



Coordinated Call on ESF Transnational Mobility Measures for Disadvantaged Youth and Young Adults

Mandatory Common Minimum Requirements

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A: INTRODUCTION

A coordinated framework for transnational mobility

Learning experiences abroad offer a unique opportunity for young people facing disadvantage to take part in life-changing experiences. Taking young people out of their normal environments of home and community provides the opportunity for them to realise ambitions and dreams that hitherto may have seemed unachievable to them. Thanks to a focus on team building and appropriate guidance and counselling, participants develop personal competences, self-reliance and self-confidence, along with professional skills.

Realising the benefits of transnational mobility requires close attention on the part of project operators to each of the key elements of preparing, sending and following up each participant before, during and after their stay abroad. It also requires close cooperation and coordination between operators sending participants and those hosting¹ them abroad.

Making such experiences more widely available in Europe requires cooperation between Member States/regions. It was with this objective in mind that the 'Coordinated Call for Transnational Mobility Measures for Disadvantaged Youth and Young Adults' was developed. The Coordinated Call enables Member States/regions to cooperate transnationally using the ESF. This document provides a framework for Member States/regions to work together, knowing that the projects they support will be working to the same minimum requirements. It also helps to guarantee that a project operator in one country will know what to expect from their partners in other countries.

¹ We refer throughout to 'hosting' organisations which are the organisations receiving participants from abroad.

Drawing on good practice from across Europe², this document sets out common requirements regarding the overall objective of transnational mobility, target groups, quality, implementation structures and cost eligibility. Together, these requirements will help to ensure the quality of stays abroad.

Developed within a network of 15 ESF Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies active in the field³, the Call is open to all ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies in Europe to take part.

Using the ESF for transnational mobility: the legal basis

The Coordinated Call provides an important tool in the implementation of EU policies in relation to the alleviation of youth unemployment and mobility for all⁴. It is based on a voluntary agreement between the partnering Member States and regions to conduct ESF operations on youth mobility under their respective national and regional ESF Operational Programmes. By defining an agreed set of minimum requirements for these operations, it takes a new approach of concrete policy coordination within the field of transnationality.

The legal basis for the Coordinated Call is the ESF Regulation 1304/2013 and the Structural Funds Regulation 1303/2013, under which ESF shall support:

“Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee [...]”⁵

² This includes good practice from a wide range of sources, in particular the German IdA programme and other national and regional mobility initiatives supported by the ESF between 2007 to 2013.

³ See <http://www.tln-mobility.eu/EN/Home/home.html>

⁴ As embodied in the objectives of Europe 2020: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm.

⁵ 1304/2013 art. 3, ph. 1, let. A, ii

and “Member States shall support transnational cooperation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF [...].⁶

The Commission shall facilitate transnational cooperation [where appropriate] on [...] themes selected by Member States, through mutual learning and coordinated or joined action [...].”⁷

In addition, this Coordinated Call respects the 2000/78/EU Directive, which establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. The Call therefore protects the principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunities, positive action, accessibility and reasonable accommodation for disabled persons in order to support the provision of appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have access to, participate in, or advance in employment or to undergo training.

Within this legal framework, national laws and state aid rules apply.

Purpose and structure of the Coordinated Call

The Coordinated Call provides a framework for national and regional calls. It sets out the criteria that are mandatory for countries/regions taking part in the Call. These criteria have been developed taking into account variations within the target group and different circumstances in the Member States.

Given that this document contains the agreed common minimum requirements, ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies are at liberty to make additional specifications if they wish to do so.

Questions concerning the application of the requirements should be directed to the relevant ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies.

⁶ 1304/2013 art. 10, ph. 1

⁷ 1304/2013 art. 10, ph. 4

The document is structured into the following sections:

1. Objectives, describing the overall aim of stays abroad;
2. Target Groups, setting out the age range and examples of target groups;
3. Programme cycle;
4. Minimum quality standards across the phases involved in stays abroad;
5. Implementation structures;
6. Common criteria for eligibility.

A separate Manual of Guidance for the Coordinated Call provides background information and examples of approaches and methods that have been successful. Structured in the same way as the Call, it provides essential information for understanding and interpreting the Coordinated Call. The Manual of Guidance should therefore be read in conjunction with this document.

B: COORDINATED CALL - THE FRAMEWORK

1 – Objectives of mobility programmes launched under this Coordinated Call

The objective of transnational mobility programmes launched by ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies under this Coordinated Call is to integrate participants of such programmes into education, vocational training or employment.

This is to be achieved by improving the knowledge, skills and competences of participants through work-related learning experiences abroad⁸.

⁸ See Annex for definition of 'work-related learning experience abroad'.

2 – Target group

The target group of programmes launched under this Coordinated Call must be young people aged 18 to 30 not in employment, education or training (NEET), who are considered to be vulnerable with regard to their chances of entering education, vocational training and employment.

Within this target group, relevant participants will be, for example:

- Young carers;
- Early school leavers;
- Low skilled people;
- Economically inactive people;
- Disabled persons;
- People without work experience.

It is possible for ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies to open their respective programmes to persons up to the age of 35, if they so desire.

In light of the very diverse backgrounds of participants under this Call, project operators must ensure that measures within all phases of participation are adapted to participants' specific needs, skills and competences; including the accessibility needs of people with disabilities and special needs.

3 – Programme cycle

The Coordinated Call and the respective national and regional calls by national and regional Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies are launched in a common window. Mobility projects under this Call can be designed with a duration of up to three years.

Within the framework of this Coordinated Call, applications can only be submitted on the national and regional level by organisations that send participants abroad. This is in line with the general ESF provision which states

that operations funded by the ESF should be located in or be conducted for the benefit of the programme area.⁹

As applicant, the sending project operator is the signatory for the grant agreement contract with its regional or national Authority on behalf of the transnational partnership; and hence has responsibility vis-à-vis its responsible Managing Authority for ensuring the quality of services delivered by the hosting organisation in the partner country. For mandatory criteria on preparing the transnational partnership see section 4.1.2.

It is however desirable within the rationale of this Call that organisations intending to submit an application are not just sending out participants but also host participants from abroad as well.¹⁰

With regard to the establishment of transnational partnerships, Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies may accept project proposals from applicants with a pre-arranged transnational partnership or with a transnational partner yet to be determined. To facilitate transnational partnership building for project operators who have applied without a pre-defined transnational partner, a partner search database is established under this Coordinated Call. This database includes all project operators who have been pre-selected by the participating Member States and regions during the common window for the Call, and who are actively looking for a transnational partner.¹¹ In addition, dedicated partner search fora are organised to provide project operators with the opportunity to enhance or finalise their partnerships.

4 – Minimum quality standards

In order to ensure the quality of transnational mobility programmes launched by ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies under this Coordinated Call, projects have to meet the common minimum requirements as described in the following section regarding their structure and management.

⁹1303/2013, art. 70 and 1304/2013 art. 13 ph. 2.

¹⁰ It is not possible to apply for a grant as a hosting organisation only.

¹¹ Pre-selection is an important tool for quality.

Except where specified, the minimum requirements apply to sending project operators rather than hosting project operators.

In light of the transnational nature of the activities, it is essential that the target group involved, and the methods and approaches to be used, are agreed between sending and hosting project operators.

4.1 Project Set-up and Management

4.1.1 Project structure

Rationale: *Preparing and sending participants to foreign countries, and then ensuring their integration into education, training or employment once they return home, requires a number of separate but related steps. It is important that these steps are reflected in the structuring of projects, to make sure that each step receives explicit attention in order to maximise the effectiveness of transnational mobility for the participants. Continuity between phases is a vital ingredient of successful stays abroad.*

All projects under this Coordinated Call must consist of the following phases:

- Participant Recruitment;
- Participant Preparation;
- Stay Abroad;
- Follow-up.

4.1.2 Agreements between sending project operators and hosting organisations

Rationale: *One of the factors that affects the success of transnational mobility is the strength and clarity of the relationship between project operators sending participants abroad, and the organisations hosting them in other countries. Written agreements covering all the key aspects of setting up and implementing the stays abroad should be prepared and signed by both sides as a first step.*

Sending project operators must make a written project agreement with hosting organisations covering at least the following points:

- the types of participants to be involved, and their needs in relation to their stay abroad;
- how mentors appointed by either side will work together;
- the structure and content of the mobility activities before placements take place, covering inter-cultural and linguistic activities, the professional/vocational placement, practical matters related to travelling to and spending time in a foreign country, teambuilding and soft skills development;
- the level of language skills participants must possess so that there is a shared understanding of language needs and support required during the stay abroad;
- how participants' achievements will be assessed, recognised and validated, including initial baselining;
- cooperation with hosting organisations in all phases as follows:
 - in the preparation phase, hosting organisations must, as a minimum, receive information in advance of placements, so that they are fully acquainted with participants' profiles and take part in handover discussions.
 - for the stay abroad, hosting project operators must, as a minimum, be involved in organising the professional/vocational placement, working closely with local organisations and companies to identify suitable placements and to make sure that hosting organisations are aware of the needs of participants. Hosting project operators must also be involved in organising a cultural/linguistic programme, and in providing mentoring and tutoring personnel.
 - in the follow-up phase, hosting organisations must be involved in participants' assessments.
- the risks that might be encountered and how they would be addressed, including procedures for dealing with conflicts by, for example, using a risk management plan;
- how equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles will be upheld, e.g. the provision of reasonable accommodation and accessibility for disabled participants;

- how regular effective communication with hosting organisations and partners, especially Public Employment Services, will be set up and maintained.

4.1.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Rationale: *Having means to monitor and evaluate activities is an important part of being able to understand the effectiveness of transnational mobility. Furthermore, there may be financial consequences in the new ESF round for not meeting set targets.*

Project operators must collect data for monitoring and evaluation purposes in a format specified by ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies, which as a minimum, meets the legal requirements of the European Social Fund (where applicable), and Youth Employment Initiative funding.

4.2 Participant Recruitment

4.2.1 Stimulating participation

Rationale: *Participants who come from disadvantaged backgrounds may have had negative experiences in education, training and the labour market, and may need special measures to encourage and stimulate their participation.*

In light of the needs of the target group who are disengaged from, or discouraged with, education, vocational training and existing possibilities in the labour market, project operators must use methods that:

- enable them to reach the target group;
- are appropriate to the target group;
- encourage, motivate and stimulate the target group to participate.

4.2.2 Participant selection

Rationale: *The target groups are likely to lack formal qualifications and therefore non-traditional selection procedures will be needed to reveal their non-academic competences and potential. The target groups are also unlikely to have had experience of foreign travel and may lack self-reliance, so selection processes will need to identify young people who will be able to cope with a stay abroad.*

In light of the needs of the target group, project operators must use methods for participant selection that:

- identify people who, with appropriate support and based on their level of individual motivation, will be able to benefit from participation in terms of their integration into education, vocational training and employment;
- identify people who may find foreign placements challenging but who, with appropriate support, will be able to cope with the stay abroad.

4.3 Participant Preparation

4.3.1 Participant learning/development plans

Rationale: *It is important that participants have learning/development plans in order to make explicit their objectives and the intended outcomes from their work-related learning experiences. These plans also need to specify how the outcomes are to be achieved and recorded. They should be prepared with the involvement of participants to make sure participants feel they own their own plans and are committed to them.*

Project operators must use with each participant an inclusive learning/development plan, adapted specifically to their needs, skills and competences including accessibility which describes:

- the objectives and intended outcomes of participants' placements;
- the activities they will undertake;
- the assessment methods that will be used.

Participants must be involved in developing their own learning/development plans with support provided for people with disabilities and special needs. The same documentation must be used throughout a participant's work-related learning experience.

4.3.2 Baselineing participants' competences¹²

Rationale: *It is important at the start that project operators understand the skills and competences participants already possess, in order to set clear goals for their development.*

Project operators must use methods to baseline the competences of participants that enable them to:

- work jointly with participants to set participants' individual goals;
- adapt provision to participants' needs;
- assess participants' progress during and after the mobility period.

4.3.3 Mentoring¹³

Rationale: *Continuous mentoring is an essential part of mobility actions for disadvantaged participants. Mentors provide space for participants to reflect on their experiences and progress, and support participants' development.*

Project operators sending participants abroad must:

- ensure that each participant has access to a mentor right from the start of participation, who will get to know them and who will communicate with partners in the host location;
- as a minimum, assign a mentor to each group of participants;
- ensure that there is regular contact between mentors and participants;
- ensure that the same mentor is assigned to a group of participants throughout the group's participation.

¹² See Annex for definition of 'baselineing'.

¹³ See Annex for definition of 'mentor'.

4.3.4 Intercultural, language, professional and practical preparation

Rationale: Participants are unlikely to have travelled much, and especially not to foreign countries. They may not be very self-reliant. Project operators therefore need to ensure participants are well prepared across all the areas where they are likely to encounter new experiences and personal development.

Project operators must have a structured programme of activities that ensures the needs of all participants are met, and that participants are well-prepared in terms of:

- intercultural aspects, helping participants to address in advance any “culture shock”, and to reflect on their own and foreign cultures as well as on socio-cultural processes taking place when going to a foreign country;
- linguistic support;
- requirements of the professional/vocational placement, discussing and clarifying with participants the possibilities and options open to them, and providing vocational guidance and counselling;
- practical matters arising when travelling to and spending time in a foreign country, e.g. travel and social security arrangements, accommodation and daily life abroad.

The activities must involve participants in an active way rather than as passive recipients and support a process of team building amongst participants.

4.4 Work-related Learning Experience Abroad

4.4.1 Key Elements

Rationale: Throughout a work-related learning experience abroad, young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) will typically need more support than non-disadvantaged people would typically require. They will also need support to develop team working and other skills, which will help them to develop qualities such as self-confidence, self-esteem, self-reliability and staying power. Continuation of language support (see 4.3.4 above) during their stay abroad is important since the ability to speak the host language is unlikely to be well developed. Language support

helps participants to realise a wider range of benefits from the work-related learning experience.

Participants must be provided with a support programme during their work-related learning experience abroad that is structured to include the development of non-formal skills and competences, supports the team building process and develops language skills.

4.4.2 Duration of the stay abroad

Rationale: *It is important that the work-related learning experience abroad is sufficiently long to enable participants to fully benefit from it. A minimum duration is specified below however the needs of participants and employers may require a longer experience, as, for example, in the case of people with certain disabilities.*

The work-related learning experience abroad must last at least 2 months.

In exceptional circumstances the minimum duration may be reduced.

4.4.3 Mentoring during the stay abroad

Rationale: *Mentoring is a vital part of the work-related learning experience abroad. Mentors will have been appointed by sending project operators (as above) but project operators that host participants also have a major role to play in mentoring.*

Project operators hosting participants must:

- assign a mentor to each group of participants as a minimum;
- ensure that there is regular contact between mentors and participants;
- ensure that the same mentor is assigned to the group throughout the group's stay abroad.

4.5 Follow-up

4.5.1 Key elements

Rationale: *The follow-up phase after the work-related learning experience abroad is an essential part of the transnational mobility experience. Its purpose is to prepare participants for integration into education, training or employment as a result of the knowledge, skills and competences they have developed during their work-related learning experience abroad. Not all participants will achieve their goal and find education, vocational training or employment within the time limits of ESF-funded support. In these cases, it is important that there is a smooth handover to other relevant agencies who can support them further, e.g. Public Employment Services.*

Project operators must provide a phase of support to participants after the stay abroad which:

- includes support and guidance for participants to identify and reflect on the competences they have developed;
- includes an implementation plan for each participant which sets out how they will be integrated into further education, vocational training or employment;
- ensures that, if participants do not find education, vocational training or employment within the time limits of ESF-funded support, they are passed on to appropriate support agencies.

4.5.2 Working out and recording participants' progress

Rationale: *It is important that the improvements made by participants are measured and recorded, not just their participation. This enables participants to identify systematically the skills and competences they have developed and to put them into a form which supports their next steps into education, training or work.*

During the follow-up phase, sending project operators must:

- work with participants to establish the progress they have made in comparison to their initial baseline (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2);
- provide an accurate evaluation of participants' possibilities for integration into education, vocational training and employment;
- recognise and validate participants' achievements to enhance their prospects of integration, where possible in relation to national qualifications as per ECVET principles¹⁴, and by using Europass mobility documentation¹⁵;
- involve all relevant organisations and individuals in assessing the progress participants have made, including the sending and hosting organisations, the participants and the employers involved.

4.5.3 Preparing employers to provide employment for participants

Rationale: *Once participants have completed their stay abroad they will return home and will need help to be integrated into education, training or employment. Sending project operators should prepare the ground amongst employers for those participants who are able to enter employment to enable a smooth integration process.*

Sending project operators must prepare employers in home countries to receive participants who have completed their work-related learning experience abroad. Methods must be used that help employers to understand the specific needs of the target groups.

5 – Common standards for implementation structures

5.1 Applicant at domestic level

The Call is open to any type of organisation considered eligible by the national/regional ESF Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies. A list of potential organizations is provided in the Manual of Guidance.

¹⁴ <http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu>

¹⁵ <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home>

5.2 Transnational partner(s)

Under this Coordinated Call, all projects must establish operational partnerships with at least one transnational partner from another Member State.

5.3 Principle of equal opportunities between women and men and non discrimination

Under this Coordinated Call, Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies must take into account the horizontal principles established by the European Union. Managing Authorities/Implementing Bodies must take actions aiming at promoting equality between men and women.

In relation to the objectives of equity, non-discrimination and social responsibility of public and private actors, interventions must ensure that professional development opportunities are available to people with disabilities.

6 – Common criteria for eligibility of costs

6.1 Eligibility of costs

Under this Coordinated Call expenses for activities in the following project phases are eligible:

- Partner finding and project preparation;
- Participant recruitment;
- Participant preparation;
- Stay abroad;
- Follow-up.

The different types of expenditures can be distributed into the following categories:

- costs related to the individual participant (costs for e.g. travel, accommodation, subsistence, insurance, social security);

- costs related to the pedagogical and labour market oriented interventions (costs for e.g. recruitment, preparation, accompaniment, placement finding, debriefing and (re-)integration into the labour market);
- costs related to the organisational set-up (costs for e.g. partner finding and project preparation, management during the project implementation, conferences, administration, depreciation of assets, expert advice and consultancy, translation and interpretation, hire of facilities).

More specific rules concerning the exact type and nature of costs eligible in the different phases are to be decided by the national/regional authorities in charge of launching the national/regional calls.

6.2 Split of costs

In principle, the sending country carries all costs related to all activities for their participants, irrespective of whether they incur in the home or the host countries¹⁶.

6.3 Use of simplified cost options

It is recommended to use the different forms of simplified cost options that are permitted according to the European Regulations in force for the 2014-2020 period¹⁷ in the national and regional calls. The following options are available: flat rates, lump sums and standard units of costs.

The exact rules for the use of the simplified cost options as well as the size of these are decided by the national/regional authorities in charge of launching the national/regional calls.

¹⁶ 1304/2013, art. 13, ph. 2

¹⁷ 1303/2013, art. 67, 68; 1304/2013, art. 14

Annex

Definitions

Baselining

Baselining is the process of working out a participant's level of skills and competences at the start of their participation. There is a wide variety of methods available to do this, some of which are highlighted in the accompanying Manual of Guidance. These methods enable project operators to understand the baseline against which participants' progress can be judged. It also enables project operators to adjust activities so as better to meet participants' needs.

Mentors

A mentor is an individual with experience and knowledge who helps to guide participants through their work-related learning experience. They are actively involved with participants from preparation through to entering education, vocational training or employment after the stay abroad. Mentors offer guidance and counselling to participants and deal with their welfare, practical issues and personal development. Mentors build on-going relationships with participants and support and challenge them to achieve their goals. Mentors provide more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help.

Work-related learning experiences abroad

In this document, a work-related learning experience abroad is the time spent by participants with an organisation during their time abroad. These terms are used in preference to "traineeship" or "internship" as some of these terms have particular meanings or connotations in some countries/ contexts. Learning experiences abroad may be used for different purposes depending on the target group. For example, for participants who are disengaged from employment, they can be used to build routines into their daily lives and develop social skills. For unemployed graduates, they can provide opportunities to gain work experience and references from employers.

Flat rates

By flat rates is meant the application of a percentage to defined categories of costs as a way of calculating expenses. Flat rates can e.g. be used for calculating and accounting for general administrative costs (telephone, fax, postage, office supplies, general management, external accountancy, depreciation of material etc.).

Lump sums

By lump sums is meant fixed amounts that are intended to cover the totality of expenses for a given activity, irrespective of what the real costs of these may be. Lump sums can e.g. be used for covering costs in relation to project planning and partnership-finding, and for total costs in relation to travel, accommodation and nurture for participants while abroad.

Standard units of costs

Standard units of costs refer to fixed amounts paid for certain services according to a scale (e.g. travel, accommodation, salaries of involved staff) and constitute an alternative to lump sums.

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