



GUIDELINES AND CHECK LIST FOR YOUTH EXCHANGES

Arab and European Scout Regions

Introduction

The Arab and European Scout Regions have maintained a good and close cooperation for several years and every two years a Euro-Arab meeting is organised.

During the 5th Euro-Arab meeting in Lebanon in 2002, the main objectives were to evaluate and work on the youth exchanges between the National Scouts Associations from both regions.

This document presents the working result from the 4th Euro-Arab Meeting in Greece in 1999, the update made at the 5th Euro-Arab Meeting and a further update made at the 9th Euro-Arab Meeting 2011 in Algeria.

Document Presentation

An exchange between young people from two or more different countries, where they travel to each other's country and enjoy activities together, can be an effective way of:

- Helping young people to find out about other countries and cultures so that they value and understand the differences between people and are more ready to contribute to peace and human understanding
- Providing a valuable part of our youth programme, and
- Giving everyone concerned the chance to have an educational and enjoyable time.

These guidelines and the checklist are provided for the use of National Scout Organizations as well as Scout Leaders in the Arab and European Scout Regions. There are other publications on youth exchanges that Leaders will also find helpful. This document is not intended to tell Associations how to draw up a partnership agreement between them, as there exists separate advice/papers on this issue. The two Regional Offices will be pleased to help.

In setting up any youth exchange, it is important to acknowledge cultural differences. Make frequent checks to make sure there are no misunderstandings between the partners and to take into consideration the needs of young people on both sides. They might live in quite different social and financial conditions. This can best be achieved through open dialogue. Finally, make sure that you evaluate your plans against the objectives you have set. The final evaluation is very important: the evaluation you carry out then will provide you with ideas and hints that will make your next exchange even better.

Youth exchanges in scouting

In general, young people live experiences very intensely and are open to all kind of changes. They are often economically and socially dependent and vulnerable to the circumstances they are exposed to. Often, they are the first losers and the first winners in developments.

In today's society, facing dilemmas like globalisation (united or unified?), power (majority or minority?), and new societies (multi- or inter-cultural), young people live in a world of diversity. One answer to these challenges is intercultural education, with its most concrete tool, youth exchanges. With youth exchanges, knowledge and skills can be shared, mutual respect can be learned, experiences can be shared and the minds of young people can be opened to new cultures, ways of living and Scouting programmes. Youth exchanges encourage Scouts to be active citizens and aid their personal and social development.

Young people, by being brought into contact with other cultures and other realities, can learn a lot from each other and are able to discover and explore similarities and differences between their cultures. Such an experience can help combat negative prejudices and stereotypes. Moreover, the effect of a youth exchange on the local population can give rise to more positive awareness of other cultures and have an impact not only on the young people themselves and Scouting's activities, but also on the local communities and the society in general.

For many young people, participating in an exchange programme is a life changing experience. Travelling to another country, sharing the day-to-day life with another group of young people and experiencing another culture are milestone events. The development of new technologies has transformed the opportunities of developing youth exchanges. Through different types of social media, sustainable contacts and exchange can be established. Any Internet and social media activities, before and after the exchange project, are crucial to make a sustainable impact.

Youth exchanges can take place on a variety of levels. They can be organized on the national, regional and local level and therefore can range from long-term national projects to exchanges between two groups and participation of individuals in projects in another country - anything is possible. Youth exchanges can take place in a variety of different organisational frameworks, from project-based approaches to the framework of an institutional partnership and they may be bilateral or multilateral.

Checklist for youth exchange

What are the ingredients for success?

- Understanding of cultural characteristics, educational objectives and benefits for the young people taking part.
- An atmosphere of trust between all people involved.
- Quality of program and leadership.
- Participation of young people in decision-making and evaluation.
- Clear and transparent finances and reliable funding partners.
- Careful evaluation at all stages.

Choosing your partner:

- Use the Regional Offices of WOSM for advice.
- Look for partners at international events and seminars and on the internet.
- Use your own Scout Association for advice and approval.
- Be aware of the priorities and restrictions of your own country. Sometimes it is difficult for some countries to cooperate.
- Take time to establish contacts.
- Common interests and a common desire to have a partnership are required.
- Share as much information as possible about the groups and their expectations.
- Be aware that the working and planning methods, of the partner association might be extremely different; make sure you are flexible enough to face this reality.

Choosing the exchange:

- Discuss decisions widely with your partner. Consider more than one option, where possible.
- Select the date of the exchange carefully, to meet the requirements of all concerned.
- Obtain the approval of your Scout Association.
- Make sure that the approach is learning by doing.
- The exchange should be interesting and based on the expectations and needs of young people
- Young people should be involved in the choice of exchange, its implementation and evaluation
- Exchanges should be of real value: challenging and attractive.
- The exchange should be based on a strong desire to live and share something together:
- Get advice from people with relevant experience or skills.
- Use the Regional Offices of WOSM, or other National Scout Organisations, for advice.

Making your plans:

- The definition of the exchange and its objectives are the most important aspects to consider - they must be clear, complete, concrete, comprehensive - and measurable.
- Carefully choose a leadership team and make sure that all members know their responsibilities and establish training sessions for adult leaders if necessary.
- Obtain the approval of your Scout Association.
- Make sure that the authorities in the host country approve of the plans, where necessary.
- The programme and activities should be the priority at all stages of the exchange, structure, organization and fundraising are always second priority.
- Make sure that safety and health of all participants are considered.
- Check for laws or rules, which may affect the exchange.
- The partners should each understand the purpose of the exchange.
- Set up a structure to manage the exchange. This structure should include young people as decision makers.
- Remember the cultural diversity and interests of young people and make them aware of what to do and what not to do.
- Focus on unity and not only on diversity.
- Check the cost of travel, accommodation, visa, and equipment. Make a careful budget.
- Check the need for travel visas and the respective conditions. Contact the Regional Offices for help in needed.
- Seek funding and grants from governments and international institutions.
- How easy is it to get to the partner country?
- Have clear agreements on financial matters.
- Provide the necessary training for the young people.

Communications:

- Start with an intermediary (such as a representative of the Regional Offices or an International Commissioner) to facilitate contact.
- Use the Regional Offices of WOSM for advice.
- Involve the young people as much as possible.
- Use email, the Internet and where appropriate social media.
- Find the right person who will be responsible for communications for each partner and who will be responsible for cascading information to all levels.
- Provide comprehensive information on the programme and plans to everyone: participants and their families.
- Develop positive media and public relations.
- Keep in touch with sponsors or other supporters.

Running the exchange:

- Prepare the first two days of the visit carefully, bearing cultural and language differences in mind, with games and activities for ice breaking and discovering cultures - but allow time to recover from the journey.
- Be informal and adaptable.
- Give young people the opportunity to express their own opinion. Involve them fully.
- The Scout Method should be used to implement the exchange.
- Exchanges should fulfil the needs and expectations of participants.
- Activities should be acceptable to the community being visited.
- Leaders and young people should accept and respect cultural and religious observances of the partners.
- Remember the local conditions: the place, the weather and the way of life.
- Follow up and support are very important.

Evaluating the exchange:

- Already when planning the exchange, make sure that evaluation is planned as well.
- Ensure that you have procedures for monitoring the exchange during its execution, have regular team meetings at the end of each day and be prepared adjust the programme if necessary.
- Make a realistic evaluation based on indicators.
- Make concrete recommendations for future exchanges.

Documentation:

The Marrakech Charter: <http://www.scout.org/wsrc/ll/indexen.shtml>

European Union - Youth in Action programme: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.php

Guidelines on partnerships:

<http://www.europe.wagggsworld.org/en/grab/485/1/GuidelinesonPartnershipE.pdf>