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introduction

The Youth Work Service of Léargas – The Exchange Bureau is responsible for the delivery of programmes and services to the non-formal education sector in Ireland. The Youth Work Service plays an important role in promoting access by young people, and those who work with them, to a range of transnational programmes.

Youth Work Service administers the European Union Youth Programme 2000-2006 and the Causeway – British Irish Exchange Programme on behalf of the Department of Education.

The Youth Work Service offers a range of services to the youth and community sector including:

- Project development, assessment and grant aid
- Transnational partner finding
- Training opportunities and training support
- Information and publications
- Advice and guidance
- Promotion and awareness-raising activities

The participation of young people as active European citizens, fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, will contribute greatly to the process by which an ever closer union is forged between the peoples of Europe. It is important that young people are given the scope to experiment with new ideas, to create and to participate.

Transnational co-operation provides opportunities, not just for young people, youth workers and organisations, but also for the sharing of expertise and the development of good youth work practice.
International youth exchange gives young people the chance to participate in planning and organising their own activities, to experience decision-making and responsibility and to sample new cultures and values.

The Youth Work Service has pooled the vast experiences and accounts of youth groups who have undertaken international exchange projects to compile this publication.

This publication is by no means exhaustive, nor is it the only vision of international youth exchange which prevails. However, it is an attempt to reach a common vision of what is referred to as international youth exchange.

The European Union was once described by Jean-Marie Bergeret (1995) as the "European Salad" – like a salad the basic shape, colour, flavour and design of each ingredient, no matter how different, does not lose its own identity. Rather it adds its own uniqueness to the overall collection of ingredients, to create the salad where each of the ingredients, can still be viewed, experienced and appreciated separately.

**what is (an)**

**international** a partnership between two or more groups of equal size across national boundaries

**youth** young people within defined age groups (15 – 25 year olds)

**exchange?** of views, ideas, perspectives, attitudes – learning to work together and sharing the enrichment of differences
A youth exchange is...

- a developmental instrument through which to work with young people
- a challenge for young people which can promote personal development, self awareness and self confidence
- a way of broadening horizons, facilitating the learning of new skills and raising awareness of new possibilities
- a means of enhancing teamwork that results in a sense of achievement
- a tool that can promote tolerance and understanding and which challenges prejudices
- a mechanism that develops relationships within the group, the local community and beyond
- an instrument to help young people to learn about themselves, their history, culture and country.

the 5 phases of a youth exchange

Keeping in mind the need to have a structured and organised approach to the planning and preparation for an exchange project, while tapping into the advice and learning from youth groups who have already undertaken them, the Youth Work Service has identified 5 DISTINCT PHASES which are the main components of all international youth exchange projects.

This publication has been written using these five phases as the basis for planning an exchange project. EACH SECTION WILL RAISE SOME ISSUES which groups will need to consider when contemplating an exchange and will make some suggestions of how groups might develop their exchange plans.

These phases will be further developed throughout the guide using quotes from real exchange projects that have already taken place.
Why are you/your group doing an exchange?

Is there enough interest to carry out an exchange?

Do you have exchange experience or is there someone/somewhere you can access advice/help?

Is there a particular thematic area you would like to work on?

Do you need involvement/support from the local community?

Financially, can you afford it?
Let’s start at the very beginning; it’s a very good place to start...

If you’re thinking about doing an exchange but don’t know where to start then your first step is to explore the idea!

- **Contact Léargas** to find out about exchanges and the funding possibilities with other countries.
- **Contact other groups in your area, or your organisation, who have carried out an exchange** – they’ll be able to give you a complete run down on what is involved.
- **Consider, as a group, the amount of time, energy, enthusiasm and money involved in taking on an exchange.**

After all that, if you are still interested, take the time to look at what has motivated your group to undertake the exchange...

- **Is there an issue or theme which is of particular interest to the group** e.g. the environment, unemployment, early school leavers, addictions (drugs/alcohol), being young in Europe, multi-media/communication etc.
- **Is there a particular way you, as a group, like to work together** e.g. through drama, using video/other media, undertaking a survey, discussion sessions etc.

The commitment is there, the group want to get things moving on, and so what next… **find a partner.** There are many ways to find a suitable partner but firstly, you need to decide together what country you would like to exchange with.

- **Contact Léargas and find out about the Partner Finding Service:** www.leargas.ie/youth
- **Is your organisation part of an international network – explore those possibilities**
- **Speak with others from your organisation who may have recently participated in an activity in another country – they might be able to help**
- **If your town is twinned perhaps somebody from the twinning committee can be of assistance**
- **Perhaps there are people from other countries living in your locality – maybe they can put you in touch with somebody**

*“I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE YOUTH CLUB SINCE THE AGE OF 13 AND PROGRESSED THROUGH TO BECOME A LEADER... I FELT IT WAS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO MIX WITH AND FIND OUT ABOUT OTHER EUROPEAN YOUTH GROUPS”*

Dunboyne Senior Youth Club

*“WE REALISED THAT VERY SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES IN BOTH IRISH AND FINNISH HISTORY HAS LEFT US WITH THE TENDENCY TO REGARD ‘FOREIGNERS’ AS A POTENTIAL THREAT, ...ALSO THAT OUR EDUCATION SYSTEMS HAD FAILED MISERABLY TO PREPARE US FOR INTERCULTURAL SITUATIONS AND LIFE IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY”*

Do Do Youth Club
Throughout the process of exploring the idea it is also important that you start establishing the exchange group... there are a number of areas to consider

- **Is there a need to advertise the exchange?** – You could put up a notice announcing the exchange or hold a meeting inviting prospective participants and their parents/guardians to attend

- The recruitment and selection of participants should be clearly stated in order to ensure the need for commitment to the project as well as the work load to be undertaken by the whole group

- **Will more young people be interested in the exchange than there are places available?** – a written/verbal application for places may be appropriate, if you’re applying for funding the age range of participants may be important, participants might need to have a good record of attending the club, which participants will benefit more from the experience? – will that determine participation?

- **Don’t forget that you will also need to look at selecting leaders – who has the interest to co-ordinate the exchange? How many leaders should be involved?** If you’re not sure of the best ratios of leaders to young people, check the ‘Code of Good Practice for Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector’, published by the Department of Education and Science in 2002 or contact Léargas

- Once you have agreed the criteria for the selection of participants and leaders the ‘chosen few’ should be notified – this is a good time to agree a broad outline ‘contract’ with the group, highlighting what they are buying into – this should be clearly stated so that participants and leaders have the option to change their mind about being involved.

- It may be necessary to have a reserve list of participants who can take the place of members who might drop out due to personal or other circumstances

- Don’t forget that it is very important that club members who will not be part of the exchange project are aware of the proposed plans and that the exchange will not take over from the regular club activities.

“...THE NAVAN TRAVELLERS COMMITTEE,... RUN A SUMMER PROJECT... FOR YOUNG TRAVELLERS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN SOCIAL, RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES WHICH WILL INCREASE SELF-CONFIDENCE AND ESTEEM, DEVELOP TALENTS AND CREATIVITY – THE NAVAN TRAVELLERS COMMITTEE ASKED VSI TO SUPPORT THIS WORK WITH THE AID OF A WORKCAMP PROJECT”

Voluntary Service International
(Navan Travellers Project)

“WE WANTED TO EXPLORE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE REPUBLIC AND DISCOVER HOW GERMAN RE-UNIFICATION WAS COMING ALONG SEVEN YEARS AFTER THE ‘WALL’ HAD BEEN TAKEN DOWN”

Killaloe & Clonfert
Church of Ireland Youth Council
preparation
preparation

How long before the exchange do you need to start preparing?

How are you going to prepare as a group?

What aspects need to be prepared?

How are you going to communicate with your partner group?

Who is making decisions?

Who is planning the programme of activities?
It has been emphasised over and over and over again by groups who have the exchange experience that the preparatory phase is the key to success of the project and without a doubt the Youth Work Service of Léargas would endorse this – let’s take the elements of preparation one by one, the order in which preparatory activities happen will be dependant on the circumstances of each group and each exchange.

Working in partnership:

Throughout the project you will find that you have a number of important relationships to manage, these will include; your exchange partner group; your own club/organisation; your local community; the families and friends of participants; the public; the agency providing the funding; local businesses and the media.

To really bring the idea alive and to keep the momentum for your planning moving at a steady pace, you need to quickly start getting to know your partner group –

- Be clear about the joint aims and objectives of the exchange – are you thinking along the same lines?
- The exchange theme/project – are all partners clear about the theme of the project or the specific project that you’ll work on together
- What time of year is best for the exchange? – you need to agree dates
- Who will host the first part of the exchange and when will the second part happen? – a decision to be made in co-operation with your partner
- How many participants and leaders will be involved, what is the age range and male/female breakdown? – you should have equal numbers

"THE EXCHANGE ENHANCED THE PARTICIPANTS’ SELF-ESTEEM, THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY ALLOWING AND ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO CONTRIBUTE – EVERYBODY TOOK PART IN UN-PLANNED ACTIVITIES E.G. WASHING-UP AND CLEARING TABLES, AS WELL AS THE PLANNED PROGRAMME"

Cope Foundation

"THERE WAS A HUGE AMOUNT OF PREPARATION FOR THE EXCHANGE AND EACH INDIVIDUAL HAD THEIR OWN JOBS AND TASKS TO CARRY OUT – I WAS INVOLVED IN PLANNING EACH OF THE DAYS EVENTS TO TAKE PLACE WHILE THE AUSTRIANS VISITED US."

Oylgate Youth Club
Once you have exchanged the basic information with your partner group, as outlined above, you will then need to...

- Identify two main contacts in each partner group – remember they will be able to communicate in a common language
- Organise an advance planning visit – involve both a leader and a participant if possible
- Exchange detailed information on the profiles and backgrounds of the exchange participants
- Have you agreed a group ‘contract’ – your partner should know what that involves
- Tell each other about the preparatory work your group is undertaking and get a copy of their preparation plans
- Whether you are hosting or sending first, you need to exchange information on the planned programme of activities for the exchange
- What kind of accommodation can you offer/will be offered to you? – swap that information

In order to reduce the initial ‘shyness’ experienced by groups meeting for the first time, particularly during the first part of the exchange, it is a good idea to let the participants get to know each other in advance, they could...

- Exchange letters or photographs
- Exchange scrapbooks and newsletters
- Make a video introducing the whole group
- Participants could be ‘partnered’ and start a ‘buddy’ system

For the exchange leaders, it is also important that you start developing your relationship with the partner leaders, consider...

- Exchanging information on what your involvement with the exchange group has been
- Letting each other know how long you’ve been involved in youth work – full time, as a volunteer, number of years etc.
- Giving each other a brief outline of the type of training you have received as a youth worker
- Telling each other about the methods/techniques you use working with groups of young people and what you feel works best

“WE HAD ALL SPOKEN AT LENGTH TO VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE DUTCH GROUP ABOUT THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF THE VISIT TO IRELAND – THEIR MAIN AIMS LAY IN DISCOVERING SOMETHING OF IRISH CULTURE, AN INSIGHT INTO THE IRISH RESPONSE TO DISABILITY ISSUES, INDEPENDENT LIVING AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION”

Central Remedial Clinic
Developing a relationship with the participants’ parents/families –

• You may need to develop a parental consent form
• You should have information on participants’ health matters or special needs
• Can parents help out with fundraising events?
• During the hosting part of the exchange, are you considering home hosting? - The families need to know what is required of them

Co-operation with the local community

• Will you need permits to fundraise? – check it out
• Depending on the theme of your exchange you may need to get special permission from your local authority
• Consider that local businesses might offer sponsorship – work with them, highlighting the publicity they could get
• Is there a local ‘celebrity’ who could launch the exchange and attract publicity?

Involving the public, friends, media –

• Should you issue a press release to local newspapers or radio stations?
• A poster campaign could draw attention to your project
• Does your organisation issue a newsletter? – you could do an article on your forthcoming exchange

“In future planning I would suggest proposed programmes be exchanged so that suggestions of suitability of programmes can be discussed”

Ennis Youth Centre

“Going away I had the impression that the young people thought it was going to be all rule and regulations that, of course, were there to be broken – before our residential weekend in Galway we set out ground rules, we explained their purpose and involved all the group in putting them together”

Youthreach Transition Centre
Running in tandem with managing relationships within and outside your group you need to develop your relationship with the funding agency – some things to check

- What is the date of the application deadline for funding?
- Ensure that your partner group is applying to their national funding agency under the same application deadline
- Discuss the application process
  - Léargas will invite you to attend an application ‘interview’
  - Who from your group should attend the ‘interview’?
- When will you hear the results of your application?
- How much funding are you likely to receive?
- What percentage of the total exchange costs might be possible to secure?
- When will you be issued with your contract?
- What percentage of your grant will you receive in advance of the exchange?


Youthreach Transition Centre

Do Do Youth Club

THE TARGET GROUP FOR THIS PROJECT COMPRISED YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAD LEFT THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM EARLY, OR WHOSE PERSONAL AND/OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS HAD LEFT THEM STRIVING TOWARDS AN UNKNOWN FUTURE – THEIR UNEMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS WERE EXTREMELY LOW IN THE MODERN CLIMATE OF ‘CREDENTIALISM’, AND THEIR LIFE OPPORTUNITIES SEVERELY RESTRICTED AS A CONSEQUENCE

Bonnybrook Youth Project


THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PROJECT ALWAYS HAVE DIFFICULTY IN THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS AUTHORITY AND OFFICIALDOM – THROUGH THE WORK OF THE EXCHANGE THE PARTICIPANTS GOT TO SEE THE LOCAL GARDAÍ IN A NEW LIGHT”
Advance Planning Visit (APV)

You may decide, and recommendations would strongly suggest, that it is a very good idea to carry out an ADVANCE PLANNING VISIT with your partner.

- Building up links with your partner group and developing a strong relationship and good communication is vital to the success of your exchange
- If this is your first time to work together, then letters and telephone calls may suffice at the early stages, but there is no substitute for meeting face to face and “sussing” one another out
- Not only is it important for you to know that you get on and can work together – you have a great deal to discuss in relation to your joint exchange
- An APV ensures that you are no longer faceless voices at the end of a telephone, the relationship you will establish will ensure greater commitment to your exchange – it brings the whole idea of the exchange alive for both leaders and participants
- It’s a great opportunity for you to meet with the participants involved in the exchange and double check that the groups and leadership teams are compatible
- As the success of an exchange can hang on the ability of both groups to communicate with each other, the APV allows for a better assessment of language capabilities – it may also help you decide to include basic language learning in your own preparations
- Having had the opportunity to see what is planned for the exchange, how it has been planned, where it has been planned and by whom, an APV will encourage the groups to have more realistic expectations
- The opportunity will be there for partners to discuss the finer details of the planned programme – not enough time to get acquainted, too many museum visits, more time to be allocated to project work etc.
- The APV is a valuable opportunity to work out your respective financial commitments in advance – who will pay for what?
- Your APV should be held in the same place in which the exchange is to be hosted – meeting at some halfway point does not cut down on costs and it will cut down on quality

"THE APV WAS EXTREMELY USEFUL, INDEED IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT A PROJECT WITHOUT ONE – EVEN THOUGH THE LEADERS HAD WORKED TOGETHER BEFORE, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THEY WORKED TOGETHER AS A TEAM, THE APV HELPED US TO REALISE WE COULD WORK TOGETHER WELL”

Do Do Youth Club
The whole group should be involved in preparing for the APV and should be brought together for a debriefing afterwards – gathering group questions and ideas as well as information introducing yourselves will make for a feeling of involvement.

Following your APV, if you have discovered that your partner group are not really suitable – don’t go ahead with your exchange.

Remember that an APV is an intensive 2-3 days work and not an opportunity for tourism and sight-seeing.

Don’t leave your APV without meeting the leaders and participants who will be your partners in the exchange.

If you are home-hosting try to organise a meeting with the parents during the APV.

If a hostel, residential centre or campsite will be used to accommodate the exchange, make sure to check it out (for example, facilities such as eating area, dorms, washing facilities).

“IT WAS HARD TO LEARN DUTCH AS WE COULD NOT FIND A QUALIFIED TEACHER IN DUNDAK – WE DID LEARN SOME DUTCH PHRASES AND WE THOUGHT WE WERE GOOD AT THEM BUT WHEN OUR DUTCH FRIENDS CAME THEY TAUGHT US HOW TO PRONOUNCE THEM PROPERLY”

Ozone

“ONE CONSISTENT FAULT OF THE AUSTRIAN SCHEDULE WAS LONG PERIODS OF TIME LAPSELING BETWEEN ACTIVITIES – THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE TYPE OF ERROR WHICH AN ADVANCED PLANNING VISIT COULD HAVE REMEDIED – WE WOULD RECOMMEND THAT OTHER GROUPS DESIGN A PROGRAMME WHICH IS FUN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE YET DEFINITELY STRUCTURED”

Dunboyne Senior Youth Club

“AN ADVANCE VISIT IS WELL WORTHWHILE – IT ESTABLISHES FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT – IT ALLOWED US TO LOOK AT THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE GROUPS. PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS WHICH PEOPLE MAY FIND DIFFICULT TO APPROACH BY PHONE OR FAX MAY WELL BE RESOLVED DURING INFORMATION DISCUSSIONS IN A MORE RELAXED SETTING”

Cope Foundation
**Task groups**

Clearly the best exchanges are those which approach preparation in a well planned and participative way.

Throughout the preparation phase there are a number of key areas which will need to be developed (these areas will be dependant on whether your group is hosting or sending). In order to make sure that everyone participates in all phases of preparation and to ensure that individuals get the opportunity to develop new skills, many groups organise themselves into task groups – below are some examples of possible task groups which could be set up:

- Planning & time-tabling
- Group contract/agreement
- Finance
- Applying for funding
- Research
- Social activities
- Communication with partner
- Accommodation & general welfare
- Meals and catering
- Travel
- Public relations
- Project work
- Programme of activities
- Monitoring & evaluation
- Reporting

"FROM THE BEGINNING ESTABLISH AN OPEN-TYPE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GROUP MEMBERS AND PARTNER GROUPS – PLAN A VARIED PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES, EVALUATE REGULARLY WITH ALL CONCERNED, EXPECT CHANGES AND THEN SIT BACK TOGETHER AND ENJOY THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOUR"

Cope Foundation
Planning & Scheduling

The planning and scheduling of your exchange project should be one of the first steps undertaken by the whole group.

- It is important that you set dates for your exchange i.e. from the preparatory stage right through to the evaluation/reporting stage.
- The timetable for the exchange should be clearly written up and visible for the whole group.
- Task groups/individuals should be clear about what they are responsible for and the completion date assigned for all tasks.
- Throughout the planning stage you should remember that there are times when programmes will be accelerated and other times when it will be particularly slow.
- It might be a good idea to assign an individual/task group to ensure the planning chart is kept up to date.
- Consider how often the group get together – is this sufficient to carry out the planned preparation or will you need to meet more often?

Group contract/agreement

Some exchange groups have chosen to write up a group contract or agreement – such a document can make it very clear to the whole group the level of commitment required, as follows:

- The number of meetings that will be held to prepare for the exchange.
- The type of activities that the group will undertake.
- The financial contribution required from individuals, if any.
- The commitment to fundraising.
- The ‘rules’ agreed by the group e.g. decisions on smoking, drinking, a curfew time etc.
- Who makes decisions about the exchange and where the final authority lies.
- The role of the leaders.

“EVERYONE GOT INVOLVED IN DRAWING UP THE RULES FOR THE TRIP AND IN MAKING A LIST OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EXCHANGE”
Kilaloe & Clonfert
Church of Ireland Youth Council

“WE WENT ON A 3-DAY RESIDENTIAL TO GALWAY, AT THE END OF WHICH THE GROUP REALLY CAME TOGETHER IN A WAY I HADN’T SEEN BEFORE, THEY WERE MUCH MORE SUPPORTIVE OF EACH OTHER AND ALSO EVEN MORE MOTIVATED ABOUT GOING TO MANCHESTER – I THINK IT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ANY EXCHANGE”
Youthreach Transition Centre
Finance

For most groups the issue of finance is a 'biggie' – the whole group should discuss the following questions:

• What is the exchange going to cost?
• How much fundraising will the group need to do?
• Will it be possible to get sponsorship?
• Can your organisation/club contribute any funds?
• Who is going to be responsible for finances?
• Is there funding available for youth groups undertaking exchange projects?
• Do you need to set up a separate bank account?

When it comes to budgeting there are some basic principles which you should apply:

• Don’t make wild guesses about how much your exchange is going to cost – you should base your budget on quotes and estimates you have researched
• Keep a watchful eye on costs that may change depending on the season and availability (e.g. travel costs in peak-season versus off peak- APEX Fares)
• Regarding income, you should consider how much actual ‘cash’ you can lay your hands on (e.g. a contribution from your organisation, sponsorship from your local county council, fundraising events or donations)
• Perhaps there are some ‘non-cash’ contributions you might be able to access – will you get your meeting place free of charge? Is there a local business that will provide materials for your project or give you food/drinks?
• The whole group should be aware of how much the exchange will cost and how it will be financed
• Is it worthwhile having a task group who will take responsibility for finances? Think of the skills they would develop; costing, budgeting, payment & receipts, managing a bank account etc.
• Get the whole group together to brainstorm fundraising ideas
• Ensure that everybody, including the leaders, gets involved in the fundraising events

“I WAS INVOLVED IN SETTING UP GROUPS OF PEOPLE TO GO ON SHIFTS OF BAG PACKING IN DUNNES STORES TO RAISE MONEY FOR OUR PROJECT – THIS WAS DONE BY USING A ROTA”

Oylgate
Research

There are a number of levels at which a research task group could work

• Exploring your partner country, their culture, traditions, way of life, food etc.
• Putting together information on your own country, your area, traditions etc.
• Looking at some language training – can you speak your partner’s language? Would it be nice to be able to speak some of the basics?
• Depending on the exchange project/theme chosen by the group, there may be a need to undertake some research into the subject
• It is always a good idea to look at what it means to young people to be part of Europe

“LEARNING ABOUT NORWAY, IRELAND AND THE EU WAS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE EXCHANGE... A STUDENT TEACHER FROM NORWAY RAN WORKSHOPS ON NORWAY AS WELL AS TEACHING BASIC NORWEGIAN”
Bonnybrook Youth Project

“THREE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN ON EXCHANGES BEFORE TOLD US ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE, IT WAS GREAT TO HEAR OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE’S OPINIONS”
Carlow Regional Youth Service
Social activities

If your group are hosting, you will need to put together a social programme for your partners, consider:

- What kind of social activities are available in your locality
- Will you need to organise travel to/from the activities
- Social time can just be ‘hanging out’ – it doesn’t always involve activities
- How much have you made available in your budget for entertainment
- Who will take responsibility for making the bookings
- Will you need to make deposit payments to secure the bookings
- What types of activities are your partners interested in
- Is there entertainment/visits that are free to the public
- Will any of the planned activities exclude group members e.g. where there is a required level of fitness/mobility to participate
- Will certain activities require additional insurance for the group
- It is important that your programme is balanced i.e. work, rest and play
- It is equally important that the social activities do not take from the overall objectives of the exchange
Communication with Partner

In choosing your partner you should have already identified some obvious links between your group and them, you should be able to communicate in a common language and you should ensure that communication exists at as many level as possible, you might

• Time-table a rota for regular communication with your partner
• Allow time, during your group meeting, for an up-date on communication with your partner group
• Ensure that there is a regular exchange of relevant information about your project
• Agree what method of communication will be used e.g. phone, fax, e-mail, internet
• Consider how much you have budgeted for communication
• To avoid a feeling of exclusion, set up a ‘pen pal’ system between individual participants or teams
• If the group is being home-hosted, exchange details of the type of accommodation they can expect
• Exchange participant profiles, highlighting any dietary requirements or special needs

Accommodation & General Welfare

You will already be aware that having accommodation that is comfortable and clean is very important but there are a number of additional questions to ask yourselves

• What are the organisational guidelines for the Protection and Safety of Young People
• What is the most appropriate type of accommodation for the group e.g. hostel, home-hosting, etc.
• How much money have you allowed for accommodation in your budget?
• Will all partners be accommodated together (including the host group)?
• Will you need special insurance?
• Information about local doctors, chemists, hospitals, Bureau de Change
• Does your chosen accommodation need to be wheelchair accessible?
• Have you got an adequate first aid kit?
• Who is trained in first aid (at least two people should have training)
• What security facilities are available for passports and other valuables

“INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON PARTNERS, ORGANISATION & COUNTRY – PARTICIPANTS EACH FAXED A NOTE OF INTRODUCTION TO THEIR PARTNER AND THEN WROTE A LETTER WITH A PHOTO”
Ennis Youth Centre (young women’s group)
Meals & catering

Don’t underestimate the need for sufficient well balanced meals – it is amazing the number of exchanges which have had a problem with food – a task group set up to look after meals and catering can be a very good idea, the group can

- Research what kind of food is most liked/disliked by the groups
- Research suitable eating establishments
- Research the costs required for meals ensuring that the budget requirement is met
- Consider having a traditional food night i.e. involving dishes from your partner country and Ireland
- Organise a cooking and wash-up rota
- Book restaurants, if eating out
- Organise shopping where appropriate
- Look for sponsorship from the local shops (i.e. food/snacks/drinks)

"I LIKE TO COOK SO I WAS INVOLVED IN PLANNING THE FOOD FOR THE IRISH DAY..."
Do Do Youth CLUB

Travel

Whether hosting or sending, your group will have to consider making travel arrangements to suit the exchange – a travel task group can

- Explore ways of travelling to your partner country – overland, flying, taking your own bus, train etc.
- Consider what mode of transport best suits your group
- Research the cost of travel
- Check that everyone has the required passport, visa (if required for travel outside the EU member states), E111 form
- Get the best deal on group travel
- Research the level of travel insurance necessary
- Get out a map and look at the route you will take
- Consider what food/subsistence will be required en route
- Research local transport costs
- Organise airport ‘pick-up’ and ‘drop-off’ arrangements

"THIS WAS MY FIRST TIME TO FLY AND I THINK EVERYONE ELSE ON THE PLANE KNEW THIS TOO AS I COULDN’T STOP SCREAMING LAUGHING WITH THE EXCITEMENT – THIS WAS AN EXPERIENCE I WILL NEVER FORGET AS IT WAS BOTH EXHILARATING AND NERVE-WRECKING – IT WAS REALLY AMAZING UP ABOVE THE CLOUDS, JUST LIKE FLOATING THROUGH CARE BEAR LAND"
Youthreach Transition Centre
Public Relations

The area of public relations has already been dealt with in the section 'working in partnership' but here is a quick reminder of some of the tasks your public relations group can undertake:

- Handling all publicity, before, during and after your exchange
- Organising meetings with parents and local community
- Preparing and disseminating all printed matter for the exchange
- Dealing with local authorities, newspapers, radio stations etc.
- Keeping a record/copies of all publicity received
- Compiling a collage/exhibition of photographs

Project Work

It has been said over and over again, by groups who have organised exchange projects, that it is essential to have a specified and agreed project or theme to keep the groups 'focussed' – a project task group can:

- Research the types of project that are feasible to carry out during the exchange
- Draw up plans to implement the project
- Research the type of costs that will be attributable to the project
- Source and buy materials required for the project
- Organise work and work teams to complete the project
- Facilitate the exhibition of the completed project

"AN ARTICLE WAS PUT IN A LOCAL NEWSLETTER THAT IS PRODUCED BY THE LOCAL UNEMPLOYED ACTION GROUP CALLED 'THE VOICE' – IT IS SENT TO EVERY HOUSE IN THE GREATER COOLOCK AREA"

Bonnybrook Youth Project

"PUBLICITY FOR THE PROJECT WAS ACHIEVED IN BOTH IRELAND AND FINLAND IN THE LOCAL MEDIA – THE LOCAL RADIO STATION IN CARLOW CKR DID COVER THE PROJECT"

Do Do Youth Club
Programme of Activities

The programme of activities will form the basis of your exchange and this is dealt with in more detail in the section entitled ‘The Exchange’ – the task group set up to set up to deal with the programme will work at two levels i.e. depending whether you are hosting your partner or travelling – this group can

- Research ideas for the programme – what are people interested in doing
- Book activities and visits as appropriate
- Take some time out to consider the European dimension/influence in your respective countries
- Give the partner group feedback on the proposed hosting programme
- Identify the transport requirements to/from activities
- Research and keep and eye on the cost of activities – when there will be admission costs, what is free of charge etc.
- Identify activities which will be accessible to all participants
- Recognise the need to be aware of activities that are dependant on weather conditions – a barbecue in the rain isn’t all that enjoyable!!

...WE LEARNED THAT ALTHOUGH WE ARE SEPARATED BY THE SEA AND TO SOME EXTENT BY LANGUAGE, WE HAVE A LOT IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER E.G. FASHION, MUSIC, FOOD AND A CHANCE TO SHARE IN EACH OTHER’S FUTURE

Dunboyne Senior Youth Club

THE ACTIVITIES THAT WERE MOST EFFECTIVE WERE THE MOST SIMPLE... WE WOULD RECOMMEND TO OTHER GROUPS THAT THEY KEEP THEIR PROGRAMME SIMPLE AND LOCAL WHEREVER POSSIBLE... A FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO YOUR PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL, AS WHAT SUITS ONE GROUP WON'T NECESSARILY SUIT THE REST

Ozone
Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting

During the preparation phase it is important that the group agree the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation throughout the exchange project. There is a need to keep an eye on the original exchange objectives set by the groups and to ensure that tasks are completed according to deadlines set. Ideally, monitoring and evaluation should be undertaken by the whole group but it may be a good idea to set up a task group who are specifically responsible for this area – this task group can:

- Research ideas for mid way and final evaluation of the exchange
- Identify evaluation methods/tools most suitable for the group
- Exchange information with partner group on how monitoring and evaluation will be handled
- Organise a rota for daily diaries throughout the exchange
- Identify an ‘outside’ evaluator to assist the group in the evaluation process
- Organise regular feedback to the whole group on the exchange process
- Organise feedback to your organisation/local community/parents
- Co-ordinate post-exchange publicity with the public relations task group
- Prepare the final report to the funding agency
- Prepare a report for your organisation
- What about your original objectives for the exchange project? These should be evaluated and measured in terms of were they met and to what degree.

“THE IRISH LEADERS MET WITH THE IRISH PARTICIPANTS EVERY SECOND EVENING – THE AIM OF THESE MEETINGS WAS TO IMPRESS UPON THEM THE NEED FOR SOME REFLECTION ON THE PREVIOUS TWO DAYS ACTIVITIES AND TO ENDEAVOUR TO WRITE IT DOWN AS THEY EXPERIENCED IT”
Cope Foundation
the exchange
the exchange

What needs to be included in the programme of activities?

Is it project/thematic based?

How will you get to know each other?

What sort of social programme will be included?
The culmination of all your preparation and planning will be seen during the exchange programme itself. There are some pointers which should be implemented by the group during this phase.

- Allow time for getting to know one another/ice breaking activities
- Look at the possibility of making a group presentation to introduce yourselves
- Agree the programme and reaffirm the partnership contract
- Ensure that all participants have time to become familiar with the local area
- Give yourselves time to interact with each other and learn about working and living together
- Getting involved in some local community activities, along with participants’ families, can give a sense of ‘belonging’ to the visiting group
- If the group is not being home-hosted, you might consider one programme day/evening with host families

“PARTICIPANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR SITUATION – DETAILED DISCUSSIONS TOOK PLACE ON: LEADERSHIP; EXPECTATIONS; THE PROGRAMME; PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION”

Voluntary Service International (navan travellers project)
• Organise a well balanced programme
  – work, rest and play
• Programme activities should allow participants
to challenge one another, learn together,
resolve conflicts and challenge prejudices
• Be aware of language limitations and ensure
that communication is not hindered by
language barriers (creativity is the name of
the game)
• Time-table the ‘project/theme’ work early in
the day and allocate enough time to allow it
to be completed by the end of the exchange
• Where possible participants should work in
mixed nationality groups
• Always have a ‘plan B’ available (you can’t
always depend on the weather)
• Allocate time to review the exchange
regularly (this can be done in single or
mixed nationality groups)
• Leaders need to set time aside to assess the
day’s activities, identify problem areas and
discuss the following day
• It is essential to schedule a final evaluation
meeting with all partners at the end of the
exchange programme

"THE WORKSHOP WAS WELL PLANNED AND
TURNED OUT TO BE A MOST EVENTFUL DAY
– THE THEME WAS IRISH LEGENDS. THE
IRISH AND GREEK PARTICIPANTS WERE
MIXED INTO GROUPS AND SET ABOUT
DESIGNING AND MAKING VARIOUS CELTIC
MASKS, HEAD DRESSES AND COSTUMES”
The Lavanagh Centre Youth Group

"THE GOOD THING WAS THAT YOU GAVE US
RESPONSIBILITY AND THERE WAS ALSO
SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THE PROGRAMME”
Do Do Youth Club

"...THE TEAM GAVE EACH YOUNG PERSON A
SOUVENIR POSTCARD WITH POSITIVE
COMMENTS ABOUT HOW THEY HAD
WORKED DURING THE WEEK – THERE WAS
A GREAT ATMOSPHERE AND A REAL FEELING
OF BEING A TEAM AND HAVING ACHIEVED
SO MUCH TOGETHER”
Youthreach Transition Centre
Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of finding out what is happening or what has happened on the exchange. The purpose of evaluation is to improve the remainder of the exchange or to make a better exchange in the future. In evaluating the project you will need to consider:

When do you evaluate?

Who will be involved in the evaluation?

How will you ensure that the objectives set for the exchange have been met?
The task of evaluating the exchange project needs to be scheduled into the overall time-table from the start of the project and details of the evaluation process need to be agreed and exchanged with the partner group – this can be one of the many tasks of the participants responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

Evaluation sessions can take place as often as desired throughout the exchange project, but previous experience suggests that ideally you should –

• Set aside a couple of hours mid-way through the exchange programme
• Allow time for joint evaluation at the end of the exchange
• Organise another evaluation meeting a couple of weeks after the exchange

If you have assigned an ‘external’ evaluator to assist you in the process, that person should be included in the exploration and preparatory phases of the project.

Evaluation sessions should be participative and creative – who really wants to complete written questionnaires on a regular basis?
Evaluation sessions should be carried out at a number of levels throughout the project, namely:

- The whole exchange group together (i.e. all the partners)
- Each of the partner groups (i.e. separately)
- The exchange leaders together (i.e. all partner leaders)
- Each of the exchange leadership teams (i.e. separately)
- Each individual participant
- Each of the clubs/groups/organisations involved

Evaluation needs to be carried out in the light of:

- The original objectives set for the exchange
- The lessons learned from mistakes made
- The unforeseen or unexpected elements of the exchange
next steps

Will there be a second leg to the exchange?

Will you continue to communicate with your partner group?

How will you inform the community/your organisation about your experience?
This part of your exchange is complete, so what is next?

- Start planning for the second leg of the exchange
- Commence the process of finding a new partner(s) for future exchanges
- Look at what other types of international activities your group can get involved in
- Work in co-operation with your partner to develop a tri-lateral or perhaps even a multi-lateral exchange
- Invite families and the local community to an exhibition of your exchange
- Invite members of the local media (newspapers, radio etc.) to a post-exchange exhibition
- Prepare a report/presentation for your whole club/organisation
- Party time – celebrate the fact that you have just completed a successful exchange project

You will have some requirements to meet with regards to reporting your exchange to sponsors (including the funding agency) so

- Check the report due date (as per your contract with the funding agency)
- Put together all the individual diaries
- Compile information gleaned during the evaluation sessions
- Compile your narrative report (follow the ‘report format’ issued by the funding agency)
- Prepare statistical information to include with your report
- Set aside time to compile your financial receipts

"THERE WAS VERY GOOD TEAM WORK AND A REAL SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT WHEN THE EXCHANGE WAS OVER. THIS WORK ALSO HAD AN ADDED BENEFIT IN HELPING THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME MORE FOCUSED, ENTHUSIASTIC AND INCREASED THEIR OVERALL SELF-ESTEEM. WE ARE PARTICULARLY PLEASED THAT ALL BUT TWO MEMBERS WHO COMPLETED THE PROGRAMME ARE NOW WORKING ON A TRAINING COURSE"

Bonnybrook Youth Project
finally

10 Commandments of Youth Exchanges

AN EXCHANGE IS:

1. Minimum of two groups from different nationalities take part
2. One group hosts and the other groups send (travel)
3. Young people and youth workers are actively involved
4. Participants are between 15 and 25 years old
5. Exchanges are usually between 6 and 21 days long
6. Exchanges must have a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 60 participants

AN EXCHANGE IS NOT:

7. A tourist trip
8. A festival, performance tour
9. A study visit
10. A language training course.

léargas  So go ahead and contact us in Youth Work Service
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