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Guidance

# Erasmus+ programme guidance for youth projects

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## Overview

Erasmus+ offers specific funding opportunities for youth that focus on:

- non-formal education
- youth work

- youth social action

Erasmus+ offers life changing experiences, particularly for disadvantaged young people. Through international exchange, young people can:

- foster confidence
- learn new skills
- gain a sense of belonging

The Erasmus+ programme also recognises the importance of:

- investing in the youth workforce
- strengthening the quality of youth work by funding training for youth workers
- encouraging partnership building.

The programme enables youth sector organisations to access funding for collaboration projects with organisations in other countries. These partnerships foster shared learning on common challenges, and youth workers can gain new ideas and approaches to implement back home.

As well as the information in this guidance the Erasmus+ [National Agency](#) website has details of the Erasmus+ programme, including eligibility and how to apply for funding.

## **The aims of the Erasmus+ Youth programme**

The Youth programme aims to:

- increase the skills of young people and youth workers
- support interaction between young people from different cultural backgrounds
- promote social inclusion and solidarity among young people
- empower young people to be active citizens and have a voice in decision making
- support young people to access training and jobs
- develop quality improvements in youth work

- support the development of knowledge and evidence based youth policy
- support the recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- strengthen the international part of youth activities

## Getting started with Erasmus+

The steps below provide a simple guide to getting started with Erasmus+, If you are new to the Youth programme, you should:

- identify the challenge or topic you want to address with young people
- decide which Erasmus+ opportunity fits your ideas and objectives ([all opportunities are listed in this guidance](#))
- find partner organisations in other countries and use [SALTO](#) to advertise your idea and look for partners
- develop your project activities and expected impact
- submit an application through your [National Agency](#) or the European Commission

## Objectives and relevant opportunities

Here are some examples of objectives and the Erasmus+ opportunity that best meets the requirement.

### Objective:

You want to bring together young people from 2 or more countries to work on issues that matter to them.

### Erasmus+ opportunity: Youth exchanges

Select youth exchanges as these projects enable young people to:

- take part in learning activities with peers from other countries
- develop skills and confidence through non-formal education
- travel and experience different cultures

## **Objective:**

You want to develop the skills of your youth workers and build links with organisations working on similar themes.

## **Erasmus+ opportunity: Mobility projects for youth workers**

Select mobility projects for youth workers as through these projects youth workers can:

- take part in training, learning or networking activities abroad
- share good practice with colleagues from other countries
- support their professional development

## **Objective:**

You want to support young people to engage with issues affecting their local communities.

## **Erasmus+ opportunity: Youth participation projects**

Youth participation projects aim to:

- help young people work with decision makers

- ensure young people's voices are heard
- support young people to develop and deliver solutions to local challenges

This guidance provides further detail to help you select the right opportunity to help you achieve your objectives.

## **Objective:**

Your organisation has not previously participated in Erasmus before but you would like to work on improving services for young people and strengthen cooperation with organisations from other countries, all in accordance with your capabilities.

## **Erasmus+ opportunity: small scale partnerships**

Choose a small scale partnership which can provide the first step for international cooperation for grassroots organisations, newcomers and smaller capacity groups in the youth field.

## **Objective:**

You are an experienced organisation who has previously been involved in Erasmus+ projects and want to deliver a large scale project to raise the overall quality of youth work and exchange ideas at a European level.

## **Erasmus+ opportunity: cooperation partnerships**

Choose a cooperation partnership which can support the development of innovative practice and promote cooperation and exchanges of ideas for experienced youth organisations or larger scale projects.

# Erasmus+ Key Actions

The types of youth projects and activities that can be funded by Erasmus+ are called [Key Actions](#):

## Key Action 1

Funds international visits abroad (these are known as 'mobilities') for both young people and youth workers. Funding is divided across specific areas such as organisational support to prepare for the project, costs for the planned activities and travel, food and accommodation costs for all participants.

## Key Action 2

Funds partnerships and fosters collaboration between youth organisations in different countries. Funding comes in the form of a lump sum grant.

Lump sum grants have been introduced to simplify things. Projects are funded based on a fixed amount determined during the application phase, focusing on the delivery of outcomes rather than detailed financial auditing.

## Key Action 3

Supports policy reform and innovation in the youth field (these projects are managed centrally by the European Commission). Funding is provided via lump sum grants.

## Erasmus+ programme priorities

In addition to these Key Actions, the Erasmus+ programme is also underpinned by [4](#)

### [horizontal priorities:](#)

- inclusion and diversity
- digital transformation
- environmental sustainability
- active participation in democratic life

These priorities are mandatory considerations for every Erasmus+ project proposal with the aim of building a more inclusive, green, and digital Europe.

Youth projects and activities should also draw inspiration from the following strategic EU youth priorities:

- [European Youth Goals](#)
- [EU youth work policy](#)
- [EU learning mobility policy](#)
- [Legacy of the European Year of Youth](#)

## Apply through a National Agency

A National Agency is the official body appointed by the EU to manage and deliver the Erasmus+ programme at a national level in each country.

The [National Agency](#) in the UK is the British Council. They are responsible for:

- promoting opportunities
- supporting youth sector organisations in applying for grants
- selecting projects
- managing funding

Some funding is managed centrally by the EU Commission. Your project's Key Actions and eligibility requirements will determine whether you need to submit your grant application to the UK National Agency or to the EU Commission.

Training and Cooperation Activities (TCAs) are regularly organised by the Erasmus+ National Agencies in each country. They include training, networking and online

events to support organisations to find and establish partnerships.

Information about TCAs is available in the [European Training Calendar](#). Project inspiration can also be found using [SALTO Tools](#).

## How the funding works

The majority of Erasmus+ funding is applied for by organisations. Individual young people or individual youth workers do not usually apply themselves.

There are 2 notable exceptions where young people can apply directly:

- [DiscoverEU](#)
- [Youth participation projects](#)

## The available Erasmus+ Youth opportunities

You will need to choose the Erasmus+ youth opportunity which is right for your organisation.

This guidance covers the following opportunities:

- Youth exchanges
- Youth participation projects
- Mobility projects for youth workers
- Cooperation partnerships are for experienced organisations
- Small scale partnerships are for organisations
- DiscoverEU
- EU Commission managed youth grants
- Capacity building in the youth sector
- European Youth Together projects

# Youth exchanges

Youth exchanges are meetings of groups of young people from at least 2 different countries.

They travel abroad and gather for a short, intensive period to jointly implement a non-formal learning programme on a topic of their interest, often drawing inspiration from the [European Youth Goals](#).

Participants get together to explore topics such as:

- youth advocacy
- digital wellbeing
- citizenship

The overall learning experience is carefully structured and includes a preparation phase, the exchange itself, and a subsequent evaluation and follow-up period.

Activities might include:

- workshops
- exercises
- debates
- role playing
- outdoor learning activities

Youth exchanges are open to all young people, with a special focus on those with fewer opportunities.

At the end of the exchange all participants receive a [Youthpass certificate](#) recognising the skills and learning they have gained.

Benefits for young people:

- cultural immersion: experience daily life, traditions, and values in a new country
- global friendships: opportunity to build genuine connections with young people from different backgrounds that often last a lifetime
- boosting confidence: a chance to step out of their comfort zone and grow self

belief in a safe, supportive environment

- skill development: a chance to develop teamwork, communication, and problem solving skills through hands-on activities
- creative learning: experience engaging workshops, games, and projects that make learning fun and practical
- fresh perspectives: the chance to see their own culture and life in a new light through intercultural exchange
- career advantage: through the chance to add an internationally recognised Youthpass certificate to their CV

Duration: the international exchange element can last between 5 and 21 days (excluding travel days). The overall project, including planning, typically lasts 3 to 24 months.

The overall learning experience is carefully structured and includes a preparation phase, the exchange itself, and a subsequent evaluation and follow-up period.

Youth exchanges can also include a preparatory visit to help prepare arrangements and set up a solid partnership between the organisations involved ahead of the exchange activity. The preparatory visit takes place in the country of the receiving organisation.

### **Eligibility requirements**

Erasmus+ youth exchanges are open to a wide range of organisations active in the youth field, including:

- non-profit organisations
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- national youth councils
- public authorities at local, regional, or national levels

A youth exchange project must:

- be carried out by a minimum of 2 organisations
- have participants from 2 different countries (a sending organisation and a receiving organisation)
- assign an organisation that takes on the role of coordinator, to apply for funding on behalf of the partnership

- have participants aged between 13 and 30 that reside in one of the countries involved
- have group leaders who must be at least 18 years old, to ensure the delivery of a high quality learning experience and enable a safe environment for the project participants
- have a minimum of 16 and maximum of 60 participants per activity

There are helpful SALTO [tools](#) to help find partner organisations outside the UK and organisations which can offer support.

### How to apply

Applications should be submitted to the National Agency of the country in which the coordinating youth organisation is located.

There is no set amount of funding for a youth exchange. It is decided by the type of activities you apply for, and the amount of funding available. As a guideline, in 2024 youth exchange projects received funding varying from €6,000 to €60,000.

The [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#) has more information about what to include in your application, including the award criteria for funding.

The application period for 2027 funding is expected to run from approximately November 2026 to February 2027.

### Example itinerary

Day	Focus	Activity highlights
Day 1	Arrival and welcome	Participant arrival, check-in, ice-breaking games, welcome dinner and introduction to the project goals.
Day 2	Teambuilding and context	Teambuilding workshops, setting group rules, introduction to Erasmus+ and Youthpass certification, cultural sightseeing in the local area.
Day 3	Digital skills	Workshop on environmental issues and digital tools for sustainability, for example using AI for environmental mapping and the use of eco apps.
Day 4	Outdoor education	Hiking in a nearby national park, practical workshops on biodiversity and litter picking challenge.
Day	Intercultural	Morning: Reflection on previous days. Afternoon: Cultural

5	exchange	visit. Evening: Intercultural night where groups showcase food, music, and traditions from their countries.
Day 6	Practical action	Workshop: Creating a digital campaign on social media for green habits. Mock simulation of a local council debate on urban sustainability.
Day 7	Evaluation and closing	Final project presentation, Youthpass self-assessment workshop. Farewell party and certificate ceremony.

## Youth participation projects

Youth participation projects help young people to get involved in civic, cultural and political life, and speak up on issues that matter to them.

In the UK we would commonly describe these types of projects as youth voice or youth social action. Youth participation projects can include activities like:

- workshops
- conferences
- debates
- awareness campaigns
- meetings between young people and decision makers

Some examples of youth participation activities that could be implemented within a project are:

- simulations of democratic institutions: mock sessions of local councils or parliamentary institutions to bring democratic processes to life
- policy consultations: workshops where young people identify local issues and directly present solutions to local leaders and decision makers
- youth summits: events designed to connect young people with politicians to discuss issues affecting their daily lives
- advocacy campaigns: campaigns raising awareness of specific societal challenges relevant to young people such as youth unemployment

- virtual exchange projects: online forums connecting youth across borders to discuss shared challenges

Duration: Projects can last between 3 to 24 months. These projects can either be solely UK based or have an international element.

### **Eligibility requirements**

Informal groups of young people can apply for funding for projects independently or they may be supported in co-designing a project by an organisation that will apply for a grant on their behalf and later support them in implementing the project.

A wide range of organisations active in the youth field eligible to apply, including:

- non-profit organisations
- NGOs
- national youth councils
- public authorities at local, regional, or national levels

Youth participants must be aged between 13 and 30 and reside in one of the participating organisations' countries.

### **How to apply**

Applications should be submitted to the National Agency of the country in which the coordinating organisation is located.

There is no set amount of funding but the maximum grant awarded per project for Youth participation activities is €60,000.

The [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#) has more information about what to include in your application, including the award criteria for funding.

The application period for 2027 funding is expected to run from approximately November 2026 to February 2027.

## **Mobility projects for youth workers**

These are projects run by youth sector organisations to:

- support the professional development of youth workers

- foster new organisational practices
- raise the overall quality of youth work

Activities can include:

- seminars
- training courses
- networking events
- study visits
- job shadowing abroad

The project must involve at least 2 youth sector organisations from different countries and can last from 3 months to 2 years.

The types of activities could include:

- youth workers from one country visiting a youth organisation in another country to undertake job shadowing and peer learning
- a summit or conference for youth workers from different countries to network, supporting knowledge building and best practice sharing
- youth workers from different countries meeting together for joint training courses and workshops supporting the development of new approaches and innovative methods in delivering youth work

A high quality mobility project for youth workers:

- has a clear impact on the participating youth workers' regular work with young people and on their organisation
- relies on the active involvement of participating organisations and youth workers, who should take an active role in all the stages of the project, enhancing in this way their learning and development experience
- is based on clearly identified youth worker educational and professional development needs notably around quality and innovation
- ensures that the non-formal and informal learning outcomes are transferable and used within the participating organisations, contributing to the evolution of youth work organisations

### **Eligibility requirements**

Minimum 2 participating organisations (at least one sending and at least one

receiving organisation) from 2 different countries must be involved.

A wide range of organisations active in the youth field, including non-profit organisations, NGOs, national youth councils, and public authorities at local, regional, or national levels are eligible to apply.

Youth worker participants must be a minimum of 16 years old and reside in one of the participating countries.

Maximum of 50 participants in each activity planned by the project (excluding, where relevant, trainers and facilitators).

### **How to apply**

Applications should be submitted to the National Agency of the country in which the coordinating youth organisation is located.

See the [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#) for more information about what to include in your application, including the award criteria for funding.

The application period for 2027 funding is expected to run from approximately November 2026 to February 2027.

## **Partnership opportunities for youth sector organisations**

Under Key Action 2, the Erasmus+ programme provides funding for youth sector organisations to develop partnerships with other organisations in different countries.

This funding is designed to:

- help increase the quality and relevance of youth work activities, to develop networks, to boost internationalisation and to transfer innovative practices
- produce results and learning that are re-usable, transferable, and that can be scaled up
- provide an open funding format for medium to longer-term projects designed to strengthen the role of youth work in Europe and offer great potential for developing systemic change
- provide the opportunity to work intensively with partners from other countries on a

topic over a long period to embed learning

There are 2 types of partnership project:

- cooperation partnerships
- small scale partnerships

## **Cooperation partnerships**

These partnerships are designed to support the development of innovative practice and promote cooperation and exchanges of ideas at a European level. These are suitable for experienced youth organisations or larger scale projects.

### **Eligibility requirements**

These must involve at least 3 organisations from different countries for a period of 1 to 3 years. This type of project is suitable for large organisations.

To be considered for funding, a cooperation partnership must address either one Erasmus+ horizontal priority or at least one priority related to youth.

There are 3 grant options for cooperation partnerships:

- €120,000
- €250,000
- €400,000

The grant size must be chosen at application stage based on the needs and objectives of the project, and the activities you intend to do.

## **Small scale partnerships**

These are designed to increase access to cooperation for grassroots organisations, newcomers, and smaller capacity groups in the youth field.

They offer lower grants, shorter durations, and simplified administration compared to standard partnerships, allowing for flexible project formats to support inclusion.

These partnerships must involve a minimum of 2 organisations from 2 different countries for a period between 6 and 24 months. The project duration must be chosen at application stage, based on the objectives of the project and on the type of activities planned over time.

To be considered for funding, a small scale partnership must address either one Erasmus+ horizontal priority or at least one priority related to youth.

There are 2 grant options for small scale partnerships:

- €30,000
- €60,000

The grant size must be chosen at application stage based on the needs and objectives of the project, and the activities you intend to do.

### **How to apply for both**

Applications for funding are made through the UK's [National Agency](#).

The call for funding is expected to open in November 2026.

## **DiscoverEU**

[DiscoverEU](#) offers young people the opportunity to enter a competition for a free travel pass to explore Europe, learn about its cultural heritage and history, and connect with people from all over the continent.

## **Eligibility requirements**

- young people applying must be aged 18
- young people can travel alone or as part of a group of up to 5 friends
- trips can last for a minimum of 1 day to a maximum of 1 month inclusive

### **How to apply**

To apply, young people are required to submit an application on the [European Youth Portal](#).

There are 2 DiscoverEU application rounds per year, UK participants will be eligible to apply in spring and autumn in 2027.

Approximately 40,000 free travel passes are awarded each year and there is a quota for each country to ensure fairness.

Additional funding support is provided as part of the DiscoverEU Inclusion Action which aims to:

- reach out to young people with fewer opportunities that would not apply to DiscoverEU on their own initiative
- overcome the obstacles that prevent these young people from applying and provide additional support they need such as funding an adult caregiver to accompany them

## **EU Commission managed youth grants**

UK youth sector organisations are also eligible to apply for 2 Erasmus+ youth grants which are centrally managed and awarded by the EU Commission.

## **Capacity building in the youth sector**

Capacity building projects are designed to support international cooperation aimed at strengthening youth organisations and promoting non-formal learning in EU associated countries and specific third countries.

Projects focus on areas such as youth empowerment, active citizenship, and the development of high quality youth work.

Project activities must focus on building and strengthening the capacities of youth organisations and can relate to broad topics of interest across Europe.

Projects which include partner countries from the following geographic regions are prioritised:

- Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia

- Neighborhood East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine
- South Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia
- Sub-Saharan Africa

You can review [examples of recent successful projects](#) for inspiration.

### **Eligibility requirements**

Capacity building projects provide grants of up to €300k for projects lasting 1, 2 or 3 years. The project duration must be decided at the application stage.

NGOs and public authorities at local, regional, or national levels are eligible to apply as programme coordinators.

A wide range of organisations active in the youth field, including non-profit organisations, foundations and research institutions are eligible as participants.

While capacity building projects are primarily targeted towards non-profit organisations, public or private companies may also be included. Examples are small, medium or large enterprises, including social enterprises however a clear added value must be demonstrated.

### **How to apply**

This opportunity falls under Key Action 2 and applications should be submitted directly to the [EU Commission](#) via the funding and tenders [portal](#).

## **European Youth Together projects**

European Youth Together projects are broad in scope and aim to create regional cooperation, enabling young people across Europe to set up joint projects, organise international exchanges and run training courses for youth leaders and youth workers. These activities can be in-person or online.

European Youth Together projects also foster international partnerships for youth organisations to create networks.

Example activities include:

- youth led campaigns: cross-border campaigns on climate change, mental health,

or democratic, engagement

- capacity building: training courses for youth leaders on digital skills and social inclusion
- policy debate: workshops and consultations involving young people to inform policy decisions

Previous project themes have included:

- closing the digital divide
- active citizenship
- inclusion of rural youth
- enhancing youth dialogue
- climate change and political instability

### **Eligibility requirements**

European Youth Together provides grants of up to €500k for projects lasting 2 years.

Projects must involve a consortium of at least 5 partners from 5 different Erasmus+ programme countries (EU Member States and associated countries).

Grants are highly competitive and approximately 20 to 30 projects are selected in total by the EU Commission each year.

### **How to apply**

This opportunity falls under Key Action 3 and applications should be submitted directly to the [EU Commission](#) via the funding and tenders [portal](#).

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