigate this complexity and address situations where laws clash (for example, around professional secrecy and age limits), we divide legal requirements into three main levels that guide staff actions:

1. **International Law (Foundation):** The universal ethical and legal basis. This consists of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the fundamental values of the EU/Erasmus+. These principles always take precedence over the internal rules of the project.
2. **National law (framework):** The binding laws of the countries in which we operate. This includes laws on confidentiality, duty to report, age of criminal responsibility, and age limits for substances. These laws must be followed to ensure that the business is conducted legally and to protect all participants and staff.
3. **The highest standard of the project (guide):** Our own internal policy, which always chooses the strictest rule in the event of a conflict of laws and is always based on the principle of the best interests of the child. This ensures a uniform level of protection for all participants regardless of where they come from.

Common Guidelines

- **Guiding principle:** In all decisions concerning laws, regulations or conflict management, the principle of the best interests of the child (CRC Article 3) shall be the explicitly guiding standard.
- **Documentation:** All decisions concerning a legal conflict or an intervention that affects the young person's rights must be documented with a brief assessment of how the best interests of the child have been considered.
- **Active awareness:** Staff must know and understand the differences in legislation between partner countries in the areas covered in this module, such as substances and professional secrecy.
- **Youth laws:** Exchange the common youth laws between the partners.

2.1 National law and jurisdiction

Safety work is based on laws relating to the protection of children (such as the duty to report, confidentiality and criminal law). During international exchanges, staff must be aware that laws may differ from one Member State to another. In an emergency, it is not always obvious which organization's or country's law applies.

The staff's duty to check: Therefore, all staff have a duty to check – an active responsibility – to inform themselves before the exchange:

1. **Emergency protection in the host country:** What protection laws apply in the country we are visiting? These laws must be followed for the young person's immediate safety on the ground.
2. **Long-term follow-up in the home country:** What are the obligations of staff regarding reporting to the social services or the police in the young person's home country, even when they are abroad?

Common Approach

In an emergency, the staff must:

- First and foremost, act on the young person's immediate safety and comply with the host country's protection laws.
- Immediately contact the responsible manager/legal contact person in both the sending and receiving organization to get support in the legal process.
- Based on the legislation of the home country, take appropriate measures at home. This includes making a report to social services in your home country (a so-called reporting obligation or reporting obligation, depending on the country's laws) to ensure long-term support.



2.2 Young people's rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), or the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is the international agreement that forms the ethical and human rights basis for all our work. The Convention has been ratified by almost all states in the world and obliges states to ensure the rights of the child. In Sweden, as in a growing number of countries in Europe, the Convention has been further strengthened by becoming national law. It establishes that everyone under the age of 18 has specific, universal and inviolable rights that must be respected by adults and institutions. Our responsibility is not only to apply the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but to live by it.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child as a working method, articles that guide our protection work

The Convention on the Rights of the Child must not be a passive document. To ensure that our exchange work is permeated by human rights, we work based on five key articles from the Convention.

A. The four guiding principles

These four articles have been identified by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as the universal basic principles for the interpretation and application of the entire Convention.

1. **Non-discrimination (Article 2):** All young people have the same rights, without exception. In our exchanges, this means that we actively combat all forms of discrimination based on gender, identity, nationality, religion or disability.
2. **The best interests of the child (Article 3):** In all decisions concerning the exchange and the young person, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration, which is the guiding principle in conflicts, disciplinary measures and protection decisions.
3. **Right to life and development (Article 6):** We have an obligation to ensure the survival and development of the child. This includes not only physical safety (see module 4) but also psychological, social and emotional development.
4. **Right to be heard (Article 12):** Children and young people have the right to express their opinions on all matters that concern them, and their opinions must be given importance in relation to their age and maturity. This underlines the importance of participation (see module 5).

B. The Supplementary Article in Youth Work

In addition to the UN's four founding principles, we have identified an additional article that is critical for leisure-based work:

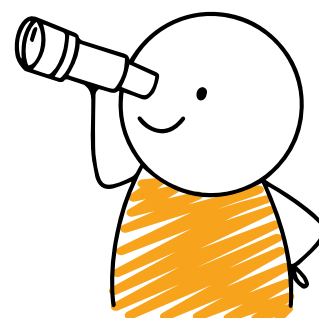
5. **Right to play, rest and leisure (Article 31):** Children have the right to play and participate in cultural and artistic life. This is crucial for our leisure-based work, as it legitimizes and protects the non-formal learning environments that the exchange offers.

Concrete impact on mobility

- **All participants under the age of 18 are children:** A 17-year-old is legally a child with full rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), even if they are perceived as adults in some cultures. This also applies to young people who participate as volunteers or youth workers: their role as staff does not mean that they lose their status as children. The project's regular staff are always responsible for them (as children) in the absence of parents.
- **The mutual obligation:** The Convention is an obligation for states and organizations, not an optional set of rules. The legal duty to protect takes precedence over organizational goals.

Common Guidelines

- **CRC as a basis for decision-making:** All major decisions concerning a young participant (e.g. repatriation, disciplinary measures, support measures) must be documented with an assessment of how the best interests of the child (Article 3) have been considered.
- **Active participation:** Ensure that young people are informed of their rights under CRC and given real opportunities to influence through participation (see module 5).
- **Universal application:** Regardless of whether the host country has incorporated the Convention into law or not, the work of the organization shall always be based on the principles of the CRC.



2.3 Tobacco, alcohol and drugs

It is essential that all partners discuss these legal frameworks openly and agree on a common understanding. Establishing shared standards helps ensure that all participants—both youths and adults—are protected equally and that the principles of safety and responsibility are upheld throughout the international exchange.

The issue of tobacco (including e-cigarettes/vaping), alcohol and drugs is one of the most complicated areas of international exchanges due to the wide differences in legislation, social standards and accessibility across Europe. While the legal age to buy and consume alcohol may be 16 in some countries, it is 18 or 21 in others, and social acceptance varies even more. To eliminate legal risks for both participants and staff, as well as to ensure a consistently safe environment, we recommend that the project establish a common zero-tolerance policy for all participants during the exchange.

But we understand the different cultures come into play. We suggest the partners decide on a common rule for tobacco and alcohol. Drugs should always be excluded from every youth exchange.

The risks for the participants and the project: The use of substances is not only a matter of violating internal rules, but involves several layers of serious risks:

1. **Increased vulnerability:** Intoxication lowers judgment and dramatically increases the risk of the participant being exposed to accidents, being exposed to violence, including sexual assault, or putting others at risk. The staff must not compromise on this.
2. **Violation of Host Country Law:** Participants, even if they are over 18 years of age and are legally allowed to consume in their home country, may violate the Host country's stricter laws. The staff have a legal duty to protect the participants from committing crimes, which can mean arrests, fines and serious legal consequences for both the young person and the organization.
3. **Health and group dynamics:** Unauthorized use of prescription drugs, drugs and alcohol can lead to acute health risks. In addition, it immediately creates a negative and exclusionary group dynamic, which violates the project's ethical principles and can lead to others feeling unsafe.

Strategic zero tolerance recommendation: With reference to the principle of the best interests of the child (CRC Article 3), the project must establish zero tolerance for all substance use by minors, including cigarettes and e-cigarettes/vaping, during the exchange. For participants over the age of 18, special rules may apply, but these must never conflict with the laws of the host country or jeopardize the overall safety objectives of the project. This policy sends a clear message that the main goal of the project is protection and health. The responsibility of the staff is to act preventively through clear communication and consistent intervention.

It is not enough just to inform about the rules. The dialogue must be open and based on health and safety.

Common Guidelines

- **Clear communication:** The project's tobacco, alcohol and drugs policy must be communicated in the Code of Conduct (see Appendix) and repeatedly at the beginning of the exchange, emphasizing that it applies. The zero-tolerance policy applies for everyone under 16.
- **Confiscation and documentation:** When substances (drugs not tobacco) are discovered, these must be immediately confiscated, and the incident must be documented according to routine.
- **Medical priority:** In case of signs of serious intoxication or medical emergencies, medical care or police should be contacted immediately. The focus of the staff is to ensure the life and health of the participant.
- **Consequences:** The consequences of violating the decided policy must be clear and uniform for all participating partners. Repatriation can be a possible consequence depending on the severity.



2.4 Stealing

Stealing refers to the intentional taking of someone else's property without permission. In an international exchange setting, it is important to distinguish between theft occurring within the group and theft committed by external individuals. Theft within the group severely damages trust, safety, and cohesion, as participants must be able to rely on one another in a shared living environment. Theft by external individuals, while equally serious, affects the group differently and often requires additional safety measures and cooperation with local partners or authorities. In all cases, stealing is a violation of personal integrity and can cause insecurity, fear, and conflict among participants. Staff must act promptly and professionally to investigate, support affected individuals and restore a safe environment.

Common Guidelines

- **Responsibility:** Stealing is a serious safety issue. Staff are always responsible for intervening, clarifying the situation, and taking appropriate action, regardless of whether the theft occurred within the group or was caused by external individuals.
- **Restore safety and trust:** The priority is to support the person whose property was taken and to restore a sense of security in the group. The goal is not to force reconciliation but to ensure accountability and healthy group dynamics.
- **Transparency and documentation:** Staff must handle the situation professionally, follow established procedures, and document all relevant steps and findings.
- **Preventive measures:** Establish clear expectations regarding personal property, encourage open communication, and ensure active staff presence. In high-risk environments, additional security measures (e.g., locked storage, partner coordination) may be necessary.



2.5 Duty of confidentiality and duty of notification

The issue of professional secrecy (confidentiality) and the statutory duty to report (duty to report) is a legal area of conflict in international collaborations. In youth work, trust is fundamental, young people must feel that they can confide in the staff to seek help. At the same time, all staff have a professional, and in many countries, a statutory duty, to report serious concerns about a child's safety. The problem arises when these duties clash between partner countries.

The clash of laws:

- **Professional secrecy (some countries, e.g. Germany):** Youth workers, especially those in certain social sectors, may have a strict legal duty of professional secrecy that protects the trust of young people. Breaking this duty of confidentiality can be punishable and damage the relationship with the young person. In Sweden, public employees also have a duty of confidentiality, but it is not as strict and may be broken based on the duty to report.
- **Duty to report (some countries, e.g. Sweden):** In Sweden, all staff who work with children and young people have a mandatory duty to report when they become aware or suspect that a child is being harmed. This duty always takes precedence over the duty of confidentiality. Failure to report can lead to legal consequences.

Strategic conflict management – the highest standard of the project: Since the project cannot force staff to break their home country's law, we propose a procedure that follows a conflict principle, mandatory reporting to the manager/responsible person.

This procedure ensures that sensitive information is immediately handled at the highest level within the exchange. The information is transferred to the responsible manager or project manager, who is the only person who can decide on whether to make a report to an external authority (police or social services) in the host country and/or home country. This protects the individual employee from coming into conflict between their professional ethics and their home country's law, while ensuring that the best interests of the young person (CRC Article 3) are prioritized.

Common Guidelines

- **Trust boundaries:** Staff should always work to create a trusting relationship. Before starting conversations about sensitive topics, the staff must inform the young person of their duty to report serious concerns.
- **Mandatory internal reporting:** In the event of serious concern, suspicion of violence, sexual abuse, crime or substance abuse that may lead to danger to the young person, the staff must immediately report the situation to the responsible manager/project manager.
- **Decision and action:** The responsible manager/project manager immediately assesses, in consultation with the project safety team, which national law needs to be invoked. Only the responsible manager contacts external authorities.

2.6 Qualifications and suitability of staff

The credibility of the project and, above all, the safety of young people are directly linked to the competence and suitability of the staff. International exchanges place high demands on staff, not only in terms of pedagogical skills, but also in terms of legal awareness, crisis management and intercultural competence. This point is about ensuring that all staff – from project managers to accompanying volunteers and youth workers – are not only committed, but also properly qualified and approved to work with minors.

Legal compliance: The first legal requirement is to ensure that no employee has a past that endangers the safety of children for example, an extract from the criminal record. Since these register extracts are rarely directly interchangeable between countries, the project must establish a common standard. Each partner organization is legally responsible for checking the suitability of its own staff according to the laws of its home country. The person responsible for the exchange must ensure that these controls are documented internally.

Qualification requirements (competence): In addition to the legal suitability, staff must have the necessary skills to implement the project's protection concept. This includes:

- **Protective training:** The staff must know about child and youth protection. By working with the modules of this youth protection concept, this can be achieved.
- **Crisis management:** The ability to act calmly and professionally in the event of unexpected incidents (accidents, conflicts, emergencies). Basic and common first-aid knowledge. Best practice is refreshing it every two years.
- **Intercultural competence:** Understanding of the cultural differences that affect communication and behavior (see 8.1 cultural differences).
- **Language competences:** Good English proficiency as it is the working and communication language in most projects.

Ongoing follow-up and development: The work with child protection is dynamic. Laws change and new risks (such as cybergrooming / AI) arise. The qualifications of the staff are therefore not static. The project must ensure an ongoing process for competence development and training in child protection, crisis management and intercultural work.

Common Guidelines

- **Mandatory check:** All participating staff, volunteers and leaders must undergo a national criminal record check before participating in the exchange.
- **Youth leader training:** We recommend that the team undergo a youth leader training before the exchange
- **Role definition:** Everyone on the staff should have a clear defined role during the exchange, including who is the designated contact person for safety issues who is trained to receive and handle reports.

2.7 European Data Protection in the Context of International Youth Work

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is designed to protect individuals' privacy and ensure that personal information is handled lawfully, transparently, and securely. For youth work practitioners, this means developing a strong awareness of how data is used at every stage of a project – from registration and communication to evaluation and dissemination.

Key principles include data minimization, meaning only data strictly necessary for the project should be collected; purpose limitation, ensuring data is used only for clearly defined purposes for example participant list and storage limitation, which requires that data not be kept longer than necessary or be deleted after five years.

When international partners are involved – especially outside the EU – additional caution is needed. Data transfers to third countries are only permitted if those countries provide an adequate level of protection or if appropriate safeguards (such as standard contractual clauses) are in place.

Common Guidelines

1. **Pre-exchange collection:** All necessary health and dietary information must be collected in writing from guardians before the exchange begins. This includes known allergies, diseases and diagnoses, special diets (medical/ethical/religious) and ongoing medication.



MODULE 3: PRINCIPLES AND WORK ETHICS

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Module 3: Principles and Work Ethics

This module covers basic values, principles and work ethics that are important to discuss with a prospective partner as well as before an exchange.

To ensure a safe and respectful environment during international exchanges, it is important to define shared values collaboratively. Organizations should meet with their international partners in advance to agree on core principles such as e.g. democracy, respect, and tolerance.

To define mutual work ethics and values, partners and participants should create a common “Code of Conduct” (for examples see appendix).

3.1 Basic work ethic

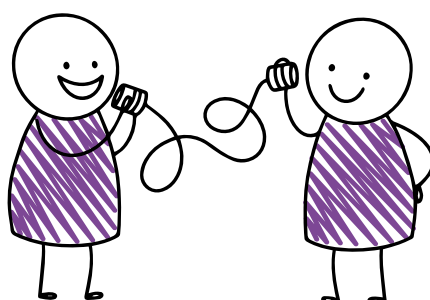
Our work ethic is based on democracy, respect and tolerance. We are committed to actively listening to young people, taking their concerns seriously and offering support when needed.

Basic attitude of the staff

- **Awareness of power:** As a staff, you have power by virtue of your role. Be aware of this power and use it wisely. Avoid favoring or disfavoring any participant.
- **Attention:** Show presence. Listen, take complaints seriously and give participants time. Always try to put yourself in the young person’s shoes and accept different opinions.
- **Open communication:** We collaborate with our colleagues, not against them. We handle conflicts openly and speak up in an appropriate and professional way if we react to something.

3.2 Handling Risks and an Open Error Culture

We recognize that mistakes are a natural part of human interaction and learning. To ensure the highest level of safety, we promote an “open error culture” where staff and participants feel empowered to address, reflect upon, and act on mistakes openly and without fear of immediate retribution. By discussing errors transparently rather than hiding them out of fear of consequences, we can better protect our participants and continuously improve our safety standards.



To make our risk analysis effective, we practice the Open Error Culture. This means:

- **Transparency over blame:** We encourage staff and youth to report risks or mistakes immediately without fear of punishment.
- **Continuous learning:** Every incident or “near-miss” is seen as an opportunity to update our risk assessment and prevent future issues.
- **Supportive Environment:** If a mistake is made, the focus is on solving the situation and supporting those involved, rather than finding someone to blame.

3.3 Roles and expectations

In a youth exchange, people from different countries come together to learn, share and grow as a group. Because everyone comes from different backgrounds it's important to have clear roles and expectations from the very beginning. When everyone understands what is expected of them – and what they can expect from others – the exchange runs more smoothly, feels safer, and allows participants to focus on learning and connecting. Each person should know which task they are responsible for, what decision they can make and who oversees specific areas. Clear roles prevent misunderstandings, promote transparency, help to divide responsibilities fairly, ensure that everyone has a voice in decision making and ensure tasks are completed reliably. They also strengthen team members sense of responsibility, improve communication and help identify and resolve conflicts early. This enables the team to work efficiently and achieve shared goals successfully. This ensures that structure and clarity won't limit creativity, they create the trust and stability that make true intercultural exchanges possible.

Staff members hold a position of responsibility, trust, and power, and their role is to ensure the safety, inclusion, and wellbeing of all participants. Professional behavior, ethical integrity, and reflective practice are essential to creating a positive and secure learning environment.

Common Guidelines

- **Clear Role Definition:** All staff members and team leaders should have clearly defined roles. Each person must know their responsibilities regarding group management, facilitation, logistics, and communication.
- **Early Communication:** Roles and expectations should be explained before or at the very start of the exchange, so that both staff and participants understand who is responsible for what.
- **Shared Understanding:** Ensure that all staff members agree on their responsibilities and on how tasks are distributed, to prevent overlaps, gaps, or misunderstandings during the project.

- **Flexibility and Support:** While roles are defined, staff should remain flexible and support each other if challenges arise or extra help is needed, ensuring smooth operation and participant well-being.
- **Continuous Reflection:** Team members should reflect on their own responsibilities, how they are carrying them out, and how their actions affect the group and other staff members.

To ensure that everyone behaves in a way that makes everyone else feel safe and comfortable during the youth exchange, the following steps should be taken:

1. Clarification by the organizations of non-negotiable rules (based on laws).
2. Jointly establishing common rules and possible consequences for non-compliance (Code of Conduct) during a digital pre-meeting with all participants.
3. Signing the Code of Conduct by participants and staff.
4. Implementation of the Code of Conduct by every participant of the youth exchange.
5. Enforcement of the Code of Conduct by staff.

Exemplary Code of Conduct for staff and participants can be found in the appendix, including a template for developing your own Code of Conduct.



3.4 Duty of Supervision in International Youth Work

The duty of supervision in international youth work serves to protect young people from harm and ensure their physical and emotional well-being. It also provides youth leaders and facilitators with clear professional boundaries and expectations. Within this context, supervision is not limited to control but rather aims to create a safe environment in which young people can gain independence and experience trust and responsibility.

Supervision must always be adapted to the age, maturity, and individual needs of participants. The level of supervision also depends on the situation, the setting, and the potential risks involved in each activity. It is based on a balance between presence and trust: young people need space for personal development, while staff must always remain attentive and reachable.

It is important to check the participants emotional wellbeing and the atmosphere (vibe) of the whole group.

Practical Supervision

- **Good supervision** begins with thorough planning and preparation and continuous communication.
- **Presence:** Supervision should be closer and more continuous the younger the group is and adjusted based on the potential risk of the activity (e.g., during transport, in unfamiliar terrain, or during free time).
- **Team composition:** Ensure an appropriate leader-to-participant ratio depending on the age group and the program, this must be considered during planning.
- **Free time and excursions:** Special situations, such as small group excursions or free-time periods, require clear agreements and reliable communication channels.

Common Guidelines

- **Clear roles and accountability:** Tasks must be clearly assigned and communicated within the team to avoid misunderstandings. The welfare and protection of young people always take precedence over convenience or individual preferences.
- **Documentation and Reflection:** All incidents, rule violations, and relevant conversations with participants should be documented in a factual and transparent manner. Regular team meetings and open discussions help identify potential problems early and strengthen cooperation.

MODULE 4: RISK ANALYSIS AND POTENTIAL ANALYSIS

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Module 4: Risk Analysis and Potential Analysis

Risk and potential analysis are a central component of any youth protection or safeguarding concept, as it forms the basis for effective protection measures. The purpose of a safeguarding concept is to prevent harm, ensure safety, and strengthen existing resources. To achieve this, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of the specific conditions within an institution or organization.

The risk analysis systematically identifies possible dangers and vulnerabilities. Its goal is to determine situations or structures where boundary violations, abuse of power, or other forms of misconduct might occur – for example, during one-on-one interactions, digital communication, or in cases of unclear responsibilities. We want to detect risks early and develop preventive measures before harm occurs.

Complementing this, the potential analysis focuses on the existing strengths and protective factors within the organization and partner organizations. It examines which structures, attitudes, and resources already contribute to safeguarding and how these can be further developed. This helps to highlight what is already working well, such as an open culture of communication, clear behavioral guidelines, or well-trained staff.

The interaction between risk and potential analysis provides a realistic and comprehensive understanding of the situation. While the risk analysis identifies areas that require action, the potential analysis highlights existing strengths that can be built upon. Together, they form the foundation for the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of an effective safeguarding concept that not only responds to shortcomings but actively promotes a safe and respectful environment.

In addition to the risk and potential analysis carried out in advance for the youth exchange and the youth project in general, a participant-oriented risk and feedback tool is included. This tool is designed for young people to complete during the exchange or at the end of the first day.

The aim of this form is to give young people the opportunity to reflect on their needs, concerns, expectations, and perceived risks, and to actively contribute to positive changes, discussions, and the identification of relevant topics throughout the exchange. Participants can decide independently whether they wish to complete the form anonymously or with their name.

Based on the completed form, young people should always be offered the opportunity for a one-to-one discussion, with guidance and support from a youth leader if needed.

Both the general risk and potential analysis and the participant-focused risk and feedback tool are included in the appendix.



MODULE 5: PARTICIPATION – THE KEY TO SECURITY

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Module 5: Participation – the key to security

In the context of youth work, participation is defined as the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives.

Young people are given the opportunity to express their opinions, ideas, and needs and to contribute them to decision-making processes. Participation strengthens democratic skills, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility. It is not only about having a say, but also about co-creating and co-deciding. Genuine participation takes young people seriously and recognizes them as important actors in society. With this it is a fundamental principle of international youth work and is closely linked to children's and youth rights. Young people are to be involved in all phases of an encounter – from the development of a project idea to the search for partner cities, accommodation and means of transport to the concrete programme design, implementation and follow-up. In doing so, they take responsibility, actively participate in shaping the future and learn to bring their interests to bear in an international context.

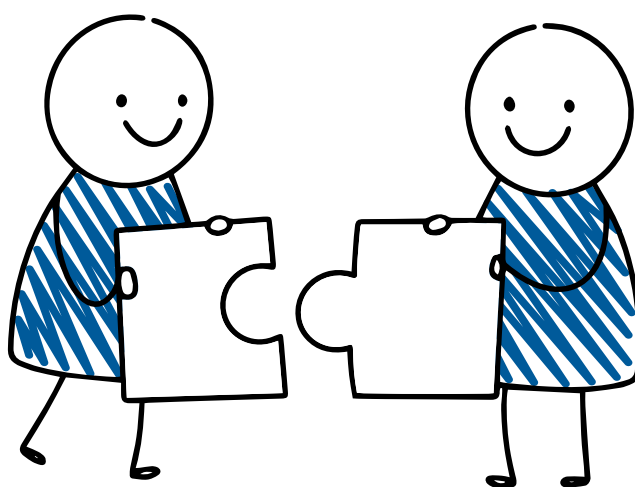
Within the framework of the protection concept, participation does not mean that young people decide everything themselves, but that a binding and secure framework is opened to them. It is important to remember that participation also requires financial resources, time, patience and openness from professionals. Skilled workers set this framework and create structures that consider safety, health, limits and possibilities of professionals/organizations and legal requirements, while on the other hand allowing freedom for co-determination. In this way, young people can try out their role in a protected environment and gain experience in planning, organizing and negotiating.

Participation enhances safety by building trust, responsibility, and open communication within the group. When young people are actively involved in planning, decision making and setting rules, they better understand expectations and boundaries which encourage responsible behaviour. Social learning, the ability to cooperate, communication skills, and democratic education can only be developed and practiced within a culture of participation. Shared ownership of the project creates transparency and helps identify potential risks or conflicts early on. Moreover, participation fosters inclusion and mutual respect allowing everyone to feel heard, valued and secure in the international environment. In this way participation is not only a democratic principle but also a key factor in ensuring both physical and emotional safety, as well as joint success during Erasmus+ activities. Wherever possible, participation should reach at least the level of co-decision-making.

At the start of a project, it is valuable to discuss the different levels of participation and consider how the greatest possible degree of involvement can be achieved. In the context of international youth exchanges, particularly under programs such as Erasmus+, the highest level of participation would include young people being involved in developing the project idea, finding partner organizations, and contributing to planning, implementation, and follow-up (see Checklist).

Common Guidelines

- **Shared ownership:** Staff should encourage participants to take part in decision-making, ensuring that youth voices shape the project. They should create a safe and structured framework where young people can participate meaningfully without carrying full responsibility
- **Transparent communication:** Staff must clearly communicate aims, expectations and decision-making processes, avoiding hidden agendas and making sure all participants understand how and where they can contribute.
- **Inclusive method selection:** Use diverse, youth-friendly and non-formal learning methods that allow everyone to participate regardless of language level, learning style or social background
- **Feedback culture:** Establish routine feedback moments where participants can openly address concerns, propose changes and reflect on the projects progress, ensuring that feedback leads to concrete adjustments
- **Empowerment orientation:** Staff should support young people in taking initiative by encouraging them to lead sessions, propose ideas and develop their own mini projects while remaining available as guidance rather than authority.



MODULE 6:

FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

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Module 6: Forms of violence and discrimination

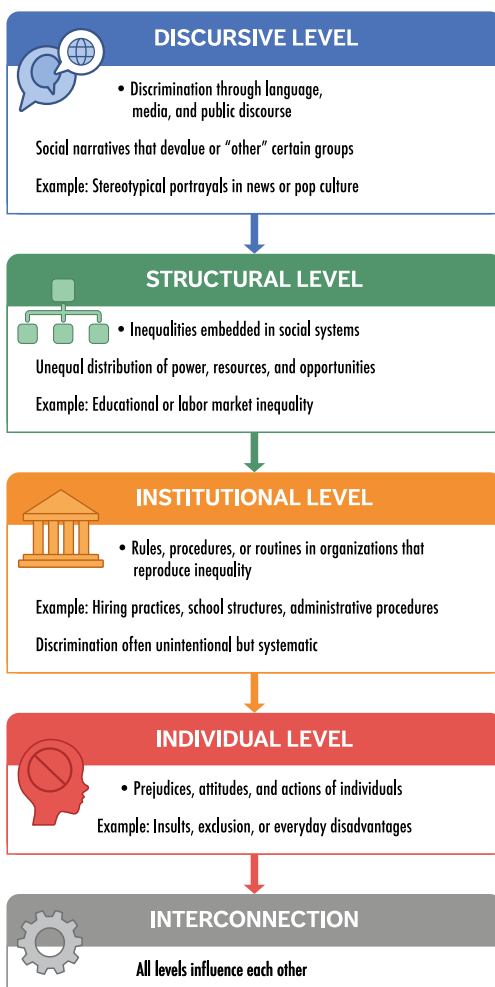
Violence is a complex phenomenon that extends far beyond visible punches and kicks. To protect participants and intervene in time, we need to have a broad and clear definition of what violence is. We use the WHO's definition which is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation".

There are seven forms of violence:

- Physical
- Emotional/mental
- Sexual/ gender based
- Financial
- Digital
- Material
- Neglect



This can also happen in different settings like domestic, honor related, institutional etc. The diagram illustrates the four interconnected levels of violence and discrimination – discursive, structural, institutional, and individual.



At the top, the discursive level represents how language, media, and public narratives shape social perceptions and can reinforce stereotypes.

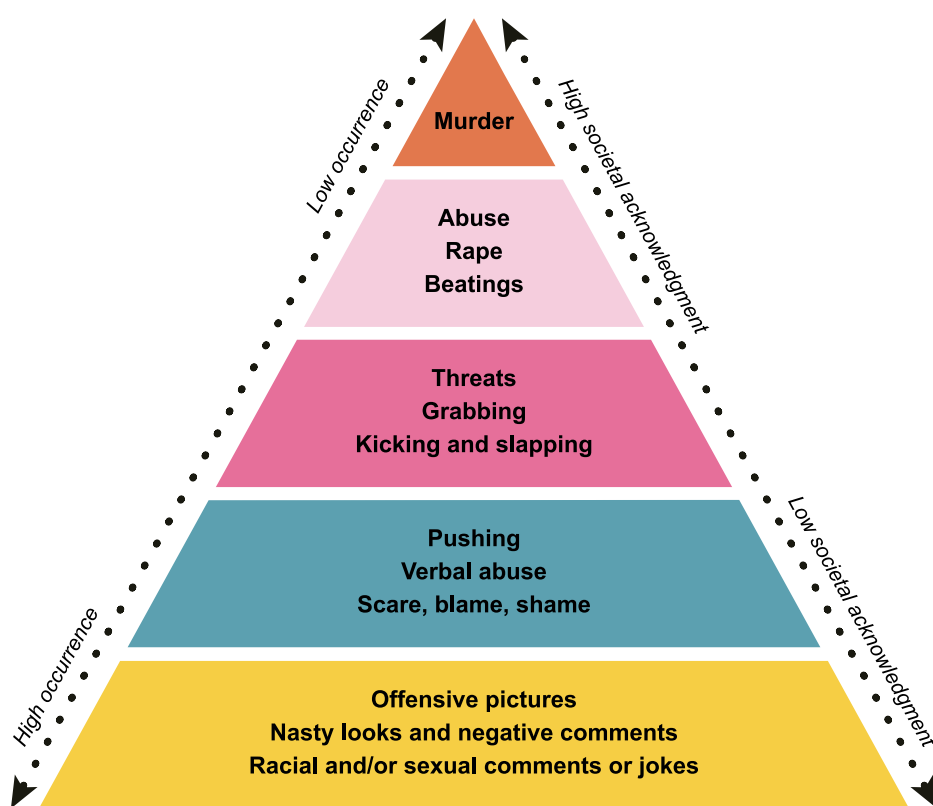
These ideas influence the structural level, where inequalities become embedded in systems such as education or employment.

The institutional level shows how organizations, through their rules and routines, may unintentionally reproduce inequality.

Finally, the individual level depicts how personal attitudes, prejudices, and actions reflect and sustain broader social patterns. Arrows between the layers show that all levels influence each other: discourse shapes structures, institutions, and behaviors – while individual experiences feed back into public discourse, creating a continuous cycle.

Violence often starts small and becomes normalized, which is why we use the pyramid of violence as a crucial tool to understand this process:

- **The basis (the most common violence):** Negative attitudes, jokes, exclusion, mean looks, racist/sexist comments and offensive language. These actions create an acceptance that boundaries can be violated and are the most common form of violence.
- **The middle (the more visible violence):** If the most common violence is not stopped, it leads to more serious boundary violations such as bullying, threats and physical acts. From this level and up you should inform your manager.
- **Top (most serious violence):** This level includes the most serious crimes, such as aggravated assault, sexualized violence, and hate crimes.



We usually talk about the three levels of violence prevention where prevention efforts are divided into universal, selective and indicated measures. In exchanges, it is primarily the universal level that we should work with to ensure a safe environment for all participants.

- **The universal level** is aimed at broad target groups regardless of experience or risk of violence.
- **The selective level** is aimed at target groups that are at risk of exercising or being exposed to violence.
- **The indicative level** is interventions for target groups where violence is already a fact and is often about support and treatment from, for example, Social Services and the Prison and Probation Service.

Common Guidelines

Highest standard of protection and zero tolerance for physical punishment: The Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear that children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence. We are aware that laws and cultural approaches to discipline vary from country to country, which is why we have decided to adopt the strictest possible standard of protection for our exchanges. This means an absolute zero tolerance for all physical and psychological violence, including all forms of physical punishment. Staff must never use or threaten violence, regardless of the culture and tradition of their home country.

Common guidelines - when do we act?

- **Stop early:** Staff must intervene immediately in all forms of crossing boundaries. By stopping the more prevalent acts of violence at the base, we prevent violence from escalating and normalizing.
- **Label the behavior:** Use clear and direct language to name exactly what is happening (e.g., “That was an offensive joke” or “That is exclusionary behavior”). By putting words to the action, you make the problem visible and easier to address.
- **Consultation:** Serious incidents must be handled together by the international team.
- **Follow up:** It is important to follow up with both the victim and the perpetrator.
- **If necessary:** Depending on the seriousness of the incident contact proper authorities and/or your manager like police or social services.
- **Transparency in preparation:** Staff in both the sending and receiving countries must discuss known risks or threat situations regarding participants before departure.
- **Zero tolerance:** Absolutely zero tolerance for bringing external conflicts, threats or violence into the exchange.
- **Separating participants:** At the slightest suspicion of threats or violence linked to external conflicts, participants involved must be immediately separated.
- **Encourage openness:** Encourage all participants to express emotions and vulnerability without fear of ridicule.
- **Talk to the group:** Explain the situation to calm everybody and explain that you are handling the situation. This is also important to prevent rumors.

6.1 Bullying

Bullying is usually defined as a behavior with the intention of harming or creating discomfort, which is repeated and occurs over time. The person who is exposed is at a disadvantage in relation to the person or people who victimize.

This means that bullying is always about an imbalance of power, where one or more people systematically try to make another person feel less worthy, excluded or afraid. In other words, bullying is a form of violence.

The psychology and dynamics of bullying: In new social environments, such as an international exchange, hierarchies are quickly established. Bullying often occurs due to:

1. **Need for status/dominance:** Some individuals try to gain status or power in the group by degrading and controlling others. This is an expression of power that we have zero tolerance for.
2. **Group insecurity:** An insecure group sometimes feels stronger if it collectively turns against a “deviant” individual to strengthen its own inner cohesion.
3. **Management vacuum:** If staff or leaders are passive, young people fill this power vacuum with their own, often negative, hierarchies.

Being subjected to bullying is traumatic and has serious consequences. The immediate and long-term consequences often include anxiety, depression, isolation, low self-esteem, difficulty sleeping, and physical symptoms. The staff’s intervention must always prioritize repairing the damage and restoring the victim’s safety.

In international exchanges, bullying can manifest itself through:

- **Linguistic exclusion:** Consistently speaking a language that a person does not understand, even though a common working language has been agreed. This creates isolation and violation.
- **Cyberbullying/digital violence:** Spreading rumors, sharing offensive images/memes, or excluding someone from group chats.
- **Cultural bullying:** Ridiculing a person’s dress, traditions, eating habits, or beliefs in a way that marks them as “deviant.”



Common Guidelines

- **Responsibility:** Bullying is a structural problem. Staff always have the responsibility to stop bullying and protect the vulnerable person. We must investigate, address and document.
- **Restore safety:** Actions must focus on restoring safety to the vulnerable person. The focus must not be on forcing the victim and the bully to “become friends”, but on changing the group dynamics and behavior.

6.2 Toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity is a system of harmful social and cultural norms that falsely links masculinity to violence, emotional closure, dominance, and control. This set of norms is a form of structural violence that is relevant to youth workers for two reasons:

1. **Violence and discrimination externally:** These norms are a root cause of sexism, homophobia, bullying and violence against girls, women, LGBTIQ+ people and all individuals who challenge the narrow norm.
2. **Inward harm:** It prevents young men from expressing emotions, showing vulnerability or seeking support for mental illness, as such behaviour is perceived as “unmanly” or weak. This creates a dangerous culture of repression, loneliness and destructive risk-taking.

Masculinity as control and dominance: In an exchange, toxic norms can manifest themselves as behaviors whose purpose is to establish or maintain power, especially in groups where hierarchies are quickly established. Staff should pay attention to the following expressions:

- **Emotional repression:** Shutting down conversations about feelings, ridiculing the vulnerability of others, or facing difficult situations with aggression instead of communication.
- **Risk-taking and harshness:** Forcing others, or oneself, into dangerous actions, taking unnecessary risks, or ignoring safety rules to prove “courage” or “toughness” in front of the group.
- **Language and group tone:** The use of sexist, homophobic, or misogynistic jargon and offensive jokes to highlight hierarchy and status in the group, or to exclude those who do not participate in the jargon.

Our goal is not to condemn men or masculinity, but to promote an inclusive masculinity where all participants can define their identity freely and where respect and openness are the norm.

Common Guidelines

- **Active conversation:** Staff should be proactive and create space to discuss gender roles and masculinity norms in a safe environment.
- **Stop gender stereotypes:** Immediately stop comments or behaviors that devalue someone based on gender or sexuality. This includes jargon, offensive jokes, and the method of making someone doubt their own opinion (“gaslighting”).

6.3 Honor-related violence and oppression

Honor-related violence and oppression is a particularly serious form of systematic violence that must not be confused with traditional violence in close relationships. It is a complex system of coercion and control in which an individual’s freedom and life choices – such as choice of partner, clothing, education, sexual orientation or social interaction – are controlled by a family, relatives or a collective. The purpose is always to maintain the family’s reputation or “honor” to the outside world.

It is critical to understand that honor-related violence and oppression is:

- **Collective and planned:** The violence is perpetrated or supported by several people in the family or extended family. This distinguishes it from individual violence and makes the victim’s situation much more dangerous as there is a common strategy and ideology behind the oppression.
- **Systematic and constant:** It is not just about physical abuse, but about a constant and systematic control and restriction of freedom. The victim is in a continuous state of mental and emotional captivity.
- **Focuses on controlling sexuality:** Often the focus is strongly on controlling girls’ and women’s sexuality, but boys and men may also be subjected to violence to be forced to uphold norms or forced to use violence against a relative.

Expressions during the exchange: Youth workers must be vigilant for these signs.

- **Social isolation:** The participant isolates themselves from group activities or becomes isolated by other participants/siblings.
- **Control and monitoring:** Constant digital and/or physical monitoring of family members during the exchange. The participant may be forced to call home regularly with the camera on to show where they are and who they are hanging out with.
- **Fear of going home:** Expressions of fear of returning home or of breaking rules unrelated to the exchange.
- **Forced marriage:** Information or suspicion that the participant is at risk of being married off against his or her will.

Common Guidelines

- **Specialized separation:** In case of suspicion of honor-related violence, immediate action must be taken to ensure separation from any family members or relatives participating in the exchange.
- **Before the return journey:** Measures are taken already during the exchange to ensure the victim's protection on return. Contact with the appropriate social authorities is made by the manager at home. The focus is solely on the protection of the vulnerable.
- **Specialist support:** Contact should be made immediately with specialist units (police, social services or support hotlines) with expertise in honor-related violence.
- **Duty to report:** The duty to report is of the highest priority in cases of suspicion of ongoing or planned honor-related violence and is handled via mandatory reporting to the manager to ensure correct legal handling.

6.4 Sexualized violence

Sexualized violence includes boundary violations, assaults, and criminal acts of a sexual nature. It is important to note that legal definitions and penalties for sexualized violence can vary across countries. This form of violence is often less visible compared to others because it frequently occurs within the immediate social environment, and victims may hesitate to speak out.

To promote a safe and respectful approach to sexuality, it is important that professionals develop a reflective attitude towards the topic of sexuality before the encounter. It should be clear that different opinions and boundaries exist, and these must be respected. Professionals should be aware that physical contact is an important part of childhood and adolescent development. Such contact should always occur only with the explicit consent of all involved parties.

Common Guidelines

- **Deterring perpetrators:** Awareness and a clear stance against sexualized violence help to discourage potential offenders.
- **Providing action options:** Organizations should establish clear procedures and support contacts so that victims know where to turn and what steps are available.
- **Risks within the immediate social environment:** Sexualized violence often occurs within close social settings, including international exchanges. When people meet in such contexts, they are often in proximity, which can increase the risk.
- **Risks during longer stays:** International exchanges involving extended stays and accommodations can also create opportunities for the experience and exploration of sexuality, which may increase the potential for sexualized violence.
- **Age:** Check the age laws in the respective countries

6.5 Domestic violence

Violence in close relationships can manifest itself in several ways during an exchange and poses a serious threat to young people's safety. We must be prepared to deal with three main scenarios.

1. **Violence from the home environment:** A participant carries with them experiences of violence from their family. This may include the participant being subjected to violence themselves, or the participant witnessing violence against a parent or other close relative in the home (which counts as child abuse).
2. **Violence in young relationships (external):** A participant is subjected to violence, threats or control by a partner who is not part of the exchange. This can be done digitally or via contact during the exchange.
3. **Violence in relationships during the exchange:** Violence or control can occur between two participants who have or start a relationship before or during the exchange.

Domestic violence includes physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. The exchange can serve as a temporary refuge and an opportunity for protection for the victim.

Common Guidelines

- **Protection is the top priority:** If a participant tells us or if we suspect domestic violence, the young person's safety and protection must be prioritized over all other aspects of the exchange. Immediate physical protection and immediate separation between the victim and the perpetrator of violence (whether another participant or an external party) must be ensured on the ground. This includes an immediate change in accommodation and room arrangements if the risk of continued exposure to violence by a partner is present during the exchange.
- **Confidentiality and responsibility:** In this reporting chain, confidentiality of the managers who are part of the chain of protection ends. The responsible manager (in consultation with the host country) then assumes the legal responsibility for making the formal, local report to the police or social services of the host country in accordance with their legislation.
- **Communicate clearly:** The victim must be clearly informed about this process: "Unfortunately, I cannot promise you to keep this completely secret, because my main task is to protect you, and I need to enlist the help of my boss to do so."
- **Recognize signs:** Pay attention to bruises that cannot be explained, reluctance to talk about home conditions, psychosomatic symptoms (stomachache, headache), strong anxiety, or difficulty sleeping. Also watch out for extreme control, isolation from the group, and constant contact with an external partner.

6.6 Gang-related violence

Gang-related violence, or threats and violence linked to criminal gangs and networks, constitutes a serious risk that absolutely must not occur in an exchange. For youth workers, it is important to understand that gang violence is a form of systematic and organized crime that poses a serious risk to those involved in gang-related crime. This can include serious threats, assault, extortion, coercion, and a risk of lethal violence, such as shootings and explosions, which are controlled and orchestrated by external networks.

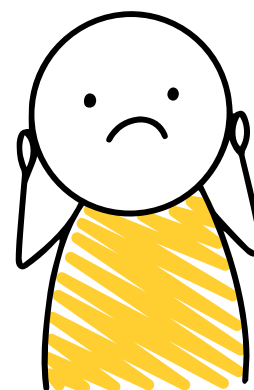
Manifestations of violence and international differences: The prevalence of organized gangs and criminal networks varies greatly between countries and regions. This means that the experiences of staff and participants differ in this regard. Staff must be aware that young participants may carry threats or conflicts into the exchange. Our responsibility is to ensure that the exchange is a safe zone, free from external influences and threat situations.

It is therefore important to be able to recognize signs that may indicate that a participant is being subjected to pressure or is using pressure on others as an expression of power. In the exchange, gang affiliation or threats from gangs can manifest themselves through the following signs and expressions:

- **External markers:** Specific clothing, symbols, hand gestures, or language that can be difficult to decipher without local knowledge.
- **Social codes:** These are silent rules that govern the young person's behavior, such as conflicts of loyalty, a culture of silence, demands to perform actions or endure pressure, and threats stemming from conflicts or debts in the home environment.
- **Digital threats:** Influence or threats via social media and encrypted messaging, or threatening the individual to share their real-time location.

Common Guidelines

- **Attention and documentation:** Staff must remain vigilant regarding the signs and expressions mentioned above. If suspect markers, social codes, or digital threats are observed, this must be documented objectively. Staff should not initiate their own investigation or confront the participant.
- **Immediate escalation:** At the slightest suspicion of gang-related pressure, threats, or criminal activity, staff must immediately contact their supervisor/manager.
- **Consultation and management:** Any further handling and potential protective measures are always decided by the responsible manager, in consultation with the international team and, if necessary, local authorities (such as the police or social services), to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the exchange.



MODULE 7: EXTREMISM

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Module 7: Extremism

International youth exchanges are based on the common democratic core values of the EU, which emphasize inclusion, diversity and respect for human rights. Extremism, whether left-wing or right-wing, political or religious, poses a direct threat to these values and creates a dangerous and exclusionary environment for participants. Since young people are susceptible to radicalization and exchanges often bring together individuals from different backgrounds, staff must recognize and deal with extreme manifestations immediately.

In the context of the project, extremism is defined as attitudes or actions that:

- **Threatens inclusion:** Actively excludes, hates, or disparages participants based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or political opinion.
- **Uses violence or threats:** Encourages, celebrates, or uses violence to achieve ideological, political, or religious goals.
- **Questioning of democracy:** Rejects basic democratic principles, such as everyone's equal value and the right to be heard.

Warning signs: Extremism rarely manifests itself in a single major event. Staff should be alert to subtle, escalating signals (like the pyramid of violence in module 6). This can be, for example:

- **Linguistic expressions:** Spreading conspiracy theories, using hateful or threatening symbols/memes, aggressive or degrading comments about other groups.
- **Digital patterns:** The dissemination of propaganda or extremist material in private or public chat rooms.
- **Social isolation:** That a participant withdraws from activities and only socializes with people who share the extreme views.

The project's role: As extremism is a complex problem, the project's task is not to "deradicalize" but to protect the group and maintain security in the project. This is done through immediate intervention, clear boundaries and reporting.

Common Guidelines

- **Pre- check:** Important to check with partners in a premeeting if this topic could be an issue.
- **Zero tolerance:** The project has an absolute zero tolerance for all manifestations of extremism that threaten the safety of participants or violate the democratic core values of the EU and Erasmus+
- **Immediate intervention:** In case of signs of extreme manifestations, staff should intervene immediately to stop the behavior. Discussions of political/religious views should be respectful, but hateful expressions must never be allowed.
- **Internal reporting:** Any concern, suspicion or incident related to extremism must be reported immediately to the responsible manager of the project (in accordance with the procedure in 2.5 Duty of confidentiality and duty of notification).

Action: Serious cases of spreading propaganda, threats or violent extremism may warrant a police report and immediate repatriation.



MODULE 8: INTERSECTIONALITY

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Module 8: Intersectionality

Youth and protection concepts must be intersectional – meaning recognizing how different forms of discrimination interact and reinforce one another.

When youth protection concepts treat young people as a homogeneous group, they risk overlooking specific vulnerabilities. An intersectional approach ensures that protective structures work for everyone – including those who face multiple forms of marginalization or exclusion.

At its core, intersectionality recognizes that individuals are shaped by many aspects of their identity – including gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, class, sexual orientation, language, and age. These aspects are not separate or static categories; they interact dynamically within social, cultural, and institutional power structures.

Intersectionality also highlights that systems of oppression always coexist with systems of privilege. Those who belong to socially dominant groups may benefit from advantages that often remain invisible to them. Recognizing privilege is not about guilt, but about awareness: understanding how social systems create unequal access to safety, respect, and opportunity.

Intersectionality is therefore not just a theory – it is a tool for reflection and action. It helps professionals see beyond single-issue perspectives and develop strategies that respond to the real complexity of people's lives. In the context of safeguarding, it ensures that protection is not one-size-fits-all, but attentive to the diverse and overlapping realities of every young person.

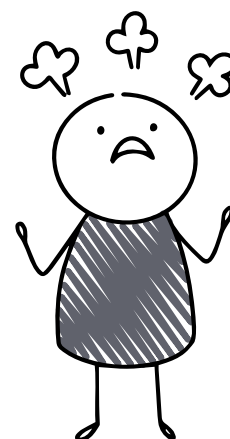
Intersectional approach helps professionals recognize that:

1. Discrimination can operate on several levels at once,
2. Children and young people may have different protection needs,
3. And that professionals themselves are part of social structures where power and privilege are unequally distributed.

An intersectional safeguarding concept therefore requires looking at structures, not just individuals:

- Who might be overlooked?
- Whose perspective is missing?
- What barriers exist linguistic, physical, cultural, social?

The goal is not only to react to incidents, but to create institutional conditions that prevent discrimination from occurring in the first place.



Common Guidelines

1. **Acknowledge:** The staff must know the diversity of the participants and their life experiences.
2. **Reflect:** Be aware of your own power-relations and institutional routines.
3. **Awareness:** Empower the staff to know about their own privileges and blind spots.
4. **Prevention:** Strengthen those affected by discrimination and build structures to prevent discrimination. Combine prevention and intervention to create a safe and inclusive space in the run.

We create an environment where every young person can feel seen, respected and safe.

8.1 Cultural backgrounds

International exchanges bring together individuals with different cultural backgrounds and frames of reference. This diversity is a great asset, but it is also a source of misunderstandings, conflicts, and the potential for small, recurring violations and exclusions. Cultural differences are not just about differences such as language, food or clothing, but about deep-rooted norms around social interaction and power structures that can differ both based on nationality and other backgrounds. Staff must be aware that these differences in norms can be a source of inequality and thus a risk to protection.

Areas that can lead to conflicts:

- **Communication:** how direct or indirect communication is perceived, the view of silence, and how to express disagreement. Being too direct can be perceived as aggressive, while being too indirect can be perceived as dishonest or passive.
- **Hierarchy and respect:** different views on authority (the role of staff), age and how respect is shown. In some cultures, looking an adult directly in the eye is disrespectful, while in others, it's a sign of honesty.
- **Boundaries and physical contact:** the view of private sphere, physical proximity between friends or strangers, and boundaries between the sexes. A hug or a pat on the back can be interpreted completely differently depending on cultural background.
- **Time and time required:** perceptions of punctuality and how to plan activities.

Unawareness of these differences can lead staff or participants to interpret neutral behavior as rude, aggressive, or disrespectful. This creates a breeding ground for misunderstandings and conflict.

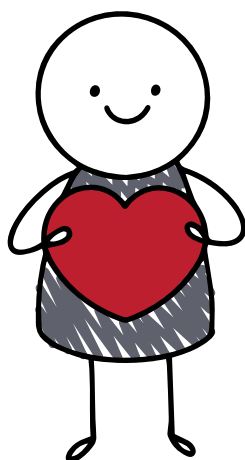
Best practice:

“Create social norms”: the goal is not to force anyone to conform to a specific national culture, but is based on openness, curiosity and common rules where everyone feels owned and involved. The role of the staff is to be an active cultural translator who can explain the underlying differences without judgment.

Common Guidelines

- **Be active and explanatory:** staff should not only observe conflicts but actively step in and explain the underlying cultural differences in case of misunderstandings.
- **Self-reflection:** staff must constantly reflect on their own background and how it affects the view of others behavior. Avoid interpreting or judging the actions of others based on what you consider to be normal in your culture.
- **Common rules:** use the first few days (or before the exchange where applicable) of the exchange to develop clear, common rules for the group on communication, respect and time commitment, which have been co-created by all partner countries and participants.

Dealing with intolerance: If cultural differences lead to discrimination or disparagement, this should be immediately stopped and dealt with.



MODULE 9: DIVERSITY

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Module 9: Diversity

Diversity refers to the variety of people and life realities within our projects and youth exchanges, including gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, origin, religion or belief, age, disability and social or economic background. It means that no single group is treated as the norm, but that different experiences are seen as equally valuable and must be actively protected through our youth protection concept. In international youth work, diversity is a core value because all young people should feel safe, respected and included, regardless of who they are or how they identify. At the same time, some groups – such as LGBTQIA+ young people – are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, exclusion and violence. For this reason, our concept understands diversity as inseparable from a clear commitment to the rights, safety and visibility of LGBTQIA+ youth and addresses these aspects explicitly in the following section on LGBTQIA+.

Being young and identifying as LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual, Asexual, +) often entails a greater risk of discrimination, exclusion, bullying and violence. This applies both from other participants and from the outside world. Many young participants come from environments where their sexual orientation or gender identity is not accepted or legally protected, and where there is a strong two-gender norm. For some, the exchange means the first opportunity to express their identity openly and freely, which places high demands on our actions and to make them feel accepted and safe.

Vulnerability increases sharply when a person who identifies as LGBTQIA+ coincides with other grounds of discrimination. A young person can be exposed to several forms of discrimination at the same time – for example, homophobia and racism or encounter transphobia in combination with a disability. Staff need to be aware that these overlapping risks (intersectionality) create a much larger and more complex vulnerability. In some environments, a participant's combination of grounds for discrimination may pose a direct danger to them, which underlines the need for nuanced and extra vigilant protection work.



Common Guidelines

- **Validated and respected:** Staff should actively use the right pronouns and preferred names. Recognizing and validating the identity of the young person is a direct protective measure.
- **Protected:** We must actively protect participants from homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and other discrimination. This duty of protection also extends to protecting them from potential threats in the host country.
- **Legal and cultural differences:** Laws and general acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people vary widely across European countries. While being LGBTQIA+ is not a criminal offence in the EU, public expressions of love or identity can lead to harassment, discrimination or pose a serious safety risk in certain settings. Staff must be aware of the local legal and social situation and adapt safety instructions accordingly, for example regarding public expressions of love.
- **The needs of transgender and non-binary people:** Ensure that there are safe and neutral changing rooms and restrooms where transgender and non-binary people can feel safe and respected. Staff must be aware of the participant's needs regarding accommodation, the safety of documentation and medication, and proactively offer support in these matters.
- **Zero tolerance for harassment:** Absolute zero tolerance for all offensive actions, jargon, jokes or behaviors related to sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Intervention must be immediate.
- **Active treatment:** staff should always use the young person's preferred pronouns and name. A mistake should lead to a quick apology and correction, not a long discussion.
- **Safety awareness:** Include a review of the local conditions and conditions for LGBTQIA+ people as well as the risks in the host country as part of the preparation and the group's safety instructions.



MODULE 10: HEALTH MANAGEMENT

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Module 10: Health Management

Collecting and managing information about the participants' health, including knowledge of any diseases, diagnoses, ongoing medication and how to take it, allergies and dietary requirements is a central part of the duty of protection. This means that the organization and its staff have an increased responsibility to look after the best interests of the young people and guarantee the young person's physical safety.

Without this information, staff cannot guarantee the safety of participants in medical emergencies or even meet basic rights.

This includes not only acute medical risks, but also the right to an adequate diet based on medical reasons (allergies, diabetes), ethical reasons (vegetarianism, veganism) or religious reasons (halal, kosher). The organization's responsibility is to ensure that all participants receive the support and diet they need.

Common Guidelines

- **Disease Awareness and Medications:** The staff handling emergency and specialty medications must have basic knowledge of the participant's diagnosis and medication. This means knowing what the medication is intended for, the dosage, and what acute side effects or reactions may occur in an emergency. This knowledge must be documented by the staff after a review with guardians/healthcare professionals.
- **Medication management:** Young people are primarily responsible for their own medication.
- **Responsibilities of staff:** Staff should only assist with the dosing and administration of medications (e.g. Epi-pen, insulin or asthma spray) if necessary and only after procedures have been established in consultation with guardians. Staff must never administer prescription drugs without clear, written instructions from their guardians or doctors.
- **Emergency (allergy/illness):** Staff must immediately contact local healthcare (emergency number) and then guardians in case of serious reactions or accidents. Inform healthcare professionals about known allergies and medication at the first contact.



10.1 Psychosocial crises

The youth exchange staff are trained in youth work and basic support, not in psychological treatment or clinical care. The staff's primary task in a psychosocial crisis is to ensure the young person's immediate safety and initiate contact with professional, external expertise (parents/guardians, medical care or crisis lines).

Definition of Psychosocial Crisis: A psychosocial crisis is a situation in which a participant exhibits severe signs of acute mental health issues that require immediate intervention. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Self-harm and self-injury:** Behavior in which the young person intentionally harms themselves physically, or digital self-harm (in which the young person posts offensive or negative content about themselves online).
- **Acute suicidal thoughts or threats:** Expressions or behaviors that indicate that the young person intends to take his or her own life.
- **Acute anxiety or panic attacks:** Intense conditions that prevent the young person from functioning.

Common Guidelines

1. **Ensure immediate safety:** Staff must immediately bring the young person to safety and ensure that there is no immediate danger (e.g. removing dangerous objects). Stay with the young person until the situation has stabilized or professional help has arrived.
2. **Listen and support:** Provide active and non-judgmental support. Focus on listening and acknowledging the young person's feelings but avoid trying to act as a therapist or giving far-reaching advice.
3. **Internal reporting:** The responsible personnel should immediately report the incident to the project manager/safety contact (see Module 2.5) to ensure that the organization's crisis plan is activated.

External expertise: The project promoter must urgently contact the guardians and professional healthcare provider (doctor, psychologist or emergency psychiatry) in the host country to determine the next steps. In crisis situations, contact with guardians is prioritized over all other organizational goals.



MODULE 11:

DISABILITIES & DIAGNOSES

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Module 11: Disabilities & Diagnoses

Many young people live with diagnoses or problems that, although not formally diagnosed, strongly affect their everyday lives. This can be neuropsychiatric disabilities (NPF), physical disabilities, chronic diseases, or psychosocial problems. The basic principle of the project is that all young people have the right to participate and that their individual needs must be met to ensure safety and full participation.

It is impossible to describe in this YPC how to think/ask in checklists for *all* diagnoses. Therefore, it is crucial that the staff, in consultation with participants and guardians, receive individualized information before the exchange. This information must specify the needs that the project needs to consider before, during and after the exchange.

The accommodation can be logistical (e.g. wheelchair users need to stay on the ground floor, access to an elevator, appropriate transport, assistance at the airport, accompanying escorts), medical (e.g. special diet for allergies, handling medication for seizures) or educational (e.g. structural support at NPF). By being proactive, the staff ensures that all participants receive the support they need.

11.1 Physical disabilities

Physical disabilities encompass a wide range of conditions that affect the young person's mobility, vision, hearing or motor skills. Accommodations in this category are often of a logistical or technical nature, but it is important that staff ensure that accommodations are implemented in a way that does not stigmatize the participant. The staff must focus on the young person's self-determination and independence. The basic principle is that the young person should be able to participate in the activity/exchange with adaptations on equal terms.

What you need to think about/ask about:

1. **Assistive devices:** What assistive devices (wheelchair, hearing aid, white cane, Braille) are used and how are they handled during travel and in accommodation? Are spare batteries/chargers needed?
2. **Accessibility:** Are the project's premises, accommodation and planned means of transport *accessible* (not just theoretically)? Check doorways, ramps, and toilets.
3. **Assisting support:** Is an accompanying companion or assistance from the staff needed for specific activities? The staff should only assist with support that is clearly agreed.

11.1.1 Visual impairments

Visual impairment means that the ability to see is impaired to varying degrees, from mild difficulties to total blindness. Adaptations aim to make information and environments accessible.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Information:** How does the participant absorb written information (large print, speech synthesis, Braille)?
- **Environment:** How should housing and activity facilities be structured to minimize the risk of falls? Avoid rearranging the furniture without informing.
- **Help:** Does the participant need a sighted companion during transports or new environments? The staff must always ask how and when help is desired.

11.1.2 Hearing Loss

Hearing loss varies in degree and fittings people with hearing loss can use include hearing aids, cochlear implants or sign language. Difficulties often arise in noisy environments or during group discussions.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Communication method:** Which method of communication is preferred (speech, lip-reading, sign language)? Is an interpreter needed?
- **Environment:** Ensure that meeting places have good acoustics and avoid talking with the light behind you (to facilitate lip reading).
- **Warning systems:** Ensure that fire alarms or other warning systems have visual signals (flashes of light) in the home.

11.1.3 Reduced mobility

Mobility impairments (e.g. wheelchair dependence, cerebral palsy) primarily require adaptations of the physical environment and logistics. The goal is full participation and for the young person to be able to move as independently as possible.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Accommodation accessibility:** Is the property 100% wheelchair accessible (ramps, doorways, bathrooms)? Have the necessary aids (e.g. shower chair) been ordered?
- **Transportation:** What type of transportation is necessary (adapted bus/taxi)? What assistance is needed when boarding/disembarking?

Planning: Has extra time been added for transport and transfers during activities?

11.2 Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (NDD)

Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (NDD) are conditions that result from differences in how the brain processes information and impressions. These affect functions such as attention, impulse control, social interaction, and learning. Since NDDs are invisible disabilities, it is especially important that staff understand how they may manifest during stress, fatigue, or in new social environments. Adaptations focus primarily on creating structure, predictability, and clear communication.

What you need to think about/ask about:

1. **Predictability:** How can we ensure that schedules and rules are as predictable as possible? Should the schedule be provided in text, pictures, or orally?
2. **Senses:** Is the environment too stimulating (sounds, lights, crowds)? Is there a “safe zone” or a quiet room where the participant can retreat?
3. **Stress management:** How does the participant react to stress/fatigue, and what strategies or aids work best to regulate their emotions?

11.2.1 ADHD/ADD

ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) affects the ability to pay attention, control impulses and regulate activity levels.

- **The hyperactive/impulsive form** is characterized by a high level of external activity, difficulty sitting still, interrupting others, and acting without thinking. This behavior is often visible.
- **The inattentive form** (formerly called ADD) is more introverted. It is characterized by difficulty maintaining focus, forgetfulness, lack of organization, and the tendency to daydream. These young people may appear quiet and still but often experience inner restlessness and mental chaos.

How it affects the individual during the exchange: Regardless of the form, ADHD can manifest as difficulty following instructions or forgetting times and belongings. Stress, fatigue, and new environments exacerbate symptoms. Staff must be aware that participants with the inattentive form may “suffer in silence.”

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Structure:** Is a clear written or visual checklist needed for morning routines, activities and bedtime?
- **Breaks:** How is the need for motor activity (Hyperactive) or mental recovery (Inattentive) handled? Are short, scheduled breaks possible?
- **Communication:** Keep instructions short, one at a time, and ask the participant to repeat them to ensure they were heard and understood.

11.2.2 Autism spectrum disorder

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) primarily affects social communication, social interaction and often involves limited, repetitive behaviors or interests. Nowadays, ASD is the collective name for diagnosis's autism and Asperger's, which are no longer used as diagnostic names.

How it affects the individual: During the exchange, the young person may have difficulty interpreting social codes or facial expressions, react strongly to sensory impressions (sounds/light/smells) and feel distressed about sudden changes in routines. Rapid social changes and unclear rules can lead to high stress and meltdowns.

What you need to think about/ask about:

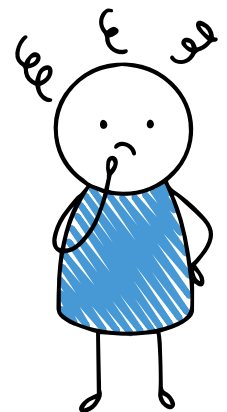
- **Predictability:** Are *all* changes in the schedule communicated well in advance? Has the "why" question (the purpose of the activity) been answered clearly?
- **Sensory Environment:** Is a quiet place or "safe zone" available for recovery? Be mindful of strong smells and unnecessary noise.
- **Communication:** Be concrete and avoid irony or metaphors. Do not force eye contact or physical touch.

11.3 Food and Eating

Introduction: Food and eating are fundamental to physical well-being but can be a source of great stress and difficulty during an exchange. This part covers medical conditions (such as Diabetes and IBD), psychosocial issues (such as eating disorders and selective eating), and ethical/religious dietary requirements. The responsibility of the project is to ensure that the food does not become a source of concern or danger.

What you need to think about/ask about:

1. **Detailed nutrition plan:** For all participants with special diets/needs, there must be a detailed written plan that is communicated to everyone involved (residents, chefs, restaurants).
2. **Self-determination:** Let the participant manage their own diet and aids (e.g. insulin) as far as possible and safe.
3. **Discretion:** Handle all dietary needs, especially those linked to eating disorders or selective eating, with the utmost discretion and integrity.



11.3.1 Diabetes

Diabetes (type 1 or type 2) is a chronic condition that requires daily management of blood sugar via insulin (type 1) or diet/medication.

How it affects the individual during the exchange: The exchange environment (stress, irregular times, different foods) can quickly lead to dangerously low (hypoglycemia) or high (hyperglycemia) blood sugar. Staff need to recognize symptoms of a drop in blood sugar and know exactly how to act.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Emergency plan:** Is there a clear, written instruction from the guardian/doctor on how to handle blood sugar drops (what type of carbohydrates, when calling emergency numbers)?
- **Medication availability:** Where is insulin/meter stored and is it available around the clock?
- **Meals:** Are the meals planned with fixed times and appropriate nutritional content?

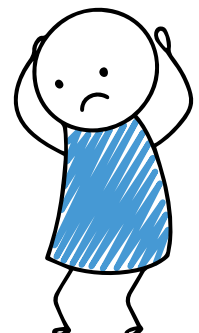
11.3.2 Eating Disorders and Selective Eating (ARFID)

Eating disorders (such as Anorexia, Bulimia) and selective eating (such as ARFID – Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder) are psychosocial problems that create great anxiety around food.

How it affects the individual during the exchange: The exchange environment, with unfamiliar foods, new routines around meals and group eating, is a major stress factor. This can trigger restrictive behavior or other forms of eating disorder behavior. The responsibility of the project is to ensure that the food does not become a source of concern or danger.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Privacy:** How can we offer food options without singling out or monitoring the attendee? Discretion is crucial.
- **Safe food:** If selective eating exists, has a list of “safe food” been identified that can be always provided?
- **Treatment plan:** Has contact been established with the guardian/treating care to understand what is an acceptable level of participation?



11.3.3 Chronic Intestinal Conditions

Description: IBD (Inflammatory Bowel Disease), such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, as well as functional conditions like IBS, involve chronic issues or inflammation of the intestine.

How it affects the individual during the exchange: The disease often requires special diets, possibly regular medication, and an urgent and easy access to toilets. Stress can trigger flare-ups.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Toilet accessibility:** Does the participant have quick and discreet access to a toilet during all activities and transport?
- **Medication:** What medication is required, and how is it stored (e.g., if it requires refrigeration)?
- **Food:** Is food that is low in fiber or free of specific triggers necessary?

11.4 Asthma

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition of the airways that can lead to breathing difficulties (asthma attacks). The condition is usually managed with preventive medicine and fast-acting seizure medicine (inhaler/spray).

How it affects the individual during the exchange: Asthma attacks can be triggered by cold, physical exertion, allergies (e.g., dust, pollen), or stress. It is crucial that staff know where the seizure medication is located, how it is used, and recognize a severe seizure.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Emergency plan:** Is there a clear, written instruction from the guardian/doctor on how to handle an acute attack?
- **Medication availability:** Where is the seizure medication (often a blue inhaler/spray) stored? Does it have to be with the participant around the clock, or is it stored centrally?
- **Triggers:** What factors may trigger a seizure for this specific participant (e.g., specific allergens, smoke, physical exertion)? How can we minimize exposure to this? What can we influence in the environment or how can we make adjustments?

11.5 Epilepsi

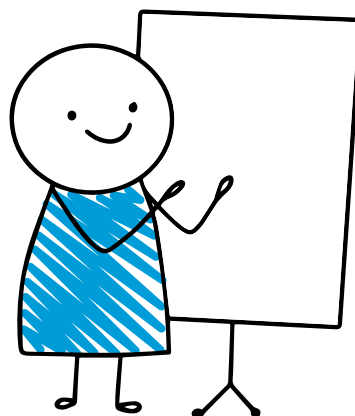
Epilepsy is a neurological condition characterized by recurrent seizures (epileptic seizures).

How it affects the individual during the exchange: In addition to the social stress of a new environment, irregular sleep, stress, bright flashing lights, or missing medication doses can trigger seizures. It is crucial that staff know exactly how to act during a seizure to prevent injuries.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **Emergency instructions:** Is there a specific, written instruction from the guardian/doctor on how the most common seizure looks and should be handled? Include information about when to call emergency numbers.
- **Medicines:** Where is any emergency medicine (e.g. Stesolid) stored? Have the staff been trained to administer this?
- **Environment:** What are the triggers? Can the schedule be adjusted to ensure regular sleep?

Flashing lights: Avoid activities where flashing lights may occur (e.g., disco)



MODULE 12:

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

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Module 12: Social and digital media

For today's youth, the digital and physical worlds are completely intertwined. Digitalization creates endless opportunities for young people to communicate, learn and express their creativity. But it also means that risks traditionally managed in physical spaces – such as bullying, harassment and violence – have moved online. Our YPC must therefore extend beyond the premises where the exchange takes place and include the digital environment. This module is about managing online risks, setting up rules for the use of social media, and addressing the ethical challenges that arise with the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI).

Risks of the digital world

- **The identity behind the screen:** When you can easily hide your identity online, the risk of abuse from unknown adults (grooming) or cyberbullying increases, which places high demands on digital vigilance.
- **Constantly present:** The staff have a limited overview of what happens outside of scheduled activities, which places demands on the digital skills of the young people and staff.
- **Diversity of vulnerability:** Online risks range from online hate speech and cyberbullying to more serious forms such as *shaming* (spreading images to humiliate), *sextortion* (extortion with sexual material) and grooming.
- **Digital stress,** social comparison, and a negative impact on sleep and physical health.
- **Digital self-harm:** where young people create and publish offensive and negative content publish offensive content anonymously or openly about themselves online, for example by posting posts where they speak badly about themselves.
- **Negative and constant use:** Signs of addiction or extremely negative screen use.

Common Guidelines

- **Preventive discussion:** Before the exchange, a discussion about online vulnerability and digital risks will be held with the participants.
- **Procedures for quick action and removal:** Create procedures for how staff should handle suspected digital risk and reporting. It is important to act quickly, as digital material (images/video) spreads quickly. Staff must know how to get help from tech companies and national organizations to remove unwanted/offensive material.
- **Language and codes:** Talk to staff and participants about recognizing digital risks, including the rapidly changing codes, symbols, and language used in chats and social media.
- **Right to Disconnect:** Encourage “phone-free” times during the exchange to reduce digital stress and ensure that the physical community remains the priority.

12.1 Use of social media

The use of social media can be an integral part of the exchange, both for documenting and for the participants to keep in touch. At the same time, improper handling of images, videos, and personal data is the most common source of privacy breaches and conflicts. In an international context, we need to ensure that we comply with both European data protection laws (GDPR) and respect the cultural differences in the view of privacy and online exposure.

Challenges in the exchange:

- **Privacy and GDPR/Protected Identity:** The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) imposes strict requirements on the handling of personal data, especially for minors. Our policy is therefore that no children who can be identified may be pictured on social media without written consent. Keep in mind that there could be participants with protected identities or similar needs.
- **Reputation and future:** Photos and comments posted during the exchange can live online for years and potentially influence a participant in the future. Staff have a responsibility to teach young people the consequences of their digital footprints.
- **Professional attitude:** The thin line between private and professional life is easily blurred on social media. Staff must have a clear policy on how they interact with participants online to protect themselves and young people.

The objective of 12.1 in the YPC is not to prohibit social media, but to ensure that it is used in a responsible and safe manner that respects the privacy of all participants. It is about teaching “digital citizenship”.

Common Guidelines

- **Image policy:** Written consent must be obtained for all image and video sharing to document the project internally. Participants shall be informed that they have the right to withdraw their consent at any time.
- **Active question:** Even with general consent, staff and participants must always ask each other before posting photos in which any identifiable person is visible. This also applies to participants in between and on their private social media.
- **Staff limits and professional presence:** To protect the privacy and professional integrity of both staff and participants, staff are not allowed to follow or accept friend requests from participants on personal social media accounts. Instead, we recommend using official or professional accounts (e.g., “Youth Worker [Name]” or a dedicated account for the youth center) for digital interaction. These accounts should be transparent, and more than one staff member should have oversight of the communication to ensure a safe environment for everyone. All other digital communication must take place via official channels intended for the exchange.

12.2 Use of AI

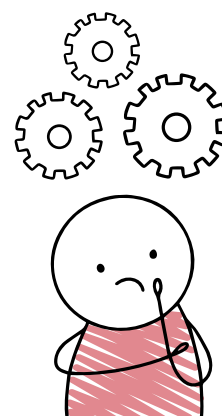
Artificial intelligence (AI) has become readily available tools that introduce new and complex privacy and security risks in youth activities. Risks that have traditionally been managed in physical and digital interaction (such as harassment, threats and image manipulation) are now taking on a new dimension through AI. Staff need to understand how AI can be used both for creative learning (positive) and to create harm (negative) to protect participants. Our approach is not to discourage the use of AI, but to empower young people to use these tools responsibly and creatively while staying safe.

AI's new risks:

1. **Deepfakes:** AI tools can quickly create highly realistic images, videos, and voice clips (*deep-fakes*) of participants or staff. This poses a serious risk of defamation, extortion and sexual exploitation (by undressing or abusing someone in a counterfeit material).
2. **AI harassment:** AI can be used to generate large amounts of hateful, threatening, or abusive messages directed at an individual or group, which can quickly escalate bullying and psychological violence (see module 6).
3. **Privacy breaches:** entering personal information, internal documents, or sensitive discussions into public AI tools can lead to confidential data being leaked.

Common Guidelines

- **Zero tolerance for deepfakes:** The creation, dissemination or threat of dissemination of AI-generated deepfakes by participants or staff, especially those of a sexual or abusive nature, is considered an immediate and serious incident.
- **Information risk:** Staff and participants shall be informed that no sensitive information about the project, participants or their background should be entered into AI tools.
- **Creative and Critical Thinking:** Encourage the use of AI for brainstorming or creative projects during the exchange, while simultaneously holding discussions on source criticism. This helps participants understand both the potential and the limitations of the technology.
- **Building Trust and Openness:** Since it is difficult to monitor AI use on personal devices, our primary focus is on building strong, trusting relationships. We want participants to feel safe coming to a Youth worker if they encounter something harmful, confusing, or illegal online, without fear of judgment or losing their digital privileges.



12.3 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of harassment that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Unlike traditional bullying, which is often defined by repeated actions over time, cyberbullying can be a one-time event. Because digital content spreads rapidly and remains online indefinitely, a single post can result in continuous and widespread harm. It follows a young person 24/7, reaching them even in the safety of their own room.

How it manifests in the exchange: Digital bullying can include spreading rumors, posting embarrassing photos without consent, or creating “hate groups” where a participant is excluded or mocked. In an international exchange, it can also manifest as “exclusionary language” in chats or social media where certain participants are intentionally left out or ignored.

What you need to think about/ask about:

- **The Digital Environment:** Be aware that the most intense interaction often happens in private group chats or through public comments. Ask the group: “How are we talking to each other online and in our chats? Are we following our common values in the digital world too?”
- **Changes in Behavior:** Look for signs such as a participant suddenly becoming withdrawn, anxious when checking their phone, or avoiding social digital interaction.
- **Screenshot Culture:** Remind participants that “what happens online, stays online.” A single joke or image can quickly be screenshotted and used to humiliate someone far beyond the original group.

Common Guidelines

- **Continuous Dialogue:** Digital safety and online climate should be a recurring topic of discussion before, during, and after the exchange. Make it a natural part of the daily routine, for example during morning briefings or evening reflections, to capture any tensions or exclusionary behavior early.
- **Label the behavior:** If staff become aware of harsh language or exclusionary behavior online, they must name it immediately (e.g., “That comment was offensive”) to make the problem visible.
- **Digital Responsibility:** Participants should be encouraged to report if they see someone else being bullied online. Make it clear that “liking” or sharing a mean post is also a form of participation in the bullying.
- **Support and Documentation:** If cyberbullying occurs, staff should help the victim to save evidence (screenshots) before the material is deleted or hidden.

12.4 Grooming (digital sexual exploitation)

Grooming is one of the most serious risks in the digital environment. It refers to any act in which an adult builds an emotional bond with a child or young person online with the aim of exploiting or committing sexual abuse. Due to the anonymous and cross-border aspects of the internet, this poses a particularly high risk as adults can impersonate a young person of the same age. Although the threat often comes from unknown externalities, we must also be vigilant about inappropriate behavior between participants or between staff and participants.

Grooming is a tactical, deliberate and gradual process that is rarely immediate. Staff need to be aware of the three phases to intervene early:

1. **Relationship and trust building:** The perpetrator tries to create an exclusive relationship with the young person, often by offering the young person something they express a need for (attention, relationship, gifts, etc.). They encourage the young person to keep contact secret from adults.
2. **Cross-border:** The perpetrator begins to violate social and digital boundaries by asking for private or sexually charged images or information. They may use blackmail or manipulate the young person into participating in inappropriate actions.
3. **Meeting or abuse:** The goal is achieved by committing abuse online or by trying to arrange a physical meeting.

The staff's proactive work is to create a culture where it is safe and accepted to say no and to tell an adult if someone asks for secrets or inappropriate material.

Common Guidelines

- **Professional attitude:** Staff are not allowed to have private digital contacts (chat, dm) with participants. All necessary communication must take place in official groups/equipment or for the exchange or with another adult in copy.
- **Reporting:** In the event of suspicion that a participant is being subjected to grooming – regardless of whether the perpetrator is an adult or another participant – this must be handled immediately according to the procedure in 2.5 Duty of confidentiality and Duty of notification (mandatory internal reporting to manager).
- **Documentation:** Contact proper authorities like police and/or organization like ECPAT



MODULE 13: COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

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Module 13: Complaints Management

In international youth work, it is essential to establish a transparent and accessible complaint procedure that ensures participants can express concerns safely and confidently. Every complaint must be taken seriously and handled in a respectful, structured, and confidential manner.

The process begins with receiving and acknowledging the complaint. Staff members must treat every concern seriously and, depending on the nature of the complaint, document it appropriately. Written complaints should ideally be reviewed according to the four-eyes principle, meaning that two staff members examine the issue together. The next step is to carefully assess the situation, for example by speaking with the individuals involved and ensuring transparency throughout the process. Once the facts are clarified, appropriate measures must be taken to address the issue. Afterwards, feedback should be given to the person who filed the complaint, and if relevant, the sending organization should be informed. Finally, the complaint process should be closed in a traceable and professional way.

A well-functioning complaint procedure helps safeguard the rights and dignity of all participants. It enables the identification and correction of misconduct, restores trust when handled properly, and highlights structural weaknesses that can then be improved. Complaints are not merely expressions of dissatisfaction — they are also valuable indicators of unmet needs, opportunities for change, and starting points for open communication.

Young people often use digital channels, such as social media or email, to share feedback or complaints. While this accessibility is important, it also presents challenges, as messages sent via social media might be seen only by the person concerned or even deleted. Therefore, it is vital to provide multiple safe and reliable ways to submit complaints. Participants should always have the right to remain anonymous, and all information must be handled confidentially. However, if they wish to receive follow-up or feedback, it is generally advisable not to remain anonymous.

Different types of complaints can arise — interpersonal conflicts, inappropriate behavior, or structural issues — and each must be taken seriously. Staff should always listen carefully, show empathy, and work together with the young person to find constructive solutions. Complaints should be seen as opportunities to understand what lies behind the perceived problem and as a chance to improve processes and relationships. Transparency is key: participants must know what options exist, how their complaint will be handled, and what outcomes they can expect.

Various channels for expressing complaints should be available during international exchanges. This can include a lockable feedback or complaint box that is checked under the four-eyes principle, daily feedback sessions, or formal evaluation forms. An open communication culture should be encouraged, where staff are approachable for any kind of concern, and where participants know exactly who they can turn to — including the possibility to raise a complaint about a main contact person to someone at a higher level.

In the event of anonymous complaints, it is helpful to inform the group afterwards that the concern was received and that steps will be taken to make improvements in future projects. Furthermore, clear preparation before the exchange can prevent many complaints. For example, clarifying expectations during pre-departure meetings — such as accommodation arrangements (e.g., shared rooms with four to six beds) — helps participants better understand what to expect.

To support this process, it is recommended to provide a flyer or information pack listing all relevant contact persons during the program as well as those responsible at the organizational level. This information should be distributed to participants and their parents before the start of the exchange. By maintaining transparency, accessibility, and a culture of respect, the complaint procedure becomes not only a protective measure but also a tool for empowerment, participation, and continuous improvement.

Common Guidelines

- **Responsibility:** Make clear who is the responsible person at a higher level for the youth exchange and can be contacted by participants if needed.
- **Immediate action:** Have a contact-person available for the participants who is a staff member the youth exchange.



MODULE 14:

THE EXTERNAL PROTECTION NETWORK

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Module 14: The external protection network

The project's internal reporting procedures (see 2.5 and module 13) are the first line of the protection concept. However, in the event of serious incidents (such as violence, crime, disappearances or serious substance abuse), staff need to know exactly which external authorities to contact in the host country. Not knowing how to reach the police, emergency medical services or social services in time can have disastrous consequences. A defined network is essential to be able to act quickly.

The three levels of the network: To be prepared in a foreign country, the external network must be defined on three levels:

1. **In the host country:** These are the contacts that must be acted upon immediately in the event of an emergency, regardless of the country:
 - **Emergency numbers:** Police, ambulance, fire department.
 - **Local police/social services:** Contact information for the local authority responsible for child welfare matters in the exchange area.
2. **With the help of the partner organization:** The partner organization has the best local knowledge. The project protection team must have quick access to:
 - **Partner Designated Contact Person:** The person in the Partner organization who is designated to handle *all* protection issues and has the authority to act.
3. **International support (home/embassy):** In the event of serious crises, the home country's support must be mobilized:
 - **Organization Manager/CEO at home:** Contact person in case of crisis.
 - **Embassy or consulate:** Important in case of disappearances, arrests or serious legal matters.

Common Guidelines

- **Contact lists:** A complete and up-to-date list of participants and their guardians' contact details, emergency numbers, local police stations and internal/external contact persons (including their responsibilities) shall be available physically and digitally to all staff.
- **Language barriers:** Staff need to identify who on the team can communicate most effectively with local authorities and possibly in the language of the host country.
- **External reporting obligation:** In cases where the internal reporting (2.5) leads to the decision to contact an external authority, this contact must be initiated by the responsible manager and take place in accordance with the laws of the host country.
- **European Health Insurance Card:** Everyone who takes part in the exchange must carry the European Health Insurance Card with them. Staff should find out and inform all participants in good time about where and how to order it.

APPENDIX

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Risks and Potential Analysis

Instructions: This analysis is ALWAYS carried out BEFORE the Checklists. It is risk assessment before the exchange and the basis of the protection concept. In the case of “No” or “Partially”, measures are determined and then implemented in the Checklist.

Project: _____ **Location/Country:** _____ **Date:** _____ **Team/Organization:** _____

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
ORGANIZATION, RESPONSIBILITY, SUPERVISION							
Roles: Are leadership, safeguarding officer, first aid, night duty, and documentation set in writing?	☐	☐	☐	Unclear responsibilities lead to gaps in supervision and delayed action.	Clear roles create safety and fast decisions.	☐ Define/adjust rules (e.g., set/adapt rules) ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Training/Briefing ☐ External consulting ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Im-plementation; Acute Actions
Supervision: Is the staff ratio realistic for age, program, night duty, and travel (incl. Plan B in case of absence)?	☐	☐	☐	Insufficient presence in-creases risk during free time, on paths, and at night.	Appropriate presence enables protection and pedagogical freedom.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision (e.g., increase presence) ☐ Activate intervention plan ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Im-plementation

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Briefing: Is there a team briefing on proximity/disfance, power, boundaries, intervention, and documentation?	☐	☐	☐	Inconsistent actions, trivialization, or overreaction can cause harm.	Shared standards strengthen consistent action.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Training/Briefing ☐ External consulting ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Challenging Situations; Acute Actions
Contact Chain: Is the emergency communication chain (internal/partner/parents/authorities/media) established?	☐	☐	☐	Incorrect or chaotic communication can endanger those affected.	Ordered communication protects and relieves.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Retrofit technology/security ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Acute Actions; Handling Severe Incidents
ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE, TRANSPORT & PATHS							
Meeting Points: Are clear meeting points, time windows, buddy systems, and pick-up rules for arrival/departure established?	☐	☐	☐	Separation/loss, stress, or danger in public spaces.	Structured arrival reduces risks.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Public Transport: Are rules for travel with public transport (tickets, group guidance, emergency meeting point) clarified?	☐	☐	☐	Getting lost, isolation, or conflicts in transit situations.	Clear path rules increase safety.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics
Vehicles: If bus/car is used: Are drivers, rest periods, seating order, belts, and emergency equipment clarified?	☐	☐	☐	Accidents, exhaustion, or lack of safety equipment.	Safe transport standards lower accident risk.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Retrofit technology/security ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics
Excursions: Are excursion rules (small groups, check-in/out, return times, maps/offline contacts) established?	☐	☐	☐	Supervision gaps during free time/excursions.	Responsible freedom within a protective frame.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Training/Briefing ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation; Challenging Situations

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
ACCOMMODATION: GENERAL SAFETY							
Fire Safety: Are escape routes, assembly points, and fire alarm rules known and explained on the day of arrival?	☐	☐	☐	Panic, loss of time, and increased risk of injury in an emergency.	Routines increase safety and calm.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Retrofit technology/security ○ Training/Briefing ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Acute Actions; Living & Logistics
Access: Are entry rules (who is allowed in the house/on the floor? keys/wristbands/cards) clarified?	☐	☐	☐	Unauthorized people can gain access unnoticed.	Controlled access increases security.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Change accommodation ☐ Change host family ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics
Visitors: Are there rules for external visitors (technicians, guests) and are these actively addressed?	☐	☐	☐	Risk through uncontrolled contact/approach.	Awareness strengthens safety culture.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Valuables: Is there a possibility to store passports/insurance/medications/valuables safely (lockable, access regulated)?	☐	☐	☐	Theft, travel problems, medication risks.	Secure storage reduces conflicts and emergencies.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Retrofit technology/security (e.g., provide lockers/safes) ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics
Reachability: Are team mobile numbers/emergency numbers handed out and do they work (roaming/offline)?	☐	☐	☐	No quick help / communication in an emergency.	Reachability strengthens certainty in action.	☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Communication and language access
Accessibility: Is the accommodation barrier-free (access, elevator, paths, rooms, bathroom) or are there alternatives?	☐	☐	☐	Exclusion/overwhelm, health risks.	Inclusion and safe participation.	☐ Change room/path planning ☐ Change accommodation ☐ Change host family ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Inclusion, Diversity & Training
BEDROOMS & SLEEPING AREAS							
Allocation: Is the room allocation planned (privacy, protection needs, conflicts, queer/gender-sensitive)?	☐	☐	☐	Conflicts, exclusion, increased risks to intimacy.	Appropriate allocation strengthens well-being and belonging.	☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Staff Rooms: Are staff rooms separate (or are access rules/2-person principle for contact established)?	☐	☐	☐	Proximity-disturbance risks and situations of suspicion.	Clear boundaries protect youth and the team.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Training/Briefing ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation
Room Visits: Are rules for room visits (who, when, door open, no 1:1 in closed rooms) established?	☐	☐	☐	Risk of boundary violations in closed rooms.	Transparency and protection for all.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation; Challenging Situations
Night Rest: Are rules for night rest (noise, visits, leaving, checks) clear and realistic?	☐	☐	☐	Night-time conflicts, running away, escalation.	A quiet night strengthens regeneration and safety.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Training/Briefing ☐ Communication to participants/staff/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Challenging Situations
SANITARY AREAS							
Privacy: Are clear rules for privacy in the bathroom (knocking, times, no photos, respect) agreed?	☐	☐	☐	Shaming, conflicts, assaults.	Shame-free hygiene strengthens well-being.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Gender/Queer: Are there practical solutions for gender/queer-sensitive usage (e.g., time windows, individual stalls)?	☐	☐	☐	Exclusion/ fear, conflicts, withdrawal.	Inclusion and protection.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Inclusion, Diversity & Training
INDOOR SPACES							
Overview: Are indoor spaces clear or are there hidden corners/storage rooms/basements with rules?	☐	☐	☐	Remote locations increase the risk of boundary violations.	Rules/locking/ checks increase safety.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Change room/path planning ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics
Locking Rules: Are there rules on whether rooms may be locked when people are inside?	☐	☐	☐	Locked rooms increase the risk of abuse.	Clear rules protect privacy and safety.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation
Visibility: Are team presence points established (where are staff visible/available)?	☐	☐	☐	Youth find no help; risks remain unnoticed.	Low-threshold accessibility.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Materials: Are dangerous objects/tools (tools, knives, chemicals) stored safely and rules explained?	☐	☐	☐	Potential for injury and violence.	Safe handling reduces accidents.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Health Management; Acute Actions
Quiet / Safe Room: Is there a quiet room for stress/overwhelm (sensory break) and does the group know it?	☐	☐	☐	Overwhelm, meltdowns, conflicts.	Prevention of psychosocial crises.	☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Health Management
OUTDOOR AREAS & SURROUNDINGS							
Remote Areas: Are there remote/hidden outdoor areas (hedges, backyard, park) – and rules for them?	☐	☐	☐	Risk zones for assaults, bullying, substance use.	Clear rules and presence increase safety.	☐ Training/Briefing ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation
Lighting: Is the outdoor area sufficiently lit in the evening or are there safe paths?	☐	☐	☐	Tripping/accidents/uncertainty, increased danger.	Safe paths strengthen the feeling of protection.	☐ Retrofit technology/security ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics
Boundaries: Are the boundaries of the permitted area clear (where can one go, where not)?	☐	☐	☐	Getting lost, uncontrolled contacts, hazardous spots.	Orientation and protective frame.	☐ Retrofit technology/security ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Public Contact: Are rules for contact with outsiders (addressing, invitations, going along) clear and practiced?	☐	☐	☐	Grooming/assaults/manipulation by outsiders.	Self-protection and clear team strategies.	☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Challenging Situations
FOOD, CATERING, KITCHEN							
Allergies: Are allergies/intolerances recorded and communicated to the kitchen/host (incl. emergency medication)?	☐	☐	☐	Anaphylaxis/health emergencies.	Safe nutrition prevents crises.	☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Health Management; Acute Actions
Dietary Needs: Are religious/ethical dietary needs (halal, vegetarian, etc.) planned to be practically feasible?	☐	☐	☐	Exclusion/stress/refusal of food.	Inclusion and respect strengthen the group.	☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Inclusion, Diversity & Training
PROGRAM, ACTIVITIES & SPECIAL RISKS							
Risk Profile: Are activities with increased risk (water, climbing, night actions, city) identified and secured?	☐	☐	☐	Accidents, overwhelm, liability problems.	Safe planning enables experience and protection.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Increase supervision ☐ Retrofit technology/security ☐ External consulting ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Living & Logistics; Health Management

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
Consents: Do you have consent forms/health releases (for minors) that are understandable?	☐	☐	☐	Legal uncertainty, conflicts in an emergency.	Transparency and legal security.	☐ Training/Briefing ☐ External consulting ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Legal & Reporting Duties
DIGITAL SPACES							
Photo/Video: Do you have a consent form for photo/video (consent, no in-time areas, no exposure) agreed and controllable?	☐	☐	☐	Data protection violation, cyberbullying, shame.	Dignity and data protection are protected.	☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ External consulting ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Communication and language access
Group Chat: Are there chat rules (rest times, respectful language, moderation, reporting path for problems)?	☐	☐	☐	Cyberbullying, pressure, night-time escalation.	A clear chat culture strengthens safety.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Communication and language access
Staff 1:1: Are 1:1 contact in the digital space between staff and participants regulated (e.g., only service/emergency, 2-person principle)?	☐	☐	☐	Risk of boundary violation/uncertainty.	Transparency protects everyone.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Communication to participants/parents ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	General Implementation

Topic / Specific Question	Yes	No	Part.	Risk	Potential	Measures (Text modules + Responsibility/Deadline) ↓ Select / Add measures:	Checklist - Areas to activate
CRISIS & EMERGENCY							
Documentation: Is there a clear documentation routine (date, location, those involved, wording, measures) and material for it?	☐	☐	☐	Unclear factual situation complicates protection and processing.	Traceability and learning.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Acute Actions
Medical: Are First-Aid kit, responsibility, nearest hospital/emergency service, and insurance information available?	☐	☐	☐	Delayed medical help.	Fast care.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Retrofit technology/security O Training/Briefing ☐ External consulting ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Health Management; Acute Actions
Missing: Is there a plan for a "missing person" (times, search route, police, info-chain)?	☐	☐	☐	Chaos, delay, dangerous situations.	Clear steps increase the likelihood of quick help.	☐ Define/adjust rules ☐ Clarify responsibilities ☐ Retrofit technology/security ☐ Other: _____ Responsible: _____ By: _____	Acute Actions; Handling Severe Incidents

SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

– HOW SAFE IS OUR EXCHANGE FOR ME?

Self-assessment for young people – How safe is our exchange for me?

Please mark with a cross. You can and should be honest. If something is “No” or “Partially”, we will look for solutions together. You can also write something down. You can write your name, or you fill it out anonymous.

Project/Country: _____ Date: _____ (optional) Name: _____

Topic	Question (simple)	Yes 😊	Part. 😐	No 😞	What do I wish for?
Room	In my room, I feel safe and respected.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Bathroom	In the bathroom/shower, I am left in peace (no comments, no photos).	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Night	I know whom I can talk to at night if I feel bad.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Retreat area	I know a quiet place where I am allowed to be alone for a short time.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Outside	I also feel safe outside (grounds/park).	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Paths	I know how we should behave on paths/excursions.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Food	I get food that I can eat (allergy, religion, vegetarian etc.).	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Health	When I am ill or need help, I get support quickly.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Respect	In the group, people are not insulted or excluded.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Rules	I understand the rules and find them fair.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Help	I know whom I can turn to if something is not okay.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Complaint	I can complain without being afraid.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Photos	Photos/videos are only taken if I agree.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Chat	In the group chat, the tone is respectful and nobody is bullied.	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____
Boundaries	My boundaries are respected (e.g., no unwanted touching).	☐	☐	☐	I wish for: _____

CHECKLISTS

Checklists

Activity	Responsible	When	Yes	No	Part.	N/A
BEFORE THE EXCHANGE: PREPARATION & LEGAL FRAMEWORK						
Legal & Reporting Duties						
Have staff informed themselves about the applicable protection laws and notification procedures in the host country?	Project Management/Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have staff clarified their duty to report/oblige the young people in the home country?	Project Management/Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have contact details for legal advisor/manager been secured?	Project Management/Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is a list of emergency numbers (police, ambulance, social emergency services) available for both the host country and the home country?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have age limits for substances/activities in the host and home country been compared and communicated?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have staff received a briefing on how to handle potential legal conflicts (e.g., confidentiality vs. duty to report)?	Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adult check – Has proof of national criminal record checks been obtained and verified for all staff?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inclusion, Diversity & Training						
Has the team conducted staff training on norm-critical issues (e.g., gender norms, toxic masculinity) and cultural understanding?	Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have all staff been trained to recognize signs of honor-related violence and domestic violence?	Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have contact details for national support lines (women's shelters, etc.) in each home country been shared with the team?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Translation – has the "Code of Conduct" been translated into the required languages for all participants?	Project Management / Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have the staff clarified and committed to using inclusive/gender-neutral language in all communication?	Staff/Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐

Activity	Responsible	When	Yes	No	Part.	N/A
Have potential local risks (social/political) for LGBTQIA+ persons in the host country been researched and communicated to staff?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has gender-neutral accommodation (if relevant) and secure bathroom facilities been available and prepared?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rules and Participation						
Have the staff agreed and signed a common Code of Conduct for the international team?	Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have the young people participated in proposing, discussing, and signing the exchange's regulations?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have parents/guardians received information about rules and possible consequences in the event of violations?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have participants been informed of their rights and the available complaint mechanism?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intersectionality						
Have staff reflected on how overlapping identities (e.g. gender, disability, ethnicity, class, sexuality) may affect participants' safety and access?	Manager / Staff Team	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have safeguarding measures been reviewed to ensure they also protect participants facing multiple forms of discrimination?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have staff discussed potential blind spots linked to their own roles, power positions, and privileges?	Manager	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have barriers to participation (linguistic, physical, cultural, social, economic) been identified in advance?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have concrete accommodations been planned to reduce identified barriers without stigmatizing participants?	Project Management / Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educational Concept, Topic & Goals						
Has a clear topic for the exchange been defined and agreed with all partners?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have educational and learning goals been clearly formulated and documented?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are the goals realistic, achievable, and appropriate for the age group?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐

Activity	Responsible	When	Yes	No	Part.	N/A
Have goals been communicated in a way participants can understand?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partner Cooperations and Responsibilities						
Has the partner organization been assessed regarding reliability, experience, and safeguarding standards?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are roles and responsibilities clearly divided between partner organizations?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have communication routines between partners been agreed (regular calls, emergency contact)?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Financing & Financial Risk Planning						
Has a cost and financing plan been created and agreed with partners?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have funding sources and application deadlines been clarified?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is there a financial contingency plan (Plan B) in case funding is reduced or delayed?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparation						
Project Development – Have young people participated in the project idea, partner search, and application process?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Project Preparation – Have young people been involved in decisions regarding accommodation, transport, and food?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Does the program include a balance of structured activities and free time?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are voluntary activities clearly marked as voluntary?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the program flexible enough to adapt to group needs and dynamics?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participant Preparation & Information						
Have participants received written information about program, rules, and expectations?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have parents/guardians been informed and involved where required?	Project Management	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have special needs, dietary requirements, and accessibility needs been collected and planned for restaurant visits and cooking?	Staff	Before	☐	☐	☐	☐

Activity	Responsible	When	Yes	No	Part.	N/A
DURING THE EXCHANGE: GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION						
General Implementation						
Are group dynamics and power imbalances actively observed by staff?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are regular reflection or feedback moments offered to participants?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are signs of emotional stress, exhaustion, or exclusion addressed early?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication and language access						
Is communication organized so all participants can understand key information?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are translation, simplified language, or non-verbal methods used when needed?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are participants encouraged to speak up despite language barriers?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Living & Logistics						
Is the accommodation for staff clearly separated from participants' accommodation?	Staff	During	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the daily program implemented with awareness of cultural differences and the group's "third culture"?	Staff	During	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the agreed-upon decision framework (which decisions young people are allowed to make) being followed?	Staff	During	☐	☐	☐	☐
On-site Participation – Are participants involved in organizing free time, social media management, and daily routines?	Staff	During	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has a daily or regular feedback channel (for complaints/suggestions) been established and utilized?	Staff	During	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenging Situations						
Are emotional lows, homesickness, or group tensions actively addressed?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are team discussions used to agree on responses to emerging challenges?	Staff / Manager		☐	☐	☐	☐
DURING THE EXCHANGE: IN CRISIS & INCIDENT						
Acute Actions						
Immediately intervene in the situation and stop the behaviour.	Staff	Crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐

Activity	Responsible	When	Yes	No	Part.	N/A
Is the routine for documentation (date, time, location, persons involved) of the incident initiated?	Staff	Crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has the incident been reported to the team leader/responsible manager?	Staff	Crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is there a routine for intervening in conflicts without judgment when cultural misunderstandings occur?	Staff	Crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Handling Severe Incidents						
In case of honour violence/domestic violence: Has a safe space for the victim/affected person been secured?	Manager/Staff	Crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐
In case of severe incident: Have police/social services (in the home and host country) been contacted if necessary?	Project Management/Manager	Crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has a plan for the participant's eventual return home in case of threat or danger been executed?	Project Management/Manager	Crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has the incident been assessed with awareness of multiple, overlapping vulnerability factors?	Staff / Manager		☐	☐	☐	☐
Has it been checked whether institutional routines contributed to the situation (not only individual behavior)?	Manager		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are protective measures adapted to the specific needs of the affected participant(s)?	Manager / Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Intersectionality						
Are staff actively monitoring whether some participants are systematically less heard or less visible in group processes?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are feedback and complaint mechanisms accessible to participants with different communication styles or confidence levels?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are informal hierarchies or exclusions within the group addressed early and transparently?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
Are staff intervening when discrimination is subtle, structural, or normalized – not only when it is explicit?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐
AFTER THE EXCHANGE: FOLLOW-UP & FINAL MANAGEMENT						
Follow-up with Involved Parties						

Activity	Responsible	When	Yes	No	Part.	N/A
Has an individual follow-up conversation been held with the victim to restore a sense of safety?	Manager/Staff	After	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has an individual follow-up conversation been held with the perpetrator to clarify zero tolerance and any consequences?	Manager/Project Management	After	☐	☐	☐	☐
In case of honor violence/domestic violence: Has coordination with social services/police for safe return home/protection been completed?	Project Management/Manager	After	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality Management						
Has an overall evaluation been carried out with participants (learning, satisfaction, participation)?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Have educational outcomes been reflected within the staff team?	Staff / Manager		☐	☐	☐	☐
Evaluation						
Has an evaluation of the crisis routines and incident management been carried out?	Project Management	After	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have lessons learned from incidents been documented and added to future contingency plans?	Project Management/Manager	After	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has the evaluation reviewed whether safeguarding structures worked equally well for all participants?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Have structural gaps or exclusions been identified and documented for future exchanges?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Have safeguarding routines been adjusted to better prevent discrimination before incidents occur?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Dokumentation, Transfer & Reporting						
Has project documentation been completed and archived?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Have financial reports and proofs been submitted?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Have certificates, confirmations, or acknowledgements been issued?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Have results been shared with partners and relevant stakeholders?	Project Management		☐	☐	☐	☐
Follow-up Participation – Are young people involved in collecting/sharing media and providing feedback for paperwork?	Staff		☐	☐	☐	☐

ERASMUS+ YOUTH EXCHANGE

CODE OF CONDUCT

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Code of Conduct for Participants

- Erasmus+ Youth Exchange

This Code of Conduct aims to ensure that all participants behave respectfully, responsibly, and cooperatively during the youth exchange so that everyone feels safe and comfortable. By participating in the exchange, each participant agrees to follow the rules below.

1. Respect and Openness

- I treat all people with respect, regardless of origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or opinion.
- I am open to intercultural exchange and strive to understand other perspectives.
- I listen, let others speak, and accept opinions even if they differ from mine.
- I understand that discrimination, bullying, or violence—verbal, physical, or digital—will not be tolerated.
- I respect the privacy of my peers' room and common areas.

2. Responsibility and Safety

- I contribute to ensuring that everyone feels safe and comfortable.
- I take care of my own health and safety and that of others.
- I follow agreements and venue rules and take responsibility for my actions.
- I leave spaces as I found them—or better.
- I treat other people's property with care and respect.
- If I see or experience a problem, I talk openly.

3. Alcohol, Drugs, and Cigarettes

- I understand that the use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.
- I consume alcohol and smoke only within legal limits and responsibly (depending on the country and project rules, possibly not at all).

4. Participation and Engagement

- I actively participate in all program activities and contribute to a positive group atmosphere.
- I am punctual and respect the daily schedule.
- If I need to miss an activity, I must inform a staff member in advance.
- I use my phone only when it does not disturb the activity.

5. Privacy and Media Use

- I respect the privacy of other participants.
- I comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and always ask for permission before taking or sharing photos or videos of others.

6. Conflicts and Communication

- I speak openly and respectfully when misunderstandings or conflicts arise.
- I am aware that I can always turn to team members or group leaders if I need support.
- I am aware that I can leave a complaint anonymously.
- I don't look away and pay attention to how all participants are feeling and in unclear situations I ask questions.
- I am aware that informing others and drawing attention to something is never considered tattling.

7. Violation of the Code

If I violate this Code of Conduct, educational or organizational measures may be taken—in extreme cases, I may be excluded from the exchange.

8. Commitment

We are here to learn from one another, grow together, and build international friendships. Everyone contributes to making this exchange a positive experience. By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to follow this Code of Conduct.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Erasmus+ Youth Exchange

- Code of Conduct for Staff

This Code of Conduct sets out the principles and standards expected from all staff and facilitators involved in the Erasmus+ Youth Exchange. Staff members hold a position of responsibility, trust, and power, and their role is to ensure the safety, inclusion, and wellbeing of all participants. Professional behavior, ethical integrity, and reflective practice are essential to creating a positive and secure learning environment.

By signing this document, each staff member confirms their commitment to upholding these standards throughout the project.

1. Power and Professional Role

- I am aware of my professional role and the power that comes with it.
- I treat all participants with equal respect and dignity regardless of origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or opinion.
- I show presence and through my actions I provide structure and security.
- I reflect on my words, tone, and actions to prevent any form of vulnerability or discomfort.
- I choose my clothes carefully as to not make anyone uncomfortable.
- I maintain professional distance—romantic or sexual relationships with participants are strictly prohibited.
- I communicate exit strategy options transparently and ensure they are easy to access and implement.
- I enable anonymous complaints and take all reports seriously.
- I do not share detailed personal experiences or private matters with participants; my private home life remains separate from my professional role.
- I do not accept personal gifts from participants to avoid favoritism or dependency.

Purpose: Prevention of abuse, maintaining professional distance and ethical integrity, ensuring role clarity and focus on young people's development.

2. Participation and Empowerment

- I acknowledge, value and note down participants' opinions, requests, and feedback.
- I listen without judgment and, whenever possible, democratically integrate their suggestions into the program.
- I explain procedures and decision-making processes transparently to encourage active participation.

Purpose: Strengthens democratic engagement, shared responsibility, and participants' sense of agency.

3. Proximity and Accommodation

- I avoid being alone with participants in closed or private spaces.
- In crisis or support situations, I ensure that conversations take place in visible areas (e.g., hallways or open rooms).
- In cases of medical emergencies or safety issues, first aid and immediate assistance take priority over preventive measures.
- I respect the personal boundaries and limits of everyone.

Purpose: Prevents misunderstandings, protects both staff and participants, and ensures safety and accountability.

4. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- I treat all sensitive information (medical, personal, or family-related) with strict confidentiality.
- I only share information with team members if it is necessary for a participant's safety (need-to-know principle).
- I comply fully with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when handling or storing personal data.

Purpose: Builds trust, upholds ethical standards, and ensures compliance with legal data protection requirements.

5. Rule Enforcement and Transparency

- The rules of the exchange are developed in a participatory manner with the group before the start of the program.
- As staff, I ensure that all rules — especially legal and safety - related ones — are followed consistently.
- I can explain the necessity and reasoning behind every rule clearly and respectfully.

Purpose: Ensures transparency, promotes understanding of regulations, and reinforces a shared sense of responsibility.

6. Communication and Reflection

- I engage in ongoing reflection and professional dialogue with my colleagues.
- In unclear or conflictual situations, I seek clarification promptly.
- I always communicate respectfully and constructively with the team.
- We talk and laugh with each other, not at each other.
- I accept all genders and use gender sensitive language.

Purpose: Promotes teamwork, professional learning, and consistency in decision-making.

7. Commitment

We, as staff, are role models and facilitators of a safe, inclusive, reliable and empowering intercultural experience. By following this Code of Conduct, we contribute to an environment of mutual respect, trust, and professional care.

Name: _____

Role / Function: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Code of Conduct

- Template

This template follows EU standards for ethical and professional conduct. It is designed to help organizations, youth workers, and coordinators develop their own Codes of Conduct. The sections below can be filled in, adjusted, or expanded according to the specific context, target group, and legal framework. Please use clear and inclusive language, consistent with the principles of the European Union and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

1. Purpose and Scope

Notes/Content: _____

2. Core Values and Principles

Notes/Content: _____

3. Respect and Inclusion

Notes/Content: _____

4. Responsibilities and Expected Conduct

Notes/Content:_____

5. Boundaries and Professional Behavior

Notes/Content:_____

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection (GDPR compliance)

Notes/Content:_____

7. Participation and Empowerment

Notes/Content:_____

8. Health, Safety, and Wellbeing

Notes/Content:_____

9. Communication and Conflict Resolution

Notes/Content:_____

10. Breaches and Consequences

Notes/Content:_____

11. Commitment and Signatures

Notes/Content:_____

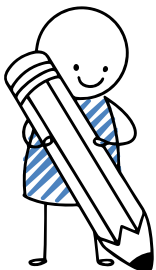
Name:_____

Role / Function:_____

Date:_____

Signature:_____

NOTES





**Göteborgs
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**Co-funded by
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Stadt Köln