Outreach recipes: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+

Diversity

Inclusion

Outreach recipes: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+

SALTO
INCLUSION EDUCATION

AGENCY FOR MOBILITY AND EU PROGRAMMES

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

EUROPEAN UNION

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Introduction

This publication was developed under the umbrella of the Long-term activity (LTA) *Embrace Inclusion and Diversity in Your Erasmus+ Projects*, coordinated by the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMEUP), which is responsible for implementing the Erasmus+ programme in Croatia.

LTAs are recurrent activities spanning several years, conducted by multiple national agencies that have agreed to collaborate on a series of activities linked to a policy or programme area.

A previous output of the LTA *Embrace Inclusion and Diversity in Your Erasmus+ Projects* is the *Roadmap Towards Active Engagement: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+*—a guide for active involvement of people with fewer opportunities in all stages of Erasmus+ projects.

As part of the LTA, a three-day seminar was held in Malta in November 2024, welcoming 55 participants from Malta and partner countries: Austria, Estonia, Finland, Croatia, Romania, and Belgium.

Throughout the seminar, participants were inspired by keynote speeches delivered by the experts Monika Auzinger and Maria Pisani; panel discussions featuring Alexander Tortell, Brian Schembri, Isabella Übermasser, and Liesbet Vroman; good practice examples shared by Snježana Kovačević, Marilyn Riisimäe, Kaia-Leena Pino, Sandra Cassa, and Owen Zahra; as well as study visits to the Fortini Learning Support Centre and Jobcentre Plus.

Guided through the process by the facilitators Sunčana Kusturin and Petar Dukić, the participants engaged in a series of group discussion which led to the creation of the first draft of this publication. After the seminar, the facilitators categorised the participants' contributions within the elements of an **outreach cycle** created by one of the groups. This outreach cycle became the backbone of the material and was further complemented by "**outreach recipes**"—concrete, practical interventions identified by the participants as essential for redoubling outreach efforts.

We hope this publication inspires you to strengthen your outreach practices and supports future Erasmus+ projects in becoming even more inclusive and diverse.

NOTE:

While this publication primarily focuses on Erasmus+ projects in the field of education and training, its insights and approaches are equally applicable to projects in other programmes or fields that aim to become more inclusive.

Defining outreach to people with fewer opportunities

REACH OUT
to groups that face difficulties accessing the programmes

WHAT: All the opportunities and support mechanisms

WHERE: in their respective personal environments

HOW: approach tailored to their specific information needs

According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide *(EN: page 7-8) and the* Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy *(page 9),* **people with fewer opportunities** are individuals who face disadvantages due to one or more exclusion factors or obstacles. These include:

- Disabilities
- Health problems
- Barriers linked to education and training systems
- Cultural differences
- Social barriers
- Economic barriers
- Barriers linked to discrimination
- Geographical barriers

Such obstacles often hinder their participation in everyday life and in the Erasmus+ programme.

To ensure that Erasmus+ is truly accessible to all learners, proactive outreach efforts are essential. Organisations should not simply wait for individuals with fewer opportunities to apply independently; instead, they are encouraged to:

> **Directly engage** with people with fewer opportunities, providing information, motivation, and empowerment to participate.

> Share details about all Erasmus+ opportunities, including the **inclusion measures** designed to facilitate their involvement.

> Tailor outreach strategies to their specific information needs, presenting material in ways that are both **engaging and easy to understand**.

By adopting such approaches, organisations can create a more inclusive Erasmus+ environment, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to benefit from the programme.

The Implementation guidelines on the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy state that several concrete approaches and measures to reach out to people with fewer opportunities may include:

- **Face-to-face meetings** or **events** with specific target groups with fewer opportunities (e.g. dedicated information days tailored to them);

- **Cooperation with organisations and individuals** active in fields relevant to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities, acting as intermediaries to reach out to particular target groups where necessary;

- **Targeted promotional material and publications** in relevant languages, including sign language, and accessible formats such as large print, easy-to- read, and braille. These should include information on how to possibly access extra funding available to support people with fewer opportunities;

- **Clear and understandable language** for information and communication. Avoid abstract language and unnecessary complexity, and use visuals wherever possible;

- **Testimonials, "ambassadors" and role models**: former participants with fewer opportunities, as well as alumni networks and organisations such as the Erasmus Student Alumni Alliance (ESAA), the Erasmus Ambassadors, or the EuroPeers, etc. can help promote the programmes to people with fewer opportunities. They can do so by sharing their experiences with peers, fellow students, staff in their organisations, journalists, or schools.

Prerequisites for successful outreach

Before delving into concrete outreach strategies, here are a few key insights the participants identified as prerequisites for successful outreach:

Educators as instruments of change

Educators play a pivotal role in transforming lives. While Erasmus+ projects may appear accessible to everyone, it is essential to challenge this assumption. Consider who may be excluded simply because they—or those around them—believe that they are not "good enough", that they should not pursue certain opportunities, or simply because they cannot leave their family or country.

Put on your metaphorical "inclusion glasses" and identify these invisible barriers. Challenge restrictive perspectives, attitudes, procedures, and policies—whether they come from learners themselves, educators, parents, community norms, or institutional frameworks.

As educators, you have the power to uncover these barriers and open doors, windows, or even dig tunnels to create new pathways to Erasmus+ projects.

Remember, the relationships you build with learners and communities make a difference. It may get scary, you may feel lost, you may face challenges, but you are not alone. Build support networks and embrace the ethos of learning by doing.
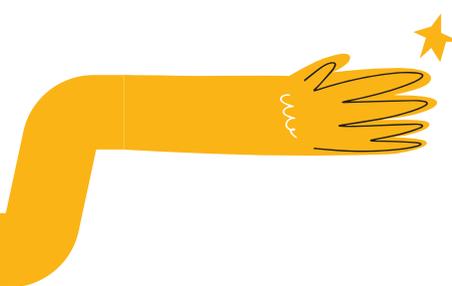
Individualised approach

There may be various concerns which forestall the inclusion of learners, e. g. "it's too scary, unsafe, or complicated to involve me/them". However, this can be a great starting point for meaningful conversations about how to make mobility safe, feasible, and enriching for everyone.

Consider a step-by-step approach to building capacities:

Start with online mobility	Transition to group mobility	Participate in preparatory visits	Progress to individual mobility
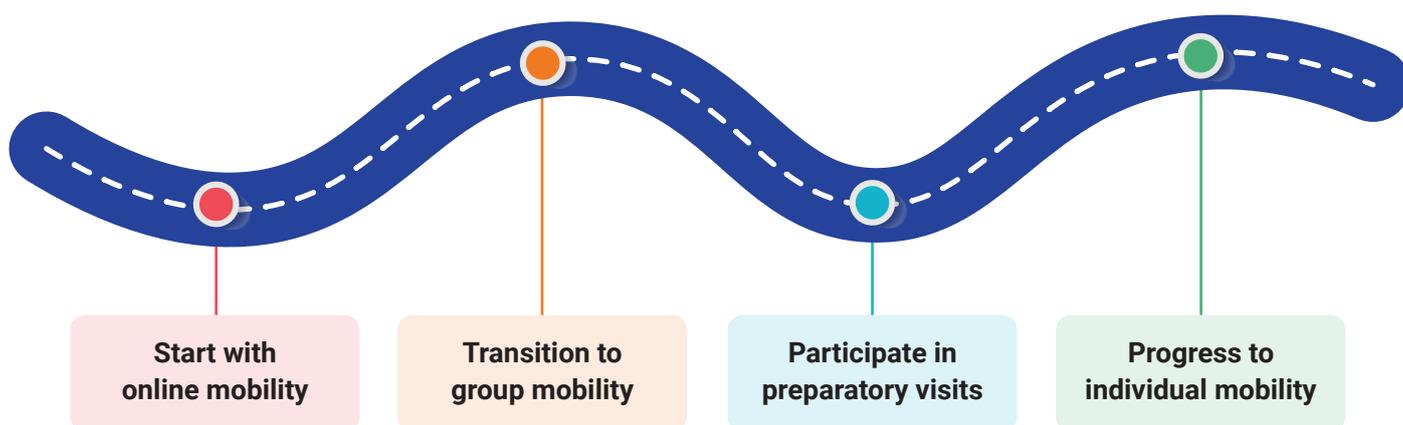
Alternatively, you may want to livestream group mobility experiences so that learners unable to travel can still engage. Additional support measures may also be necessary. Erasmus+ projects thrive when they are tailored to learners' needs, helping them (and educators) grow at their own pace.

Creating an inclusive environment for all

There will be times when it will be necessary to recognise the specific needs of learners and adapt projects, procedures, or materials accordingly. For example:

> Translating Erasmus+ materials into braille.

> Designing projects that bring together students from LGBTQ+ or migrant communities to address shared challenges.

At other times, adopting a universal design approach can benefit all learners. For instance, allowing application submissions in various formats—audio/video files, interviews, posters, essays, poems, or comics—can make Erasmus+ projects more accessible to a diverse range of participants.

By fostering an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated as a strength, learners with fewer opportunities and those without can thrive together.
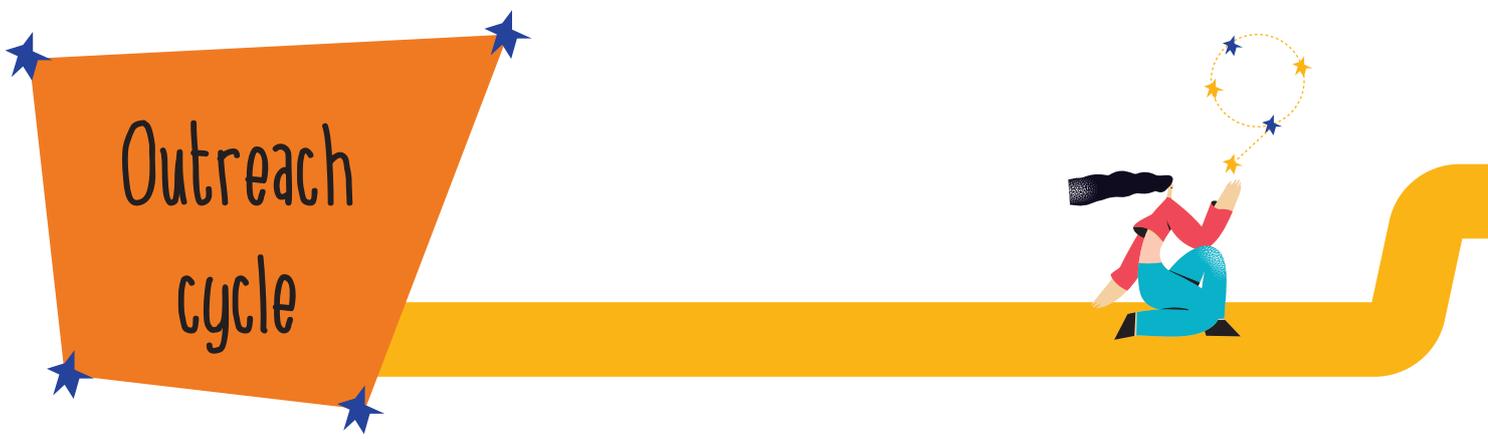
Outreach cycle

The participants emphasised that outreach is not a single act, but a continuous process. To illustrate this, they identified the key aspects of outreach and conceptualised an outreach cycle. The cycle begins with thorough **preparation** and effective **communication**, which jointly help create a sense of **safety**. This solid foundation fosters **empowerment**, ultimately leading to a genuine, long-term commitment to inclusion.

Maria Pisany, in her keynote speech, underscored the importance of using the word "including" as a verb, highlighting its dynamic, ongoing, and sometimes messy nature.

Additionally, the participants developed several "recipes" for outreach, which you can try out.

A recipe is a set of instructions for preparing a particular dish, including a list of required ingredients.

*While recipes may seem like rigid guidelines, they actually invite creativity. **Just as you might modify a cookie recipe—substituting almonds for walnuts to accommodate allergies, using a round tray instead of a square one for a special occasion, or decorating with flowers and berries from your garden in summer instead of store-bought items—you are encouraged to adapt these outreach recipes to your specific context.** Tailor them to your audience, institutional framework, ethical standards, personal approach, and other unique factors. Let them serve as a starting point for your own innovative approaches to inclusive outreach.*

PREPARATION 1
COMMUNICATION 2
THE OUTREACH CYCLE
SAFETY 3
EMPOWERMENT 4
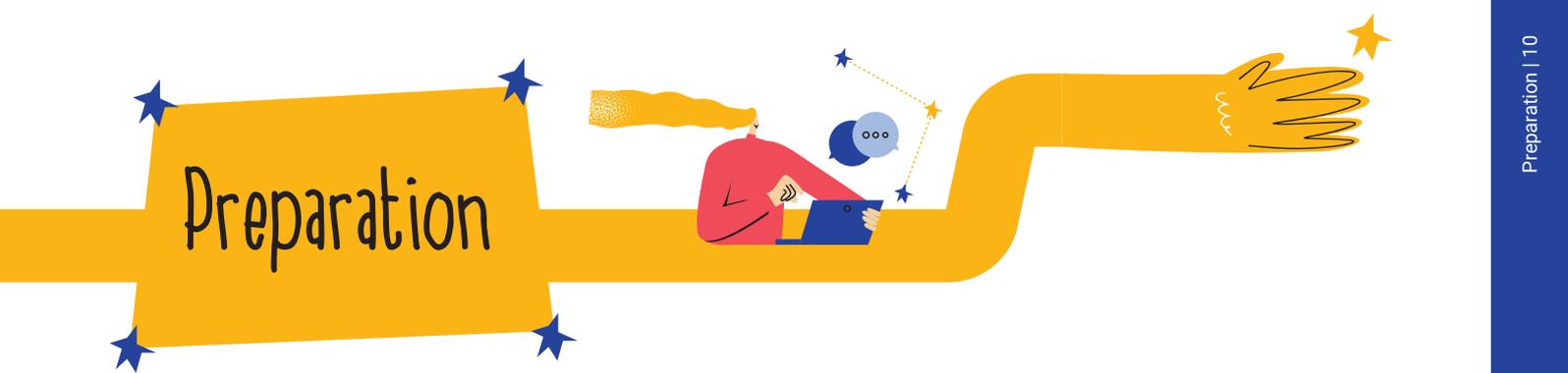
Preparation

Preparation is an essential part of project management. In the context of outreach, preparation is necessary to understand people with fewer opportunities and for tailoring approaches to their needs. Understanding learners' fears and obstacles, the social networks that influence their decisions, and their motivations helps define meaningful content and engaging messages to communicate. This understanding should serve as the guiding thread for your communication strategy.

Recipes
you may want to adapt and try:

⭐ **Be informed:** Gather information on which groups are underrepresented in your projects, the diverse barriers learners face, and their specific needs for participating in Erasmus+ projects.

> Refer to research, such as *Maybe it will be different abroad: Student and Staff Perspectives on Diversity and Inclusion in Student Exchanges*.
> Ask pupils or students directly about their needs.
> Consult those who know them best (teachers, parents, friends, etc.).
> Listen to all voices—everyone has something valuable to contribute.

⭐ **Practise cultural awareness and intercultural learning:** Consider the learners' cultural backgrounds and the cultures they will encounter during mobility experiences.

> Organise workshops to promote intercultural learning and reflection.

⭐ **Explore hosting options:** Recognise cultural differences and individual family preferences when arranging hosting. Some learners' families may be concerned about whether they will be hosted by families. Also, some families may be hesitant to host due to cultural, political, or religious reasons. Discuss these topics with learners and their families as well as with host families

⭐ **Prepare and support not only learners, but also their families:** Families can have a significant influence on learners' decisions—this is true even for adult learners. They may affect the choice to participate in mobility opportunities, as well as how the learner feels during the experience (e.g., whether they feel guilty for leaving or worry about their family's well-being). Keep in mind that families may face challenges when a learner goes abroad, especially if they depend heavily on the learner (e.g., for caring for a sick parent or a younger sibling). Providing preparation and support to families can therefore be crucial.

Adapt mobility, application, evaluation, and promotional formats to be accessible for a wider range of participants:

> Offer flexible application formats (e.g., audio or video submissions).
> Provide virtual or asynchronous formats for participants unable to attend in person.
> Organise group mobilities tailored for participants with fewer opportunities.

Build strong partnerships: Establish partnerships with institutions or organisations to ensure coordinated inclusion efforts. Preparatory visits can help align goals and expectations.

Train and connect staff: Ensure that teachers, advisors, support staff, and coordinators are well-informed about the inclusion and diversity priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. Provide training to help them identify hidden barriers and recognise the challenges learners with fewer opportunities face. By fostering connections among staff, you enable collaborative efforts to address these challenges effectively.

Implement inclusion support systems before the project begins: Explore existing Erasmus+ inclusion mechanisms and develop additional support measures within your organisation. For example:

> Explore examples of support mechanisms in the publication *How to Include Participants with Fewer Opportunities in International Educational Projects* or consider other examples of effective support mechanisms.
> Recruit volunteers to deliver language preparation workshops.
> Ensure financial flexibility and assess whether existing resources adequately support learners with fewer opportunities.
> Involve both learners with fewer opportunities and educators in preparatory visits.

Organise regular evaluations: Collect feedback through evaluations to identify the obstacles learners faced, additional support measures needed, and the impact of the project on participants. Use the participants' quotes, statistics, and success stories from evaluations in future promotional materials. Evaluations also help you recognise and highlight achievements—celebrate them as they fuel your future endeavours!

Communication

Communication is fundamental to everything we do. The information gathered during the project preparation phase serves as the guiding thread for our communication strategy. At this stage, the most suitable approaches, methods, platforms, timing, language, message length, and other elements are defined to effectively deliver the agreed-upon content and messages. Communication style is tailored to diverse audiences in this phase.

Educators, parents, and learners are likely to be the primary target groups. However, it's equally important to establish cooperation with other stakeholders in the community who can support your outreach efforts. These may include local authorities, organisations hosting learners during mobility, labour market representatives, and companies. These stakeholders may assist in several ways, including: helping you reach your target groups; translating materials or refining your language and messaging; and overcoming specific barriers (e.g., donating luggage or assisting with visa processes). This collaborative approach creates a robust support system that links individuals to their potential employers and resources, thereby fostering synergy across sectors.

While this step is focused on providing participants with all the necessary information, remember to also communicate values, emotions, and attitudes. These aspects are essential for enabling learners to make informed and meaningful choices.

And finally, once all information has been shared, it's time to tread carefully on the fine line between encouragement and respect. If a learner decides not to participate, their choice must be respected.

Recipes
you may want to adjust and try when communicating with LEARNERS:

★ **Personalised outreach:** Approaching each person individually can be highly effective and can provide you with a list of their respective needs. For example: approach learners in libraries or go from classroom to classroom.

★ **Engaging materials:** Create promotional materials that are engaging and relevant. Encourage learners to take the lead in designing these materials. Ensure that practical advice is included; that the availability of intensive guidance throughout the process is emphasised; and that the selection process for participation is clearly explained. Consider:

> Hosting a logo competition for your project.
> Writing a personalised "letter" in the learners' language. This letter should resemble an

advertisement and be tailored to each group's preferences (in length, vocabulary and tone).

> Developing blogs, short videos, or TikTok content.
> Showcasing participant testimonials through a platform that features their stories.
> Sharing good practices to reach students with fewer opportunities.
> Utilising social media and influencers.
> Creating handmade posters.
> Conducting TV interviews.

Consider learners' reactions: Be mindful of how your words and activities may be perceived by learners. For some, certain aspects of Erasmus+ projects may feel overwhelming. If an activity triggers anxiety or panic, address their concerns empathetically and offer reassurance.

Info sessions: Organise sessions to provide learners with detailed information on inclusion opportunities. Involve Erasmus+ alumni to share their experiences. Possible formats include:

> Erasmus-themed events: Erasmus Day, eTwinning Days, Erasmus Picnics.
> Casual gatherings: Morning talks on Fridays, cafés.

Peer support mechanisms: Peer support is crucial. Students who have participated in exchange programs, such as Erasmus+, can act as ambassadors. Their stories and experiences can demystify the process for new learners and encourage participation.
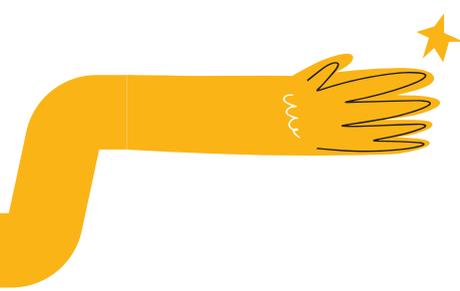
Recipes
you may want to adjust and try when communicating with EDUCATORS:

Fact list: Compile a list of key facts and insights drawn from research, such as *Research on the Needs of Beneficiaries on the Topic of Inclusion and Diversity in the Erasmus+ Programme*.

Person-to-person communication and ambassadors: Invite educators who have participated in previous Erasmus+ projects to promote the programme amongst their peers. Highlight their personal experiences to inspire and encourage participation.

Erasmus+ buddy system: Develop a buddy system specifically for educators and teaching staff. This system can encourage them to get involved by providing them with mentorship and peer-to-peer support.

Supporting materials for ambassadors: Create practical and user-friendly materials to support educator ambassadors. Examples may include:

> A comprehensive guide with essential information.
> Step-by-step instructions on how to promote an Erasmus+ project effectively.

Recipes
you may want to adjust and try when communicating with PARENTS:

Create a questionnaire: Develop an anonymous questionnaire for parents to explore their concerns, fears, and expectations regarding the Erasmus+ project. This can be aimed at parents whose children have already participated in mobility programmes and/or parents whose children are considering participating.

Prepare parent-friendly handouts: Create written materials that learners can share with their parents, providing all the necessary information about Erasmus+ projects and their benefits. Make sure to include:

> Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Address common concerns, such as the fear of children being alone for three weeks.
> Aims and benefits: Explain the purpose of the projects and highlight that they are educational experiences and not vacations.
> Details of extra support available: Outline any additional support measures in place for learners.
> Contact Information: Provide the details of a contact person or team whom parents can reach out to for further questions.

Organise parent evenings: Host information sessions to help families understand the goals of Erasmus+ mobility programmes and how they align with their values. Consider inviting parents and/or learners who have participated in previous projects to share their experiences. This can be particularly helpful for families with concerns related to political or religious beliefs.

Hold parents' meetings: Organise meetings with all parents whose children are interested in participating in Erasmus+ projects. Use these sessions to:

> Answer questions and address concerns.
> Provide detailed information before the mobility and share updates or outcomes after the project ends.

Create WhatsApp groups for parents: Set up WhatsApp groups or similar communication channels to keep parents informed and provide real-time updates.

Organise exhibitions or open house days: Display posters, photos, or outputs from Erasmus+ projects and invite parents to view them. This can serve as a showcase of the value and impact of participating in the programme.

Respect cultural differences and family preferences: While hosting learners can be a valuable experience, be mindful that some families or cultures may not support hosting for personal, political, or religious reasons.
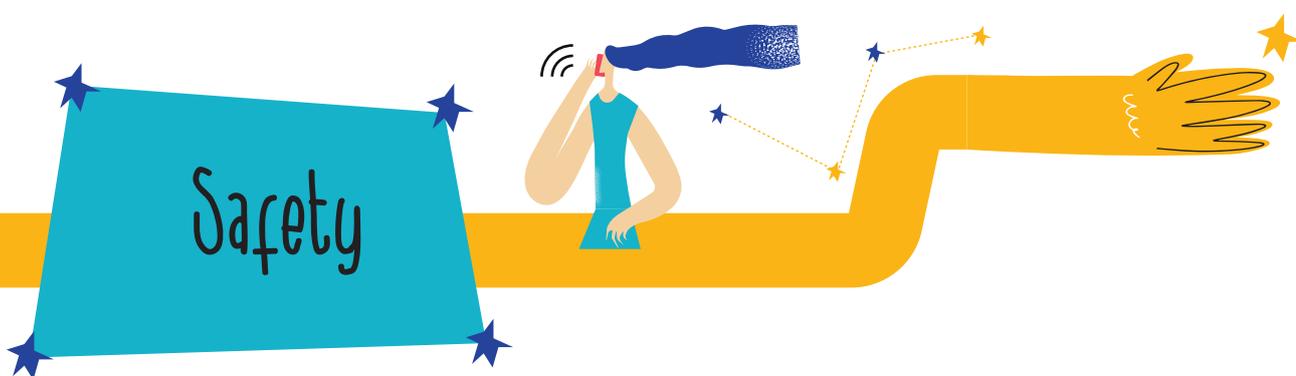
Safety

Safety is a prerequisite for opening communication channels during outreach. Without it, learners may not feel comfortable sharing the diverse obstacles they face when considering participation in Erasmus+ projects. Furthermore, safety is a critical standalone topic. If we fail to address safety—encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual, legal, and other aspects—throughout all the stages of Erasmus+ projects, we risk overlooking a crucial barrier that sometimes prevents learners from participating.

Recipes
you may want to adjust and try:

⭐ **Explore what "safe space" means to learners:** Open discussions with learners about their perception of a safe space, and collaborate with them on co-creating one. For inspiration, refer to *Mental Health Power* (especially Chapter 6) or *Outside* In (particularly Chapter 1.3).

⭐ **Provide intensive guidance:** Offer strong, personalised guidance throughout the entire process to help learners feel supported and secure.

⭐ **Offer extensive mobility preparations:** Design preparatory training sessions that are motivating and engaging, addressing key issues such as: language learning; intercultural learning; psychological support; the history and culture of the host country.

⭐ **Organise team-building activities:** Build trust and rapport among participants through team-building exercises before the mobility begins.

⭐ **Create an emergency toolkit:** Develop toolkits for learners and educators/coordinators (especially newcomers) that include: key project information; emergency contacts; practical materials and guidelines (e.g., rules, expectations); step-by-step guidance for each stage of the project: before, during, and after mobility.

⭐ **Get to know the hosting schools:** Being familiar with the hosting schools enables you to present mobility opportunities to learners in more detail and to provide host schools with tailored recommendations for supporting students with fewer opportunities. Consider sending your teachers for a job-shadowing experience at the school that will host your students. Additionally, when learners with fewer opportunities are involved in the mobility, a staff representative and one of the learners can take part in a preparatory visit. This visit allows them to see the school in advance, agree on key aspects of the mobility, and helps reduce uncertainty by providing a chance to get familiar with the new environment.
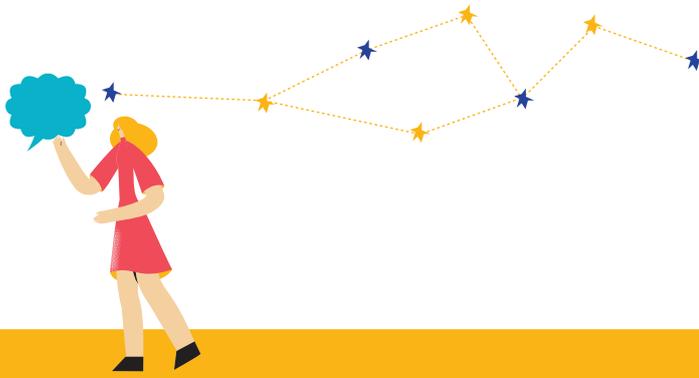
Adapt hosting arrangements: Recognise that some learners may not feel comfortable staying with host families. Consider pairing two learners in one host family (depending on the family's capacity).

Inform companies: Share information about the learners' skills with participating companies. This fosters trust and ensures that companies feel prepared to host learners.

Develop a risk management plan: Prepare a comprehensive plan to manage potential risks, ensuring that parents and other stakeholders are reassured. Make sure to include: measures for coping with homesickness or physical illness; emergency contacts, addresses, and phone numbers.

Provide emotional and practical support: Ensure continuous emotional and practical support for learners by designating emergency contacts who can address immediate needs and by offering regular open consultations to address potential concerns.

Involve support staff: Engage support staff such as social workers and psychologists to assist with problem-solving during the project and to promote mental health and proactive well-being support.

Empowerment

Empowerment is both a foundation for effective communication and a desirable and valuable outcome. When designing outreach strategies, we can choose to focus on learners' vulnerabilities or emphasise their strengths. Highlighting strengths—whether personal, social, or organisational—builds a solid foundation for growth and makes learning and development more evident. This approach is deeply empowering for both learners and facilitators.

Empowering learners involves creating an environment where they feel free to navigate between independence and interdependence. Learners should feel comfortable seeking support when needed, while remaining confident in their ability to take charge of their own growth. Focus on the process, allowing space and time for development, rather than being driven solely by immediate results.

Recipes
you may want to adjust and try:

- **Organise life skills workshops:** Offer workshops or coaching sessions before and during mobility to help participants develop practical life skills (e.g., cooking, time management, managing money).

- **Support growth, self-esteem, and confidence building:** Facilitate activities like feedback sessions or workshops designed to enhance self-esteem and boost confidence.

- **Empower learners to become ambassadors:** Encourage learners to share their experiences and represent Erasmus+ as ambassadors, inspiring others to participate.

- **Emphasise the role of advisors:** Advisors play a critical role in empowerment. They should work closely with learners to understand their individual needs and guide them towards appropriate resources and opportunities.

- **Provide teachers with necessary support:** Equip teachers with tools and training needed to create an empowering environment for learners.

- **Explore diversity as a strength:** Create opportunities for learners to experience and celebrate diversity, recognising it as a source of enrichment.

- **Foster a sense of belonging:** Prevent stigmatisation by designing inclusive practices and ensuring that all learners feel seen, accepted and valued, and that all learners feel they belong.

Words of Encouragement for All

Be brave—turn obstacles into opportunities

Focus on the future; don't dwell on the past (or past mistakes).

Don't hesistate to ask for help when you need it.

Join an Erasmus+ group and shine aboard!

Listen to and learn from those with more experience.

Share your experiences and inspire others.

Remember to have fun and let your creativity flow.

Just go for it—take the leap!

Think outside the box and welcome new perspectives.