

Partner Matching Conference

Establishing contacts for international cooperation and exchange

a.) Selection process and preparation

Let's assume that an organisation, we might call it "Youth for Sustainability", would like to organise an international youth exchange. It is looking for a partner organisation for this purpose or already has one, but is new to the field of (international) youth exchanges and therefore needs information about funding and the field of youth exchange.

The organisation "International Encounters" wants to provide a framework for such an endeavour and is organising a partner matching conference as a platform where "Youth for Sustainability" can take part together with a (matched) partner organisation. A preparatory meeting is held to present preliminary matters of importance for international cooperation, explain the contents and objectives of the partner matching conference and clarify questions.

Practical tips for phase a.):

- "Youth for Sustainability" can:
 - Either find a partner organisation itself, in which case online portals, umbrella organisations and networks can be helpful
 - Or it can be matched with a partner organisation through "International Encounters".¹
- "International Encounters" can:
 - Either invite "Youth for Sustainability" and their selected partner organisation to the partner matching conference by contacting them directly
 - Or recruit the participating organisations by means of a call for applications and selection procedure.
- Preparations of the matched partner organisations for the conference can take place jointly or separately (virtually or locally), depending on the focus and the exact objectives.
- Possible contents of the preparatory meeting:
 - Introduction to the conference country (for example historical and socio-political contexts), presentation of the funding programme(s), travel arrangements, intercultural and discrimination-sensitive communication, dealing with stereotypes.

¹ Based on a selection of basic information (for example professional knowledge and language skills, target country, area of activity, project plans) from the organisations, it is possible to create 80-90% suitable matches.

b.) Conference

"Youth for Sustainability" meets its partner organisation "Young Tanzanian Volunteers". They receive information on funding formats, application and visa modalities and expert lectures. They are given time to get to know each other, because the forming process of a group, especially in an intercultural context, is often a sensitive subject. Together, they work on a future project for a youth exchange.

In addition to the intended exchange with the partner organisation, the conference also offers numerous opportunities for networking and sharing ideas. Here, it is worth providing space and time for informal discussions. This creates numerous further contacts with other conference participants and their networks and enables learning beyond the exchange partnership. Bringing together participants from different fields (e.g. sport and culture), makes it possible to achieve interdisciplinary learning effects and gain valuable impulses beyond one's own core activities.

Practical tips for phase b.)

- Possible thematic content of the conference:
 - Pedagogical concepts, intercultural competences, gender mainstreaming, inclusion, power-critical discourse on racism, dealing with stereotypes, global learning, the sustainability goals of Agenda 2030 (SDGs)
- The conference may be held in the home country of one of the two partner organisations. A visit to the local headquarters of the partner organisation is highly recommended and time should be allowed for this. This enables, for example, "Youth for Sustainability" to get to know the working conditions of "Young Tanzanian Volunteers", which is important in order to contextualise their work and to take this into account accordingly for the application process. A subsequent return visit is certainly conducive to the team-building process, but it must be critically weighed up in terms of climate change and the resulting flight emissions.
- The application process and subsequent budget management require time and close cooperation. It is helpful if the matched partner organisations address this already at the conference and therefore before the start of a joint project. It is recommended that they formulate their needs, interests, expectations, working approaches, experiences, expertise, resources and capacities, and consider how they can/may want to manage the work in their partnership.

c.) Follow-up

At a follow-up meeting, conference participants can reflect on objectives, contents and challenges of the conference and of youth exchange programmes, clarify open questions and discuss the next steps in their projects.

Practical tips for phase c.)

- The post-conference follow-up activities of the matched partner organisations can be carried out jointly or separately (virtually or locally), depending on needs and objectives.
- A possible focus could be the implementation of the joint project proposal with the partner organisation and how the project can be jointly planned and prepared from a distance. Best-practice examples and reports from more experienced organisations can provide orientation here (possibly also in the form of mentoring).

d.) Application support

Funding applications often present a challenge and paperwork may be perceived as extensive. Assistance with applications and fundraising (third-party funds and own contributions are often required in funding programmes) can help to overcome this hurdle and enable applicants to submit an application together with the partner organisation.



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