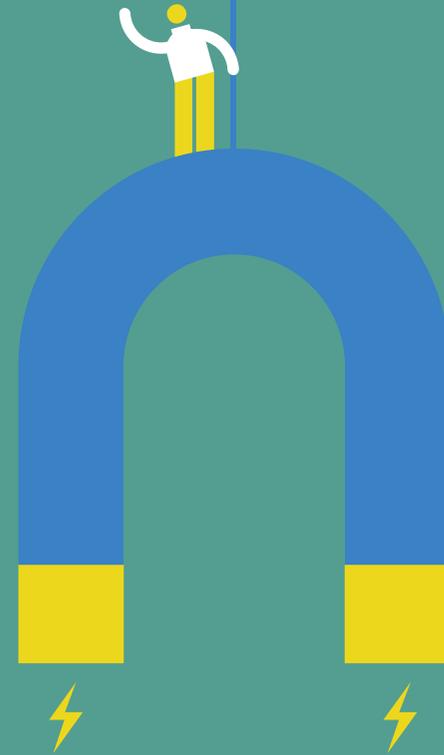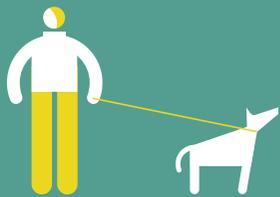# Mobility projects for young people

Youth participation is a process in which power is shared with young people, whether in the context of decision-making or other processes involved in the project. The youth participation process interlinks with the youth exchange life-cycle from the moment the idea for the exchange is born through every step in the planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up of the project.

The tools in this module are focusing on:

How to involve
project participants in implementing youth exchanges

How to ensure
the youth exchange is really designed to be inclusive and accessible to young people with fewer opportunities

How to support
project participants so that they 'learn participation' during youth exchange

How to make sure
that youth exchanges are contributing to greater youth participation

If you are not sure where to start, there are other youth workers around you that might have experience in doing this kind of activity and who can offer you advice or answer your questions. They can be in your organisation, in some other organisations near you, in the National Agency for Erasmus+ Programme, online or perhaps already sharing their experience. Look them up and reach out to them with your questions and ask for support!

How to involve young people in implementing youth exchanges?

Before you start » The participatory approach places the focus on the **process**. This changes the **power relations** between the project staff and the participating young people. It also **increases the sustainability** of the project action beyond the end of the project, because the young people continue to take responsibility and have developed their social, civic and political efficacy. Choosing a participatory approach is, therefore, a political act.

The participatory approach requires resources and time, along with additional flexibility and adaptability, as the process evolves and the project unfolds, often with unexpected results.

All of this needs to be clear in the project outline, so that NA staff can understand and support your youth exchange project in the best way.

An idea is born...

A good place to start is... at the very beginning.

When you have an idea for developing a youth exchange project, your starting point could be to share your idea with the young people you are working with, your peer group or any concerned group of young people, using participatory methods. Use any channel at your disposal to share this interest with young people:

- ✅ **face-to-face meetings** – check for meetings and activities organised in your proximity and attended by young people that you could use to share your idea;

- ✅ **social networks and online communication tools** – check if there are social media channels targeted towards young people specifically (your organisation, or organisations around you might have one) and see if they could be used for sharing your idea;

- ✅ **info-boards** – check for info boards in places visited by young people (youth club and other youth spaces, schools and educational centres, info centres, cultural spaces, etc.) and see how you can share your idea there;

When starting these conversations with young people, check their interest in participating. Encourage them to express their motivation, as well as the needs, potential obstacles and fears that they might face. You should be aware of those and be ready to address them and support young people in participating.

💡 **Be creative about the ways of presenting your idea. You can think of creating a storyboard, poster, video, etc.**

The project is taking shape...

Now you want to make sure that each young person participating is aware of the opportunities and choosing the level of engagement that is the most appropriate for them. To maximise young people's participation, you must have a good handle on your goals and overall project dynamic.

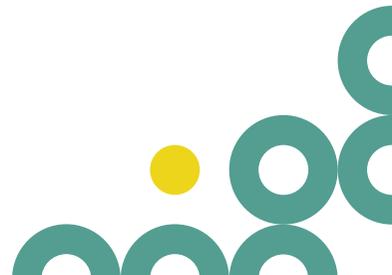# Evaluating Young People's Participation Needs

Support young people in understanding the opportunities for participation that are available in the context of the youth exchange. You could ask some of following questions:

_____

Why have they joined the youth exchange?

_____

How much would they like to/could they invest in this youth exchange (time, skills, etc.)?

Evaluating Young People's Participation Needs

Share with them the ⊜ Degrees of Participation. Ask them about where they feel confident to engage.
Also ask them what they would like to experience, test or improve when it comes to different participation opportunities?

> 💡 **Asking for too much youth participation can also have a negative effect, as those young people might have other priorities and activities that the project is competing with. Assuming a lack of interest or underestimating young people and their capacities is problematic, just as overestimating their resources and demanding participation all the time can jeopardise the quality of their participation experience.**

Depending on what you have agreed with the project participants about their participation, you could apply some of the following tools for:
• Informing and consulting project participants
• Sharing decision-making between project leaders and project participants

Informing and consulting project participants

To involve the project participants, it is important to have an **information and/or consultation channel.**

Agree with the participating young people on the channel that is most appropriate and then use this channel to inform and/or consult with them on any relevant milestones and issues.

Not sure what to consult project participants on?
Here are possible suggestions. Note, however, that what to consult on really depends on the concrete youth exchange project, as well as the interest and competencies of the project participants.

Preparation phase - You could involve participants in order to share their views regarding:

Venue – consider different options that look at accessibility, environmental footprint, digital aspects.
Timetable – consider the different learning styles and learning needs of each individual.
Profile of experts to be involved – consider options for more practical or theoretical inputs, a provocative or motivational style, being more critical or assertive, and covering different perspectives in connection to the given topic.
Specific programme elements – consider innovation and out-of-box thinking while bearing in mind the different learning styles and learning needs.
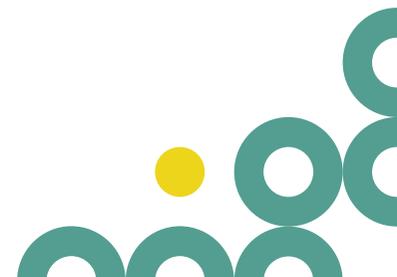
Informing and consulting project participants

Implementation phase - You could use **daily reflection and evaluation meetings** to consult the project participants about the decisions you need to make regarding the next days' programme and/or technical arrangements. Furthermore, you could get their opinions on shaping the follow-up phase.

Follow-up phase – You could involve the project participants in sharing their opinions regarding the different elements to be implemented at this stage, similar to the *preparing phase.*

Online tools and platforms for informing and consulting could be useful if the whole group has no opportunity to meet face-to-face in the run up or during the activity. In this case, you could use your chosen information/consultation channel and add pooling options, or as needed use other tools that have features for the easy collection of opinions.

> **Make sure to inform the project participants beforehand on the issue in question and the platform you are using, so that they can confidently participate in consultations. Take into consideration that there might be GDPR or internet security considerations to take into account when working with young people under the age of majority. Explore participation resource pool to find more info about** 🌐 internet safety**.**

Sharing decision-making between project leaders and project participants

To share decision-making with young people, it is important to (jointly) create a **decision-making model** that everyone feels is appropriate to both the project and the participating young people. The following models (and tools) can be presented to participating young people as a basis for discussion and deciding on which would work best for your youth exchange project.
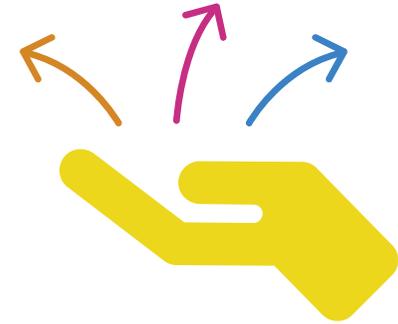
Participatory model – all project participants are engaged in decision-making on the given issues through dialogue, consensus-building exercises or voting systems, whether face-to-face or online.
Online tools and platforms for online voting are 🔊 Polys, 🔊 Choice voting, 🔊 ElectionBuddy, 🔊 HeliosVoting, 🔊 Poll-maker, 🔊 Electionrunner, 🔊 Opavote (list created by 🔊 European Youth Forum).

Sharing decision-making between project leaders and project participants

Representative model – some project participants, who are willing or wish to take up additional responsibility in the project, are elected by others to participate in the decision-making on their behalf, i.e. represent them.

Appointive model – Project staff offers interested young people with a "seat at the table" by appointing one or more to participate in decision-making. In this case, those appointed may still consult with the group they are "representing". However, the chances they would feel the urge to do so, and that the group would feel represented, are lower than in other models.

For shared decision-making, a **Project steering committee** can be formed in the early stages of project planning.

Regardless of the model through which the project participants are involved in decision-making, you would need to ensure that you inform them beforehand on the issue in question, so that they can confidently participate in the decision-making process. Informing them may include organising a specific face-to-face meeting and/or preparing material for them to read/watch/listen to.

Is our project really designed to be inclusive and accessible to young people with fewer opportunities?

Before you start » The inclusion of all young people in participatory processes is about supporting young people from all backgrounds and who have different life experiences in accessing participation opportunities equally, and once involved to have their voice heard and specific experiences shared, as well as to take action and take on leadership roles within a project.

Mapping who is left-out

You can start by considering which groups of young people are most likely to be left out when you plan, prepare, implement and follow-up your youth exchange.

Which young people are usually not involved in youth exchanges?

Mapping who is left-out

_____

Which young people are not usually included in youth exchanges on this topic?

_____

Which young people may have some interest in engaging with the topic of youth

_____

Which young people would really benefit from youth exchange experience, regardless of the topic?

_____

In the community in which I do my youth work – with which groups of young people have I the least contact with?
Which groups' realities, traits and backgrounds do I understand and know the least?

- -

If you then ask yourself 'How come?' after any of those questions,
you are already on the way to finding ways to involve excluded young people.

Identifying participation needs and interests

Reach out to the young people you have identified as at risk of being left-out and plan together their engagement with the youth exchange project. Reaching out is about making initial contact. Sometimes, it can be easier to get into contact with them in their comfort environment (their neighbourhood and places they visit and are comfortable with e.g. park, youth club/space).
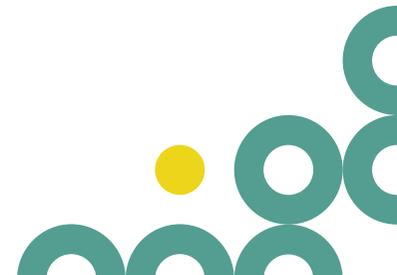
You should attempt to find out:

Would they be interested in joining your youth exchange? *(As needed, start by explaining to them what youth exchange is)*

What are their participation needs?
What might be an obstacle for their involvement?

Identifying participation needs and interests

_____

How could you support them in their participation?

_____

How much would they like to/could they invest themselves in this youth exchange if the support were provided?

_____

Share with them the 🌐 Degrees of Participation. Ask them about where they feel confident to engage.
Also ask them what they would like to experience, test or improve when it comes to different participation opportunities?

How can we support young people so that they may 'learn participation' during our youth exchange?

Before you start » Participation is best learned through *experience* and *reflection*. Thus, even though you may want to share with young people some theory on participation and ◉ Degrees of engagement, the most important thing to remember when designing your youth exchange is that it must create conditions for young people's experiential learning and reflection about their own participation.
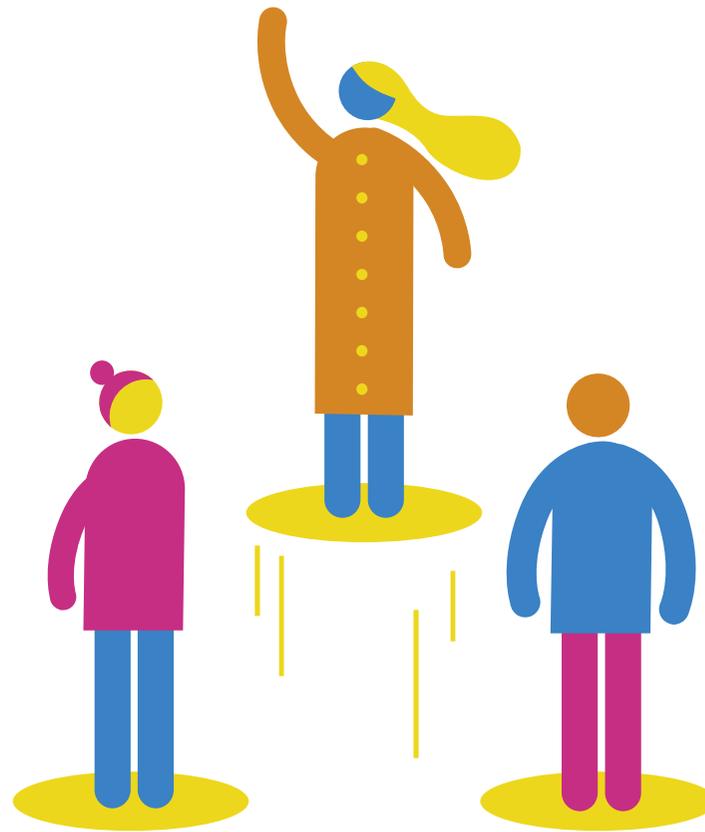
Youth exchange programme review

You can review the programme of the youth exchange to check if there is space in the design for session(s) that would add an experiential learning dimension. For example, you could consider adding a simulation whose main focus is to provide project participants with the experience of participation. This session can, of course, be adapted to the theme of your youth exchange. There are a lot of good reference manuals for participation specific activities that can be adapted to the topics of youth exchanges. One such manual is 🎧 Compass - Manual on Human Rights.

Here are some examples of activities for experiencing participation:

🎧 Electioneering: Participating young people take positions on a statement (e.g. agree, disagree) and build arguments to explain their position. They also reflect on the arguments of others. In this example, the statements are mainly about voting rights. You can adapt the statements to be more relevant for the topic you are dealing with.

🎧 To vote or not to vote?: Participating young people go into the community to find out what community members think on any given subject. In this example, the topic is voting. You can adapt the topic to be more relevant for your youth exchange.

Youth exchange programme review

Let every voice be heard: Participating young people engage in discussion about what might need to be improved about a given topic. Then the participants design a democratic system through which young people can have a say in bringing about the desired improvements. In this example, the topic is education and young people having a say about the kind of education they are receiving. You can adapt the topic to be more relevant for your youth exchange.

On the ladder: Participating young people reflect on the meaning of youth participation and discuss ways of increasing their own participation in the local community.
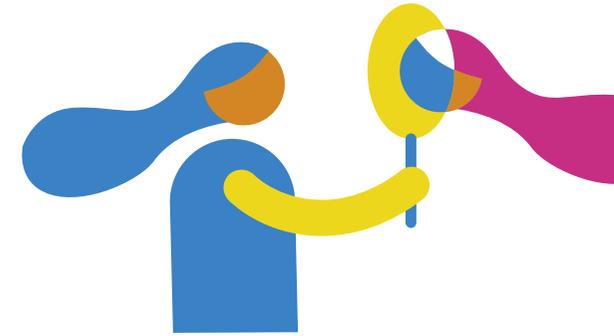
A mosque in Sleepyville: Young people take on roles in a simulation of a town council meeting. In this example, the topic is freedom of religion and discrimination. You can adapt the topic and respective actors to be more relevant for your youth exchange.

Reflection on learning

In order to support young people participating in your youth exchange in reflecting on their participation and learning, you yourself should be excited about it! Then you could implement some of the following strategies:

Allow for enough **reflection time slots** in the programme design.

Propose that the participating young people create a **learning diary.** It can take different forms – written in a notebook, scrapbook from activities with side notes and drawings, written in notes on a telephone, recorded as audio or video on the phone, physical or online in any format they like.

Propose that the participating young people choose and 'work with' a **learning buddy**. This can be someone involved in the youth exchange with whom they have already connected and/or feel they can discuss their learning. It could also be someone from their community or youth work context at home that is not involved in the youth exchange. Again the formats can be diverse – walking and talking, sharing and discussing segments from the learning diary, calling or messaging with another person about experiences.

> Reflecting on one's own learning is a demanding task, and it can be even more so if the participants have never done anything like that before. Participants might show resistance or appear to struggle with the task. That is nothing out of the ordinary. It might make sense to offer the option of ongoing 'reflection on learning', something that participants can choose to do rather than an obligatory activity, but which the youth exchange provides an infrastructure and support for. Keep in mind that participants will need support and time, and ensure that you offer it to them. You can also consult the 🌐 Learning by doing module for more ideas!

How can we make sure our youth exchange is contributing to greater youth participation?

Before you start » Regardless of the topic, a youth exchange can strive to either give young people a VOICE, such as organising a petition to the local council to ask for a youth space. Or it can strive to support them to take an ACTION, such as organising a local fundraiser and the clean-up of an abandoned or empty space so that they can transform it into a youth space. In either case, it is important to explore the topic in depth and figure out which approach is best for your activity – VOICE or ACTION, or even a combination of the two. To learn more about VOICE and ACTION and about different forms of youth participation, go to the 🎧 What is youth participation? module.

Supporting young people in initiating and implementing a youth exchange

Some young people might be looking to take greater ownership in the youth exchange project, or even to initiate and implement a youth exchange on their own, and you can offer them support and encouragement. In such cases, you will need to create opportunities for those young people to lead the project through its different stages of planning, preparing, implementation and follow-up. Youth workers and other staff provide support as needed and as requested.

Some ways of offering support and encouragement while young people take the lead include:

Mentoring – Mentoring is about meaningful dialogue between a young person (mentee) and a more experienced person (mentor) that supports them to develop on their chosen learning journey – in this case, the topic would be leading youth exchange projects.

MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning) meetings – Support young people in generating learning objectives for their own leadership role in the youth exchange project, and to identify monitoring and evaluation questions to help them understand what they are learning. Then support them in applying the knowledge gained through evaluation to improve their practice.

Peer reviews – Support young people in connecting with peer individuals/groups working in the same field who can help them to evaluate or provide feedback on their work and provide relevant insights.

Discovering how best to support young people

You can offer support to young people interested in initiating and implementing a youth exchange. If you have noticed in which areas they might need support, you can suggest those. They could also have different ideas about where they might need support. Discuss both and agree on a way forward. Those questions can be a starting point for discussing with young people:

What experience do you have with youth exchange?
As needed, you could explain the life-cycle of youth exchange as described in the Guide.
Which positive aspects would you like to keep and incorporate into the design of your youth exchange?
Which aspects would you like to avoid/prevent from happening in your youth exchange?

What experience do you have with the topic that you are interested in addressing?
What makes it exciting and important? How could you translate that in the design of the youth exchange?
Who could provide good input and advice on this topic?

Discovering how best to support young people

Which areas overall are you still unsure about? Who do you think could support you and how?
You could refer to the life-cycle of youth exchange as described in the Guide and offer your support to them.
Make sure to outline under which conditions it could be provided (e.g. it could be offered at a specific time,
in relation to the finalisation of some other steps, only when they feel they need specific support and directly ask for it, etc.)

If different steps are not working the way you intended them; if the results are not there in the time frame that you had expected; if you feel powerless and are unsure if it all makes sense at all – remember that participation is about process! So whenever you feel uncertain, feel free to check in with young people about how they feel and how the process is working for them. It helps to realistically define what would be a success with particular young people that you are supporting in initiating and implementing youth exchange. Also re-define it along the way in constant dialogue with young people, as you both learn more and can assess better the scope and scale of the support needed. You can also consult the ⊛ Young people leading projects module for more ideas!

Supporting young people in engaging beyond the youth exchange

If your youth exchange was developed in a participatory manner, or it was a participatory youth exchange 🌐 How to involve young people, this means that the participating young people have already had a meaningful experience of participation that would set a standard for future activities. This is a great basis on which to start thinking about the follow-up to your youth exchange.

Prepare young people for continued participation after the youth mobility project

Plan activities that would further encourage young people to participate in the democratic life of their societies even after the youth exchange. Depending on the group and topic of your youth exchange, you may want to consider:

organising meetings with the young people to explore their interest and plan their further engagement;

Prepare young people for continued participation after the youth mobility project

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agree on ways to share information with the young people about campaigns and events in which they might be interested and could participate;

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plan concrete follow-up activities with the young people through which they could raise their VOICE or take an ACTION.

- -

Furthermore, you can indicate following opportunities to young people:

☻ Erasmus+ and opportunities for starting a youth participation activity;
☻ European Solidarity Corps and opportunities for implementation of other solidarity projects and/or volunteering activities;
The opportunities offered by ☻ Eurodesk platform;
☻ European Youth Portal and the opportunities for the participation in the ☻ EU youth dialogue.

> 💡 **For greater impact and sustainability of the results of your youth exchange, check which international and national documents are there that can support your cause. You can look for specific European/national/local laws, policies, strategies, recommendations, declarations, action plans or any other public commitments in relation to the topic of your youth exchange. You could also look for key institutions in the field and utilise their youth programmes (or lack of) to support your cause.**

Where are you at now?

Self-assessment for youth exchanges

You can use this self-assessment tool even before you start developing your mobility project. It will help you to understand what you should pay attention to. Or after you have implemented youth exchange and used some of the tools proposed in this module – to assess how it worked for you.

Self-assessment for youth exchanges

Are all the project participants at the beginning of the project aware of their own participation needs and the possibilities offered through this youth exchange project?
If yes, how? Could that be improved?
If no, why not? Could that be changed? What could you do to inform them and support them in identifying their own participation needs?

How are young people supported in participating in decision-making about the youth exchange? Did you include a focus on:
inclusion and diversity,
digital transformation,
sustainability, environmental and climate goals?
If yes, how did it go? Could it be improved?
If not, how could that be changed?
What could you do to support young people's participation?

Are young people feeling competent to raise a VOICE and/or take an ACTION during the follow-up phase or even after the mobility project?
If yes, to what extent? Could that be improved?
If no, why not? Could that be changed?
What could you do to build their competences and/or confidence in this respect?

Self-assessment for youth exchanges

**Are young people motivated to raise a VOICE and/or take an ACTION
during the follow-up phase or even after the mobility project?
Have the young people indicated any interest in
initiating another youth exchange?**
If yes, to what extent? Could that be improved?
If no, why not? Could that be changed?
What could you do to spark their motivation?

**Are all the project participants at the end of the project
aware of their participation experience and learning
about youth participation through this project?**
If yes, to what extent? Could that be improved?
If no, why not? Could that be changed?
What could you do to support young people in understanding
their own experience and learning in regard to participation?

**Did you notice differences in the level or quality of participation
of the young participants in your youth exchange?
Were some participants more active and some less active?**
If yes, what were those differences?
Why do you think those differences exist?
What would need to happen in the context of a youth exchange to
change the level of participation of the less active participants?

💡 **For the overall assessment and creation of quality youth exchanges, you can also check the 📶 Q! App – a tool for the co-creation
of a quality youth project online with your partners or young people based on 16 logical project management questions.
Projects developed through this co-creation process can be easily exported for use in funding applications.**