Programme implementation and national project operators

• **What criteria to select the tutors and pedagogical personnel who accompanies the participants throughout the project cycle (qualifications, experience)?**

The persons in charge of pedagogical support need skills and experience to achieve development progress and actual integration of participants, to support them in crisis situations and to launch and moderate the appropriate interventions in cooperation with all partners. Target groups with varying degrees of problems need professional mentors.

The staff should therefore be carefully selected, trained and supported (e.g. gender expertise, diversity awareness, accompanying supervision and coaching). Monitoring by project management and a culture of openly handling mistakes, together with professional external supervision, can strengthen the pedagogical staff not only in transnational and intercultural requirements, but also in development work with participants.

An advantage for the project team would be knowledge in social pedagogy or a comparable professional qualification, professional experience with disadvantaged youth and young adults in the transition school-education-work, as well as intercultural, gender and diversity competence. Previous knowledge and experience with international youth exchanges and/or ERASMUS programmes is also an asset.

• **What is the role of the tutors and project personnel during the whole project cycle?**

The personnel should accompany the participants throughout the whole project cycle, starting with the selection process, the preparation and coaching of the participants before they go abroad and the follow-up after they return, to help them to use their new experiences to integrate into work, education or training. Individual and group support to participants, such as in coaching sessions, should be one of the main tasks of the pedagogical team of the project operator across all phases.

The way in which this coaching and support programme is organized is generally left to the project operators. In most cases, the regular project staff takes over most of the programme while the operator can hire special staff or service providers for some specific tasks, such as language courses.

As regards the stay abroad, in many cases at least one personnel of the project operator accompanies the participants and stays with them during the whole time or at least for extended periods during their stay. For example in the case of the German programme, the project operators sent at least one mentor to accompany the participants abroad and provide continuous coaching and support.

In some other TLN programmes, the project operators did not accompany the participants and the hosting transnational partner took over the support abroad.

• **What about psychological support to the participants?**
Psychosocial support for participants may be necessary in all project phases, including after their return from abroad. A culture shock can occur when returning to the home country after a successful internship, when participants find a problem they had at home unchanged (“reverse culture shock”). This can be alleviated by adequate crisis management.

In general, it is not a requirement for project operators to hire a psychologist or provide access to psychotherapy. It is however possible to allow project operators to use programme funds to provide psychological support to the participants as well as to the mentors and the other pedagogical staff.

- **What level of knowledge of foreign languages is expected from the participants? Is it an issue for the participants? Are courses provided to the participants before the stay abroad, and if yes how many hours?**

Experience of TLN programmes has shown that no prior knowledge of the language of the destination country is necessary. Language classes in which the participants learn basic language skills for their internship and for everyday tasks such as grocery shopping should however be offered to the participants during the preparatory phase and during their stay abroad. In most cases, the participants manage to get along quite well both at the company where they are placed and in their day to day life and there are only very few cases where a lack of language skills has been a serious problem. In many cases, participants were also able to use English where their knowledge of the local language was not sufficient.

- **What is the role of public employment services in finding and orientating participants? What about synergies with other operators (job centers,...)?**

Public employment services are an essential partner for ALMA programmes and can play an important part in all stages of the project cycle. They should thus be involved from the beginning.

As the target group is quite vulnerable and in general is not used to apply to such programmes on their own, it can be difficult to identify suitable persons and there is a risk of “creaming” by taking the easier cases. Public employment services are already in contact with vulnerable groups, such as long-term unemployed persons, and have a good access to them. They can thus help either by recommending participants to a project operator or, as has been the case for some TLN programmes, by acting as project operators themselves.

Apart from the recruitment phase, public employment services can also play an important role in the other phases of the project cycle. As they have experience with the integration of vulnerable persons into the labour market, they can offer support in the follow up phase and also in the preparatory phase, e.g. by offering coaching.

Jointly defined goals and a close collaboration with public employment services help to ensure that the mobility projects meet the needs of regional labour markets and are embedded in regional labour market policies. This facilitates a successful integration of the participants into employment or training.

This approach is most successful if project operator and the employment agency exchange information regularly throughout the project cycle. Mutual exchanges inform about participants’ development progress and about the requirements of the labour market accessible to them.
Transnational partnerships and cooperation

Please see in Annex also the 8 steps presented in the document ‘Building up transnational partnerships - from the finding process to a sustainable transnational partnership of high quality’, also shared during the Technical launch meeting in Ljubljana.

• How to sequence the calls to ensure funding of the work to establish partners?

Several models have been existing in the past to set up the program structure. Same flexibility should be offered to the Member States in the context of the implementation of ALMA.

In Germany for example, the project operators are granted funding for a longer period of several years. During this time, they receive regular funding to finance their regular operations, i.e. to pay project staff, rent, etc. In addition, they receive fixed amounts whenever they send a group of participants abroad. These amounts are proportionate to the size of the group and the destination country. In addition, the German programme allows the operators to obtain funding for networking activities to find transnational partners and help set up the partnership with them as well funding for networking activities with public employment agencies and other local partners.

In Czech Republic however, partner search was not eligible in the past Czech calls.

• What practical aspects need to be clarified with the partner?

Special attention should be given, among others, to:

- common understanding: expectations/goal of the cooperation/ how to work together
- financial setting
- workplaces
- job matching process
- transfer to and from airport
- accommodation
- induction
- language lessons
- follow up at workplaces
- spare time activities
- evaluation meetings in group/individual
- feedback to tutors, in case of illness, emergency, conflicts in the group, etc.
- 24/7 telephone number
- support/ tutoring/ monitoring
- diplomas/certificate of attendance
- evaluation of the partnership between the sending and hosting organisation, as well as risk management (during the whole process).
Simplified cost options

- Once the delegated act is in force, can we use the same unit costs and top-up amounts to reimburse our beneficiaries? Could we use a different form of reimbursement?

Using the same amounts and conditions/results would be the simplest way to implement an ALMA operation. The Managing Authority (MA) may also choose to reimburse beneficiaries in any other form that is in line with the rules of the Common Provision Regulation (CPR).

If using Financing Not Linked to Cost, the MA needs to ensure that at the level of the priority axis the amounts received from COM are passed on to beneficiaries, in accordance with Art 95(3) CPR.

- How can we reduce the risk for the beneficiary?

Using result-based financing entails incentives as well as risks. The MA may mitigate these risks in different ways. It may, for example, choose to link payment of a certain amount of the overall planned budget of a specific ALMA operation to pre-defined conditions (that are different to the payment trigger defined in the delegated act).

Example: A beneficiary plans to send three groups of 10 participants each from Member State X to Y; total duration is 12 months with a mobility phase of 4 month. The overall budget including different top-ups is a maximum of EUR 200.000. The MA may decide to link 60-70% of the planned budget, i.e., EUR 120.000 to 140.000 to the condition that the beneficiary indeed manages to send all three groups of young persons abroad (with a recommended min. group size of 8, as defined in the ALMA manual). Consequently, if the number of total participant days and the achieved results are significantly lower than expected, the beneficiary still gets 60-70% of his estimated budget reimbursed. If the operation is implemented as planned, the amounts are calculated based on participant days and various top-ups, as defined in the delegated act.

- How can we avoid creaming?

The top-up amounts for successful participants are relatively small compared to the overall budget of a standard ALMA operation. Thus, the Commission does not see a major impact on how project promoters would approach and select their respective participants. Furthermore, the MA needs to define detailed eligibility rules for their specific context and set out how the notion of “disadvantaged young persons” is to be understood. It can thus steer the selection of participants in line with its policy objectives.

- How can we proof that the participants are indeed NEETs?

Within the final version of the delegated act, the target group is modified to “disadvantaged young persons”, a wider concept that includes young persons that are not in education, employment or training. It is up to the MA to define the target group more specifically and to demonstrate that participants are indeed “disadvantaged young persons”.

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1 The tailor-made approach offers flexibility, to adapt to specific target groups. For instance, in case of young persons with disabilities, group size can be smaller (i.e. 4 people).
• How should we use the top-up for “a decent standard of living”? Is it the participant or the beneficiary that receives this amount? What is the purpose of this top-up?

It is at the discretion of the MA to decide if they wish to apply this top-up for their ALMA operations or not. There is no need to justify this decision. The MA may decide to apply it to some participants or to all, for some phases of the operation or for all. The condition to be fulfilled is solely that the amount set as daily “allowance” is passed on in full to the respective participant. After all, it is meant to ensure a decent standard of living for her/him; it is not linked to the implementation.

This top-up should allow MA to support individual participants on top of the in-kind benefits they receive while being part of an ALMA operation. Some of the participants will have access to social security benefits, like unemployment allowances or minimum income schemes, while others will not receive any support from official sources. This depends on the individual situation and differ across Member States. Therefore, it is up to the MA to decide if (some of) the participants need to receive such an additional allowance or not.
# Building up transnational partnerships - from finding partners to a sustainable transnational partnership of high quality

## Finding, meeting, forming a transnational relationship

### Step 1: Identify your own needs and expectations
- Does the transnational partner work in a similar way as you do?
- Which target group does the partner work with and which schemes does it offer?
- Is there a specific country to work with, why and what would an exchange with the country mean (e.g. costs, mind-sets etc.)?

### Step 2: Find the suitable partner
- How do you find suitable partners?
- Were there previous transnational experiences within your existing internal and external networks?
- Which other channels could you use for finding a suitable partnership?
  - Partnership data base
  - Partnership forums and conferences by the European commission
  - Internet platforms such as the TLN network platform or Epale (Erasmus+)
  - Transnational communities (such as the IdA-community)
  - Meetings such as the ESF-meetings
  - Direct contacts with organisations
  - International/European networks on social media

### Step 3: Contact and first meeting with the potential project partners
- What kind of company do you work with (aims and objectives)?
- What is your target group? What is your understanding of NEETs, who is included in this group?
- What are the expectations of both partners towards the transnational experience?
- What is the aim and guideline of the project?
- Do we have a similar mindset/ a common view of a pedagogical approach for the target group?
- How is your network of local companies, do you work with internships, are the companies you work with used to groups experiencing exclusion and sometimes a challenging target group?
- Is there a clear willingness to work with and for a European exchange?
- What are the resources of the partners – how many people could you involve for the group and are there resources for the organisation and support of the programme?

## Establishing a transnational relationship

### Step 4: Taking time to form the relationship and meet the organisation in person, best at the organisation of the transnational partner:
- Is the place reachable for us, can we organise the travel?
- Can we see places and surroundings (if possible, also accommodation and possible placements)?
- Can we meet the usual apprentices/young professionals of the company and see their working paths?
- Do we have a common language (by words and means) and a common understanding, with similar pedagogical approach? How do we want to communicate?
- Can we define responsibilities and regulations such as staff, structure of the programme, time management, and form a transnational agreement/cooperation contract?
- Do we have a common ground regarding financial setting – what are the funds, what are the expectations and is the fund suitable for the region? What is possible, where are the limits?
- What would risk management look like? Talking about possible scenarios and the solutions in detail.
- What could be intercultural differences and how can we deal with possible disagreements and misunderstandings?
- Can we build a trustful relationship with similar expectations?

**Step 5: Preparation of a concrete mobility:**

- How do we start: getting into deeper conversation and which are the best communication channels (mail, online meetings, messenger, etc.)?
- Getting started: setting a date, finding participants and starting the preparation with them,
- Kick-off meeting online: review of all needed tasks, defining responsibilities and time management?
  - Agreeing on a budget plan
  - Who is arranging the accommodation
  - Which work placements need to be found – do some participants have further special needs (maybe later in the process)
  - Who is arranging cultural activities, will this be shared?
  - Who will be the mentors, who is taking which role in the process?
  - What will the support structure look like (maybe agreeing on times and hours)
- What information about the participants and the upcoming steps is needed?
- Exchanges about the on-board process of the participants, their profiles and possible challenges (on-line meetings)
- Do we speak the same language? Clarify potential misunderstandings due to language and culture. How do we deal with conflicts, do we see any already?

Sufficient time should be foreseen for this process.

**Collaboration and strengthening a transnational relationship**

**Step 6: Implementation of the transnational mobility**

- Arrival of the group, welcoming and orientation week, start of the internship
- Are the roles of the different people clear?
- Regular meetings to speak about the involvement, amend expectations and tasks – supporting each other throughout the entire mobility
- Are there any misunderstandings throughout the mobility?
- Are you willing and able to make compromises? Intercultural exchanges need a lot of patience and self-reflection.

**Step 7: Evaluating the process**
- Have you taken time to speak about every person involved in the mobility exchange after the return?
- Can you speak afterwards about the positive elements and the challenges involved in the mobility exchange?
- Can you find ways to improve the relationship by talking about the issues, to solve them or find strategies for the next misunderstanding?
- Can you speak in detail about specific situations to improve, openly and honestly?

**Step 8: Developing a sustainable relationship: the workshops and new/other common projects**
- Establishment of a partnership is a process
- Stay in contact also in times, where there is no mobility exchange/having regular contacts
- Holding workshop throughout the mobility exchange with the TP but also with other stakeholders
- Can you imagine other projects together?