

Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy European Commission 2014



Practical guidelines to work with inclusion and diversity in Erasmus+

Critical questions to youth involvement

[The Guidelines are created for Youth projects, but the critical questions are also relevant to other Erasmus+ projects involving young people. The critical questions are relevant to the creation of applications as well to the implementation of projects aiming at authentic involvement of young people.]





Reaching out

Youth organisations and other stakeholders are invited to consciously reach out and reduce obstacles for a variety of target groups. This makes an organisation truly welcoming for minorities and young people from all different walks of life.

Appeal: Does the organisation make a conscious effort to appeal and reach out to different target groups? What do they do to get young people with fewer opportunities on board?

Obstacles: How does the project in question reduce obstacles for diverse target groups to participate? In what way does it respond to the needs of different young people? Does it make extra efforts (equitable measures) needed to ensure equal opportunities for all?



Keeping young people at the centre

A youth project is not only for young people, but should also be conceived by them or even better run by them. Even though we use the European term 'young people with fewer opportunities', projects should be based on the strengths of the young people and their active contribution.

Needs-based: Is the inclusion and diversity project built around the needs, interests and aspiration of the young people? Did the organisation carry out a needs-analysis? How do they know what the young people really want?

True participation: Are the young people embedded in the project design? Can they steer, carry out tasks and take initiative? Does the process allow them to use their competences and develop? Do the youth workers encourage participation of all young people?

Tailor-made: Is the project adapted to the competences and previous experience of the young people? Are the methods suitable to their age, background, religion etc.? How does the project strike a balance between the safety of the known and the challenge of the new?

Supportive approach: What support does the project foresee for young people with fewer opportunities? How does the team cater for special needs? Are the

exceptional costs adequate? Are the youth workers skilled to deal with the special needs and sensitivities in the groups? How is the programme adapted so that it is inclusive of all?

Social dimension: Does the programme help everybody to mingle and find their place in the group or project? How does the project deal with stereotypes about different excluded groups? Is the project fun, without losing the educational dimension?

Risk assessment and crisis management: Do the youth workers involved have a clear view, not only of the benefits, but also of the potential risks, of the things that could go wrong when working with this target group? Do they have systems in place to respond to any emergency situation that might arise?



Dealing with diversity of all kinds

Our societies become increasingly diverse. People from different countries, backgrounds, situations interact on a daily basis and this reality should be reflected in a youth project. This requires specific attention from the organisations involved in implementing the activities.

Preparation: How are both the young people and the team prepared for the encounter and inclusion/exclusion issues during the project? Does the project focus on common interests rather than difference?

Mixed groups: Are young people from different backgrounds (socio-economic, educational, cultural, religious, geographical, disability, sexual orientation, gender etc.) mingled in the project? Is this diversity taken as a learning point?

Homogenous groups: In exceptional justified cases (e.g. when dealing with sensitive topics, such as identity, violence, personal development) it might be beneficial to work with one particular target group only (a particular immigrant community, lesbian and gay youth, girls only, etc.). Where relevant, is it well justified and beneficial to work with a homogenous group?

Social and intercultural competence: Is the project used to learn to deal with difference in the widest sense of the word? Does the project envisage promoting diversity and countering intolerance and discrimination? How does it deal with taboos?

Language support: How do the organisations prepare the young people for communicating across cultures? What methods does the programme foresee to allow young people to interact despite linguistic barriers? What linguistic support is available?

Reflection and time-out: Does the project foresee enough breathing space for vulnerable young people? Are there moments in the programme when young people (alone or together) can make sense of what is happening and what they learn?

Youth workers from inclusion groups: Does the team of youth workers reflect the diversity of the participants? Do they understand the needs of the target groups they work with? Do they provide specific support and set a positive role model?



Using non-formal learning

Non-formal learning refers to learning undertaken voluntarily, outside the formal setting and structures of for instance a school or university. Youth projects provide non-formal learning experiences. They are an attractive way to gain competences and life skills. They can be especially valuable for young people who may be at risk of low levels of attainment in formal learning, who have dropped out of school or are in a situation of unemployment where achieving new skills might increase their chances of finding a job.

Clear objectives: Even though non-formal, the project should still have clear and realistic objectives. Are the methods appropriate to achieving them? Is the project presented to the young people in a way that is relevant and understandable for them? Are the expected outcomes tangible for the young people? What do they get out of it?

Attractive methods: Young people participate in non-formal learning of their own free will. Are the methods learner-centred and participatory? Do they engage young people and allow them to try out new things?

Peer learning: Are young people seen as a source of learning? How does the project encourage all young people to come up with their own solutions to challenges and work together to reach their goal?

Simplicity: Is the project clear, simple and tangible enough for the young people? How will the general objectives be broken down in manageable actions? Is the project work accessible for all involved in the project?

Documenting learning: Is there time and space for the young people to think about their learning? How do the youth workers help young people to become conscious of their learning? How do they learn to present their learning?

Fun: How do the organizers make sure the project is attractive and exciting for the young people?



Keeping eyes on the long-term impact

Designing and organising an inclusion and diversity projects involves keeping eyes on its long-term impact; to improve lives of young people with fewer

opportunities. A project should be seen as a piece of a longer-term process of social change, for the young people and for the communities they live in.

A wider process: Is the project with young people with fewer opportunities embedded in a process before and after the actual project or does it remain an isolated event? How do the organizers ensure the follow-up of young people after the project?

Step-by-step approach: Do organisations have a strategic approach for young people with fewer opportunities towards positive change? How do they create a pathway for the young people to a better life - and how does international mobility fit in this? Are the young people ready for it?

Motivating experience: Does the project take into account on young peoples' competences and aim at developing their potential, rather than focus on deficits and problems? How does the project give them appreciation for their involvement and achievements? How does it motivate them?

Follow-up: What happens to the young people after the project? Does the organisation have plans to continue the work (outside the project)? Do they keep track of young people's evolution and guide them to next steps on a path of change?

Dissemination and exploitation: Are the organizers clear about the tangible and intangible outcomes of the project? How do they foresee to make other organisations or young people benefit from those project results? Do they help others to do similar activities?



Ensuring a holistic approach and partnerships

A young person (and youth worker) is not an island. It is important for the success of a project that it is embedded in a wider context and that it makes links with the world around it. Together with relevant stakeholders, a project can have considerably more impact.

Holistic approach: How do the project partners make bridges to others in contact with the same young people (family, peers, health services, employment agency, school, etc.)? What cooperation and complementarity do they foresee?

Solid partnership: Do the organisations and individual youth workers involved in the project know and trust each other? Did they develop a set of commonly agreed objectives, concepts and working methods? Are they aware of each other's strengths and differences?

Strategic Partnerships' projects: Does the project envisage innovative ideas and solutions? Are relevant stakeholders involved, notably experts in different fields that can contribute with their knowledge?

Training: have the youth workers/other staff members involved taken part in training that focuses specifically on inclusion and diversity?

Professionalism and commitment: Do the partners take the inclusion and diversity projects seriously? Are they aware of the commitment and competences

needed to get the most out of the projects? Do all staff-members involved know what they are doing?

There is a lot to think about in these questions for people creating and implementing projects with deep and authentic involvement of young people!

