



Able2Travel

A Beginner's Guide
for Youth with Disabilities
to Participate in
International Projects



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the European Union





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the European Union



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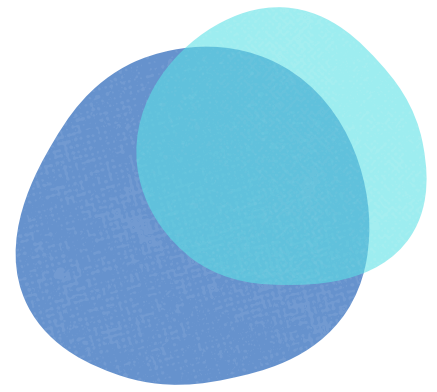
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Introduction



Dear reader,

The topics of inclusion and diversity have widely been recognized to be of top priority for various national and European youth programs of different scale and scope. However there are still many young people, especially the ones with disabilities, who are unaware of these opportunities including international mobility projects. On the other hand, the young people who have at least heard about these opportunities still may not intend to take part in these projects either due to the fear of unacceptance, misconceptions or lack of information and guidance.

Able2Travel is an Erasmus+ Small Scale Partnership project in the youth field, prepared and implemented by 3 partner NGOs; **MOVEO (Austria), ODTIZ (Slovenia) and Turkey Youth Union Association (Türkiye)**. The project recognizes young people with disabilities as people of many different skills, talents, and interests and the unquestionable right to access equal opportunities with their peers. The main motive behind Able2Travel has been to encourage and equip youth with disabilities to take active part in international mobility projects. We believe and strongly advocate that young people with disabilities should be observed as equal partners in mixed ability group projects, where they will have uninterrupted access to information and where their presence and contribution will be equally valued as of their peers. To that, the goal is to introduce inclusion and diversity as natural, integral parts of these future projects, and not as separate topics to be covered independently.

For this purpose, Able2Travel Guidebook is the main output of the project and it was aimed to be a practical, easy to understand and accessible resource for young people not limited to but especially for the ones with disabilities, who would like to be involved in international youth projects but have limited understanding of where to start, how to find these opportunities and how to prepare themselves.

This guidebook has been prepared by a mixed ability team of experts having extensive experiences working with young people with and without disabilities in international youth projects. It is designed as a **“You can do it!, go for it!”** beginner’s pack to address all these needs by removing the existing barriers and the imaginary barriers only existing in our minds.

We are well aware that there is this presumption of youth projects with mixed ability groups being way too challenging both for the organizers and the participants. However we also believe that a good structured preparation and an inclusive approach from the beginning can make things easier and beneficial for everyone.

While preparing the content of this guidebook our main principle has been a meaningful inclusion of the target group itself in the whole process. We chose truly to hear young people's voices in order to be effective in developing this guidebook because we believe that young people with or without disabilities are the experts on their own lives and experiences and they should be involved actively in all stages. **(Nothing about us, without us!** principle). They know what matters most to them and what affects them and they also have incredible creativity and capacity for solving problems. Incorporating the perspectives of a broader diversity of people gave us a deeper and broader understanding of the needs and interests of the young people with disabilities.

That's why we organized mixed ability focus group meetings in Austria, Slovenia and Türkiye and inputs received from the young participants helped us to design the content and the way to present it.

For whom is this guidebook prepared for?

If you say "Yes" to at least one of the following situations, good news, you are at the right place and this guidebook is for you!

You are a young person aged between 13-30 years either with or without a disability

You are curious and interested in European youth projects

You don't have any experience in European youth projects and don't know where to start from

You have some concerns and hesitations to travel abroad and take part in projects

You have little experience but you want to explore and learn more

You are a youth worker/youth trainer/project organizer who would like to organize mixed ability group projects

How can you use this guidebook?

In this guidebook you will find a brief overview of practical tips to be used in the searching, preparation, implementation and follow-up stages of short-term mobility projects of Erasmus+ Youth Programme based on real experiences. Therefore the focus is mainly on youth exchanges. However don't worry, all the information and suggested tips can be easily adapted and transferred to longer-term international projects.

You can either read it from beginning to end, or look up specific sections according to your particular needs. After giving an introduction to the context, the guidebook is divided into sections covering different aspects. At the end of the guide you will also find testimonials of young people sharing their reflections on their international mobility experiences. We hope they will light the way for you and give inspiration.

So welcome again!

Dear young person,

Enjoy the joy of entering the world of wonders of international youth projects and we hope this guidebook will provide you with all the information, courage and motivation you are looking for. We wish you an amazing journey!

And dear youth worker, project organizer or youth trainer,

We also hope this guide can provide you with the necessary information to better understand the needs of young people with disabilities and how to involve, inspire and motivate them to take part in the international youth exchanges. Because these opportunities make rewarding experiences for all!

Have a good read!

Please share with us your insights and feedback regarding the guidebook for the future versions by sending us an e-mail at the bio section.

Basic information on the Erasmus+ Programme



As we have mentioned in the previous section, in this guidebook we are focusing on the international youth mobilities, mainly youth exchanges under Erasmus+. You may have been hearing a lot about Erasmus+ but you may not have a clear idea what exactly it is, therefore we would like to start by giving some basic information for you. Let's go!

Erasmus+ is basically the European Union (EU)'s programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It is a big universe full of many opportunities for all. Started back in 1987 with the aim of supporting higher education student mobility and cross-border cooperation, the Erasmus+ programme has evolved a lot into its current incarnation. Nowadays, there are many 'pluses' in the programme, including traineeships, staff training and teaching activities, cooperation projects in the field of higher education, vocational education and training, school education, adult education, youth and sport and much more! Erasmus+ simply gives you the opportunity to be connected!

As a common misconception, it is not only targeting students but many other groups from various fields, both formal and informal, in the education and training sectors. The programme offers students, apprentices, school pupils, vocational students, teachers, trainers, staff, job seekers, young persons neither in education, employment, nor training etc., the possibility to travel abroad to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and even employability.

The programme funds youth projects across Europe and beyond, to provide non-formal and informal learning opportunities for young people so that they can acquire competences that improve their personal and socio-educational development. It also encourages active youth participation in society, improves youth employment prospects and raises the quality of youth work in general.

Who is managing Erasmus+?

The programme is managed by the European Commission (the EU's executive body), the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). At the national level, the European Commission relies on national agencies for implementing the programme's decentralised actions. The national agencies help promote and support the actions of organizations coordinating Erasmus+ projects. They are responsible for providing information on the programme, reviewing applications submitted, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the programme in their country. **You can always visit their websites or contact them directly to get further information and ask your questions on Erasmus+.**

Check out the website of the National Agency in your country from [this link](#).

What are the specific objectives of Erasmus+?

- promote learning mobility of individuals and groups, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organizations and policies in the field of education and training;
- promote non-formal and informal learning mobility and active participation among young people, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of organizations and policies in the field of youth;
- promote learning mobility of sport staff, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of sport organizations and sport policies.



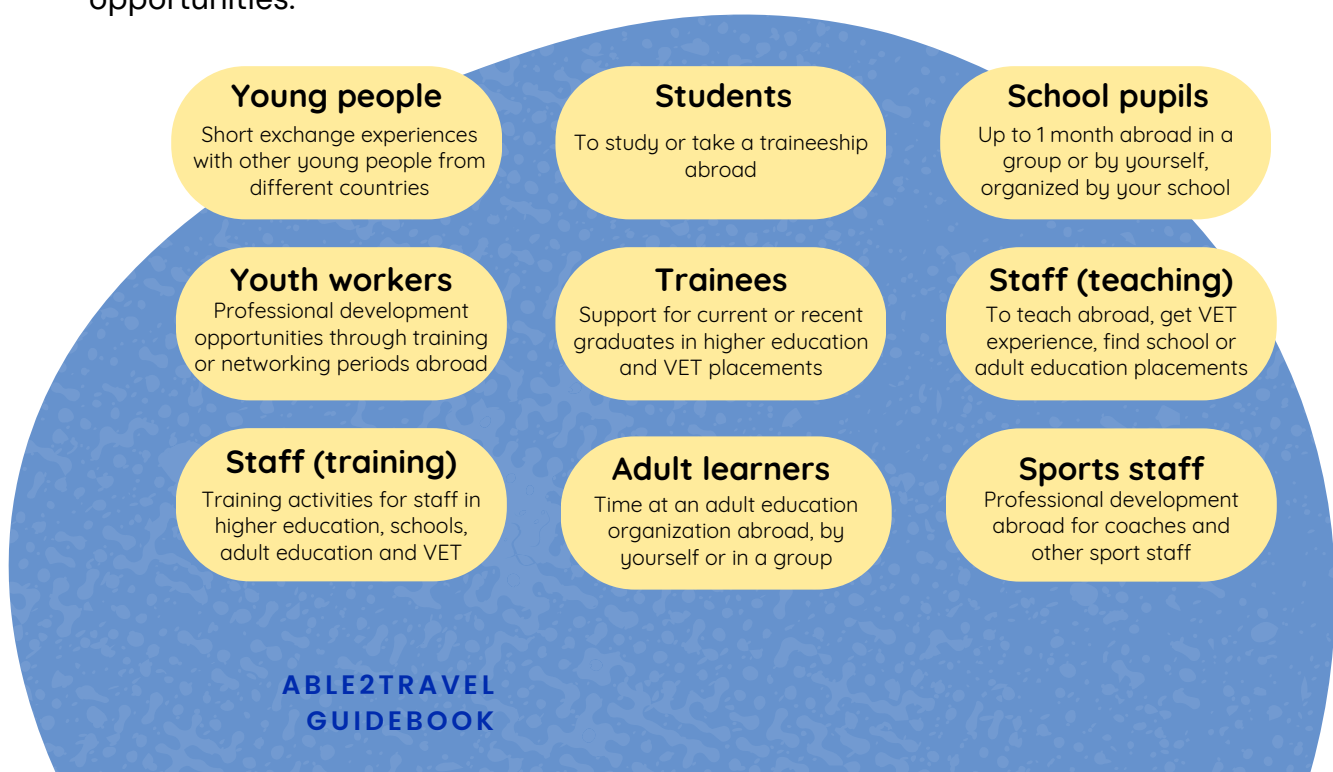
What are the key actions of Erasmus+?

- **Key Action 1 :** Learning mobility of individuals; aims to encourage the mobility of students, staff, trainees, apprentices, youth workers and young people. The role of the organizations in this process is to organize these opportunities for individuals. This key action is basically what we will focus on within this guide. We highly recommend young people to start their journey with a youth exchange (a.k.a mobility of young people).
- **Key Action 2 :** Cooperation among organizations and institutions; is expected to result in the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices at organizational, local, regional, national or European levels.
- **Key Action 3:** Support to policy development and cooperation; aims to provide support to policy cooperation at European Union level, thereby contributing to the implementation of existing policies and the development of new policies, which can trigger modernisation and reforms, at European Union, and systems' level, in the fields of education, training youth and sport.

Check out [here](#) if you want to explore further on the structure of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Who is Erasmus+ for?

If you are looking to take part by yourself, it's likely that you will need to apply through an organization such as a youth organization, university, training center, company and so on. Check out below according to the group you belong to for further opportunities.



Is Erasmus+ only for Europeans?

Which countries does Erasmus+ cover?

There are 2 types of countries where Erasmus+ is active:

1- EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme can fully take part in all the actions of the Erasmus+ Programme:

-All EU countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden

-Members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA): Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein

-Some of the candidate EU countries: Türkiye, North Macedonia and Serbia

2- Third countries not associated with the Programme can also take part in not all but certain Erasmus+ actions. There are many of these, spanning the globe.

If you would like to see the full list, you can check out [this page](#).

What are the priorities of Erasmus+?

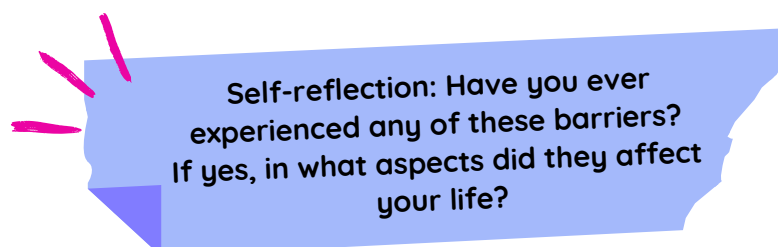
Inclusion and Diversity

The Programme seeks to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across all its actions. Organizations and the participants with fewer opportunities themselves are at the heart of these objectives and with these in mind, the programme puts mechanisms and resources at their disposal. When designing their projects and activities, organizations should have an inclusive approach, making them accessible to a diverse range of participants and addressing the barriers different target groups may face in accessing such opportunities within Europe and beyond.



The list of such potential barriers, spelt out below, is not exhaustive and is meant to provide a reference in taking action with a view to increasing accessibility and outreach to people with fewer opportunities. These barriers can hinder their participation both as a stand-alone factor and in combination among them:

- **Disabilities;** including physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder someone's full and effective participation in society.
- **Health problems;** including severe illnesses, chronic diseases, or any other physical or mental health-related situation that prevents from participating in the programme.
- **Barriers linked to education and training systems:** Individuals struggling to perform in education and training systems for various reasons, early school-leavers, NEETs (people not in education, employment or training) and low-skilled adults may face barriers.
- **Cultural differences:** Such differences may represent significant barriers to learning in general, all the more for people with a migrant or refugee background – especially newly-arrived migrants –, people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, sign language users, people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties, etc.
- **Social barriers;** such as limited social competences, anti-social or high-risk behaviours, (former) offenders, (former) drug or alcohol abusers, or social marginalisation may represent a barrier. Other social barriers can stem from family circumstances, for instance being the first in the family to access higher education or being a parent (especially a single parent), a caregiver, a breadwinner or an orphan, or having lived or currently living in institutional care.
- **Economic barriers;** like a low standard of living, low income, learners who need to work to support themselves, dependence on the social welfare system, in long-term unemployment, precarious situations or poverty, being homeless, in debt or with financial problems, etc., may represent a barrier.
- **Barriers linked to discrimination:** Barriers can occur as a result of discriminations linked to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, or intersectional factors (a combination of two or several of the mentioned discrimination barriers).
- **Geographical barriers:** Living in remote or rural areas, on small islands or in peripheral/outermost regions in urban suburbs, in less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) or less developed areas in third countries, etc., may constitute a barrier.





Digital Transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic shed further light on the importance of digital education for the digital transformation that Europe needs. In particular, it emphasized the increased need to harness the potential of digital technologies for teaching and learning and to develop digital skills for all. The Programme aims to support this endeavor to engage learners, educators, youth workers, young people and organizations in the path to digital transformation.



Environment and fight against climate change

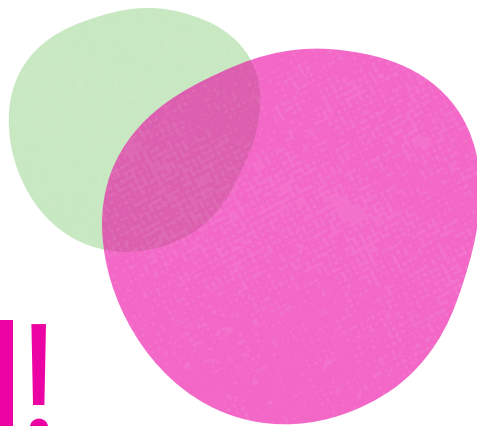
Environment and climate action are key priorities for the EU now and in the future. The Erasmus+ programme will be a key instrument for building knowledge, skills, and attitudes on climate change and support sustainable development both within the European Union and beyond. The Programme supports the use of innovative practices to make learners, staff and youth workers true actors of change (e.g. save resources, reduce energy use, waste and carbon footprint, opt for sustainable food and mobility choices, etc.).



Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

The Erasmus+ Programme addresses the citizens' limited participation in its democratic processes and their lack of knowledge about the European Union, and tries to help them overcome the difficulties in actively engaging and participating in their communities or in the Union's political and social life. The Programme supports active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning; it fosters the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy. Priority is given to projects that offer opportunities for people's participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities.

Youth Exchanges in a nutshell!



To begin with..what is a youth exchange?

A youth exchange is a type of Erasmus+ KA1 mobility project, based on a transnational cooperation between two or more participating organizations from different countries within and outside the European Union. Youth exchanges bring together groups of young people from different countries, providing them with an opportunity to discuss and confront various themes (such as role of young people in society, the environment, racism and xenophobia, art, women in society, local heritage etc.) mainly through peer-learning while discovering each other's cultures, habits and life-styles. They also help you to acquire new skills! The learning process in Youth Exchanges is triggered by methods of non-formal education.

Taking part in a youth exchange is a great opportunity for you, no matter which background you are coming from, to become aware of social realities and cultural differences and to reinforce values such as solidarity, democracy and friendship. Youth exchanges give you the possibility to spend time together with your peers for a short period of time and to work together on a common project topic and learn from each other. More specifically, youth exchanges aim to:

- foster intercultural dialogue and intercultural learning;
- develop skills and attitudes of young people;
- strengthen European values;
- break down prejudices and stereotypes;
- raise awareness about socially relevant topics and thus stimulate engagement in society and active participation.





Who can take part and who manages?

Youth exchanges are managed by youth organizations, informal groups of young people or other organizations. They are open to all young people, with a special focus on those with fewer opportunities. If you have a project idea, you can apply for it to be funded. However it is not possible to apply directly as an individual to receive a grant for your project. You must be part of an organization to apply with a project proposal. Alternatively you can form an informal group of young people with at least 4 young persons between the ages 13–30 and write your own youth exchange project.

There are 2 application deadlines per year to submit grant applications through an online system. These deadlines are valid for 2024 and may vary from one year to another, always check the updated version of the **Programme Guide**.

- 20 February at 12:00 (midday Brussels time) for projects starting between 1 June and 31 December of the same year
- 1 October at 12:00 (midday Brussels time) for projects starting between 1 January and 31 May of the following year

If you just want to take part as a participant you must contact an organization coordinating a project funded by the Programme.

Youth exchanges are open to all young people between the ages of 13 and 30. There should be at least two groups from different countries involved. A group is composed of a minimum of 4 participants. Each group must have a group leader that will accompany your group on the youth exchange to ensure that everything goes well. Group leaders monitor and provide support to participants to ensure a quality learning process during the activity. At the same time, they cater for a safe, respectful and non-discriminatory environment and protection of the participants. To be a group leader in a youth exchange, you must be at least 18 years-old and there's no upper age limit.

Minimum 16 and maximum 60 participants per activity (group leaders, facilitators and accompanying persons not included). In the cases of youth exchanges involving only young people with fewer opportunities, the minimum number of participants is 10.

What happens on a youth exchange?

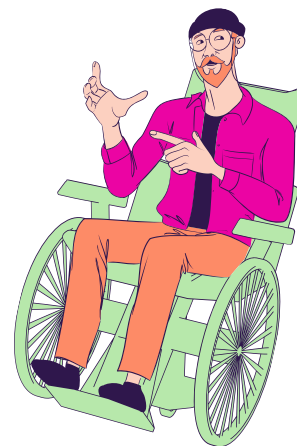
Youth exchanges are meetings of groups of young people from at least two different countries who gather for a short period to implement jointly a non-formal learning programme (a mix of workshops, exercises, debates, role-plays, simulations, parties, intercultural nights, outdoor activities, etc.) on a topic of their interest, seeking inspiration from the European Youth Goals. This short term learning period comprises a planning period before the application, preparation phase before as well as evaluation and follow-up after the exchange.

The following activities are not eligible for grants under youth exchanges: academic study trips; exchange activities that aim to make financial profit; exchange activities that can be considered as tourism; festivals; holiday travel; performance tours, statutory meetings, training courses by adults for young people.

A youth exchange can technically last from 5 to 21 days (excluding travel days), however generally the duration varies between 8–12 days. This, of course, highly depends on your project topic, your group's needs and also your National Agency's funding approach.



Can the youth exchanges be organized in mixed ability groups?



Big YES! Frankly, they are not as common as they are supposed to be, for now, but we hope they will be, very soon in the future. The more young people with disabilities become aware of the opportunities and possibilities provided within Erasmus+, the more they will demand to take part in these activities and the more youth organizations will organize mixed ability projects. So never hesitate to ask for it!

Mixed ability projects are activities that target young people with different backgrounds, abilities and disabilities. The inclusive “mixed ability” approach recognises that all young people have different needs and may need individual support at some point to fully participate.

These projects provide positive experiences of working, playing and simply being together and break down the barriers and taking on challenges. They offer young people with and without disabilities the opportunity to interact with each other in a safe environment and to build positive and respectful relationships by fostering a sense of belonging. They not only enable young people to contribute actively to all programme activities but also gain confidence in their skills and learn that their voices count.

Will you receive a certificate?

Absolutely! Your learning experiences will be recognised through a Youthpass, an online certificate which officially recognises learning outcomes from youth activities. All participants of the youth mobility projects are entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate, and thus recognition for their non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Through the Youthpass process, reflection on learning becomes more structured and the educational value of the project is strengthened. It makes your learning more conscious. Being more aware of your competences, it gets easier for you to make use of them in the future.

The Youthpass logo is a red rounded rectangle with the word "Youthpass" written in white, slanted text. It is enclosed within a green, wavy, hand-drawn style border.

Sounds great, but who is paying and which costs are covered?

Erasmus+ provides a grant to support travel as well as practical and activity-related costs necessary for the activity to take place. Funding to cover for costs that might be needed for young people with disabilities are also granted! Here's a brief summary of the financial support provided:

Travel: Contribution to the travel costs of participants (economy class and eco-friendly means of travel are supported), including group leaders, accompanying persons and facilitators, from their place of origin to the venue of the activity and return. The amount is based on the travel distance per participant between the place of origin and the venue. Here's the [distance calculator](#) for the grant support for Erasmus+ mobility projects.

Organizational Support: Costs directly linked to the implementation of mobility activities for preparing and managing all phases of the project.

Individual Support: 'Subsistence' costs for participants (food and accommodation). The amount varies according to the country in which the exchange is taking place.

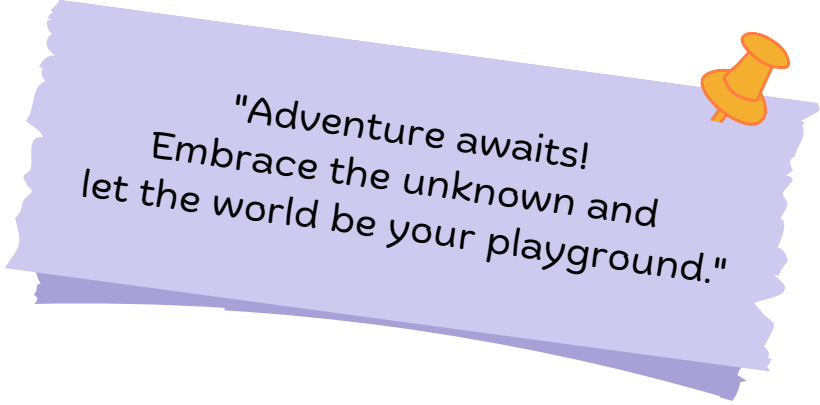
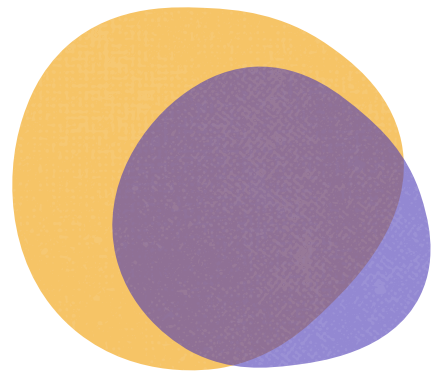
Inclusion Support for organizations: Costs related to the organization of mobility activities involving participants with fewer opportunities.

Inclusion Support for participants: Additional costs directly linked to participants with fewer opportunities and their accompanying persons, including group leaders and facilitators (including justified costs related to travel and subsistence if a grant for these participants is not requested through budget categories "travel" and "individual support").

Preparatory Visits; aim to ensure high quality activities by preparing administrative arrangements, building trust and understanding and setting-up a solid partnership between the organizations and people involved. The preparatory visit should enable to ensure that the specific needs of the participants can be catered for. They are much needed in case of mixed ability group projects. Preparatory visits take place in the country of one of the receiving organizations before the start of the youth exchange activity.

Exceptional Costs: Costs for providing a financial guarantee, if the National Agency asks for it; visa costs; vaccination costs; medical certifications or expensive travel costs (for example, when a participant is traveling to or from a very remote place).

Ready, Set, Explore!



"Adventure awaits!
Embrace the unknown and
let the world be your playground."

Where to Start?

Embarking on a journey with Erasmus+? It all begins with a spark of interest! Start by exploring your dreams and passions. What issues ignite a fire within you? What kind of impact do you want to make on the world?

The first step in your Erasmus+ journey is to define your goals and aspirations. Think about what you hope to gain from this experience, whether it's improving your language skills, gaining international work experience, or simply exploring different cultures. Once you have a clear vision, you're ready to move forward.

The internet is your best friend! Dive into reputable websites like the **European Youth Portal**, **Erasmus+ App**, **European Solidarity Corps Portal** or **Eurodesk**. These platforms are treasure troves of opportunities waiting for passionate souls like you. Take a look at some of the following addresses:

a. Erasmus+ Official Website:

Visit the official Erasmus+ website to access the latest information on available projects, application deadlines, and eligibility criteria.

b. National Agencies:

Each participating country has a National Agency responsible for managing Erasmus+ programs. Contact your National Agency to get insights into projects suitable for your needs.

c. Educational Institutions:

If you are currently enrolled in a university or other educational institution, check with your institution's international office. They often have information about Erasmus+ opportunities.

d. Online Databases:

Explore online databases where you can search for projects based on your interests and disabilities, such as **SALTO-Youth** (Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth) which works within the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.

How to decide if the project fits your needs and expectations?

Read carefully, research, and reflect! Dive into the project descriptions and evaluate if they align with your interests, skills, and goals. Pay attention to the project's objectives, date, location, duration, activities, organizers and required commitment. Check the website of the organization to have a clear understanding of their previous work. Reach out to project coordinators or hosting organizations. Ask questions about their facilities, accommodations, and inclusion support for participants with disabilities. Share your concerns, if any, and clarify everything with them before applying. If possible, connect with previous participants of the same or similar project or program you are interested in. They can provide valuable insights into their experiences.

Talk to other young people who have more experience than you. After doing all of these, trust your instincts – if it resonates with you, it's worth considering.



Do you need a sending organization?

Absolutely! A sending organization acts as your guiding star throughout this exciting journey. They provide support, advice, and help you navigate the process. Plus, they are your biggest cheerleaders, encouraging you every step of the way. Start by contacting youth organizations, student unions, or community centers in your area. They can connect you with reputable sending organizations that match your interests. Also, don't hesitate to reach out to your national agency – they're there to guide you on this exhilarating adventure!

a. Contact Local NGOs, youth centers, community centers:

Youth organizations, organizations working with people with disabilities, youth centers, and community centers are often involved in Erasmus+ and act as sending organizations. Check if there are any in your area.

b. Collaborate with Educational Institutions:

If you are a student, your educational institution may serve as your sending organization. Contact your school's Erasmus+ coordinator or international office.

c. Online Databases:

Explore online databases or platforms that connect young people with sending organizations. Check out the websites mentioned in the previous section.

Starting your Erasmus+ journey may seem overwhelming, but with the right information and guidance, it becomes an achievable and life-enriching experience. Define your goals, explore available projects, evaluate them carefully, and consider partnering with a sending organization to make your journey smoother. The next chapter will delve deeper into the application process and provide tips for a successful application.



Sealing the Deal!

"Your journey starts with the stroke of a pen or the click of a button. It's time to turn dreams into reality!"

In order to take part in an Erasmus+ mobility project, the hosting organizations (sometimes also the sending organizations) ask you to fill in an application form. This form is designed to receive information to assess how much you are interested in the project topic, meet the participation criteria and the participant profile, in order to evaluate and select the most relevant participants. In these forms the organizers generally ask about your motivation to take part in the project, your previous experiences, your opinions about the topic and special needs.

Nowadays the application forms are generally online, however if it isn't accessible, don't hesitate to reach out to the organizers. **Your needs matter!** Send an email or give them a call, explaining your situation and asking for alternative ways to apply. Accessibility is the key, and everyone needs to have an equal shot at this incredible experience.



Don't forget to follow any specific guidelines mentioned in the application. Check out the deadline to fill in the form and submit your application before the given date.

English is the main language used to communicate and run the activities in youth mobility projects, therefore the application forms are generally in English. If you have difficulties filling up the form due to your limited language skills, feel free to seek assistance, but in that case do not pretend you have good English skills and be honest about your actual English level.

For your information, simultaneous or consecutive interpretation for the participants with limited or no English skills can not be provided in Erasmus+ youth mobility projects and therefore it is not an eligible cost to be requested. Interpretation service can only be provided in case of having Deaf participants in the group who need sign language interpretation to communicate. However there's nothing to worry about, because it is not obligatory to be fluent in English to take part in Erasmus+ youth mobility activities. Being able to communicate in English, at least on a basic level would be sufficient since it is a Programme promoting inclusion of the young people with fewer opportunities who may not always get the opportunity to learn and practice English.

Programme itself also has an Online Language Support (OLS) through which participants who wish to improve their language proficiency –not only English but also other European languages– have the opportunity to follow online language courses before and during their time abroad. Alternatively in youth exchanges, group leaders have the role to support their group members in terms of communication in English when needed. Nevertheless, we strongly recommend you to practice your English as much as you can. First of all it will boost your confidence and self-esteem and make a significant difference in both the application process and during the projects in terms of better communication with others without any support.

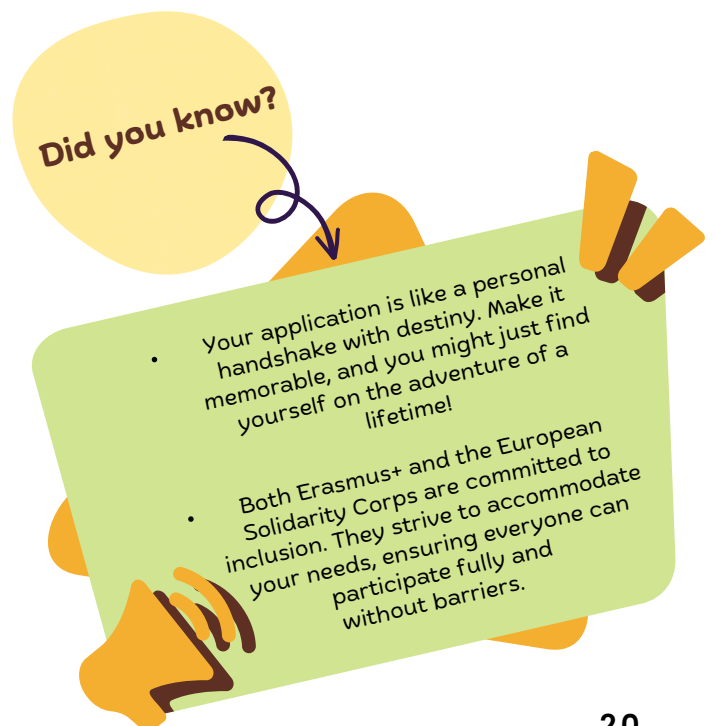
In the application form, they can ask you questions such as; your general opinions on the project topic; your previous experiences in similar activities; your motivation to participate and your possible contribution to the project. There's no need to get stressed to answer these questions. Think of it like storytelling! Be honest, passionate, and let your personality shine. Clearly express why you would like to be there and why you're perfect for this adventure. Highlight your skills, experiences, and what makes you, well, simply you! You might have zero experience in Erasmus+ but you can still mention your other passions and interests related to the project topic. Keep in mind that organizers are not always looking for very experienced participants, sometimes being the new kid can be an advantage to be selected. If you can not think of a concrete contribution from your side at that moment, you can mention your enthusiasm to learn from other people about other cultures, your motivation to broaden your perspective and your positive energy that you could bring with you.

Your individual needs/preferences (accessibility, dietary, health and medication etc.)



It is totally fine and also necessary for your own benefit to inform the organizers about your needs which you think they should be aware of in order to accommodate the activity by taking your needs into consideration. Sometimes it is observed that young people may refrain from mentioning their disabilities or individual needs as a result of their disabilities in order not to create a negative impact on the selection process. This might be a valid concern for the projects of some organizations who are not skillful or experienced in organizing mixed ability group projects. But this shall not be generalized and you should still answer the questions honestly by empathizing with the organizers. If you were the organizer, what would you like to know about the potential participants? Considering this, do not hide anything, yet do not over-inform and over-explain. For instance it would be useful to mention in case you need to be accompanied by a personal assistant; you require an adapted room or adapted transport; you use a mobility aid such as a wheelchair, walker or cane; you need a sign language interpretation or a speech to text service; you use assistive technologies; you need alternative materials in a certain format; or you have a chronic illness that the organizers should be aware of.

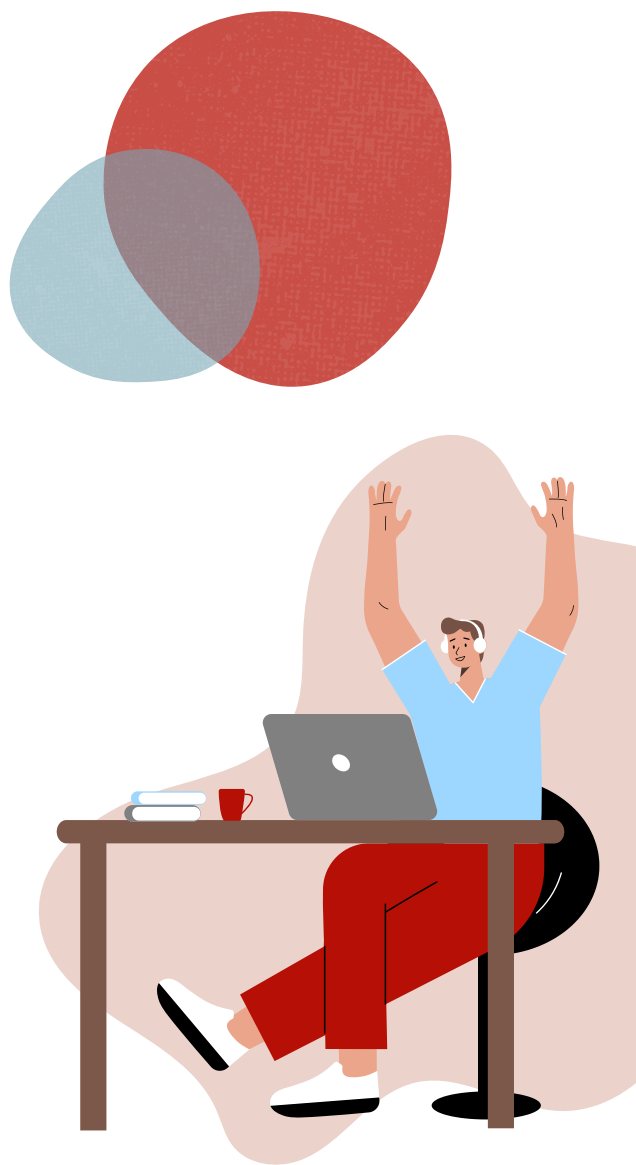
Make sure to mention any dietary needs or preferences you have. Whether you're a vegetarian, lactose intolerant, prefer halal food, need gluten-free options, or follow a diet for any particular reason (health, faith, cultural..etc.) – make sure you inform them, so that they've got you covered. This is your chance to savor every moment, including the meals!



Congratulations, you are selected! What now?

After applying to be a participant in a project, make sure you check your inbox regularly. Organizers generally contact the selected participants via email. Not all organizers inform applicants who are not selected, so no news doesn't always mean good news! Therefore if you don't receive any email from them after some time, do not hesitate to contact them to ask about the results.

Once you are confirmed to be selected as one of the participants by the organizers, there are some essential things you have to prepare/take care of before you start your Erasmus+ journey. Let's make a general preparation list then we will zoom in on each separately, shall we?



- Reading the participant information pack prepared by the organizers
- Informing yourself about the project's daily program and duration, so that you know when exactly the arrival and departure days should be
- Researching the best and economic travel options by checking your travel cost limits according to the Erasmus+ rules, sharing the travel options with the organizers and waiting for their confirmation before buying your ticket
- Contacting the selected airline/bus company/train company to get to know about the traveling conditions, inform them about your individual needs and ask for assistance if needed

- Filling out the Participant Form to inform the organizers about your arrival and departure time, your individual needs and disabilities, your medical conditions and dietary requirements, if any
- Searching entering conditions to the country of the destination and needed travel documentation
- Checking if your passport/ID is in date or renew it if you have to
- Applying for the visa, if needed
- Calculating how much money approximately you will need for traveling and during the project, to make sure you have enough money with you
- Checking the currency of the country you are traveling to and exchange the amount of money you will need
- In case you need, making arrangements for adapted transportations, or asking the organizers to make these arrangements for you
- In case of no adapted transfer arranged by the organizers, asking for step by step guideline of accessible travel from the airport to the venue
- Asking the organizers to give information about the accessibility of the accommodation and the venue beforehand. This is extra important in case you require an adapted room to stay
- If the room or the venue in general is not accessible enough for your needs, communicating with the organizers to see if some further adjustments could be made
- Checking out what is worth seeing around the project venue and thinking about the leisure activities you can do
- Checking out if the organizers expect you to prepare anything in advance.
- Preparing your luggage according to the activity programme, weather and the baggage limits of your flight
- Adding your medications and/or disability aid(s) into your luggage

FRIENDLY ADVICE:

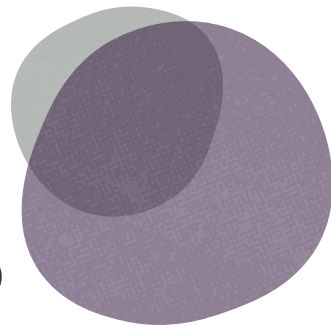
- Start your preparations early, so that you will have everything ready in time.
- Be clear and precise when giving the organizers information about you and your needs, so they can prepare everything accordingly.
- Don't be shy when talking to organizers about needed adjustments. This will allow them to provide you an inclusive Erasmus+ experience.
- Be proactive and take active part in the project's activities. Feel free to express your suggestions and new ideas.

Bojan and other participants in his national group were asked by the project organizers to prepare a one-hour dancing workshop. They have already started to plan the choreography, so that they will be ready when the time for the workshop arrives.



Amadeja has the idea to make dream catchers from different recycling materials. She will bring some materials from her own local environment, but she will also write to the organizers and other participants if they could bring some more materials from their own local environment for the workshop.

Travel Preparations



Hi there! My name is Anna and I've recently been accepted to participate in an Erasmus+ youth exchange and I'm super excited. The project is in 2 months and now I need to start preparing for my travels! Come, prepare with me!



I'll start with;

- Checking if my passport/ID is in date or not, renewing it if I have to
- Checking entering conditions to the country of destination and requested travel documentation
- Checking whether it is needed to apply for a visa online or at the embassy of that country
- Purchasing a travel health insurance for the possible medical costs abroad (This is the case for non-EU citizens. For EU citizens European Health Insurance Card can be obtained for free and can be used in 27 EU countries.)

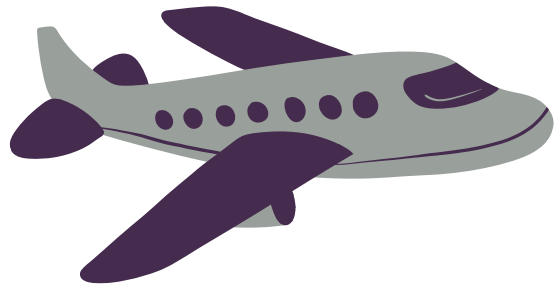
Who needs to apply for a visa?

- If you are not an EU citizen and traveling to an EU country
- If you are an EU citizen, traveling to a non-EU country

How to apply for a visa?

- Firstly, learn which visa type you will apply for (touristic, cultural, etc.)
- Secondly, learn how much time it will take them to process your visa application
- Start the visa application process as earliest as possible (preferably at least 2-3 months prior to your travel date) by contacting the nearest relevant embassy. This may require an appointment either directly from the embassy or an authorized agency.
- Based on the visa type needed, the embassy/agency will ask you to provide some documents:
 - Signed visa application form
 - Biometric color photograph
 - Copy of your passport (page with biographic data)
 - Signed invitation letter by the host/project organizer on a headed paper, mentioning the reason and the details of your stay
 - Copy of travel health insurance certificate
 - Copy of your return flight reservation
 - If you are a student, your student certificate
 - Documents showing your or your sponsor's financial status (bank account extracts, salary pay checks..etc.)
 - Application fees (varies approximately from 35 eur to 120 eur, depending on the visa type and the service fee that the authorized agencies receive)

The documents listed above are the most commonly requested ones and the whole list of required documents may vary from one embassy to another, so make sure to contact the relevant embassy for more accurate information.



In my case, it would be the best and the easiest way to travel by an airplane, so first I'm going to do a research on best flight options to my travel destination on my chosen travel dates: [10 Best Search Engines for Your Cheap Flight Search](#))

Once I've found the most affordable flight options for me and the closest airport, after confirming with the project organizers I can start booking tickets for my flight. I can do that on my own or I can choose a travel operator/agent to help me with that. The choice is mine, depending on my needs. I also recommend contacting a travel operator to help you with flight booking when traveling with disability aid(s) that require special care and storage during flight, e.g. an electric wheelchair.

I've decided to book my flight tickets on my own but since I'm a person with disability and will be traveling with a manual wheelchair I will make sure to research and book passenger assistance at the airport too. To book my flight tickets, I will go to my chosen airport company's site and fill out a form with my basic information, such as my first name, last name, birth date and travel dates. If possible, I will also choose a plane seat for myself. Depending on instructions on the airport company's website, I will require passenger assistance for persons with disabilities; I may have to fill out an online form, call a specific number or write an email to the airport. They usually require information about your disabilities and needs, as well as information about your disability aid(s), such as: their measurements and weight. ***If traveling with an electrical aid you will also need a certificate that the batteries are suitable for airplane traveling!***

Last but not least, I will be checking my baggage allowance on the flight, so I will know what type of suitcase and how many kg to bring with me. All that's left for me to do then, is wait for my flight booking and assistance confirmation, which should arrive to my email within a few hours of booking.

On the traveling day, I will make sure to be at the airport at least 2-3 hours before the flight! As soon as I can, I will go to the counter of my chosen flight company for a check-in and to ask for passenger assistance. Once again, I will remind the staff about the specifics of my needs, so that they assign me the appropriate assistance. At the check-in I will also ask to go with my wheelchair directly to the gate and for my wheelchair to be delivered to me at the gate again, as soon as we land. In that way I will make sure that my wheelchair is with me right until the moment I have to go on a plane and that it is given back to me right after I go out of the plane.

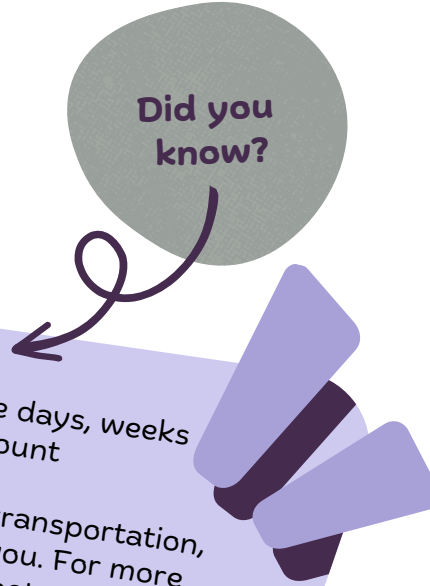
When it will be time to board the plane, I'll most likely be one of the first passengers to get on so I'm seated and comfortable before the plane gets busy. Since I'm unable to walk unaided, the passenger assistance team will transfer me to an "aisle chair" to get me onto the plane. This is a narrow, lightweight wheelchair designed to fit down the airplane aisle. The passenger assistance team will help me into my seat and then remove the aisle chair. The cabin crew will then take over caring for me, while the passenger assistance crew will take care of my wheelchair storage during the flight.

When landing at my chosen destination, the airport staff will already be informed that I need assistance getting off the plane. I will most likely be one of the last passengers to get off. Once again, the passenger assistance crew will come and help me from my plane seat to the "aisle chair", with which they will escort me off the plane and transfer me to my own wheelchair as soon as we are at the gate.

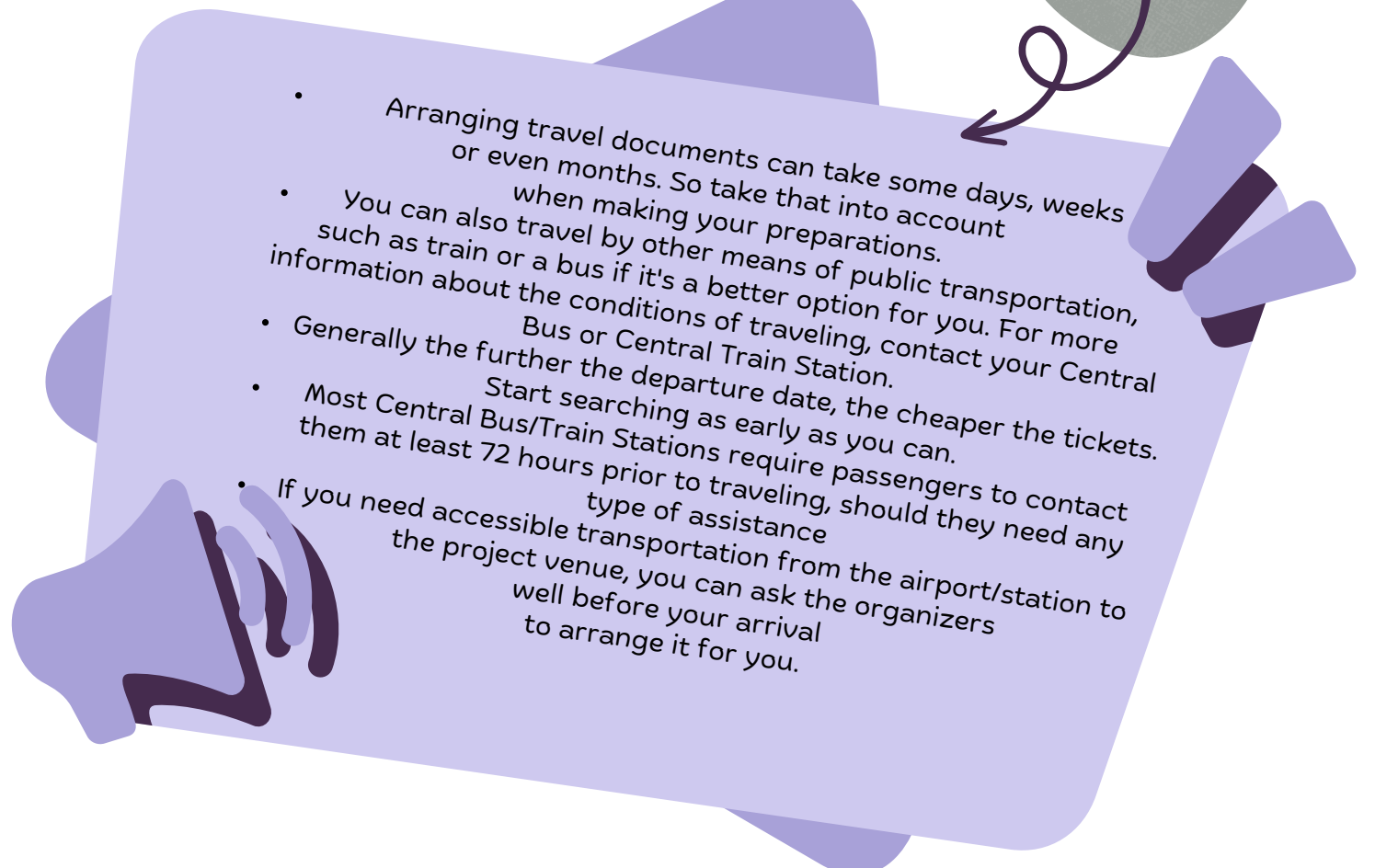
And that's it! My travel plan is prepared! Thank you for going through it with me. I hope it will help make your own travel preparations easier and faster!

See you somewhere around the world,

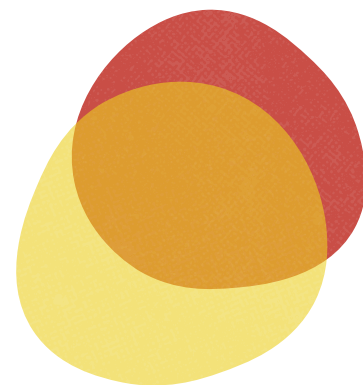
Anna



Did you know?

- 
- Arranging travel documents can take some days, weeks or even months. So take that into account when making your preparations.
 - You can also travel by other means of public transportation, such as train or a bus if it's a better option for you. For more information about the conditions of traveling, contact your Central Bus or Central Train Station.
 - Generally the further the departure date, the cheaper the tickets. Start searching as early as you can.
 - Most Central Bus/Train Stations require passengers to contact them at least 72 hours prior to traveling, should they need any type of assistance
 - If you need accessible transportation from the airport/station to the project venue, you can ask the organizers well before your arrival to arrange it for you.

What to bring with you?



When thinking about what to bring with you on a project, it is best to ask yourself these 4 essential questions:

- What country am I going to and what is the weather forecast for the days I will be there?
- What types of transportation (international, intercity or public transportation) am I going to use during my travels?
- What type of activities will we do (indoor, outdoor, excursions, intercultural nights, etc.)?
- Did the organizers ask me to bring anything specific?



Answering these four basic questions will help you to pack and optimize your luggage. Knowing the climate and the weather forecast for the country you will be visiting, will help you decide what type of clothes and shoes to bring. Also depending on the season and the weather consider bringing sun protection cream, cap, hat, sunglasses..etc.

Deciding on the means of public transportation you are going to use for traveling will give you the information on how many pieces of luggage and how many kg you are allowed to bring with you.

This information may vary depending on the company, the ticket you bought and your arrangements with the airport or train/bus station, but generally;

When traveling with a plane;

Passengers are allowed to bring one bigger suitcase, which is stored away in the luggage cabin at the bottom of the plane at check-in (The luggage weight limit for international flights may vary between 23-30 kgs per ticket based on the destination country and the airlines) and one carry-on bag which you can bring with you on the plane (this bag should not be heavier than generally 8-10 kg and should be maximum 23 x 40 x 55 cm in size). Not all airplanes are suitable for electric scooters or wheelchairs, so be sure to contact the airline in advance if needed.



When traveling with a train;

Generally, passengers are allowed to bring up to 3 pieces of luggage onboard, at no extra cost. These items may include satchels, backpacks, suitcases, and the like. However, some train companies have different luggage policies, so it's always a good idea to check their website before you travel. Items that are larger than 1 meter in any dimension are not allowed on a train. Not all trains are suitable for electric scooters or wheelchairs, so be sure to contact the train station about that in advance, if needed.

When traveling by a bus;

Passengers can generally take at least one carry-on bag, and one checked bag for free. Due to limited space in luggage compartments the bags should have a maximum of 22,5kg and be maximum 157 cm (length + width + height) in size. Internationally traveling buses are generally not suited for electric scooters and wheelchairs due to them having stairs and weight limitations.

These limitations are provided here to give you a general idea but please note that they may vary from company to another and make sure you check the exact numbers with the company you will travel with.

Now, let's prepare your luggage together!

What to pack in your checked-in baggage?

- Your clothes, shoes, flip flops and other items that you will need during the project, but not during traveling.
- Hygiene items, medical supplies and/or disability aid(s) that you will not need during traveling.
- Items for intercultural nights





What to pack in your carry-on baggage:

- Essential things that you will need during traveling as well, such as:
- Things that can be removed or can fall down of your medical aid(s) (e.g: a sitting cushion), spare parts of your assistive equipments (e.g: batteries)
- A few essential clothes in case your checked-in luggage is lost or arrives late, such as a few underwear clothes, back up shirt, pants, socks, toothbrush etc. to help you survive 1-2 days until your luggage arrives.
- Phone, phone charger, laptop, travel documents and wallet
- Any medication you will need to take during traveling (e.g. pain killers, digestive medicine..etc.)
- Some liquid to keep hydrated. Liquids carried in the airplane cabin such as aerosols, drinks, toothpaste, cosmetic creams or gels must be carried in a transparent plastic bag, maximum capacity 1 liter – and no container may hold more than 100 ml. Liquid containers larger than 100 ml must be placed in checked baggage.
- Some snacks to keep your strength and energy high
- Antibacterial wipes and hand gel
- Some book or other activity to help you pass the time



Knowing what type of project you are going to, can help you anticipate the activities and therefore the type of clothes, shoes and other items you are going to need to bring.

For example: Maša is going to a project named: “Inclusive sports”. She anticipates that there are going to be sport-related workshops, so she is planning to bring mostly comfortable, stretchy clothes in which she can freely be active in.

What is an intercultural night?

An intercultural evening is generally an evening activity in which participants present their own countries, cities, culture, traditions, a little bit of history, but also a way to have a chance to taste different local flavors and to get more information about cultural elements such as traditional costumes, games, jokes, music and folk dancing!

Some ideas for intercultural nights and items to bring are listed below:

- Bringing your national flag
- Getting dressed in traditional clothes
- Playing some traditional music (if you know how to play an instrument, that would be great!)
- Dancing the traditional folk dances
- Making a short but interesting presentation with the most relevant information about your country (the main cities, the most visited places, local customs, including creative games and quizzes)
- Sharing some traditional stories
- Presenting and sharing the little tastes of your cuisine and traditional drinks of your region
- You can use your creativity and come up with other fun ideas but always remember to enjoy every moment of the intercultural evening and put as much as you can to make it original, rich and inclusive so others will benefit the most and will be interested in finding out more and more about your culture!




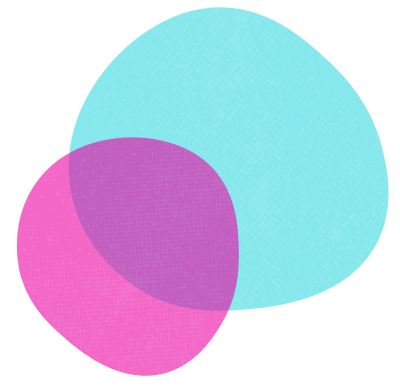
Ege is going to participate in a youth exchange with his national group. They were told that as a part of a youth exchange program, they would have to present their country's culture to the other participants during the intercultural night, so he is packing some national foods, drinks and some traditional costumes in his luggage to bring with him. Of course he will pack the food and the drinks properly and carefully according to the above mentioned baggage rules in order not to have a bad surprise on arrival!



FRIENDLY ADVICE:

- Think about what you will need, when you will need it and for how long you will need it.
- Pack the essential things first and then see how much room you still have in your luggage for other things.
- Bring some cash money or a credit card in case you might need it for souvenirs, extra food, extra drinks or any unexpected expenditure.
- Travel as light as possible.

Accessibility at its best!



"Adventure knows no bounds when accessibility paves the way. Get ready to explore without limits!"

Accessibility check of the venue

Before You Go:

Before you embark on this grand adventure, ensure your comfort by asking all the right questions:

- Bedroom: Is it accessible? Can you move freely and comfortably? Feel free to ask for some pictures if you are not convinced.
- Bathroom: Check if it's equipped for your needs.
- Activity spaces: Ensure you can participate fully in all planned activities.
- Restaurants: Is the dining area accessible, and can they accommodate your dietary preferences?
- Coffee-break areas: Because coffee breaks are relaxing and socializing times and important as much as the sessions– make sure they're accessible too!
- Surroundings: Explore beyond the venue. Are the nearby attractions and places wheelchair-friendly, blind-friendly or accommodating for your specific needs? Are they safe to navigate by yourself?
- Feel free to ask for some pictures from the organizers especially if you are not convinced by the accessibility of any of the above. If you are visually impaired and need a visual description of the pictures provided, feel free to ask for it.

When You Arrive:

Upon arrival, make the most of your first moments by getting an on-the-spot orientation:

- **Ask for Guidance:** Get a feel for the venue. Where's everything located? Don't be shy to ask for a guided orientation tour to familiarize yourself with the surroundings.
- **Meet the Team:** Connect with the organizers and support staff. They're your allies, ready to assist whenever you need.
- **Share your inclusion needs with the facilitators:** The organizers and the facilitators may not know your individual needs if they are not well informed beforehand. So don't hesitate to share these needs with them.
 - For instance, in youth exchanges a lot of visual materials can be used (e.g. videos, digital presentations, posters, flipcharts..etc.). If you are a visually impaired person and you need visual description support, ask for it from the very beginning. You can also share the proper and correct way of communicating, guiding or approaching in a friendly and constructive manner.
 - If you are a Deaf person and having difficulty reading and comprehending the written material, ask for simplifying the information. If the speeches are going too fast for you and the sign language interpreter to follow, ask them to adapt their pace.
 - If you are a wheelchair user and you can not stay too long on the wheelchair and need longer pause sessions to lay down and rest during the day, share this with them in order to arrange the timing.
 - If you have any kind of learning difficulties, share beforehand what you are able and not able to do, so that the facilitators can organize the tasks without causing you feel excluded during the activities.

Don't forget that it may be their first experience meeting a person with such a disability. Try to be open to alternative solutions for inclusion. This is a wonderful learning opportunity for all and you can be a great asset and source of knowledge for this purpose. Use it wisely!

Accompanying Persons



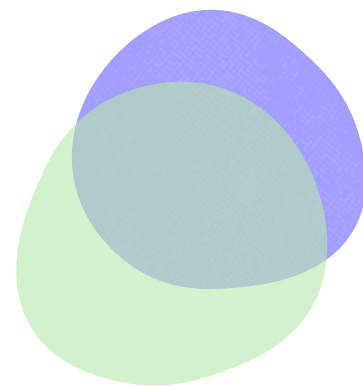
Accompanying person accompanies participants with disabilities in a mobility activity in order to ensure their safety, provide support and assistance, as well as assist with the participant's effective learning during the mobility experience. In the project application phase organizations have the right to claim the fee for the accompanying persons under the inclusion costs in their budget. Don't hesitate to ask about any kind of support during the application phase in order to be able to plan better. If not, your needs always matter, and they're here to make sure you have the best experience possible:

- **Personal Assistant:** Personal Assistance is a tool which allows for independent living. Personal assistance should be provided on the basis of an individual needs assessment and depending on the life situation of each individual. If you require one, check with the organizers if it's covered. Your adventure buddy might be part of the package! Generally the participants with disabilities are expected to find their assistants themselves and the fee for the service is paid by the organizers. Their travel, accommodation and meal costs are also covered by the project budget.
- **Sign Language Interpreter:** Sign language is the key for communication for the Deaf individuals. If you need a sign language interpreter as a Deaf person, inquire about it during the application phase. They shall ensure you fully engage in every aspect of the project just like the hearing participants. Generally the Deaf participants are expected to find their sign language interpreters themselves and the fee for the service is paid by the organizers. Their travel, accommodation and meal costs are also covered by the project budget.
- **Palantypist/Speech to text reporter:** If you are hard of hearing and you would follow what is spoken much better with such kind of assistance, feel free to inquire about it in the application phase. Travel, accommodation and meal costs of the palantypists are covered by the project budget.

Since all of these services are professional and expensive, organizers may need some time to arrange accordingly. Erasmus+ is committed to providing accessible experiences for all participants. It's not just a journey; it's an inclusive adventure for everyone!



Financial and Technical Information



When participating in Erasmus+ youth mobility activities, each participant involved in such an activity/project is provided with safe and decent free accommodation and food for the duration of the activity, as well as covered transport costs to and from the activity. The amount of traveling costs covered by the Erasmus+ program is determined based on the length of the trip.

When it comes to participants with fewer opportunities – those with additional needs – who may need a personal assistant due to a disability or a sign language interpreter or any other language support – there is an option to cover additional costs for support and well-being of such participants if you provide the necessary evidence on why this additional support is needed.

Accommodation and meals, travel expenses and, by prior agreement, also payment for work – all these costs must be foreseen in advance and paid for when the project is registered, so it is important that the participants are already involved in the preparation of the project itself. The partner/sending organization should communicate all this information to the applicant organization before the project application is even submitted, so that all relevant things are already included in it.

You can read more about the financial aspect of project application in the Program Guide, which you will find here:

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide>





How about Green travel?

Sustainable transport is also encouraged by the Erasmus+ Programme by providing participants with the option of choosing green travel – this is when they choose to use means of transport with lower emissions (such as a bus, train, bike or car sharing), for most of their journey. Although flying is usually the faster and the cheaper option, it is an unsustainable way of traveling.

To travel green, the first thing you can do is to avoid domestic flights. If you are traveling within Europe, it is best to use the train to transport. If you do not have such an option or you are traveling overseas, try to use direct flights as the takeoffs and landings create most of an airplane's carbon emissions. You can also use airlines that offer carbon offset programs for a greener journey.

Green travel generally means longer journeys and long journeys can be relatively challenging and exhausting for people with disabilities, especially for people with physical disabilities. But on the other hand due to some other difficulties can be encountered during the travel by airplane, (e.g. wheelchair users still have to change from their chair to the airplane seat in most of the aircrafts, which is very laborious and uncomfortable for many), trains, cars, vans or buses may be more preferable. Those transport vehicles, especially trains for longer distances are less carbon intensive than planes. Check out [this link](#) to read more on how to plan your accessible train travel in Europe.

The European Commission has established a top-up amount for green travel support in different key actions. Meaning that individuals who choose to take transport methods considered to be more sustainable can receive more grant money for their travels and up to 4 days of additional travel days (if the travel days are relevant for the key action).

Who is purchasing the tickets?

In case of youth exchanges, generally participants from each partner country organize their travel together as a group with the assistance of their group leader and their organization. Participants arrange/purchase their travel tickets individually and they are reimbursed after the project. In some rare cases if the participants are not financially able to purchase their own tickets, they can ask to be supported by the sending or the hosting organization with the condition of guaranteeing their full participation in the project with a written statement. Because organizations consider it risky to buy the tickets for the participants who may change their mind to participate or simply miss the flight and in such cases these costs are not eligible.

VERY IMPORTANT!!!

- When purchasing the tickets, check out the baggage allowances and whether the baggage cost is included in the price or you have to pay an extra amount.
- For the expenses to be justified and reimbursed, each participant must save all tickets, boarding passes and invoices from traveling and forward them to the organizers
- It is useful to save all travel documents in a digital form as well (scan, take photos)



The kilometer distance from the starting point of traveling to the location of the activity is determined based on the EU distance calculator which you will find here:

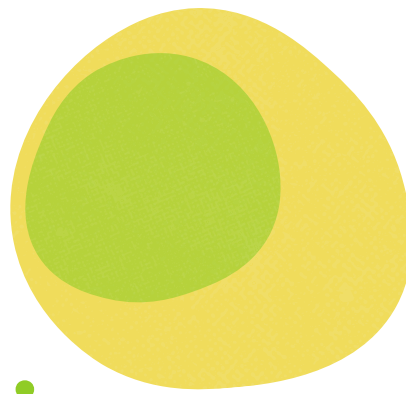
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/distance-calculator>

Visa Costs

All expenses incurred in connection with obtaining an entry visa (service fee, taxes, necessary travel, etc.) are eligible expenses that are reimbursed to the participants.

These expenses must also be planned in advance, so the participant or the sending/partner organization communicates the need for a participants' visa before the project application is submitted. The applicant organization then considers/estimates visa costs within the project application.

Inclusion and Participation




"Disability is an opportunity for innovation."
- Haben Girma (the first Deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School)

Let's talk about one of the most exciting aspects that make the entire Erasmus+ participation process unique and special which is inclusivity and active participation. Inclusion and active participation of youth with disabilities should be a collaborative effort that involves a two-way process. It's not just about the organizers and trainers creating an inclusive space but also about the active engagement and socializing of all participants from different countries and cultures. Remember the importance of sharing responsibilities and contributing actively to the collective experience, which shows that your input is valuable, and your active participation is vital to fostering an inclusive environment.

As another component, taking the time to familiarize yourself with non-formal education techniques is super crucial. Understanding these techniques can help you engage more effectively and participate actively without feeling overwhelmed. As a reminder, non-formal education techniques are super cool learning tools, where you get to dive into interactive activities, like games with purposes, group simulations, lively debates, and hands-on workshops, along with discussions and real-life experiences, making education way more exciting and engaging than the usual textbooks and lectures! If you encounter any activities that seem non-inclusive or make you feel uncomfortable, don't hesitate to communicate your concerns with the facilitators. Your feedback can contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all participants.

Also be open minded when it comes to sharing your experiences related to your disability with both the other participants and the organizers. View this as an opportunity for mutual learning and growth. Recognize that it might be the first time for many of them to interact closely with someone who has your specific disability. By sharing your insights and experiences, you can help cultivate a greater understanding within the group, fostering a more inclusive and compassionate environment for everyone.

Communication



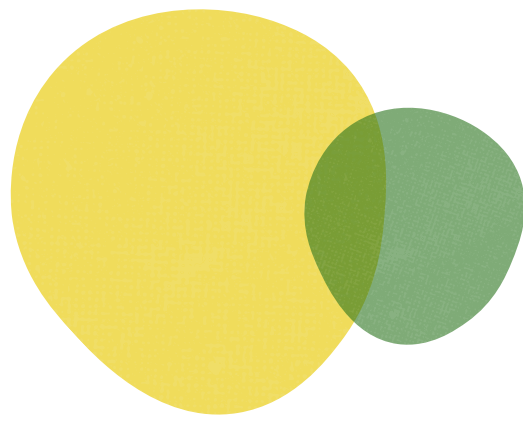
"Good communication is the bridge between confusion and clarity."
- Nat Turner (A Slave Rebellion)

Hey again, Erasmus+ explorer!

Congratulations on your upcoming adventure! You are progressing through a process to add a new experience to your life. Let's cover pre-communication topic in 3 dimensions:

- Before you set off, make sure to have a good chat with the organizers, facilitators and all other relevant individuals involved in the process. Keep in mind that you'll have various options like social media, WhatsApp, email, and/or video calls to communicate with these individuals. Share which ones work best for you and if possible, suggest multiple options. Feel free to share your individual needs when using any of these ways of communication. (e.g. If you are a visually impaired person, you can inform them that the visual description of the images shared in whatsapp communications is very important)
- Ask them all the questions you need and be clear about what you require for a smooth experience. You can define the content of your questions by asking yourself, "What do I need to know before going there? What would help me to adjust my basic needs first and then address my concerns?". Don't be afraid to vocalize it—just mentioning your disability might not cover everything you need. You know that everyone experiences disability differently, and no one can understand your needs and you better than yourself.
- Also, check out if there's a nearby clinic or health center in case you have any emergency situation. If you require regular medical care and might need more intensive and/or specialized interventions than standard procedures in the event of any medical emergency, knowing this can make you feel better prepared and more at ease. Thus stay safe, make memories, and rock your Erasmus+ journey!

Free time



Do you know what is great about Erasmus+ projects?

It is not all about the project's programs, activities and workshops, it is also about free time too!

At every Erasmus+ project you go to, you get some free/siesta time. This is usually in between 1 hour length sessions or right after lunch and in the evenings. Free time after lunch is usually 1h to 1,5h long, while in the evenings free time is even longer. This free time is meant for you, to reflect on the activities of the day, socialize more with other participants, make new friendships and to spend it exploring the venue and its surroundings however you want.

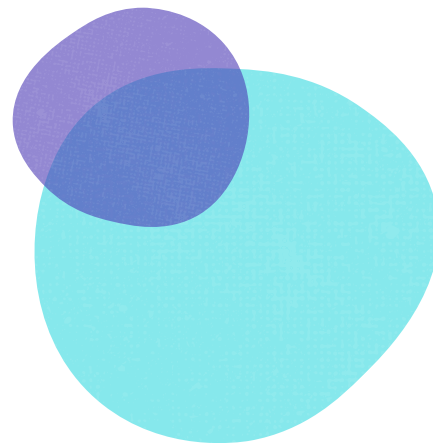
This is why it is good that you check out the venue you will be staying at and the opportunities it offers for leisure activities beforehand. By using different resources, you can research what would be nice to see or do there and prepare accordingly. You can do this research by yourself of course or ask the organizers for information.

Erasmus+ also allows youth exchange participants to travel up to 1-2 days before OR after the activity days to the project venue. For example, if the youth exchange will be organized in Budapest-Hungary, you can travel 1-2 days earlier and enjoy the sightseeing in the city, explore the historical and touristic attractions, and start to get to know about Hungarian culture. Keep in your mind that accommodation and food is not provided and shall be self-covered during your extra staying days.



"Free time is a terrible time to waste. Free time keeps us going, encourages our creativity, awakens the child within us."

What can go wrong and what to do?



"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."
- Nelson Mandela



No matter what experiences come your way during your Erasmus+ journey, it's important to be prepared for unexpected challenges that might arise. However, always remember that you have a support system in place, including the organizing team, your sending organization and the facilitators who are there to assist you every step of the way.

Let's explore some potential situations that could occur and what proactive steps you can take in response:

1. Losing the ID or passport: In the event of misplacing your ID or passport, it's crucial to maintain composure and immediately report the incident to the local authorities and your embassy. Before embarking on your journey, make it a practice to keep duplicate copies of your essential documents separately for easy access. Additionally, keep the project organizers informed, and familiarize yourself with the terms of your travel insurance, ensuring you're adequately covered in such scenarios.

2. Losing the baggage: Should the unexpected happen and you find yourself without your baggage, promptly inform the airport or transportation authorities and the relevant carrier. Ensure you carry essential items like medication in your carry-on luggage and retain a detailed record of your belongings before your departure. Staying in touch with the project organizers and understanding your travel insurance coverage for lost items can significantly aid in streamlining the recovery process.

3. Losing/breaking your assistive devices: In the unfortunate circumstance of misplacing or damaging your assistive devices, swiftly reach out to the necessary authorities or project organizers for assistance. Research local facilities that can provide the needed support in repairing or replacing your devices. To be prepared for unforeseen events, consider carrying spare parts or supplementary devices, and be diligent in documenting your device specifications and insurance coverage details.

4. Theft or losing your wallet and money: If you're a victim of theft or misplace your wallet and funds, ensure you file a formal report with the local authorities and notify your banking institution immediately. Safeguarding duplicate copies of vital documents separately and understanding the provisions of your travel insurance for instances of theft or loss can ease the process of retrieval. Seeking guidance from the project organizers and taking precautionary measures to secure your belongings can prevent such incidents from occurring.

5. Getting sick during the project: Prioritize your well-being in case of illness by seeking prompt medical attention. Collaborate with the project organizers to identify nearby medical facilities and communicate any pertinent medical history to the attending healthcare professionals. Confirm the extent of your health insurance coverage for medical expenses and adhere to the prescribed treatment plan for a speedy recovery. In case the situation gets serious and you have to go back to your country due to your illness, it is still possible to be reimbursed by justifying your reason not to be able to fully participate and leave earlier the project, by preparing a written statement to the organizers and the funding National Agency, annexing your official medical reports.

The same conditions are also valid for the accompanying person. In case the accompanying person has to leave the project earlier due to health issues, the organizers shall immediately arrange a replacement from the hosting country.

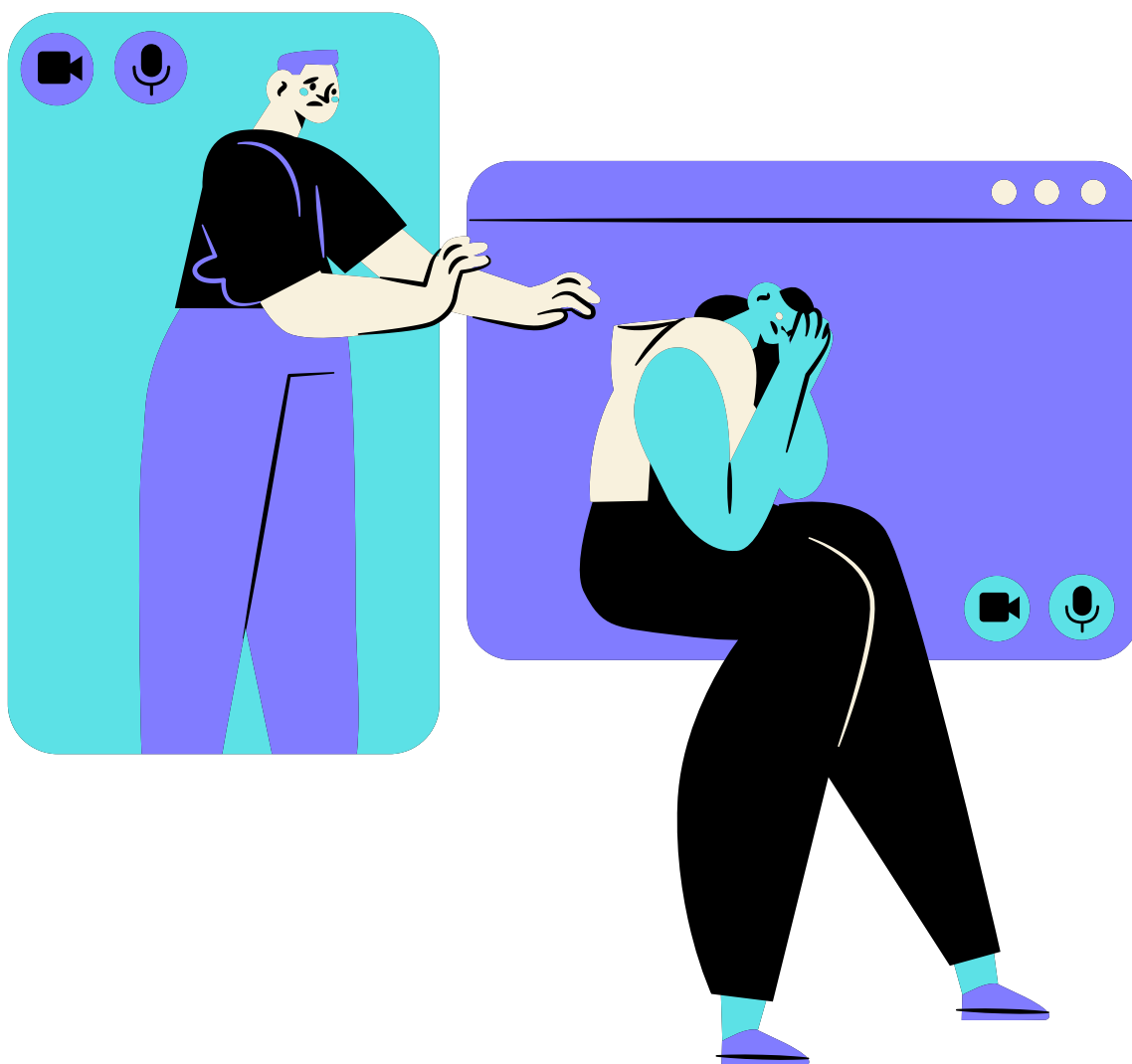
6. Having an accident: In the event of an accident, it's crucial to prioritize your safety and promptly seek assistance from local emergency services or the project organizers. Stay in communication with your team and inform your insurance provider about the incident. Follow the prescribed recovery plan and allow yourself ample time to recuperate before resuming your activities.



7. Getting Involved in a conflict/Argument: If you find yourself in a disagreement, prioritize maintaining a calm and respectful demeanor. Take a moment to gather your thoughts and actively engage in open communication to foster understanding. Seek assistance from the project organizers to facilitate conflict resolution and promote a harmonious atmosphere within the group.

8. Having an unpleasant experience with the project organizers: If you have a problematic issue with the hosting organization and the organizers which could not be resolved despite all your efforts, such as unequal treatment towards the participants, having discriminatory behaviors, not providing safe and decent conditions, not making the reimbursement on time or at all, etc., after discussing within your national group and with your sending organization, you can always directly contact and claim to the National Agency of the hosting country and also the National Agency of your own country about the situation. Here is the list of contacts of the [National Agencies](#).

By remaining informed, relying on solidarity and taking proactive measures, you can effectively navigate through these challenging circumstances, ensuring a seamless and enriching Erasmus+ experience.




What about your responsibilities?

Your feedback helps to shape the future of the projects? Your voice influences the design of programs, making them even more impactful for future participants. Sharing your experiences creates a ripple effect and your story has the potential to inspire a new wave of young changemakers, fostering a community of global citizens. So what can you do?

Fill in the evaluation form: Your insights matter! As the adventure concludes, take a moment to reflect and share your thoughts. The evaluation form is your platform to express your experiences, challenges, and suggestions. Your feedback is invaluable in shaping future projects and ensuring they cater to the diverse needs of participants. Seize this opportunity to contribute to the ongoing improvement of these life-changing experiences.

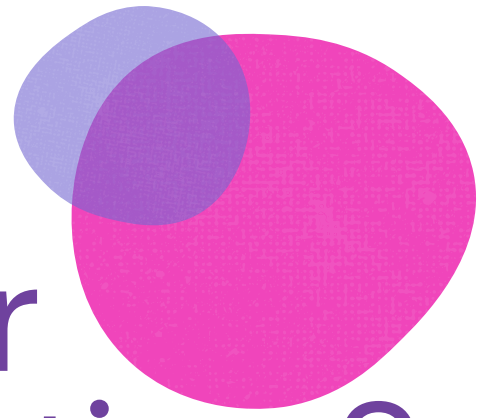
Provide what is asked from you by the organizers: It's a team effort! The organizers may request additional information, feedback, or documentation. Whether it's sharing your project outcomes, participating in follow-up activities, or providing testimonials, your active engagement post-project ensures a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact. Fulfilling these requests strengthens the community and contributes to the legacy of the project.

Share your experiences with other young people around you: Be the spark of inspiration! Your journey is a story worth telling. Share your experiences with friends, family, and peers through social media, blog posts, or other platforms. Your narrative has the power to ignite curiosity and motivate others to embark on their own adventures. By being a storyteller, you become a beacon of encouragement, breaking down barriers and opening doors for those who follow in your footsteps.



"The end is just the beginning of a new chapter. Your journey continues with the power to inspire and the responsibility to share the magic."

What to keep in your mind all the time?



As you set foot on this exhilarating Erasmus+ adventure within a particular project in any country, always remember that you are part of a vibrant and diverse community of like-minded individuals. Your enthusiasm, passion, and open hearts are the driving force behind this incredible experience. As we're approaching to the end of our guidebook, here we would like to share 9 dynamic reminders to keep in mind throughout your journey, ensuring that you make the most of every moment:

Respect other cultures

Be on time, be punctual for the sessions

Always check on your own national group

Be involved, be active

Always remember to enjoy and have fun

Take care of your belongings

Leave your room and other activity spaces tidy and clean

Be open-minded

Never ever give up!



"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
Maya Angelou



Respect other cultures: Embrace the incredible diversity you'll encounter during this project. Engage with curiosity and respect for the various customs, belief systems, traditions, and viewpoints you'll encounter. Celebrate the beauty of different cultures and use this opportunity to learn, share, and grow together. As an example, during a cultural exchange event, actively engage with local participants by asking questions about their customs, trying traditional foods, and participating in local dances or activities. Believe in the power of the inclusive language and avoid biases and expressions that may be discriminatory. Be aware that some expressions may have different meanings in different languages and cultures.

Take care of your belongings: Your personal items are not just things; they're essential tools on your journey. Keep your belongings organized and secure. This not only ensures your own comfort but also shows responsibility towards the shared spaces we'll be in. As an example, ensure your backpack, toiletries, and other items are neatly stored to prevent clutter and maintain a clean environment.

Be on time, be punctual for the sessions: Time is a precious resource, and being punctual is a sign of commitment and respect. Arrive on time for every session and activity. Your energy and presence matter, so don't miss out on anything by being late! As an example, arriving promptly for a group discussion or workshop shows respect for the organizer's time and ensures you don't disrupt the flow of the activity, enabling everyone to make the most of the session.

Leave your room and other activity spaces tidy and clean: Our environment plays a huge role in shaping our experiences. Show appreciation for the spaces you use by keeping them clean and organized. A tidy space fosters a positive atmosphere for everyone. For example after using a common area for a group activity, take a few minutes to clean up and return furniture to its original arrangement.

Always check on your own national group: While we embrace diversity, it's also essential to stay connected with your fellow participants from your country. Share your experiences, support each other, and build a strong national presence within the project. This unity will make your journey even more meaningful. As an example, organize a regular gathering among peers from your country to share experiences and provide support for each other.

Be involved, be active: Don't be a bystander in this incredible experience. Dive in headfirst! Engage actively in discussions, workshops, and activities. Your participation fuels the project's success, and your enthusiasm can be infectious. As an example, volunteer to lead a group discussion on a topic of interest to you or organize a team-building activity. If you are a Deaf participant and the majority of the group is hearing, take the initiative to teach them basic daily sign language expressions. They will love and appreciate it!

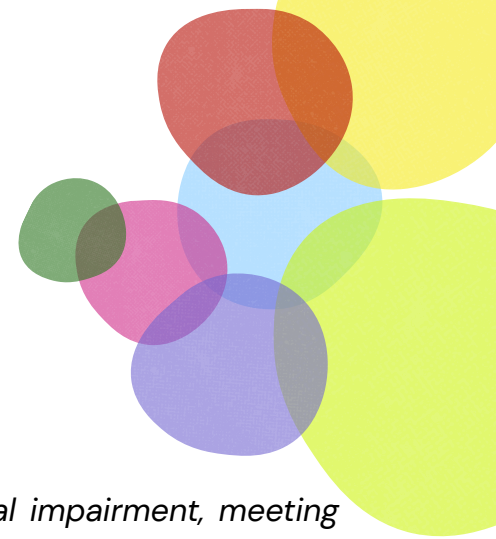
Be open-minded: This is your chance to broaden your horizons. Be open to new ideas, different perspectives, and challenging conversations. An open mind is a powerful tool for personal growth and building connections with others. As an example, when discussing controversial topics, actively listen to opposing viewpoints and seek common ground. Engage in respectful debates to broaden your perspective and promote understanding.

Always remember to enjoy and have fun: Youth exchanges mean so many things; sharing, learning from each other, intercultural learning, team spirit, collective thinking, breaking stereotypes, building new narratives among youth, ..etc. and many more. However when you ask former participants of youth exchanges one common thing you hear would be how much fun they had. So don't miss the opportunity to enjoy every second of it.

Never ever give up!: Sometimes even though you prepared an excellent application form and you think you would be the best participant in that project, you might not be selected. This could happen for so many different reasons, and this could happen to anyone. Do not take it personally! do not consider it as a failure! Keep pursuing other opportunities. Keep working on yourself, develop new skills, and improve your English!

Thank you very much for reading, we hope all the information provided here was useful and it will pave the way for you and other young people with disabilities to take an active part in Erasmus+ Programme. Last but not least, please share this guide with other young people you think need guidance and do not know where and how to start yet. We wish you an enriching, fulfilling and fun Erasmus+ journey!

Testimonials



"I don't know where to start. As a young woman with a visual impairment, meeting with other young people from different countries in Europe, with different cultures and backgrounds, was one of the most transformative experiences of my life. I was the first member of my family to go abroad with Erasmus+ projects, as most of its members lived in small towns or small communities. Therefore, for me, taking this experience without being able to hear about it from my relatives was a quite big step, it was like embarking on an adventure of sorts. Looking at it from this perspective, you can probably guess how challenging yet miraculous the decision and process of representing my association in other countries and international projects after being among founders of perhaps the first organization of disabled youth in Turkey.

So much so that when trying to purchase the first project ticket from the account of a dear friend who is now living in Australia after her Work & Holiday experience there, as the airline's website was not accessible, we ended up purchasing it for her instead of me, as her information was loaded when we went back to check to avoid entering incorrect details of mine. We were both so inexperienced in these matters and were students who couldn't afford to compensate for the cost of a ticket that we were anxious to the point of death while going through what is now a moment I laugh at when I look back.

Later on, I participated in training sessions that were organized for disabled people, in mixed participation events where inclusive treatment was observed, and even in training sessions that were not supposed to include disabled people but turned into a mixed group thanks to my participation. Each of these evolved into unforgettable moments of transformation with new companions whose experiences I benefited from, tasks that would improve skills I avoided doing in Turkey, and the transformation of the perspective of the experimenter, that is, "me".

To take this further, I wanted to become a young trainer. I received training on inclusion from my trainers at the Youth Trainers Academy, practiced under the supervision of Cemile Elif Serbest, one of the architects of the process creating this booklet that you are reading now, and transformed from a little Bahar who was afraid to speak to the community to a trainer who enjoys touching others. In short, this journey transforms everyone and everything you come into contact with because it's a kind of magic where you are also touched."

Bahar Yavuz - Türkiye



"In July of 2023, I went to Sweden as part of an Erasmus+ youth exchange. The exchange was generally a positive experience, as I met a lot of new, nice people, experienced the pulse of interculturalism firsthand, caught the pulse of the Swedish Lund and its beautiful landscape, and also tested myself in the "Robinson" living conditions, which strengthened and prepared me for all future (unexpected) situations that require ingenuity. I stayed in touch with quite a few co-participants through social media. I really enjoyed the intercultural evenings, where we had the opportunity to pamper our eyes and taste buds with different tastes and impressions from Malta, Sweden, and Italy, as well as dance and laugh and be part of an acrobatic show with horses. Thanks to all these experiences, now I know what I need to pay more attention to and which methods of exchange suit me and which do not.

But sadly, not everything was positive about this youth exchange. It got complicated right from the start, when I arrived at the airport, because the organizers who bought the plane tickets did not send me any confirmation message about assistance and allowed devices on the plane in time. When ordering tickets, they also incorrectly stated the type of battery I had inside of my electric wheelchair. (lithium instead of dry gel cell), which made additional inconveniences. When arriving at the exchange's location, the accommodations were not suitable for people with cerebral palsy, as we slept in glamping canvas tents on very low beds that were difficult to stand up from (even though the organizers initially assured me that there were "normal" beds). Fortunately, we managed to arrange the bedroom situation later, when they assigned a bedroom in a house for me and my assistant. The exchange itself (including the workflow) was very disorganized - we had a lot of unplanned free time between activities, when no one really knew what we were supposed to be doing. Also, not all activities were disabled friendly (and especially not for those with cerebral palsy), as they included a visit to an inaccessible adrenaline park, which led to two participants with a disability having an accident there and had to be taken to the emergency room. The transportation we used was also mainly not adapted for wheelchairs, so many times I had to be carried into the bus/van.

Nonetheless, I would rate the experience as very welcome and I don't regret having experienced it, but I will definitely be more careful in the future before taking on another such challenge."

Agnes K. - Slovenia

“As a Deaf young person, I have been participating in EU Erasmus+ projects since my 20s. I participated in projects in various countries in Europe and these projects were very useful and guiding in raising awareness. I gained different perspectives and they helped me find new ideas that would be especially useful for the Deaf community.

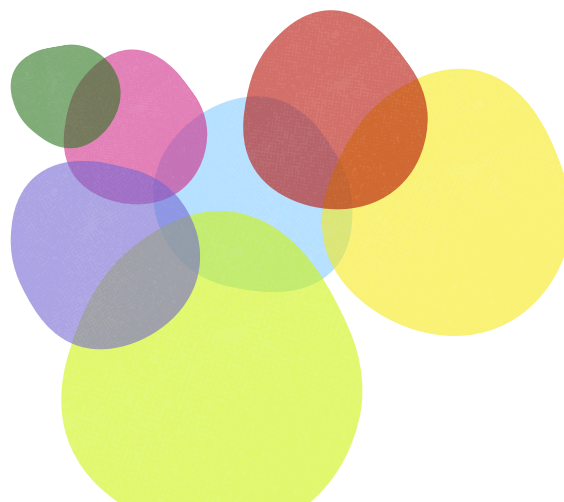
Participating in these projects has not always been easy, because many organizations still do not believe that we, Deaf young people, can actively participate in projects like all other young people, and do not create the necessary opportunities for this. However, in order for us to benefit from these mobility opportunities, a few small arrangements, especially sign language interpreters, are sufficient.

At the same time, as a Deaf rights advocate, my biggest dream was to prepare my own project, apply and present my own ideas, instead of just being a participant in these projects. I struggled a lot with this issue, because the language barrier made it very difficult for me while preparing a written project. While I could express myself very well with sign language, I was having difficulty filling out the application form and needed support from my hearing friends.

Finally, with support in filling out the form, we prepared our first ESC-30 project with my Deaf team and it was approved. I was very happy to be the leader of a project prepared by Deaf individuals in Türkiye for the first time and to contribute to the Deaf community. This was my dream and I made it happen. In our project, we brought Deaf and hearing young people together for dialogue and organized various trainings and events. Our project created great awareness in both communities.

With the big motivation I received from this success, this time I prepared an international youth exchange project and I am looking forward to the results.”

İrem Karakaya – Türkiye





“I am a 24-year-old student with Spinal Muscular Atrophy and therefore I use an electric wheelchair. Despite my mobility impairment, I try to live as normal and full a life as possible. This is sometimes very difficult, especially when traveling and visiting hard-to-reach places. Thus, so far, I have only visited nearby neighboring countries where I can go with my customized vehicle. I can't imagine traveling with airlines, as I think this would be very complicated due to the electric wheelchair I have. In addition, when choosing accommodation, I always must pay close attention to accessibility and functional consumption, which limits my options quite a bit.

All of these are the reasons why I never decided to go on a youth exchange or other Erasmus+ projects so far, that would require me staying abroad. This decision is also largely influenced by the fact that I need the help of personal assistants in my everyday life. When I would go abroad, several people would have to go with me, to provide me with care, and I fear that these things are not regulated, especially if we are talking about taking part in projects lasting several months. It's hard to expect someone to give up their lifestyle and go away with you for months, in my opinion. But, I was already involved in online international projects through which I gained an international experience, except that it was based on online platforms.

I therefore suggest that solutions be found in these areas and that it is possible for disabled people to find a way to go abroad together with their assistants. It is necessary to enable several modes of transport (transportation by adapted vehicle, train, plane, etc.) that suits each individual. It is necessary to know that everyone has their own needs and preferences, which are conditioned by their disability. I also suggest enabling more online Erasmus+ projects for people who are unable to participate in person, due to the severity of their disability.

In the end, I would like to say that I am grateful to have been a part of this “Able2Travel” project and to contribute to the development of this Guidebook, because I believe that only with the sharing of our experiences, will we be able to find the right ways for improvements”

Anamarija V. – Slovenia



"I have been active within the Erasmus+ field for about 7 years now. It started with me being a participant in youth exchanges, then a youth leader for national groups, to becoming a youth worker in international youth projects. Erasmus+ has definitely opened up a lot of new opportunities for me, both professionally and personally. It has tested my limits, while at the same time, enriching my life with unforgettable experiences and new life-long friendships all around the world!

As a member of the ODTIZ Institute team, I'm very happy that I got a chance to work on this Guidebook development. Firstly, because being a wheelchair user myself, I've also discovered some new information and helpful tips for my future participation in Erasmus+. Secondly, because I got to collaborate with youngsters with different abilities, hear their experiences and suggestions. It all resulted into this Guidebook you are reading today.

I do hope that this Guidebook will answer some questions, help calm down some of the fears and encourage more young people to participate in Erasmus+, regardless of their disabilities. Wishing many exciting and unforgettable Erasmus+ journeys to you all!"

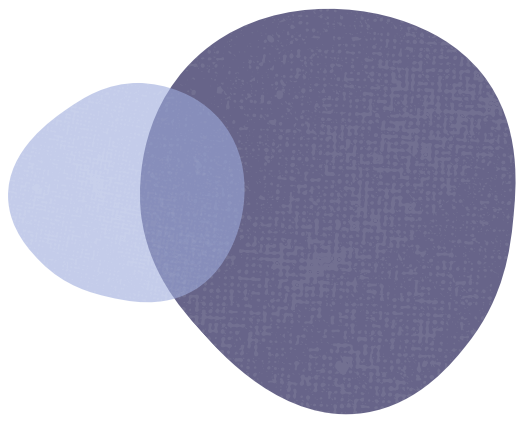
**Kimberly Ren, youth worker and project coordinator
at ODTIZ Institute – Slovenia**

"In 2022 I participated in an Erasmus+ youth exchange project for people with disabilities, in which the German Federation of the Blind was the applicant organization and the accessibility arrangements necessary for accessible city tours were determined. I was among the participants selected by our association, EGED, and my travel process started with great excitement. It was not the first Erasmus experience for me because I had done my first project as an Erasmus student before, but I always arranged my travel process with the guidance of others. Within the scope of this project, we had a city tour in Berlin for 5 days in total, including travel days, and there were participants using wheelchairs in the project. As a visually impaired young person, it was really good for me to participate in such a project and get to know people from different cultures. I can easily say that I spent an unforgettable 5 days. I think this guidebook on Erasmus+ youth exchange is really comprehensive and very useful because it has satisfying information about all the stages of a trip from the beginning to the end and I think it is a travel bedside book.

My young friends, please set out to travel, be sure that life is all about the memories we accumulate, the places we discover and the different cultures we get to know. Travel is the most important personal investment. While you have such a wonderful guide in your hands, please take action, set off without compromising your individuality, personal needs and differences, and take steps to discover yourself and the world."

Elif Kain, Türkiye

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