

“AWARE and ACTIVE”

Inclusion Guidelines

This inclusion guidelines has been developed by Alexandra Beweis and Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez in the framework of the project “Aware and Active”

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Intro

In the last years Europe has been facing many difficulties. An economic crisis, a wave of refugees coming from the war ridden areas of the world (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and many African countries). Violent extremism and terrorist attacks have shaken Europe while at the same time xenophobia, Islamophobia and racism become stronger in Europe. In response to this the Paris Declaration was adopted in 2015. The Declaration aims at promoting citizenship and common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

As an answer to those challenges the project AAA ("Aware and Active") aims to prevent violent radicalization and promote democratic values, fundamental rights, intercultural understanding and active citizenship of young people; and enhance critical thinking and media literacy among young people.

„Aware and Active“ is a three-year Action supported by the European Commission in the context of the Erasmus+ Programme: Initiatives for policy innovation – Social Inclusion through education, training and youth. It started on December 1st 2016 and will end on December 31st 2019.

It is coordinated by Interkulturelles Zentrum, the Austrian National Agency of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme. Seven National Agencies of Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme from Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Macedonia and Slovenia are directly involved into the project implementation. The project is also supported by National Agencies from Germany, Belgium-Flanders, the Netherlands, Croatia, Slovakia and Latvia as well as POYWE - Professional Open Youth Work in Europe.

The target group of "Aware and Active" are young people between 16 and 30 years of age. In particular, young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are to be involved in the project.

Rationale – Why?

If inclusion is always important in educational projects for addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all youth through increasing participation in learning, it is a must in the "Aware and Active" project.

In order to be credible the different dimensions and elements of the project should be coherent with its objectives (prevention of violent radicalization, promotion of democratic values, fundamental rights, intercultural understanding and active citizenship) and therefore embrace diversity as richness and a source of learning.

Taking into consideration the issues to be explored and the characteristics of the “Aware and Active” project, an inclusive approach implies the involvement of young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the different activities of the project.

Despite the fact that young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are part of our realities (neighbourhoods, schools, youth clubs...) their participation in the project will not naturally happen. Pro-active strategies and initiatives need to be put in place so that the obstacles for their participation (lack of information, limited access to civic activities, language barriers) can be overcome.

Strategies and methods - How?

The non-formal education field has a long tradition and a accumulated know how on how to run activities and projects. In particular the national agencies of the Erasmus+ programme, the NGOs and the youth field as a whole have a large and successful accumulated experience on inclusion in all kind of international projects. The SALTO Inclusion resource centre has systematised many of those experiences in very useful and accessible publications on inclusion: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/>. We strongly encourage you to make use of them.

In this section on “How”, as a kind of reminder, we will simply explore the 5 dimensions that in the Aware and Active project are considered particularly important in terms of inclusion. We will briefly go through some inclusive strategies and methods in relation to the needs and expectations, the partnerships, the preparation of all participants, the intercultural dimension and language barriers and the participation.

Beyond methods, remember that the most important is that the different actors of the project have an inclusive and a self-critical attitude. “How to guarantee the effective participation of everybody?” should be always at the centre of the project.

Needs and expectations

Before you start looking into details of organisation and feasibility of dates, it is important to take a step back and examine various needs and expectations:

- of the overall project “Aware and Active”
- of your own organisation/national situation

- of the young people you wish to involve in this process

The project "Aware and Active" gives a frame for your activities – it has overall aims and objectives, common European activities will occur, deadlines are set and rules are given by the project. In addition to that you and the other partners have taken decisions and agreed on messages, tasks and much more. Consult the project description, minutes of partners meetings, the compendium of best practice and any other relevant material the project has produced so far to start your planning and getting a frame in which to operate. The project will only be a common success if all partners are on the same highway – not necessarily all on one lane, but heading in the same direction.

Nevertheless every country and reality of the participating institutions is different and also that diversity has to be taken into account and included to make the results useful for all partners.

Before planning concrete activities analyse your own situation – asking questions like:

- What do we want to see as national results?
- Where are our expectations totally matching the European ones, where do we slightly need something different?
- What initiatives are already there in our country that we wish to link to, cooperate with, and connect to?
- What projects and partners do we have on national level that could be interesting for this project?
- What set up is feasible and useful for us in terms of partners, meetings, seminars...?
- What can we offer to those that we would like to join the project?
- ...

Once you have identified your national strategy that links into the European project, think about partners that you wish to see involved – and that most probably is various groups of young people, organised or not.

Before you approach them analyse what are their needs and expectations:

- What is their interest in the topics of the project?
- What is your common goal?
- What do they need to know for sending people to your activities or commit to come if it is individuals?
- What is the benefit for them in participating – a common passion/interest, getting know-how, a good point in their CV, a possibility to travel to a European meeting...?
- What might be specific needs of the groups of young people that you have identified as especially important for your national reality – refugees, asylum seekers, minorities..?
- What might be related hopes, fears, obstacles for the young people you wish to involve and how can you take those into account/support them?

- Who might have an influence on their participation – e.g. parents and family, youth organisations, refugee & asylum seekers support structures and how can you involve them and in case of need (e.g. parents not allowing their children to come once they hear that refugees will be part of the group – see best practice compendium) convince and involve them.

Strong partnerships

In difference to other international project for this one, you will mainly need to build up strong partnerships within your own country for spreading the idea and getting potential participants involved.

If your organisation does not have an overview of the landscape of youth work (in its broadest sense) and existing support structures, initiatives, organisations of refugees/asylum seekers/minorities, your first step will always be to get that overview.

Find out who is active in the field and might share the aims and objectives of this project, identify who could be your link to young people that belong to one of the groups that should comprise 20% of the young people involved.

Once you have your national strategy and the overview of possible partners – draw up a short introduction that you can share with those you wish to approach. Make sure that you are clear and concise in that first paper and that you show what is the framework and opportunities the partners can operate in.

Before approaching them ask yourself the following questions:

- What are their needs and expectations?
- What is our offer – also in the sense of images, shared vision, common goals..?
- What do I want the partner to do – propose young people, select young people, prepare them for the activity (see below), connect us to groups of young people,..?
- What can the partner influence/share responsibility in?
- ...

Needless to say that the more the partner has the feeling of being involved and able to influence the process, the stronger the sense of belonging to the awareness raising activities and ownership of the overall project will be.

Don't forget that not all young people are represented in a youth organisation –especially in reaching those groups that we are aiming for, you might want to address:

- youth workers, who are active in youth centres and street work
- teachers
- social workers – especially those working e.g. in refugees houses,..
- municipalities

• ...

Last but not least informal youth groups (e.g. youth reporters, youth initiatives, volunteers in refugee help,..) might also be a very good source for recruiting inspired and interested young people.

Preparation of all participants

Projects that aim for inclusion usually need much more preparation – participants might be hesitant, facing various obstacles, difficult to find or convince.

An important part of working with diverse groups is also to prepare all participants for the experience – give them a supported moment before to reflect their own expectations, stereotypes, wishes, fears...

You might have the possibility to do that with an experienced trainer that you work with as NA, you might also find partners that are willing to prepare “their” participants and you just have to support them with clear information, technical help, facilities or simply by giving them the opportunity (time wise, suggesting it,..) to do so.

Don’t forget that all participants should come prepared – it is a national event in the first phase, still it will be an intercultural experience for all participants due to the composition of the group. It is very likely that given the topics and the target groups of this project emotional and confronting issues will come up – make sure everyone is aware of that and prepared to deal with it.

Intercultural dimension and language barriers

Including other ways of living, thinking and doing is a big enrichment for the project but it can be frustrating if this diversity is not considered from the very beginning.

It is obvious that without understanding you young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers will not join the project. But beyond or together with the language, without considering their background and without the positive appreciation of their experiences the participation of young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers might become a decorative element of the project.

There are quite a lot of practical implications but at first the intercultural dimension for inclusion requires a self-critical and open attitude. This means to be ready to challenge our own stereotypes, feel comfortable with the differences and, ultimately, celebrate diversity.

Once the first contacts are done with young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers take the opportunity to visit their places or neighbourhoods where they live. Explain the AAA project, what do you hope to achieve with it and the importance of the participation and contribution.

From the very beginning the role of the leader or facilitator is crucial for creating an environment that celebrates difference and unites the group in its diversity. A simple non-verbal gesture of impatience or frustration caused for example by a miscommunication can transmit the message that cultural diversity is a "problem or an extra load" in the project instead of a "learning opportunity".

As part of the "preparation" or during the project beside the "contents" you can organize a intercultural session. it can be at the beginning can be an intercultural group building session on "who are we". Later it could be enriching to explore "our similarities and differences" and finally to discuss "how to better cooperate". This should be done gradually. Depending on the needs and interest of the group they can explore quite general issues such as values, religion, social structures,... or more concrete such as food, non-verbal communication, the role of men and women, the time notions and timing, the understanding of leadership, the organization of work...

Ideally the combination of a general intercultural awareness and the practical implications for the group will help participants to understand and appreciate their diversity and to benefit from it.

There are many intercultural exercises in the SALTO Tool-box for example that you can use for that. (<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/>). This kind of exercises, sessions or mini sessions can be run in the preparation encounters, using informal moments, in the evenings of your trainings... Many of them do not require a lot of time.

Dealing with language barriers

For creating an atmosphere where all participants feel safe enough to speak (including making mistakes) you can work in smaller groups or pairs whenever possible, use simple words and visualize the key messages and ideas. The facilitator can use some words or sentences in a language he/she does not master at all. This will contribute to overcome the fear of talking in public because of the eventual mistakes.

For overcoming the language barriers an obvious strategy is the “translation”. Translating some parts of the programme or documents is normally enough. The

online translation programmes used in the mobiles can support the personal-group interaction and provoke some laughs when something completely incomprehensible comes out.

Not always the “minority” has to work in the language of the “majority”. The intercalations of some reverse translation can strength the group cohesion and interaction.

Some exercises or discussions can be done in language groups.

Another strategy is to support the participation and input of young people through mostly non-verbal methods (drawings, pantomime, music, etc.).

Encourage all participants to actively learn some words in the other native languages present in the group. You can use a variety of simple and fund methods like:

- Brainstorming any words you already know in a particular language
- Learning a small number of new words and/or simple phrases each week (e.g. Hello. My name is... It’s nice to meet you. Etc.)
- Tongue twisters
- Learning short rhymes or poems
- Learning song texts
- Learning some words in sign language
- Look through a youth magazine on another language and see how much you can understand

Finally remember that working in and around different languages can take a lot of mental energy. Be sure you plan time in your programme where the participants can “take time off” from having to speak and think in a foreign language.

Participation

Participation is a key aim of the “Aware and Active”-Project – it all strives for activating young people to be informed, stand up for their opinion and believes and share their knowledge with their peers.

From the organisational point of view participation is not only a nice wish, but very clearly a strategic decision to what extent we wish to share the power.

So before inviting any young person to participate in this project ask yourself:

- How serious are we about letting the young people who engage in this project taking their own decisions? What will we do if we do not like what they come up with?
- What are the boundaries – what do we wish to decide ourselves and what are we ready to lose some direct control on?
- What exactly can the young people influence, decide, do?
- What is the framework that we pre-define – money, messages, forms of awareness raising campaigns (e.g. can we live with it if the group decides to go and occupy the office of the minister for integration?).
- Why do we want them to do some things themselves and keep the decision to ourselves on other parts?
- -...

There is a lot of “difficult” questions to ask yourself, before inviting especially young people from disadvantaged groups to participate – it is only fair to answer those questions seriously and honestly to yourself before taking off.

And it is ok not to want to lose total control and give all the power exclusively to the young people, but it is important to take an informed decision and be clear in your communication.

In this particular case this includes questions like:

- HOW will the ideas for the European Idea Lab be chosen? WHO will take the decision and WHEN?
- HOW will be decided which ideas will be implemented on national level? WHO will take that decision and WHEN?
- WHAT can an idea get: budget, support, promotion on national and/or European level...