



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

Manual of Guidance

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1 *Disadvantaged young people and work-related learning experiences abroad: a unique opportunity*

Transnational Mobility programmes have a special value for disadvantaged people by providing them with a unique opportunity to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, a sense of purpose and to clarify personal goals and ambitions. Placing participants in foreign environments creates a 'free space' in which their anonymity provides an opportunity to start afresh and experiment with aspects of their personality and vocational direction¹.

This Manual of Guidance provides background information and examples of approaches and methods that have been successful in transnational mobility for disadvantaged youth and young adults². It will help ESF Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies to interpret the Co-ordinated Call that sets out the criteria to be used in national/regional calls. It is structured in the same way as the Co-ordinated Call and uses the same main section headings for ease of reference.

Transnational mobility placements for disadvantaged youth and young adults need well-designed structures and processes. They come with some unique challenges and rewards for project operators. Learning how to adjust the different phases to suit different target groups is part and parcel of the experience of running such schemes. This Guidance offers the opportunity to learn from the experiences of organisations who have gone through such learning curves.

It is intended that this Guidance will grow and develop as evidence accumulates of successful practice through the Coordinated Call.

2 *Target Group*

The target group of programmes launched under this coordinated call are young people aged 18 to 30 (which may be extended to 35) 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. This is a highly heterogeneous category. Indeed, the composition of the NEET group varies considerably between countries and between regions within countries. National and regional analysis is therefore important in order to delimit accurately the target group, to identify priorities and to work out the type of support participants will need.

¹ Transnational mobility has been seen as creating a "free space" in which participants are placed in foreign environments where their anonymity provides an opportunity to start afresh and experiment with aspects of their personality and vocational direction (Cedefop, 2004, Disadvantaged groups in transnational placement projects). Thus mobility programmes can have a special value for disadvantaged people by enabling them to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, a sense of purpose and to clarify personal goals and ambitions.

² For further information see: <http://www.tln-mobility.eu/EN/Home/home.html>

More information and country specific analyses of the NEET group can be found at <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/neet.htm>

National and regional data about early school leaving and the NEET group can be found at http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_20

3 Programme Cycle

The Coordinated Call sets the framework for transnational youth mobility measures financed through the ESF. Managing Authorities and ESF Implementing Bodies who have agreed to participate in this action are responsible for launching national and regional calls for projects under their respective ESF 2014-2020 programmes, following the minimum requirements defined in the Coordinated Call. National and regional project operators interested in sending young people abroad under transnational mobility measures are able to apply for funding under these calls.

Acting as a host as well as a sender

While only project operators who want to send participants abroad can apply for funding, it is strongly recommended for them also to host participants from other countries. This is considered highly beneficial for the overall success of transnational mobility actions as project operators will gain an improved understanding of all phases and the respective support and preparation required. Joint quality standards as set out in the Call can also be much more easily applied.

The ‘joint window’

In order to enable project operators who follow the same minimum standards to find partners in other countries, Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies partnering in the Call have defined a common time period (or ‘joint window’) for launching their national and regional calls.³

Applicants without a transitional partner

As indicated in the Coordinated Call, applications can be submitted with or without a transnational partner already allocated (also see section 5.3). After a pre-selection of applicants on regional and national levels, those who have applied without a transnational partner are invited to a transnational partner search forum where they can meet prospective transnational partners who have also been pre-selected. At the forum, they can set up their agreements and prepare for the joint documentation required for final approval.

³ The timetable of the overall Network and the effective timelines for each partner can be accessed through the TLN Mobility website www.tln-mobility.eu.

Applicants who already have a partner

In the case of project operators who already have a transnational partner, including those who have partners from a Member State or region which is not part of the Coordinated Call Network, it is still recommended that the Managing Authority / Implementing Body to whom the application is directed invites the project operators and their transnational partner to attend the partner search forum. This is for quality purposes as well as to extend the overall pool of transnational partners that wish to take part. Further explanations on the repercussions for the management of the application process and the eligibility of costs are provided, see sections 5.3. and 6. of this Manual.

4 Minimum Quality Standards

4.1 Project Set-up and Management

4.1.1 Project Structure

All phases are crucial for the success of mobility projects; they are interconnected and interdependent. Recruitment and preparation needs to be appropriate to the target group. Without appropriate support participants may become disappointed and demotivated. During the stay abroad adequate mentoring and support is needed otherwise the best preparation could come to nothing. After the stay abroad, well-structured and organized follow-up activities are required to make sure that participants capitalise on competences and attitudes they have developed and do not go back to their former way of life.

Continuity between phases

It is important for participants that there is continuity between all the phases so that they experience a smooth transition from preparation through the stay abroad and into follow-up activities and eventually integration into education, training or employment.

Intense support

Many of the young people to be involved through this Coordinated Call have a need for significant and intense support, perhaps over a long period of time. What is envisaged is not a 'quick fix'; in total it may take a participant many months to pass through all the phases required, and in the experience of some projects this may take as much as 3 years.

4.1.2 Agreements between sending project operators and hosting organisations

An essential part of the solid foundations on which transnational mobility is built concerns the drawing up of agreements between sending project operators and hosting organisations. Such agreements should set out clearly what is expected of both sides in the relationship.

Requirements of host organisations

It is important that sending project operators ensure that organisations that are to receive (or host) participants have experience in organising placements, and are able to implement effective mentoring during participants' stays abroad.

Risk management

A risk management plan is an important part of any transnationality agreement. This needs to specify the likely risk of any unforeseen difficulties arising, and the steps to be taken in its eventuality, i.e. which of the partners will need to take what action. Some emergency measures can be planned and practiced beforehand, for example through role-play and first aid courses. It is especially important that the support system for participants and the staff accompanying them abroad are clearly set out.

4.1.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are essential tools for project operators to keep track of progress amongst participants and to understand the overall impact of activities. Good practice highlights the value of integrating monitoring and evaluation activities and obtaining the perspectives of all the key participants, as the example below shows.

An integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation: the Italian Leonardo da Vinci – funded project ‘Up and Go!’

Monitoring

All actors of the project were involved, project managers, tutors and every participant. During the stay abroad, each youth was accompanied by a tutor who represented the reference point for all problems in the work or training place. Once a week all participants were asked to attend a meeting with the responsible member of staff of the host organization and the tutor, to discuss all practical aspects and any possible problems. The tutor also completed a weekly report on the activities and achievements. The hosting partner was responsible for producing an overall assessment of each mobility experience. In addition, the opinion of the hosting organization – about the management of the project and implementation of activities - was taken into consideration.

Evaluation

The evaluation strategy was based on data obtained from:

- Personal satisfaction forms, filled in by all participants in relation to the activities undertaken
- Monitoring documents completed by tutors
- On going monitoring of the project
- Hosting partner evaluation.

4.2 Participant Recruitment

4.2.1 Stimulating participation

Allowing for participants' low levels of self-confidence and self-esteem

People from disadvantaged backgrounds often do not see themselves as 'natural' participants in mobility programmes: low levels of motivation linked to low self-confidence and self-esteem are common issues. Recruitment activities may therefore need to tackle directly the possibility of meeting negative attitudes. Potential participants may need to be motivated and stimulated to take part, even when they are known to organisers, such as when they are in receipt of unemployment benefits.

Using community gatekeepers

Tackling motivational issues requires approaches tailored to the individual and involving direct contact with and knowledge of the life situation of individual participants. Intensive contact with individuals and communities is thus a prerequisite for success. It may be necessary to work through communities in order to reach individuals. This can be difficult where communities are sources of negative attitudes towards stays abroad. Building strong relationships with community 'gatekeepers' such as community or religious leaders are key approaches. Individuals drawn from local communities can also be developed as 'outreach' workers to help identify and encourage disadvantaged young people to participate.

Implementing a range of methods

Such approaches can be supported with a range of other methods including: web-based tools (targeted e-mails, webinars, use of social media such as Facebook etc.); and open days. Involving previous participants is also likely to be effective with participants from many different backgrounds, whether through face-to-face, video or audio testimony methods.

Information for participants benefits from being objective, frank and clear about what is involved in a placement abroad.

4.2.2 Participant selection

For disadvantaged groups the real significance of a stay abroad is the acquisition of personal competences such as self-confidence, self-esteem, sense of purpose and clarified personal goals and ambitions. Accordingly, learning modes should be used that get participants to take responsibility for their own actions. For many participants the most significant learning outcome is often psychodynamic in nature, arising from the sense of achievement of having coped with the challenge of a stay abroad⁴.

⁴ Cedefop (2004) Disadvantaged groups in transnational placement projects
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/5155_EN.PDF

Careful design

In light of these issues selection processes need to be carefully designed. On the one hand, they need to be able to select individuals who will be able to benefit from participation. On the other hand, the ability of some participants to benefit may only become apparent during the preparatory phase as they begin to develop new outlooks and competences. It is therefore important that selection processes do not screen out participants who might otherwise be regarded as 'too difficult' since this would deprive many potential beneficiaries of the opportunity to take part. Providing support to participants from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and with the greatest emotional and psychological needs should therefore be an important part of selection processes.

Selection of Participants: Key Questions from the German IdA project

- Does the disadvantage criterion apply for this participant and does she/he thus generally belong to the target group?
- Is a positive development forecast possible for the selected person and can agreement be reached on the basic objective of integration into training/work?
- Is the individual motivation clear and what does it basically consist of?
- Will the person be able to cope with difficulties in the unfamiliar and complex situation abroad? What evidence or examples is provided by their biography?
- Does the selected person fit into the overall group structure?

Source: A manual for successful transnational work with disadvantaged target groups; as part of the transnational ESF programme IdA - Integration through exchange

Feedback

Once participants have been selected it is important that feedback is provided to both successful and unsuccessful candidates. It should be explained clearly to candidates against the assessment criteria why they have/have not been selected. Ideally, unsuccessful candidates should be provided with constructive feedback and their next options explained. This can help to ensure that the project maintains a good reputation in the communities it serves.

Participant selection lessons from Ireland and Italy

There are a number of examples of good practice in selecting participants from Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects in Ireland and Italy. In Ireland, lessons include having clear and transparent selection criteria that are notified to interested potential candidates prior to application. Tools of selection include a cv, a letter of motivation, and a letter of application in conjunction with an interview panel. Telephone interviews and group interviews are undertaken where considered appropriate. Interview panels should have an uneven number of interviewers to prevent deadlock. There should be clear weighted selection criteria and equal opportunities should be taken into consideration (see also section 5.4). A reserve list should be created in case of drop out after selection. Where possible the reserve list candidates should also participate in any preparatory activities prior to departure in case of late drop outs.

In Italy, a number of Leonardo projects that published public Calls to recruit and select participants adopted very clear sets of criteria, particularly regarding:

- having a Europass cv
- the level of language skills required
- learning attainments
- motivation letters
- personal interviews.

4.3 Participant Preparation

Ensuring participants are well equipped for their placements (e.g. in terms of being able to cope with linguistic and cultural differences) is a vital part of ensuring that they realise all the potential benefits. Sadly, evidence suggests that the preparation phase is often neglected. A survey of EC mobility schemes in 2007 found that only 55% of the survey participants rated the preparation they had received as good or very good, with much lower figures in some countries⁵.

Length and Intensity

Experience suggests that some target groups will require a long and intensive period of preparation before they are ready to go on a work study abroad. For example, early school leavers with negative experiences of and attitudes towards formal education and some years of dislocation will require significant support, especially compared to, for example, unemployed graduates who are likely to be more motivated. Indeed, experiences from some countries, such as Ireland, is that the stay abroad is most beneficial if embedded in a much longer and broader 'return to education/training' type of intervention.

⁵ WSF Economic and Social Research (2007) Analysis of the Effects of Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Measures on Young Trainees, Employees and the Influence of Socio-economic Factors.

A concrete example of the time taken during a preparation phase is provided in the box below.

Time spent in the preparation stage in Galicia, Spain for exchanges with Germany

According to participant needs the preparation phase takes 80 to 110 hours:

1. Language Training: 45- 60 hours
2. Intercultural training: 35-50 hours
 - German Culture (3 - 4 h)
 - Group Dynamics /Cohesion (5 - 7 h)
 - Europass cv; Use of EURES (6 - 8 h)
 - Experience Panels: European Volunteers, Young Germans in Galicia (4 - 5 h)
 - Emotional Intelligence and Aspects of Belonging (2 - 3 h)
 - Stereotypes, Culture Shock, Intercultural, Prejudices, Cultural Iceberg, Adaptation, Curiosities (6 - 7 h)
 - Interview & Introduction at the Workplace: Guidance, Responsible Attitudes (2 - 3 h)
 - Employment Regulations: Rights and Obligations (1 - 2 h)
 - Integration into a New Role: Worker (2 - 4 h)
 - Inclusion in Transport Means Abroad (1 - 3 h)
 - Self Confidence in the New Tasks (3 - 4 h).

Source: Fundación Paideia (A Coruña- Spain)

Sharing methods

Projects will naturally vary in the approach they take to preparing participants for their stays abroad. Providing a mechanism, such as a web-based tool, to enable projects to share their methods can be a fruitful venture for Managing Authorities. The Italian Leonardo da Vinci Agency has created a web portal aimed at presenting and sharing methodologies and tools for the preparation of mobility periods: <http://www.preparalamobilita.it/index.asp>.

4.3.1 Participant learning/development plans

Good practice points to the need for learning plans to be drawn up. These are regarded as being especially important for long-term mobility, although they are also useful for short-term mobility. Learning plans should be built around placement objectives and expected learning outcomes in terms of the skills and competences to be developed. They should specify how the learning outcomes are to be achieved, including how broader competence development might be incorporated into occupational practice/work tasks. The learning plan should also specify the follow-up processes. They should deal with how the skills and competences acquired are to be recognised, such as specifying the use of Europass documentation and linkages to any qualifications. It should be explained to participants from the very start how their experience abroad will be integrated with their existing skills and competences.

Involving participants

There is wide evidence that learning plans for people from disadvantaged backgrounds are most effective when drawn up with their active involvement. Many disadvantaged people have had negative experiences of education and training and a common cause of dissatisfaction is their sense of powerlessness in the learning process. Involving participants in developing their plans empowers them, and gives them a sense of ownership of their learning goals.

4.3.2 Baselineing participants' competences⁶

This section provides guidance on how to assess participants' competences once they have been recruited. Assessment is therefore seen as part of the preparation phase for participants. The methods described in this section could be used in the initial selection of participants.

Designing methods that are positive and constructive

Although participants will vary significantly in the nature of their 'disadvantage', it is likely that all participants will to some degree have negative perceptions of themselves as failures, either because they have not succeeded in qualifications at school or because they are experiencing difficulties finding work. As a result, assessment procedures need to be designed in a constructive, positive and sensitive manner, with attention being given not just to how to assess individuals, but also how to deal with potential participants who do not go onwards to participate.

Relating skills and competences to mobility goals

It is important that, at the outset, project operators set out the skills and competences which it is intended participants will acquire during their placements. These skills and competences should be related to the main goals of mobility, i.e. personal (including self-confidence, self-esteem, taking responsibility, reliability, staying power, team working), intercultural, linguistic and professional/vocational.

⁶ See Annex for definition of "baselineing".

Benchmarking

Setting out the skills and competences provides the benchmark against which the progress of participants can be assessed during and at the end of placements. Personal competences related to attitudes and attributes of individuals are especially important for the NEET group. People in this target group are often deficient in these areas. They are prerequisites for success in life in general and in employment.

Suitability

Careful assessment of participants is particularly important in the case of disadvantaged youth and young adults owing to the greater likelihood of their dropping out. Assessment procedures should be designed with 2 issues in mind: (1) to ensure that participants are suitable in general for transnational mobility exchange and (2) to ensure a good match with the particular placements available.

Encouragement

It is important that assessment processes do not discourage potential participants. Participants may have had negative experiences at school, with welfare benefit systems etc., and may need much encouragement to take part. As part of this, assessment criteria should be clear and transparent and explained to participants so that they understand them.

Non-academic competences

A range of criteria can be set for the assessment process including academic performance, and personal motivation, attitudes and aptitudes. However, academic performance is likely to be much less relevant in this case given that educational underperformance is likely to be a key feature of most participants. Academic performance will certainly be less useful as a means of differentiating between individuals who are likely to participate successfully and those not. Consequently, the emphasis in any effective assessment process will need to focus on non-academic competences.

Participants' potential

The purpose of assessment will also be to work out participants' potential to benefit. This requires a balance to be struck between selecting people who would clearly be able to cope with the unfamiliar and complex situation abroad and those whose possibilities for labour market integration would be enhanced by the mobility period—evidently, they are not necessarily the same. Equally, this issue cannot be answered in isolation of the level of support available. In other words, the question to be addressed will be whether an individual will be able to cope with the stay abroad given the framework of support available.

It may also be necessary to determine whether an individual fits within an overall group structure.

Participants with health problems

Disadvantaged youth and young adults may be suffering from significant issues like drug addiction, depression or other mental health problems. These need to be taken into account in any assessment procedure.

Assessment methods

Assessment procedures should not be narrowly conceived as involving simple methods such as written applications and interviews. These are unlikely to bring out the best in people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and they are not the best methods to reveal the non-academic competences and potential referred to above. Rather than using conventional interviews, assessment should involve discussions or guidance talks which give participants a realistic understanding of what is involved in the stay abroad. This is likely to reveal if participants have the motivation to continue. In addition, methods such as self-assessment, individual profiling (using psychometric tests for example) and assessment centres can be used.

The value of self-assessment

Self-assessment by participants can be a highly effective component of the preparation phase. The German ESF Integration through Exchange (IdA) project has found that participants benefit from reflecting on their occupational aims (attitude, competences, directions), their identity and their 'culture' in the broader sense. Self-awareness can also be improved through situations that convey a sense of 'foreignness' to help prepare for dealing with difficulties. Approaches from educational theatre and experiential education can be applied here. The aim is to enable participants to see possible problems abroad as positive challenges that they can master.

The following prompts and questions have proved helpful as part of self-assessment:

Occupational guidance and clarification:

- Where am I going?
- How will a work-related learning experience abroad help me?
- What would help me get on? (wishes and compromises)
- Before/after assessment (actual and expectations profile).

Expectations and possibilities (bringing participants down to earth, bringing visions into line with reality)

Individual clarification of special aspects of participants' psychological situation and assistance needs

Specification of suitable assessment and documentation tools together with participants.

Role of mentors

In view of the sometimes challenging nature of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is worth giving consideration to whether the mentor in charge of supervision during the mobility placement (see 4.3.3) should participate in the assessment process.

Foreign language skills

Every participant in a placement will require some degree of foreign language capability. Foreign language skills are likely to be underdeveloped in people not in employment, education or training, but this should not be a barrier to participation since the principle purpose of mobility for this group is not to acquire language skills. Rather, participants should be equipped with ‘survival’ language skills as described below (section 4.3.4).

4.3.3 Mentoring⁷

Role of mentors

It is important that participants have support throughout their stay abroad to enable them to achieve their objectives and to provide opportunities to reflect on their progress. Day-to-day issues, homesickness and other problems can overshadow core learning issues. Mentors have a key role to play in making sure learners have the support and ‘space’ they need to grow and develop. It is important that participants have mentors in host countries as well as mentors whilst at home (for host country mentors see 4.4.3 below).

Ratio of mentors to participants

It is important that the ratio of mentors to participants is agreed in line with the needs of the particular group involved as some groups will need more support than others.

Continuity

Continuity in mentor support is important to participants to provide stability during their placements. This is especially true for the most disengaged participants whose family or community backgrounds may be quite disorganised and who themselves may lead chaotic lifestyles.

Regular discussions

Regular discussions between mentors and participants should be held and scheduled in advance. They should be supplemented with participants writing weekly reports either in their mother tongue or the language of their host country. Other methods can be used including learning diaries, group discussions and blogs.

Accompanying persons

Some target groups with particularly challenging needs, e.g. disabled people, may require the support of accompanying persons in addition to mentors.

⁷ See Annex for definition of “mentor”.

Mentors from the host localities

During participants' preparation, mentors from the host locality can play an important role in allaying anxieties participants may have about going abroad, as shown in the box below.

Using local host mentors to defeat participants' fears about their first time away from home

For a successful first stay abroad young disadvantaged people need to defeat their own fears. Participants do not know what to expect abroad. Even the best information about the host country provided by the sending project operator can't completely overcome doubts about this great adventure. The experience of several German ESF Integration through Exchange (IdA) projects shows that visits by hosting mentors before participants travel abroad can provide substantial help to defeat participants' fears.

Participants get the opportunity to discuss their doubts directly with someone who has first hand knowledge, of the place they are going to travel to, and not just with somebody from the host country. Participants also feel better if they already know somebody in the hosting region who will be able to welcome them when they arrive in the host locality.

Such measures help to create confidence, minimize the risk of getting homesick and also provide a better beginning to the stay abroad: a trusted person participants can rely on is available from the first day of their stay abroad.

Dealing with conflicts involving participants

Mentors have an important role in dealing with conflicts which are likely to be a particular issue with disadvantaged youth and young adults. Handled properly by mentors, conflicts can become opportunities for learning and competence development. At the same time, it is important that, to be most effective, the role of the mentors in conflict management is seen as part of an overall framework involving a range of techniques. Such a framework might range from immediate action by local mentors in order to calm situations, to terminations of placements where there have been serious breaches of rules. Escalation processes to deal with different grades of conflict should be made clear to participants. They can be part of partners' risk management plans (see section 4.1.2)

Feedback

It is important that mentors provide feedback on participants to project operators in order that there is a record of progress made, challenges overcome or unresolved etc. Feedback in the form of written – rather than oral - reports is normally part and parcel of quality-based approaches.

4.3.4 Intercultural, language, professional and practical preparation

Intensity

Once participants have been recruited and assessed, intensive, well-structured preparation for the stay abroad is an important feature of successful mobility programmes for disadvantaged people. Many disadvantaged people do not have experience of travelling long distances and may not be very self-reliant so intensive preparation is critical.

The goal is to prepare people for the four key aspects of the placement:

- the cultural life of the host country
- language needs
- professional/vocational dimensions
- practical aspects.

All these need to be covered adequately.

Providing opportunities for learning and empowerment

The preparation activities should be seen as an integral part of a project since they provide opportunities for experiential learning and the empowerment of participants. Participants should be given the opportunity to be actively involved and not just passive recipients. For example, participants can shape their own preparation by collecting information about the host country/region.

Balancing individual needs with the benefits of group work

Tailoring preparation and support to the individual can be very important, especially where the needs of participants are many and varied. The box below provides an example:

An approach to personalized preparation: lessons from an Italian Leonardo da Vinci Project

The project '*Up and Go! Transnational placements for personal empowerment and independent life – Third edition*' aimed to assist people, many of whom had mental impairment and health issues, on the way towards independent living on the basis of an individual approach to transnational mobility.

The project promoter, Volontarimini, an association of voluntary organizations based in the province of Rimini (Emilia – Romagna Region), ensured that all activities (before, during and after the mobility) were linked to the special needs of each individual. Linguistic preparation undergone in the framework of wider meetings aimed to start to develop knowledge of the culture of the host country through a pedagogical approach and a role play methodology. Each event was attended by educators, tutors, social operator and parents.

In particular, three courses were prepared:

- Language (20 hours)
- Imagine and video production (20 hours) - designed to illustrate the mobility experience participants would experience abroad
- Writing course (20 hours) - on taking notes, daily journal writing,
- Local culture of the host country - based on two meetings.

At the same time, the personal approach was balanced with socialization meetings and one day events (e.g. to start taking pictures) which were undertaken regularly with all participants to create the feeling of a group.

Period covered: 01.10.11 – 31.05.13 / National ID: LLP-LdV-PLM-11-IT-234

At the same time, preparation can be done individually or in groups. Group dynamics can be highly beneficial to participants. The right balance between individual and group work needs to be found according to participants' needs.

Involvement of former participants

In terms of who should be helping to prepare participants, former participants can play a valuable role. For instance, former participants can be invited to give talks to alleviate the fears of potential participants by telling them about their experiences and how they were managed.

Involving families

It can also be beneficial to involve families as part of wider projects to engage disadvantaged young people. Families are one of the key influences on individuals and overcoming negative attitudes within the home can be an important complement to activities to prepare participants.

Preparation of and follow-up with families: an example from Italy

The project 'Up and Go!' mentioned above also took steps to ensure the involvement of participants' families. Four meetings of 2 hours each were held to prepare the families of the young participants. The meetings presented the project, the activities, and the psychological and pedagogical aspects of the stay abroad. During the meetings the families completed a form in which they made an assessment of the autonomy of their children. A final meeting with the families was held once the youths had completed the experience abroad.

Involvement of hosting project operators

It is also important to involve the hosting project operators in preparations. Ideally, they should get to know the participants before they depart, perhaps visiting the home country of the participant, as in the case of host mentors mentioned in 4.3.3 above.

If this is not possible, they should at least receive individual participant profiles well in advance of their stay abroad in order to acquaint themselves fully with both individuals and the group as a whole. Sending project operators also need to make sure that they hold handover discussions with hosting project operators.

Accessibility

Activities in the preparation phase will need to be adapted to the needs, skills and abilities of the participants concerned. In particular, people with particular accessibility needs such as people with disabilities or poor health should have their needs assessed so that preparatory activities can be adapted accordingly. People with disabilities often fear that they will run into problems whilst travelling and they should be given reassurance that such issues have been anticipated and taken into account. This applies, for example, to practical matters such as using public transport and the accommodation they are likely to use in the host country, as well as the workplaces in which they will be placed.

Preparing for intercultural experiences

Intercultural preparation for a stay abroad is essentially not about learning the history and geography of a country: it involves participants reflecting on their own culture in the broad sense and on images and preconceptions about other cultures. For disadvantaged youth and young adults preparatory techniques which help participants come to terms with the potential challenge – the ‘culture shock’ – of going to a foreign country are important. Their aim should be to support participants to see any potential problems or issues (such as learning how to deal with cultural conflicts caused by cultural differences) as positive challenges they can master.

Techniques include various experiential education methods, role-playing and educational theatre which help participants to think through and simulate in advance – and in a secure environment – what they are likely to experience abroad. They enable participants to reflect on their own culture and their images and pre-conceptions of other cultures.

Language preparation

As noted above (section 4.3.2), every participant in a placement requires some degree of foreign language capability. It is vital that participants have their language skills assessed before departure and if necessary provided with any language teaching they require. Such language teaching should take place in the sending country before departure and continue in the host country before and during the placement. It is likely that most participants will have little knowledge of the language of the host country. In this context a focus on basic ‘survival’ language skills (e.g. how to say ‘hello’, ask for things in shops etc.) is appropriate.

It will also be necessary to ensure that participants receive sufficient technical language instruction related to their professional placement.

Professional preparation

Participants need to be provided with guidance before their placement on the professional options open to them. They also need to be acquainted in advance with the nature of their placements, e.g. through prior information meetings.

A vital part of professional preparation involves working with local partners in the host country to ensure they understand and, importantly, accept the needs of the participants. Some participants from disadvantaged backgrounds will need intensive help and support during their placement.

Preparatory activities also need to take place amongst employers who will host participants. This is an important activity for hosting organisations. They need to have good contacts with local businesses and experience in organising, monitoring and evaluating placements. Considerable resources may need to be devoted to encouraging employers to participate.

The target group is often the subject of negative perceptions amongst employers who foresee difficulties in the workplace. Case studies are valuable means of demonstrating the benefits for employers and encouraging them to see a ‘win-win’ situation in the placements.

Ensuring the most suitable placement for a participant involves working closely with local organisations and companies. It is important to make sure the relevant documents from the trainee (such as qualification profiles, certificates and curriculum vitae) are organised in a timely manner to send to the enterprise involved.

Professional Preparation in Ireland

Professional preparation in Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects in Ireland is guided by the sector in which the candidate is placed and may include:

- occupational (pedagogic) preparation
- how training and work practices may differ, working hours, responsibilities, expectations
- appropriate behaviour in the workplace
- appropriate clothing
- health & safety
- time keeping
- work-appropriate language
- personal organisational skills
- ICT skills
- problem solving and team work
- Vocational Oriented Language Learning (VOLL):
- survival / work -related language and cultural skills.

Methods could include self-directed learning, classroom-based learning, online learning and research project work. A variety of methods should be used to ensure a complementarity with a variety of learning styles.

Pre- and post- self-assessment of skills can be a strong motivator for candidates and provide evidence of progression in learning and achievement.

Practical preparation

The practical aspects that need to be prepared for include travel arrangements, insurance, residence and work permits, Social Security, accommodation and health and safety. Such issues can be dealt with through information sessions.

Practical preparation lessons in Ireland

Good practice for Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects in Ireland suggests that:

- Project operators should keep copies of participants' passports, insurance policies, emergency contact details and next of kin. Duty of care should be ensured at all times.
- Candidates should be clear on travel and accommodation arrangements a number of weeks prior to departure. Accommodation should be researched to ensure that it is of sufficient standard and in a safe area.
- Candidates should be provided with appropriate documentation to supply to the Department of Social Protection to ensure continuance of relevant social welfare payments, where required.
- All candidates should sign a code of conduct prior to departure.

4.4 Work-related learning experience abroad

4.4.1 Key elements

Setting the most appropriate type of supervision

Disadvantaged youth and young adults need opportunities to develop not only language skills but also team building and other less formal skills which they will be able to use when they return home. In this regard, getting a good balance between active and passive supervision can make the difference between success and failure. Active supervision involves taking action to pre-empt possible problems; passive supervision means establishing the basis for dealing with problems that participants are unable to cope with themselves. Too much active supervision can fail to create a 'free space' (see section 1) within which participants can develop.

Social and cultural activities

In successful stays abroad cultural and social activities that provide opportunities for participants to socialize with local people of the same age are seen as important and intrinsic elements and not as 'add-ons'.

They can develop a range of competences related to employability and personal development including the ability to socialise with people from different backgrounds and language skills. Such competences help, in turn, to boost self-confidence.

Organising opportunities for teambuilding and soft skills development is an important function for hosting organisations.

Good practice during the stay abroad: lessons from Ireland

Good practice from Ireland is that **team building** should commence prior to departure. This facilitates social cohesion within the group. Such activities should continue throughout the duration abroad. Planned social activities should be arranged to suit the interests and abilities of participants. A wide variety of options should be offered ranging from familiar activities to those which are host country specific.

Most participants will probably have little knowledge of the language of the host country and therefore a focus on basic ‘survival’ language skill is appropriate. But, participants have the greatest potential to ‘soak up’ a language when they are immersed in it in the host country, and augmenting this with language support is therefore likely to show significant rewards. This can take many forms including individual or group coaching and language workshops organized with young people in the host locality.

It is also important to remember that not all participants manage to complete their stay abroad, regardless of how well designed it is. It is important that participants who leave early are passed on to an appropriate body by project operators so that they can find an alternative path.

4.4.2 Duration of the stay abroad

Experience with stays abroad indicates that short-term stays of a few weeks are generally inadequate to achieve the type of personal development which participants from disadvantaged backgrounds require. Along with acquiring work-related skills, the goal of stays abroad for the target group is to facilitate the acquisition of positive attitudes and behaviours. These new competences provide the basis for motivating individuals to put into practice the competences they have acquired once they return home. This takes time as it requires the un-learning of old habits as well as the embedding of new ones. From the employer's perspective, longer duration stays may also be preferable since they enable participants to be better integrated into work and to be part of a team in the workplace.

Some target groups are likely to need stays abroad of longer duration than other groups. Based on experience, disabled people are likely to need 3 months or more.

4.4.3 Mentoring during the stay abroad

Mentoring in the preparation phases was discussed in section 4.3.3. Mentoring during the stay abroad is a crucial task for mentors from both the sending and receiving localities. It requires coordination between the two to maximise its effectiveness. The division of responsibilities between home and host mentors will vary according to circumstances including the needs of participants. However, experience suggests that mentors from the home country should travel with participants to the host localities to help them to adjust to a foreign culture. They should also accompany participants throughout their stay and work in collaboration with the host mentors

Host country mentors have a vital role to play alongside mentors appointed by sending organisations. For their part, host mentors can help participants to feel part of the local community.

Mentoring during the stay abroad: experiences from France

During the French project 'Vistapro', it was found to be very important to have a mentor who is fully available for the participant at the beginning of their stay abroad. Away from home, the youngster may feel lost and needs to adjust to a new environment. The host mentor and the home mentor need to cooperate closely. They must agree on their roles and the means, and the frequency, of the mentoring by the home mentor.

Participants should stay in contact with their home mentor from as well as with their family or friend. This is to be ensured by providing them with a SIM card for their mobile phone abroad. A call once a week helps to keep in touch and to avoid major crises. Internet is also important for communication.

The home mentor can also visit the youngster half way through the mobility. Such visits can prevent conflicts, solve problems and re-motivate youngsters.

4.5 Follow-up

4.5.1 Key elements

Well-structured follow-up

The follow-up phase is generally reckoned to be the most under-developed component of most mobility programmes⁸. However, it is also regarded as being important for the entire process.

A well-structured follow-up phase is essential where a programme has been designed to give participants new prospects on the labour market in order that participants can reflect on knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired and understand how to capitalize on these new competences in applying for further education, training or employment.

Support and guidance

For disadvantaged youth and young adults, where developments in personality or vocational orientation have begun during the placement, participants will need support and guidance to build upon them. Without support and guidance, it may be difficult for participants to maintain a new perspective or outlook when they return to their original environments and are met with the former image of themselves as reflected in others' expectations of them.

Support and guidance is particularly important where the placement has been of short duration and therefore where there has been not much time for changes to become habituated.

Advice and encouragement

One of the characteristics of people from disadvantaged backgrounds is their lack of 'social capital' in terms of connections with local employers. It is therefore very important that support is provided to compensate for this deficiency which provides advice and encouragement as well as concrete support with making job applications. This may last for many months, until participants are successfully integrated into employment.

⁸ E.g. see Christodoulides G.D. et al (2010) A Study Report on Mobility. See 'Baseline Study on Mobility' at: <http://www.youthemploymentnet.eu/Portal/PortalDocuments.aspx?DocumentId=b059fb3d-238c-4263-bae7-bd27c0a7c7ec>; CINOP and PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) MoVE-iT final report. Overcoming obstacles to mobility for apprentices and other young people in vocational education and training. http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/moveit_en.pdf; and page 61, Cedefop (2004) Disadvantaged groups in transnational placement projects http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/5155_EN.PDF

Follow-up experiences from France

The 'Vistapro' project defined the following steps for follow-up:

15 days after their return, participants receive four-days' training during which they meet the other participants.

The structure is:

Day 1: summing up of the experiences: What did I do? What experiences did I have? etc.

Day 2: development of organisational and social skills

Day 3: professional and technical skills

Day 4: the future: CV, covering letter, 'How can I make a difference?' 'Let's train to do an interview'

15 days after this training, the participant is invited to come for an interview with his mentor. During this interview, the mentor checks what is going on in the life of the participant, whether the personal objectives have been reached and if the participant needs help on anything.

At 1 month and 3 month intervals after this, the mentor calls the participant to check on progress and to remind her of the development she made during her placement. If necessary, another project can be proposed for participants who have not found training or employment.

4.5.2 Working out and recording participants' progress

Role of guidance councillor

To reflect on their experiences, participants should be able to talk through their stay abroad with a counsellor and discuss the consequences for their future career path. To be most effective, such discussions should be well structured, evaluating the mobility period against the learning plan and looking forwards to how to find employment drawing on the competences that have been acquired or improved. The guidance counsellor helping the participant should be able to draw upon evidence from all the organisations and individuals involved in the participant's stay abroad, including the host employer. This will enable the most accurate assessment of progress and prospects to be made. This reinforces the need for a strong partnership to maximise its effectiveness (see implementation structures section below).

The division of responsibilities between home and host mentors will vary according to circumstances including the needs of participants. However, experience suggests that mentors from the home country should travel with participants to the host localities to help them to adjust to a foreign culture. They should also accompany participants throughout their stay and work in collaboration with the host mentors.

Self-assessment

Getting participants to undertake self-assessment should be an important part of follow-up activities; it can have a strong motivational effect. Participants can be helped to put into words their experiences, thus making them conscious of what has actually happened. This can be done for example through appreciative enquiry. Getting participants to brief new applicants can also make them think systematically about what has happened and to answer questions from an interested and committed audience.

Practical support

Participants can also be provided with further practical assistance, for example being given help to make job/training applications, and being shown how to make the most use of Europass documentation and employer testimonials.

Making use of European tools

The issue of how competences acquired are to be recorded should have been set out at the start of the placement (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2). At this point, the relevant processes will need to be put into action. Knowledge and skills acquired can be recorded using Europass documentation which has been designed specifically for mobility activities:

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

Also, the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), which has been adopted at EU level, provides a useful set of principles through which competences obtained through stays abroad can be validated against qualifications: <http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu/>

Involving host country mentors in the follow-up process: experiences from the German IdA programme

The experience of several IdA projects reveals the importance of continuing with mentoring by the host country mentor even after participants return. A short written report by the local mentor about the experience of the group is essential and a minimum requirement. He/she can provide important knowledge regarding participant development during the stay abroad.

During this process participants and their sending project mentor will speak about the stay abroad in general, the good but also the bad experiences and try to prepare a realistic plan for the participants' future. This may include the real desire to go back to the hosting country to start a new life there. In such cases additional coaching is needed by an expert from the target country. Local host mentors are ideally situated to play this role, being able to estimate the real possibilities of a return to the host country.

In specific cases including host country mentors in the follow-up process could be taken into consideration during initial planning of the project.

4.5.3 Preparing employers to provide employment for participants

For participants who seek work once they have completed their stay abroad, it is important that the ground is prepared amongst employers in the home location. Disadvantaged youth and young adults may not be seen in a positive perspective by employers, and so time and effort may be needed on the part of project operators to persuade employers that participants who have benefited from placements have developed positive attitudes to work, apart from having the skills employers need.

In addition, strong links between the organisation leading the mobility activities and relevant employment agencies or job centres is very important where employment is the goal.

5 Implementation structures

This chapter contains advice and recommendations in four areas related to the implementation structures required for mobility actions.

5.1 Applicants and partners at domestic level

5.1.1 Eligible applicants

The Call is open to any type of organisation considered eligible by national/regional Managing Authorities. Hence there is a wide range of potential applicants. A non-exhaustive list includes:

- institutions/bodies able to reach the target groups
- NGOs, third sector, voluntary and non-profit organizations
- local authorities and municipalities
- job centres
- employment agencies
- VET providers
- schools
- higher education institutions
- enterprises, social partners and other representative bodies linked to the labour market including chamber of commerce and other trade associations
- agencies responsible for skill validation
- research centres and organizations dealing with lifelong learning
- associations and representatives of those involved in vocational education and training
- guidance, consultancy and information services linked to lifelong learning.

5.1.2 Partnerships and strategic networks

The advantages of opening calls to partnerships

The involvement of different actors in the design and implementation of transnational mobility is vital to bring to bear the different types of expertise required and also to ensure that different activities, such as identifying and involving the target group (see 4.2.1), can be efficiently and effectively carried out. Partnerships also bring other advantages. These advantages include: being able to involve organisations that not only send participants but also receive them (see below); and helping to overcome the challenge of involving enterprises normally deterred by administrative requirements (especially smaller ones) by involving organisations that have enterprises as members or that can readily access them. It is therefore recommended that MAs open their calls to partnerships.

Who is needed to make a partnership effective?

In order to ensure the participation of effective partnerships, MAs should set up award criteria in the selection of project proposals which take into account the types of partners needed to carry out the proposed activities. This will help to ensure that the composition of the project partnership is strongly linked to the required tasks and services to be fulfilled. It will help to avoid tendering procedures that are not always the best guarantee for selecting the most suitable partnerships. More specifically, according to other mobility programmes (e.g. the IdA-programme⁹) the presence of employment agencies, public authorities, job centres and VET providers within implementation structures has proved to be particularly critical in their success. It is therefore recommended that MAs include an award criterion that includes the presence amongst the applicants of one of the aforementioned bodies. In addition, they could include such a criterion related to a network of strategic partners if included (see below).

In this context, partnerships should be informal groupings of at least two different organizations. In order to avoid administrative burdens that might deter participation, no formalization should be required. One of the organisations within the partnership will be the project leader who will sign the grant agreement (and be the formal grant beneficiary) with the Managing Authority and who will therefore be uniquely responsible towards the MA for the implementation of activities and financial reporting.

A distinction should be made between partners and external service providers. Whilst partners are engaged in all stages and aspects of project implementation (from planning, through project development and mainstreaming of the results), external service providers provide limited goods and/or services (e.g. accommodation and travel arrangements, language courses, etc.) and play no role in project management or implementation. The recourse to external service providers should be permissible for the realization of specific actions.

⁹ http://www.esf.de/portal/generator/9836/ida__aktuell.html

The value of a wider network of strategic partners

Applicants can also include in their proposal a wider group of ‘strategic partners’ in a project network at national, regional or local level, who are capable of being interpreters of both the needs of the target group and the socio-economic context into which the participants will return. Such a group might include job centres, employment agencies, VET providers, public authorities (e.g. social services, departments of culture and leisure, departments of education), national youth organizations, competent authorities for validation, assessment and certification, NGOs, schools, firms, etc. As noted above, it is therefore recommended that MAs set an award criterion in the selection of project proposals related to including the setting up of such a network in support of activities. Strategic partners should demonstrate their commitment to a project through ‘letters of commitment/engagement’. These letters should declare the nature of their support and the phase of the project in which it will be delivered.

Involving receiving as well as sending organisations

Although national/regional calls are addressed to applicants as organisations that send participants abroad, project networks should include organisations that not only send but also receive participants. It is therefore recommended that MAs include in the pre-selection phase an award criterion for applicants that are sending organisations who also declare their availability to receive youngsters from abroad. This availability should be verifiable by objective criteria, e.g. the presence within the partnership or amongst the strategic network of bodies where youngsters will carry out the stay abroad, the conclusion of agreements with companies to enable placements of youngsters etc.

Summary: setting award criteria in the selection process to encourage partnerships

Good practice indicates that Managing Authorities should set award criteria that give priority to applications that:

- are presented by a partnership;
- include the setting up of a wider network of strategic partners in support of activities;
- include among the partnership and/or the strategic partners one or more of the following bodies: employment agencies, public authorities, job centres and VET providers;
- include sending organisations that declare in the pre-selection phase their availability to receive youngsters from abroad, thus also acting as a receiving partners.

5.2 Ensuring applicants have staff with the skills needed

The implementation of mobility projects addressed to disadvantaged youth and young adults requires particular attention to be paid to the recruitment of skilled staff. Staff are needed who have experience in dealing with disadvantaged youth and young adults in general but who also have the skills needed to deal with the special needs of the particular targets groups with which they are concerned.

In addition to the staff responsible for project coordination and management, it is crucial that projects have skilled staff who collectively cover the range of skills needed which include social and psycho-pedagogical skills, mentoring, and inter-cultural and linguistic competences. It is also important to have equality expertise amongst project staff who are able to deal with the different dimensions of equality including disability, race and gender.

It is recommended that Managing Authorities, as part of their Calls, list a minimum set of staff skills (including professional profiles) and reflect these in the award criteria in the selection of project proposals.

5.3 Transnational partner(s)

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

In the national/regional calls, Managing Authorities may decide whether to allow applicants to include more than one partner in their project. However, it is recommended that Managing Authorities do not allow them to have more than 3 transnational partners in order to keep the required management processes, financial reporting etc. manageable.

There are two types of application in relation to transnational partners which are permissible:

Type A. Applications that do not yet include a transnational partner because the applicant has chosen to take advantage of the partner search facility offered by TLN-Mobility which enables them to identify pre-selected applicants¹⁰ using a database and partner search forum.

and/or

Type B. Applications that already include a transnational partner chosen by the applicant itself in another Member State, regardless of its participation in the Coordinated Call. (Note that such a partner will be a host rather than a sending organisation since for this application they will not receive funds under the Coordinated Call as a sending organisation).

¹⁰ Applicants should be made aware that, within the database, they will be able to find receiving partners only within the Member States/Regions that have joined the Coordinated Call.

It is important to note that A-type applicants are entitled to claim costs for partner finding (as per section 6.1 below). In contrast, type B applicants (who present a transnational partner at the time of submission of the application) must be made aware that any costs incurred for partner search before submitting their application are not eligible for reimbursement.

From a wider perspective, type A applications are preferable as they help to build the network of organisations involved that work according to common standards.

Regardless of the choice of type of application made by the competent Managing Authority, the application procedure is based on a two-stage selection process.

Stage One

Under Type A, where no transnational partnerships have yet been formed at application stage, in addition to other requirements, applications are pre-selected on the basis of the quality of the project idea.

Under Type B, in addition to other requirements, the pre-selection is made on the basis of a joint work plan of mobility actions defined between partners (sending and receiving).

Pre-selected applicants (under both types) are entered into the partner search database set up by TLN Mobility to facilitate partner matching. A partner search forum, managed by the Network, supports applicants to find suitable partnerships in other Member States.

Stage Two

Before moving to the implementation phase:

- Projects under Type A are required to find at least one transnational partner willing to receive youngsters from the sending organisation. In addition, Managing Authorities can decide whether applicants should or must be available to receive youngsters from abroad.
- Projects under Type B are required to confirm the transnational partnership (presented on application) and may be asked by the competent MA to find an additional partner from amongst the pre-selected applicants in order to enlarge the network of sending and receiving organisations.

Note that Managing Authorities can decide either (i) to make it compulsory that applicants play both sending and receiving roles; (ii) to give an awarding criteria to those who take over both roles; or (iii) they may leave it open so that a applicant may act as a sender only.

5.4 Principle of equal opportunities between men and women and non-discrimination

The Coordinated Call reflects the horizontal principles set down by the European Union. Accordingly, Managing Authority actions should reflect the objectives of equity, non-discrimination and social responsibility applied to both public and private actors. Actions should strive to promote equality between women and men, and to ensure the availability of professional development opportunities for people with disabilities.

To help projects to enact these principles, Managing Authorities should list some methods/provisions that enable project partners to reach equal opportunities and non-discrimination objectives, and reflect these in awarding criteria used to select projects.

Examples of such provisions that could be taken into account in national/regional calls include:

1. ensuring the equitable participation of women and men, taking into account the gender variable in the recruitment/selection/involvement of participants
2. promotion of individual mobility aimed at the desegregation of women and men in training and work, encouraging their presence in areas where women/men are underrepresented
3. provision of women's empowerment paths to address horizontal and vertical segregation in training and work
4. provision of additional forms of support for women's participation in mobility programmes where necessary (e.g. vouchers, aiming at services that can promote participation and retention in paths, forms of income support)
5. development of initial assessments which take into account the gender perspective (as a starting point for any additional actions)
6. promotion of actions aimed at guaranteeing equality in mobility and accessibility for people with disabilities
7. presence of a gender perspective within the monitoring and evaluation activities of the project
8. presence in the project staff of experts in gender equality.

6 Common criteria for eligibility¹¹

This chapter contains explanations and recommendations on selected questions related to the eligibility of costs. It provides a more in-depth treatment of issues covered in the text for the Coordinated Call. Where appropriate, some concrete examples from previous ESF-funded mobility measures or other mobility schemes as well as references to other aspects of the Coordinated Call which impinge on the eligibility issue (e.g. concerning quality assurance) have been inserted to help illustrate a particular point and show how eligibility questions in transnational mobility measures could be handled.

When setting up eligibility rules for a national/regional call, national/regional authorities are advised to take into consideration the common minimum requirements regarding project structure and management under this Coordinated Call, as these provide further specifications of eligible costs.

6.1 Eligibility of costs¹²

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).

¹¹ The chapter is not a complete inventory of legal and administrative aspects of eligibility of costs in transnational mobility measures funded through the ESF; although it contains references to relevant European rules and regulations. ESF activities, however, are at the same time covered by two sets of rules and regulations: the general rules and regulations adopted at European level that apply to all ESF funded activities; and rules and regulations adopted at national (or, in some cases, also regional) level, which are particular to each Member State or region.

¹² See Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 art. 65-70 and 1304/2013 art. 13

Costs for transnational partner-finding

Many mobility schemes both at European and national level do not operate with costs related to project planning and transnational partner-finding as an eligible expenditure. Project organisers applying for funds under these schemes are supposed to finalise these arrangements at their own expense and present a full-fledged project plan when the call for proposals is issued. This favours organisations that already have long experience with transnational project activities and an extensive network of contacts and partners outside their own country. Organisations with little or no experience with transnational projects and/or with no appropriate international networks may consequently not be in a position to submit a proposal, even though they have a very interesting and relevant project idea.

To open up the field for all applicants under the Coordinated Call, costs for project planning and transnational partner-finding are considered eligible in the case where applicants, at time of submitting their application, do not yet have transnational partners (see type A applicants in section 5.3). Such applicants are automatically included in the partnership database and invited to a transnational partner search forum where they can meet partners and set up transnational partnerships. The costs incurred during this phase of project preparation, e.g. for staff, administration, travel and accommodation, are considered eligible.

Costs for recruitment and selection measures

Concerning the pre-departure phase of the mobility project, the quality criteria defined for the mobility activities to be financed under this Coordinated Call not only cover the preparation process (e.g. linguistic, cultural and practical preparation), but also include the necessity for carrying out adequate measures for recruitment and selection. These procedures should be put in place to ensure that as many as possible from the target group are encouraged to participate, whilst only those that stand to reap real benefits from their participation are actually sent abroad. Costs for these activities are consequently also to be counted as eligible project expenditure.

When working with disadvantaged young people, the nature and scope of the pedagogical and labour market oriented interventions vary widely according to the target group and special target groups may mean special types of expenses. The Coordinated Call has therefore been designed to offer sufficient flexibility in terms of the eligibility of costs to cater for different types of groups.

Catering for the special needs of the target group

Within the framework of the IdA-programme, six single young mothers were sent on a work placement scheme in Spain. As the children could not be left at home for an extended period of time, they accompanied their mothers to Spain and stayed there for the duration of the project period. This incurred extra costs for the organizers of an unusual nature – not just for an accompanying person to look after the children during the mothers' working hours, but also to cover expenses in relation to their integration into a Spanish playschool and various other activities that were organized for them.

6.2 Split of costs, control and audit obligations

Under the Coordinated Call, the sending country is in principle carrying all costs related to activities for their participants, irrespective of whether they are incurred in the home or the host countries. This arrangement is based on the fact that the project outcomes are for the benefit of the programme area of the sending country¹³. This also means that the obligations in relation to management, control and audit stay with the sending country and project operators in the sending country have to make sure that national audit requirements are met when using services abroad.

In Regulation (EU) 1304/2013 art. 13, ph. 2, let. b, two methods of management, control and audit concerning the activities are described:

- management, control and audit concerning the activities are fulfilled by the authorities responsible for the programme under which the activities are supported;
- or they enter into agreements with authorities in the Member State in which the activities are implemented, provided that the obligations in relation to management, control and audit concerning the activities are fulfilled.

At the same time as the sending country is responsible for management, audit and control, the administrative burden of real cost accounting **for expenses incurred outside of the programme country** can be very heavy. In order to ensure administrative management that is as effective and efficient as possible it is recommended that Member States/regions participating in the Coordinated Call make use of the instrument of simplified cost options for costs incurred outside the programme country. The next sections are devoted to this topic in detail.

¹³ See Regulation (EU) 1304/2013 art. 13, ph. 2, let. a

6.3 Use of simplified cost options

The legal basis for the use of simplified cost options in the ESF-period 2014-2020 is laid down in Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 art. 67-68 and 1304/2013 art. 14. The term “simplified cost options” covers **flat rates**, **lump sums**, and **standard unit of costs**.¹⁴ It is a condition for using simplified cost options that they are calculated according to a methodology which is fair, equitable and verifiable. They are either based on statistical data or historical practices, including experiences with simplified cost options applied in other EU programmes or policies for similar types of operations and beneficiaries.

The different types of simplified cost options are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible to use all three options for different costs within one and the same programme. Neither are they restricted to certain types of expenditure – administrative costs may thus either be calculated as a percentage of total project costs or as a lump sum.

U Flat rate or lump sum for indirect costs

In the ESF funding period 2007-2013 in the IdA-programme, indirect costs are calculated as 7% of the provided funding. In the Leonardo da Vinci programme, indirect costs for mobility activities are covered as lump sums.

Similarly, transnational travel may be included in the lump sum, or may be covered according to standard scales (units) of cost, graduated according to destination.

Lump sum for travel and subsistence

In the mobility strand of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, travel and subsistence is calculated as a lump sum per participant, which is paid out to the organizers and for which they do not have to provide detailed accounts. All they need to be able to document vis-à-vis the funding authorities is that the required number of participants have been away for the stipulated units of time (weeks).

Simplified cost options represent a possibility for both project operators and national/regional authorities to reduce administrative work and audit requirements and introduce added flexibility. Furthermore simplified cost options lead to an increased focus on outputs rather than inputs.

¹⁴ For the definition and technical guidance on the three kinds of simplified costs see: COM: “DRAFT Working Document on grants and repayable assistance calculated on the basis of Simplified Costs”.

One of the disadvantages of the use of simplified cost options is that they sometimes fail to take into account important differences between individual Member States or target groups. In particular the latter is important in a context where we are dealing with a very diverse target group, where some groups require significantly higher levels of funding if a mobility project is to be carried out in a responsible way – or carried out at all. For example, target groups from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds may necessitate much more intense pedagogical interventions in the shape of e.g. preparation or accompanying staff. The use of simplified cost options must take this into account and suggest extra options to cover costs for more extensive preparation and/or accompanying staff for target groups with special needs.

Simplified cost options under the Coordinated Call

Under this Coordinated Call it is up to each Managing Authority to decide on the use of the simplified cost options according to national or regional regulations and priorities for ESF-funded activities. However, in light of the profound administrative challenges of accounting for real costs incurred outside the programme country, **it is strongly recommended for partners participating in this Coordinated Call to make use of simplified cost options for these type of expenditures** (as described in section 6.2). You will find further guidance on this aspect in the sections 6.4.3 and 6.4.5.

In principle, Managing Authorities should ensure that projects are aware of any differences in accounting procedures between them and their partner country in order to avoid problems when the final statement of account is made.

6.4 Models for calculating and accounting different cost areas

In order to provide further guidance, the following sections will outline models for calculating and accounting different areas of costs arising in the context of transnational mobility measures.

The models are based on prior experiences from relevant EU programmes, initiatives and policies, notably the ESF-funded IdA programme and the Erasmus+ programme. It has not been possible to identify relevant simplified cost option experiences for all of the areas, however, and in these cases, the model has been elaborated on the basis of an estimate taking into account the nature of the expenditure.

6.4.1 Costs linked to partner-finding and project preparation

These are costs that arise for partner-finding and project preparation in the preparation phase:

- Costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence in connection with participation in the partner search forum
- Costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence in connection with visits to (potential) partners;
- Costs for external advice concerning drafting of partnership agreements and other project documentation;
- Cost for translation of relevant documentation;
- Costs for staff in connection with the execution of the above tasks.

Complications

These costs are likely to be highly diverse from project operator to project operator. Some will have existing contacts and networks that greatly facilitate (and in some cases even make superfluous) partner search, whilst others will have had no previous relevant transnational experiences. For some, one encounter with the (potential) partner may be sufficient to successfully establish a partnership, but for others two or even three visits are needed to bring this about. Similarly, concerning the drafting of agreements, some project operators will already have accumulated relevant experience from previous activities and have templates for these that only require slight adaptations for use in a new context, whereas newcomers may need to invest considerable resources in elaborating these.

Assumptions

Even though project operators come with very diverse backgrounds, even complete newcomers do not need to start entirely from scratch. In the context of the TLN Mobility, a database will be available to potential applicants where (additional) partners can be identified. In addition, there is the possibility to attend the partner search forum of TLN Mobility, where project operators can meet (further) potential partners from other countries with similar aims. Concerning project documentation (partnership agreements, participants' contracts etc.), there are already many templates around, elaborated under other mobility initiatives (e.g. IdA templates, templates in the ECVET-toolkit: www.ecvet-toolkit.eu).

Model

Applicants can claim costs – incurred in the preparatory phase – for: the participation in the partner search forum, visits to (potential) partners, staff, external advice, and translation work. The costs are calculated and paid out as a lump sum of EUR 5.000 for which no documentation is needed other than proof of attendance at the partner search forum (signature on attendance form).

6.4.2 Costs linked to pedagogical support for participants in the home country

These are costs that arise in connection with necessary pedagogical interventions before and after the stay abroad, in accordance with the guidelines for quality assurance:

- Joint preparation activities (linguistic, cultural, vocational, pedagogical)
- Individual guidance and personal preparation;
- Debriefing activities, including validation/documentation of learning outcomes.

Complications

The diversity of the target group means that the pedagogical interventions cannot be carried out according to a “one-size-fits-all” model, but to a large extent have to be tailor-made to suit the needs of specific participants. Compared to mainstream target groups, more intensive work on these aspects is generally required, as the participants are more fragile and learning processes more complicated.

Assumptions

Adequate preparation and debriefing are generally acknowledged as crucial factors for a successful outcome of transnational mobility activities, and most mobility schemes offer financial support for these. The Erasmus+ scheme uses a standard unit of cost per participant of EUR 350 for preparation/debriefing. This simplified cost option is valid for up to 100 participants, but for each additional participant beyond this threshold, the amount is reduced to EUR 200 as it is assumed that an economy of scale kicks in to reduce costs. In addition to this, an on-line language learning course is offered free of charge for 5 major European languages (English, German, French, Spanish and Italian). For language training in other languages, a standard unit of cost of EUR 150 per participant is available.

Model

For the needs of the target groups involved in the ESF mobility activities, the financial requirements for pedagogical support is higher than for mainstream target groups, given the more fragile nature of the target group. The two amounts are therefore set at EUR 550 and 250 respectively. These amounts, however, also include linguistic preparation, and can be used for language training in any foreign language.

6.4.3 Transnational travel costs and costs during the stay abroad related to the individual participants

These are the direct costs arising in connection with the mobility experience and the pedagogical programme in the hosting country¹⁵:

- Transnational travel costs;
- Costs for daily subsistence during the stay abroad;
- Local transport during the stay;
- Insurance;
- Costs for the pedagogical programme during the stay (excursions, special events etc.).

¹⁵ Please note that costs for accompanying staff are not subsumed under this heading, but constitute a separate cost category.

Complications

This group of costs cover many types of expenses, and real cost accounting is a very time-consuming. It is impossible to draw up an exhaustive list of costs, and unexpected expenses are a rule more than an exception with fragile target groups. Costs under this heading may furthermore vary significantly along a number of parameters:

- *Nature of target group:* For special target groups, significantly increased costs may be incurred for travel (e.g. wheelchair-bound participants), practical support (e.g. single mothers bringing their children with them) etc.
- *Length of stay:* Some costs are the same irrespective of the duration (e.g. transnational travel costs) whereas others decrease the longer the stay lasts. It is thus often possible to negotiate cheaper rates for accommodation and subsistence, and the social and cultural programme is as a rule not equally intensive for a long-term stay as for a shorter stay.
- *Target country:* There are significant differences in costs of living between individual Member States.

Assumptions

It is necessary to adapt or construct a flexible funding mechanism for these costs that can accommodate the very diverse nature of the circumstances surrounding each project and at the same time reflect the real expenses of the activities.

Model

To cover participants' mobility costs the same mobility lump sums as applied in the ESF funding period 2007-2013 in the IdA programme are used as standard scales of unit costs per month which are then converted into daily rates. The per diems shown in the table below are the basis for the calculation of the eligible expenditure and are granted per day of the stay abroad per participant.

It is possible to increase the respective country-specific mobility lump sums by up to 50 per cent for participants with additional special needs (as may be the case e.g. with regard to persons with a severe disability, single parents) in order to fund the corresponding additional needs.

Standard scales of unit costs to settle participants' mobility costs		
Country	Standard scales of unit costs in € per month and participant	Standard scales of unit costs in € per day* and participant
Belgium	1200	39.45
Bulgaria	1002	32.94
Denmark	1654	54.38
Estonia	954	31.36
Finland	1400	46.03

France	1418	46.62
Greece	1120	36.82
Ireland	1464	48.13
Iceland	1376	45.24
Italy	1350	44.38
Croatia	1041	34.98
Latvia	920	30.25
Liechtenstein	1444	47.47
Lithuania	906	29.79
Luxembourg	1200	39.45
Malta	1088	35.77
Netherlands	1322	43.46
Norway	1670	54.90
Austria	1278	42.02
Poland	1320	43.40
Portugal	1102	36.23
Romania	1008	33.14
Sweden	1378	45.30
Slovakia	1058	34.78
Slovenia	1042	34.26
Spain	1226	40.31
Czech Republic	1024	33.67
Turkey	896	29.46
Hungary	914	30.05
UK	1672	54.97
Cyprus	1096	36.03

* Formula for the calculation of the daily rate: Monthly rate * 12 months / 365 days

Example:

A stay in Spain from 1 March to 15 May corresponds to 76 eligible days.

This leads to eligible expenditure in the amount of 3,063.56 € per participant (76 days x 40.31 €).

These rates cover the following participant-related partial costs:

- Subsistence expenses incurred abroad (for meals and accommodation);
- Travel and transport costs incurred abroad;
- Insurance coverage for the time of the stay abroad;
- Costs related to the support programme.

Provision of proof for the settlement of the standard scales of unit costs is effected through:

- Agreement between the project management organisation and the participant
→ Proof of participation in the project
- Participants' list has to be signed every day during the total stay abroad.
→ Proof of having stayed abroad for every single day.

6.4.4 Costs linked to accompanying staff and project visits

Vulnerable target groups require staff from the sending organisation to accompany them during parts or the whole of their stay abroad. During the project period, other project staff may also need to travel to the host country for reasons connected to the running of the project. Costs that fall under this heading are:

- Transnational travel costs;
- Costs for daily subsistence during the stay abroad;
- Local transport during the stay;
- Insurance;
- Salary.

Complications

The need for accompanying staff varies greatly from project to project according to the requirements of the target group. Some may only need this during travel and to settle in during the first couple of days. For others, however, accompanying staff during lengthier periods or during the entire stay is a necessary requirement for a meaningful learning process to take place. Accompanying staff may also split their time abroad into several visits, e.g. at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the participants' period abroad. The number of accompanying staff that is necessary depends on both the size and the nature of the target group. In some cases – e.g. with paraplegic wheel-chair users – a 1:1 ratio of participants to accompanying staff is conceivable. The nature of the target group also determines the qualifications and experience needed from the accompanying staff.

Assumptions

In the event of longer stays, the presence of the accompanying staff is in the majority of cases only required at intervals, and not during the entire duration. The necessary qualifications and experience from accompanying staff lies across a wide scale, ranging from simple, practical assistance to highly specialised interventions. The most common requirements will, however, probably be of a nature that can be covered by persons with qualifications as a social worker or similar.

Model

Travel costs are covered according to the standard unit of costs developed for use in Erasmus+ mobility projects. Subsistence, insurance and local travel will likewise be based on the Erasmus+ rules, and for a maximum of 60 days. For stays exceeding 14 days, the daily allowance will decrease by 30%. Any need for accompanying staff must be clearly and convincingly argued in the project proposal.

Salary for accompanying staff will be calculated as a standard unit of cost and on the basis of an experienced social worker in public employment according to agreed pay scales.

Visits of other project staff (project leader, administrative staff etc.) can be covered according to Erasmus+ scales for travel and subsistence. Salaries for these are covered through the provisions for indirect costs, however.

6.4.5 Costs of the hosting organisation

These costs relate to the expenses of the hosting organisation in relation to the execution of project activities (list not exhaustive):

- Administrative costs;
- Office supplies;
- Costs for communication (postage, telephone, electronic data transfer);
- Costs for identifying placements;
- Monitoring of participants;
- Induction courses ;
- Rental and upkeep of premises;
- Pedagogical activities and staff costs in relation to this;
- Learning material;
- Documentation of learning outcomes.

Complications

Costs for the hosting organisation may vary considerably according to the number of participants, the duration of the stay, and the way the project is organised. Activities involving work placements in public and private enterprises will incur costs for identifying placements, matching them to the participants and maintaining ongoing contact (monitoring). If activities are organised on the premises of the host, there will be costs in relation to staff (trainers and instructors), rooms, learning materials etc. Most hosting organisations also organise induction activities. Staff costs (in particular in connection with monitoring) may be considerably reduced, however, if accompanying staff from the sending organisation are foreseen, and the costs for some of the pedagogical activities can be covered from the daily allowance of the participants.

Assumptions

Any major induction process or training activities (e.g. special language courses) foreseen in the hosting country should be covered by the general grant foreseen for preparation activities or (in the event of special needs) applied for by the sending organisation and settled between the two project partners according to real costs.

Model

A standard scale of unit costs is used based on the assumption that the workload for looking after a group of 8 to 12 participants corresponds to a full-time job of a youth/social worker. The per diems fixed for the group of "teachers/ trainers/ researchers/ youth workers" in the area of "Strategic partnerships in the general and vocational education and training and youth" in the framework of the EU Programme ERASMUS+ are applied.

Daily rate per country group	
Country group and countries	Daily rate in €
Country group 1: Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden	241
Country group 2: Belgium, France, Italy, Finland, UK, Germany	214
Country group 3: Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia	137
Country group 4: Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic	74

The number of eligible days corresponds to the number of days of the group's stay abroad and includes weekend days. In addition, five extra days are eligible in order to cover preparation. If a group has fewer than 8 or more than 12 participants, the standard scales of unit costs are reduced or increased by 5 % per participant respectively.

Example:

A stay in Spain of a group of ten participants from 1 March to 15 May corresponds to 76 eligible days, plus 5 eligible days for the preparation phase. Thus the total number of eligible days is 81. Therefore the eligible expenditure amounts to 11,097 € (81 days x 137 €).

Provision of proof for the settlement of the standard scales of unit costs is effected through:

- Agreement between the project management organisation and the participant
→ Proof of participation in the project
- Participants' list has to be signed every day during the total stay abroad.
→ Proof of having stayed abroad for every single day
- Transnational cooperation agreement between the project management organisation and the receiving partner organisation in other European countries.
- Remittance (account statement) of the amount to be refunded to the receiving partner organisation to provide evidence of the cash flow.

6.4.6 Indirect (administrative) costs of the sending organisation

This heading covers costs that arise from the management and administration of the mobility project (list not exhaustive):

- Administrative assistance;
- Management;
- External evaluation and auditing;
- Office supplies;
- Communication (postage, telephone, electronic data transfer);
- Depreciation of assets;
- Rental of equipment and premises.

Complications

Even though some costs under this heading are quantifiable (evaluation and auditing) and calculations can be done on the basis of tenders from outside agencies, most of the costs are embedded in the daily routines of the sending organisation and are very difficult to quantify, if the organisation also runs other activities. Calculating and accounting for these costs as real costs is very resource-consuming.

Assumptions

The size of these costs do not necessarily all stand in a direct relationship to the scope of the project (number of participants, nature of target group, duration of stay), but there is nevertheless a strong correlation. It would therefore seem fair and equitable to link the amount available for indirect costs to the size of the project, expressed as the total budget for direct costs.

Model

The sending (applying) organisation calculates its indirect costs as a flat rate.

6.4.7 Additional costs

This item covers costs in relation to the dissemination of results from the project. They are optional:

- Conferences and seminars;
- Publications;
- Translation of documentation.

Complications

These costs only apply to projects (rather than participants or staff), where it is important to make the experience harvested available to others.

Assumptions

The project must be able to argue convincingly that it will produce knowledge or pedagogical material that is of relevance to other actors and stakeholders in the field.

Model

Expenditures can be covered according to real costs up to a maximum of EUR 15.000 (capped real costs). Costs for travel and subsistence for up to 15 international participants who are invited for conferences and seminars can be covered according to the same rates as accompanying staff under Erasmus+.

Annex I - 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. 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 abroad. 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.

Simplified cost options

The term 'simplified cost options' covers flat rates, lump sums, and standard unit of costs.¹⁶

Flat rates

By flat rates we understand 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 we understand fixed amounts that are meant 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 unit of costs

Standard unit of costs refer to fixed scales of pay for certain services (e.g. travel, accommodation, salaries of involved staff) and constitute an alternative to lump sums.

¹⁶ For the definition and technical guidance on the three kinds of simplified costs see: COM: "DRAFT Working Document on grants and repayable assistance calculated on the basis of Simplified Costs".

Work-related learning experience 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.

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