

CREATE YOUR YOUTH NETWORK

**Sharing learnings and materials
based on the experience with
the moveurope! local groups
network**

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- Associazione Interculturale Universo
- Pistes solidaires
- United Societies of Balkans
- RANA
- Humacoop-Amel France
- Salam e.V.



pistes solidaires



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Introduction

What is this handbook about?

In the beginning of the year 2020, our organisation decided to approach young people all around Europe to put in practice the principles of active citizenships in which we strongly believe and that are as well on the first plan in the European Youth Strategy*.

Many young people would like to get active in their society. As young people ourselves, we also feel this desire to get active to make a change and “do something”. However, it can be challenging to know what to do and where to start. We are living nowadays in a society full of conflicts, challenges, and it can become overwhelming to understand what we can do as individuals to take an active role to tackle these challenges. It is also a fact that there are many ways to act, many initiatives, and many different topics to be addressed. You can sometimes feel you are too small to achieve anything.

But there are also a lot of people who can get strong together by joining and/or taking small actions, and who can together make a change for one smaller or bigger cause, in one city, for one person even. All small actions together form a huge network of people who act to make possible what seems sometimes impossible.

"They didn't know it was impossible, so they did it."

-Mark Twain

As young people ourselves who also experienced, or are still experiencing these feelings, but working at the same time in one of those many initiatives that try every day to make this world a bit better, we came up with the idea to propose to young people in Europe to engage in their local contexts for the cause we are defending, and to get active in their very own ways on the topic of migration, refugee rights, equal opportunities and mobility rights in Europe.

This handbook doesn't pretend to be exhaustive. There are many ways to engage young people, and we are just sharing here how we built our network.

[*https://europa.eu/youth/strategy_en](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy_en)

We started without having experience in building such a huge network, and learning by doing, we faced difficulties and challenges but we also experienced a lot of successes and of joy, and all these learnings are, in our opinion, all important to be shared. We also don't want to reduce the engagement of young people in their society to them getting active only when they get approached by initiatives. Young people are also creative to invent solutions on their own, join existing initiatives and find their own way.

What we do want to share here is how the energy coming both from the young people who joined our network through this initiative and from us as initiators could unite and transform for us all the meaning of engagement in the society, what it meant in every city or in the different European countries where a local group was created and what it meant for our organisation, the work we do and the impact we have.

How to use this handbook?

Through the different chapters of this handbook, you will be able to follow us during our journey of creating our network of local groups, step by step. For some chapters, you can find some materials in the Appendices that we used or created during this phase.

We want of course to emphasise on the fact that this was experimental, and there are many ways to do different things, as well as to adapt our approach.

1. Dissemination of Offer to Build Network of Local Groups

As a first step, we needed to reach out to young people, to find interested persons as well as understand if the idea was actually answering a need for action and engagement from their side. We started in the late Autumn of 2019 to disseminate our offers, mainly through emails to universities and through social media. We created dissemination material such as a brochure or an info sheet, that were summarizing the idea, how to get involved and what it meant to get involved, what was our offer in terms of training and support, as well as how to finance or sustain their activities, and the deadlines to get involved and create a local group. For each person interested, we then organised calls to meet them in person (online), explain more details, and more especially understand what appealed to them in our offer, what were their reasons to join, and what they were inspired to do in their local context. As for the funding we offered to support every local group to apply to the ESC Solidarity Projects* funding, we were also discussing with each new person in a new location the possibilities for them to find other people in their cities in order to be at least five people**.

We struggled a bit at the beginning, as we didn't have so many connections with this target group yet. Also, it was hard to define our target group, as we were looking for young people in general who could be interested in supporting our cause. This included activists, young migrants and refugees themselves, students, young professionals working in the migration or youth sector and so on. However, we got surprised at the beginning of 2020, and specifically when the lockdown started, with the number of people interested to join the network and form a local group. We suddenly got around 20 groups being created in France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium and Greece.

*https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/solidarity_projects_en

**Being a group of five people is one of the requirements to apply for a funding through the ESC Solidarity Projects.

2. Application for ESC solidarity projects funding for local groups

After forming a network, as stated in our brochure, we supported all groups willing to apply for the ESC “solidarity projects” funding for young people.

Why did we choose this funding opportunity?

The ESC solidarity projects* offer a unique opportunity for young people all around Europe that are not part of a legal body or organization to apply for funds for their own small-scale projects. It means, it is sufficient to be an informal group of young people (at least 5 with one being the legal representative). If needed or wanted, the group of young people can be affiliated or supported by an association, f.ex. regarding project management etc. In that case, it is mostly the organisation applying for the funding and managing the project and the young people implementing it, guided by a coach of the supporting organisation.

It was also a way to transfer new skills already from the beginning, as many of them never applied for any funding, nor did most of them have experience with fundraising or project design. Moreover, all applications were submitted in English, and this was also for some of them challenging, but many were as well happy to get the opportunity to practice English while doing something meaningful. In order to facilitate the process for each of them to apply for the funding in each of their countries, we created a template of the steps to register on the ESC platform with explanations of what the different registration numbers were for. We also created a checklist of what had to be done before the deadline for submitting the project proposals, and more importantly, a template of a document giving guidelines and ideas on how to answer the questions of the project proposal.

*https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/solidarity_projects_en

2. Application for ESC solidarity projects funding for local groups

We concretely had several online meetings with all groups to explain the templates and checklists, answer their questions, and give feedback and more advice on how to build their project proposal and write about their activities ideas. After a one month-marathon of feedback sessions and supporting meetings, they all managed to submit their projects.

We would like to underline still some barriers that we faced with our youth network that included in particular as well young people with migration biography or protection status, i.e. third country nationals. For instance, our Paris local group chose a young student from Algeria to be the legal representative. This was not possible in the framework of the ESC solidarity project format, as only European citizens can be legal representatives. Although it makes sense to us that the ESC programme wants to ensure an ongoing participation of people who get granted funds (which might be difficult if s.o. Has a residence permit that expires during the project implementation), we find it discriminating towards this group of young people and to exclude all third countries nationals from this very important role, also because the Erasmus+ programmes want to be inclusive for all young people and in particular for young refugees and migrants.

Furthermore, we noticed that support of the Erasmus+ National Agencies in each EU country can differ strongly from one to another which means that young people have very different access to information as well as to support in each country and which creates quite an unbalanced if not unfair outcome for them and the active role they can take in the end in our societies.

We would like to underline that these comments shall be taken as constructive criticism. Since 2021, we are part of the Inclusion and Diversity Task Force of the Erasmus+ NA Jugend für Europa in Germany, where we advocate and share such experience to improve the E+ programme.

3. Establishment of cooperation after application

After the submission of the projects to the ESC funding, we started working on the creation of the basics for the cooperation between us as an organisation and each one of the groups. We wanted indeed to make sure that each parties' expectations and common activities were clear from the very beginning, to avoid misunderstandings or wrong expectations leading to frustration for all and to render our cooperation as fruitful as possible.

We therefore made partnership agreements with each local group, independent of the funding approvals or rejections, with some clauses specifying what would be different in case the funding was approved or not.

This partnership agreement would specify those topics among others, and make the cooperation official:

- Responsibilities of migration_miteinander and local groups
- Clarification of the roles within the local group (mentioning who is the legal representative)
- Stating the kind of support migration_miteinander would offer
- Communication (tools) between us and the group, as well as inside the network
- Communication guidelines on how to communicate about moveurope! with external stakeholders
- Duration of the cooperation
- Obligations of the local groups as representatives of moveurope! in their local context

4. Management of the Network

This phase between the funding applications and the reception of approvals or rejections also was a moment to organise how the network would work, meaning not only how the collaboration between each local group and our organisation would look like, but as well how all local groups and us would interact with each other. It was indeed a priority for us that all young people be part of a local group to develop a feeling of belongingness to this European network, as it gives opportunities to exchange a lot, get aware of the strengths of each group, support each other, etc.

For this reason, we created an interactive map* where each local group was present, and when clicking on the name of the group we could see a small description of who they were, what they were planning to do, and how to get in touch with them.

We also organised the communication and informal networking activities, as described in the two sections below:

a. Communication

The organisation of the communication was probably one of the biggest challenges we faced. We had already created WhatsApp groups with us and each of the groups, gathering all participants of each group to communicate faster for the application. We decided to create a common WhatsApp group for all groups, as well as common WhatsApp groups per country. Time showed that the multiplication of the WhatsApp groups was not so effective, and that many people in the European WhatsApp group were not reading the messages, as WhatsApp can become overwhelming.

[*moveurope! local groups interactive map](#)

4. Management of the Network

We also created a diffusion mailing list for more official communication. After some months, seeing that the WhatsApp groups were probably not the best tool to communicate in the network, we decided to try another platform, Flock, where everyone can go whenever they want and avoids getting everyone's phones overloaded from groups and messages. Flock enables as well to create of different channels for different purposes that every member of the Flock board can join depending on the topic relevant to them or not. However, the disadvantage of this tool is that many of them never used it, and it's one additional platform in addition to the many ones they are used to connecting to. A lot of them just were forgetting to connect and a lot of information got lost, which made us then use all three communication channels to communicate each message: Flock, WhatsApp and emails.

After one year and some brainstorming with the young people themselves on the advantages and disadvantages of each channel, we stayed in the end with the European WhatsApp group and the emails, and gave up on the Flock tool.

Regarding external communication, we created together, with the social media expert of our team, some guidelines on how to use the logo, how to pay attention to the wording, and what are the tips and recommendations for the creation and use of each different social media channel.

Each local group created a specific email address, and in terms of social media, it was recommended to them to create Facebook groups (and not pages) that could be linked to our moveurope! Facebook page and were easier to administrate. Many groups also created an Instagram account.

[*moveurope! local groups interactive map](#)

4. Management of the Network

To sum up, we recommend asking active feedback from the young people on which tools they would prefer for communication, but then to decide on one tool and implement it together with them. The communication channel issues we had were also due to the fact that we wanted to include all group members in the decision taking of the communication tools to be used. This is in our experience not easy and a time-consuming process.

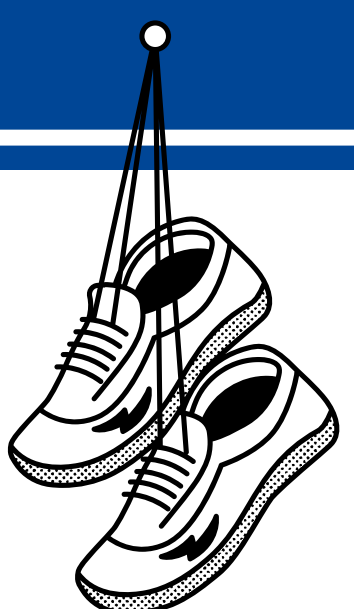
b. Network informal activities

In addition to the communication activities, we also started to organise activities for the whole network, for them to get to know each other, as well as interact through informal and fun activities.

We first organised a get-to-know online evening on Zoom, with speed-dating activity, presentations of the groups and local contexts of each group.



We also organise a game party with the game "move in my shoes"* that we developed to learn about moveurope! while playing. It was a way to have fun in a small team while exploring the topic that was gathering us all together.



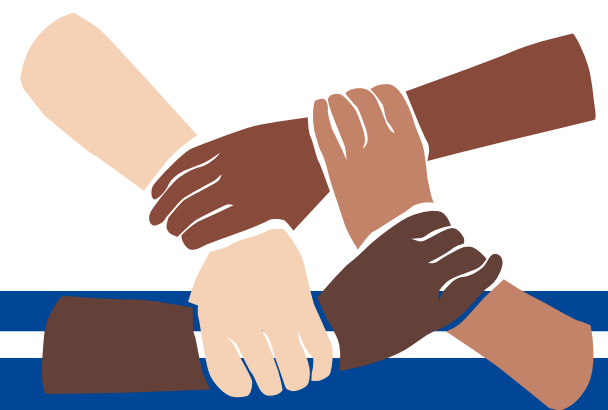
*move in my shoes

4. Management of the Network

Quiz night: we organised a quiz night that mixed questions about moveurope!, refugee rights and mobility, and fun questions about culture, geography, etc.



To promote interactions between the groups, we also organised an interview series, where each group got assigned another group to interview**.



We also organised regular online get together where representatives of each group could participate and give updates of their activities, or discuss future network activities or network decisions. We organised the first get together, and then the groups were one by one responsible to organise get-togethers, which was also a way to get different ways of organising the meetings, and for some of them to organise the logistics of a meeting for the first time.

In addition to the activities together, we also sent for Christmas 2020 a package to each group, to thank them for their involvement in the network and send them materials for their activities, as well as gadgets for them as participants (stickers, t-shirts, pens, etc).



**our moveurope! local groups

5. Training activities

When we got the idea of creating this network of local groups, we also wanted to have the opportunity to meet them in person for training activities that would also give them the opportunity to get new skills and share knowledge in a peer-to-peer approach. For this reason, we applied 2019 to a Key Action 1 funding for a Youth Worker Mobility*. Partnering with organisations in France, Italy, Belgium and Greece, this funding gave us the opportunity to make the network meet together, exchange in informal ways, and to organise inputs and workshops.

As the first training week was supposed to take place during Summer 2020, and given the uncertainties caused by the pandemic, we had to postpone the in person training. However, as all (and us too) were looking forward to learning and getting inputs on how to start being active and organise their activities, we started in the summer to organize some digital training activities.

The struggle was to find dates that would fit everyone or at least as many people as possible, and we tried different formats: during the week in the evenings, or during the weekends. We could say that none of the solutions is optimal, but the evenings in the week are still the best for now.

We organised online trainings on the moveurope! legal framework and concept, the mobility opportunities promoted with moveurope! (especially the voluntary services in the European Solidarity Corps), basic project and budget management tools, and communication and social media.

*Youth Worker Mobility

6. Coaching activities

Finally, in June 2021, we implemented our first in person training funded by Erasmus+. It was a really great moment of joy to finally meet each other and work together. It was for sure noticed by everyone that even if digital activities are nice to maintain contact especially in an European network, and in times of pandemics and lockdown, it is of course way better to be together. We had many occasions to exchange and work together, be productive, learn from each other, but also informally during conversations in the evenings, which is more difficult to make happen in the digital setting.



In the framework of the funding we received for the training, we also organised a follow-up training in Italy that took place in Autumn 2021, organised by our Italian partner Associazione Interculturale Universo. The aim of this training was this time to take the time to evaluate the activities and impact of the network, as well as of each local groups, and to reflect together on what could be the next steps and next involvement. Would the local groups stay active, organise new activities, start new missions and project parallelly, or stop after this experience? This occupied us in the beautiful mountains surrounding Bologna.

6. Coaching activities



Parallelly to all these online and in person activities and to the logistics of the network from our side, the groups got as well active in their local contexts. Most of the ones getting active were the ones who got the funding from the ESC Solidarity Projects, as they could then finance their activities. Some groups who didn't get the funding however still stayed involved in all network activities, waiting to get financial support in the future.

In order to support the groups to organise their activities, we closely followed them and supported them through monthly coaching sessions that could be financed by the ESC funding. We met every month with each group to talk about the latest updates, their doubts and questions, facilitate the building of the team and support them to find their roles in their team. Especially for a lot of them, it was really challenging to implement the activities they had planned because of the continuously new lockdowns. The coaching sessions were also a way to support them with the use of project management and budget tools that some of them were not really familiar with.

7. End of the projects

In the end of the projects, we supported the local groups with their final report for their ESC funding, for those who needed support or wanted to get feedback. We also issued a Youthpass and a certificate for all participants of the local groups and of the two training activities.

We also had the opportunity to discuss in Bologna, with the representatives of the groups present in the training, about what comes next for the network. We also discussed with each group in individual groups meeting online on their future plans.

All of them wanted to stay part of the network communication tools in order to get news from each other and from moveurope!. Some groups also decided to get more active, and some funded their own organisation, or decided to do so and are organising themselves. Some other decided to get attached to organisations in their cities that they got to know during their local groups involvement, in order to continue being active, and some to have the benefits of the organisation to continue spreading the word about moveurope!. Some had to stop being active or to move out of their city for studying, personal or professional reasons, but all in all this was a meaningful engagement for all.

From our side, this adventure was a really beautiful experience, during which we had the chance to meet a lot of people with many ideas to contribute to their cities. Our moveurope! initiative expanded a lot, and we still get regularly contacted by young people willing to create a local group. We had a lot of learnings and findings during the whole project.

7. End of the projects

We also got challenged, especially with covid, as a lot of activities in person either organised by us or by the local groups themselves couldn't take place, or had to be postponed or cancelled. We also got challenged by the success of our proposal, as monitoring and following closely 20 local groups was taking us a lot of time and demanding a lot of organisation. We came to the conclusion that it is as well easier to propose a set of activities that each local group can implement, rather than to let all groups free to imagine everything they want, as it's then more time-consuming to follow and give advice on all the many ideas and types of activities they have.

But the challenges don't overcome the joy we had to create and animate this network with so many inspiring young people, and we cannot thank them enough for having embarked in this adventure with us.



Appendices*

Appendix 1. Dissemination of offer to build network of local groups

- Appendix 1.1 Email template to acquire new local groups
- Appendix 1.2 Dissemination brochure

Appendix 2: Management of the network

- Appendix 2.1 Our Thank You Letter
- Appendix 2.2 General checklist to guide each local group

Appendix 3 : End of the Projects

- Appendix 3.1 Template moveurope! Volunteering Certificate

***All Appendices can be downloaded by clicking [here](#).**

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