MANUAL
FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Towards new horizons

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Without you,
this Manual
would not exist!

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Introduction

Dear reader...

In 2006, in co-operation with the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) published a Manual for School Students to introduce school students to the work of a school student organisation with all its different aspects: from its birth to further developments, from economic management to planning events, from students' leadership to media relations.

This manual has been a great tool for both newly established and more experienced OBESSU Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations. After 10 years, OBESSU believed that to keep the manual up-to-date and alive, a revision was needed. This is how the idea of this new Manual was born.

OBESSU established an ad-hoc Working Group in order to review the existing manual and to create and develop a new comprehensive publication. The result is the book you hold in your hands: the Manual for School Students! The aim of the Manual for School Students is to provide useful information and details to empower school students as relevant stakeholders in their educational systems and to educate school students on democratic and active participation.

This Manual is a journey towards participation of school student at different stages, from a very grassroots involvement to formally established organisation on a national and international level. We will lead you through the path and the universe of school student participation with the aim of encouraging you and your peers to be active members of the school community. In each chapter you will find useful tips on different topics, from the definition of a stakeholder to suggestion on how to run a democratic organisation; from communication to how to organise small and big events; passing through how to advocate and carry out negotiations on how to have your rights protected and enlarged.

In the different chapters we are going to give you some definitions, recipes and some examples which we encourage you to adapt and rewrite according to your context. While reading, always remember that the trip in the "school student universe" is a collective journey and should never be a one-person process, because a united and democratic group is what enriches and makes school student structures unique. If you want to dive deeper into some topics and have some very practical tools to use you will have a chance to do so with the annexes, both in the printed version and with the additional online material.

With this work we hope to stimulate more and more school students to approach student activism, to get involved and take active part in an existing school student organisation or to develop and facilitate new democratic student movements, in order to tackle issues present in their school life. Furthermore, this publication can be very useful for both newly and well established school student organisations to redefine or improve the organisation and make it stronger: turn inexperience and lack of knowledge into awareness and maturity.

Our ambition is to see this Manual as a powerful tool which can be used by school student activists as a weapon to fight for their rights, needs and interests locally, nationally and internationally.

Enjoy your reading!

OBESSU

What is OBESSU

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) is a non-profit and independent platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe.

It was founded in April 1975 in Dublin, Ireland, and brings together Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations from all over Europe. All Member Organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.

OBESSU is a key player on the European arena of policy-making on educational and youth matters, representing the voice of secondary school students towards European decision-making bodies, political institutions and other stakeholders in the field of education

Represents the school students as stakeholders of their educational systems, and in issues concerning their lives

Provides the national school student organisations with assistance and support and co-operates for the development of representative school student structures

Promotes new teaching methods in learning and promotes healthy teaching environment

Promotes solidarity and understanding between young people

Encourages and enables exchange of experience and good practice among the national school students organisations

Contributes to the development of democratic educational systems in Europe, that promote active citizenship in all forms

Promotes equal access to education and strives for the end of all discrimination and injustice within the educational systems

Why participate
Why be active

When we are part of a community, we can (or we should) contribute to its well-being, influence it and participate in its development. In other times, for example in Ancient Greece, participation in the affairs of society was not considered only a right but also, and first of all, a duty. Participation can also be considered as the practice of playing an active role in our community and society. It relates to one's personal sense of belonging: belonging to a community which you can shape and therefore improve life for all members of the community. Today, participation is not a duty, but a right to decide whether one will or will not contribute to the community.

Participation in political and cultural life, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a fundamental right. Right to participate in government and free elections, in the cultural life of the community, the right to peaceful assembly and association: participation is a condition for effective democratic practices and core principle of human rights.

Participation is also recognised and strongly encouraged in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Convention says that children (all the people below the age of eighteen years) have the right to express themselves freely, to receive and share views and information. The Convention recognises the importance of giving children an opportunity to influence decision-making concerning them and their rights and to actively participate as citizens and actors of change.

Without participation we cannot make our voice heard to influence decision makers, achieve change, develop social cohesion, build a society based on human rights, and eventually be the key player of our own lives. The active participation of young people in decisions and actions is essential if we aim to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies.

As it is in society, the principle of active participation has to be recognised as the cornerstone of the school system. A school which does not take into consideration this principle and does not encourage and support students to take active part in the everyday life of school, carries out its role only half of the way. It may fill students' minds with concepts but it will never teach them what being a citizen means and how to be one.

Why are students key stakeholders?

In society, a distinction between "youth" and the rest of the population is, more often than not, made on the basis of age and experience, but it is incorrect to perceive youth as a homogenous group and it does not respect the social diversity it represents. Unfortunately, the political discourse and actions related to it refer to young people in these terms, putting school students in the same pot called youth.

In this context, it is really important that school students are considered a specific social group with a representation of their own. It has to be acknowledged that there are special needs, rights and duties unique for school students, just as every group in society has the right to be represented and to influence over decisions concerning them.

For this reason, school students have to be recognised as key stakeholders in the field of education. Only the principle of direct self–representation prevents school students from vanishing in the larger group defined "young people". This fundamental principle must be maintained and encouraged not only in schools, but also in society on local, national and international level.

As key stakeholders, school students have the objective to protect and promote the common school students' interests and take an active part in the decision-making processes related to educational matters. In order to achieve these objectives and tackle issues present in school life, school students need to get organised. This means they need to develop or take part in a school student movement, an organisation led by students whose function is to coordinate, support, represent and improve school students' conditions. Furthermore, school student organisations stimulate debate and creativity, promote participation, activism, the idea of aggregation and practices of democracy, preparing school students to be active citizens in a complex society.

Nevertheless, there is still a worrisome lack of opportunities and a remarkable number of obstacles for school students to take part in decision-making processes already at school level. The sad outcome is that policies affecting the everyday life of school students are developed without any involvement of the school students themselves. This democratic failure is what justifies the existence of school student activism.

DEFINITION

"In education, the term **stakeholder** typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councillors, and State representatives".
www.edglossary.org

SCHOOL STUDENT UNIVERSE

Other school student organisations

Cooperate with other school student organisations from your region and/or on specific topics and matters, it is fundamental to be stronges and reach your goals.

Local Youth Councils

Local youth councils are bodies that represent the views of young people at a local level. They give young people a voice and enable them to make their views heard in the decision-making process.

European Institutions

The institutions of the European Union are the principal decision making bodies of the European Union.
The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation.

Other youth organisations

Youth organisations are organisations led by and for young people which promote ideas, programs and activities aiming at enhancing the personal and social development of young people.

Parents

Parents, as one of the educational actors, are part of the welfare and success of the school system. Therefore, it has to be seen as another actor to cooperate with.

International Partners

International partners are bodies you cooperate with on an international level in order to achieve common objectives and priorities having an impact at wider scale.

Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions- OBESSU

OBESSU is the platform for cooperation between the national school student organisations active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe.

National school student umbrella organisations

National school student umbrella organisations or national school student unions are the coordinating platforms for all the local and regional school student organisations on a national level.

National Youth Councils

National Youth Councils are representative bodies made up of youth organisations and young people in a particular state or nation.

School student organisations

School student organisations are bodies made up by students which protect and promote the common school students' interests. They provide coordination, support and representation for school students to take action in their interest and in the interest of their schoolmates.

University student organisations

University student organisations represent university students towards decision-making bodies on matters concerning higher education.

Teachers

Teachers are one of the major stakeholders in the field of education. Building strategic alliances with them can increase the probability of success.

Headmasters

Headmasters or principals have multiple roles to play in the school to ensure quality teaching and learning. They are one of the key educational stakeholders to address when lobbying for your priorities.

Other civil society organisations

Civil society organisations are non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary civic and social organisations, associations and institutions such as NGOs, networks, charities, foundations and advocacy groups.

National institutions

National institutions or government bodies are the actors which take decisions over the educational system and shape the educational policies affecting school students in a country.

Preparations for the launch

Gathering a group around a specific idea and motivating people to engage themselves is a huge step before deciding which kind of organisation you would like to start or join. In this chapter we will try to introduce you with the basics of activism, possible reasons for students and young people to be inactive and how to turn their inactivity into activism. We will help you to decide which method to use to encourage student participation and we will give away a secret recipe for a democratic organisation.

Student participation and involvement for beginners

One of the main topics these days is youth inactivity and unemployment. Mostly heard phrases when discussing them are "students are not engaged" and "students do not care". This is not true, and students should prove everyone wrong. The vast majority of students are engaged in something outside their school and they all care about their situation and have an idea of what or how to change. There are many students around the world who are involved in some kind of organisation, union, club or any other extracurricular activity. However, it is true that there is a certain percentage of inactive students throughout the world. But for that it is not only youth to blame.

Activism – the word itself has got into our everyday language so far and we are using it more or less carefully. Many researchers say activism consists of efforts to promote, obstruct, or direct social, political, economic, or environmental change. In this Manual, we will consider „being active" as making an effort to change a situation and reacting when things are not the way they should be. It does not mean that you will do everything to make a better situation for yourself but for the community, or making a protest because you personally dislike something, but doing your best to change something for a better collective cause. It is important to know that activism is not only about doing great things that will affect the whole world, but the actions that will change your environment and make you and people in your surroundings feel comfortable, understood, accepted, etc.

Youth participation became a great factor in decision making processes. At first youth participation was considered as right to vote or stand for elections, but now it is recognised as

> "having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society"[1].

The United Nations affirms the full and effective participation of youth in society and decision-making as one of its 10 priority areas for action. Participation, whether on a local, national, international or global level, is a human right.

It is important for you to know that there are different ways to be active and make a change. To do this, you might not need to start your own organisation, but you can influence by being an active citizen who follows an organisation or idea. Leading a big organisational process may not be your cup of tea, but you enjoy participating in different organisations and events, so that may be your way to express your opinion and use your potential as an active citizen.

If you have an idea which you would like to implement, there is always a way to do it with a certain support. In this Manual you will find a lot of useful tricks on how to start a project or an organisation. Somehow, the real struggle can be to encourage people to join you and become active citizens. There are different reasons why students choose not to try and change something in their surroundings, but it is a duty of others to show that person how important it is to affect their own situation. Of course, you should never make someone join your cause by force, but just introduce him_her with your idea and your shared goal. If he_she recognises its importance, you have a follower!

People that follow a certain idea are usually not recognised as important actors and that is a huge mistake. A single person can change something, but two are unstoppable. You can help a movement just by talking about it to your friends or family, by sharing a link online, etc. There are so many little ways to help and encourage a change.

Reactions to school student activism can be different, but they all make the system and are necessary for its sustainability. People are not to be categorised, but we will need to divide few types of reaction so we can bring some new perspectives to the issue.

ACTIVISTS are people that we can also call 'leaders of change'. They are the ones fighting for the goal. Activists are motivated, determined, strong minded and believers. Activists can be active in a school student organisation, any non-governmental organisation, school council or neighbourhood. They act as part of a group or alone. This is the name you can give to everyone willing to react when they notice injustice or see opportunity to improve something in the system. School students used to try and affect schools, curricula, and educational funding, but today they have broaden their area of impact. School students are fighting for both school student rights and a better society.

Right beside activists there are students that are MOTIVATED, but PASSIVE. They are motivated to act and make a difference, but they do not and the reasons are different. An important thing to know is that if someone is passive, it does not necessarily mean they do not care about their situation, even though this might be a possibility. Students usually do not know that they can

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1   Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, published by the Council of Europe.

and should make a change, they believe that the system cannot be changed, so they stick to it. Sometimes they do not even know that organisations representing students exist at all, or they are too shy to approach someone and join. There can be a case when the system does not allow you to form an organisation and if that is the situation, maybe the solution to your problem can be found in this Manual.

As always, there are people that will try to underestimate the work activists have done. We will call them DE – MOTIVATORS. They can be described as apathetic, i.e. they will not put their energy in your fights and activities, usually spreading their apathy. People, and especially school students cannot be blamed if they are not interested in making a change when they do not find the issue important, but what is frustrating is that de-motivators tend to discourage others. Sometimes they act just due to boredom, but sometimes they fight against the masses just for the sake of it.

Although the de-motivators are rare, they are harmful for motivation. Unconsciously people become discouraged, give up their project and do not fulfil their goals. A right approach towards de-motivators could be to underline that there is no need for de-motivating others if you yourself are not motivated. No one is obliged to join the movement and everybody is free to support what they believe in, so people should not infringe the freedom of others. De-motivators' opinions are as important and respectable as everyone else's, as long as they respect others and do not actively try to bring the motivation of other school students down.

While we cannot do much to change de-motivators there is plenty we can do to activate apathetic and passive students. Nowadays students tend to be less active in society, because of different reasons regarding their background, the means they have at disposal and their surroundings. They do not mind going to events or helping in the organisation, but they will not know why the event is organised or why is it important to make a change. They are not the ones starting an organisation or talking to authorities, they are the ones following. Your job, as an active student is to activate them, and then keep them involved, and to make them also leaders of change in a shared governance of the process.

example

We offer our members a student card which has a lot of discounts. We also provide legal advice and different manuals for ALL students, not just members. Our members learn many skills that are useful in the future and they make useful contacts during their time in the organisation. The skills they can learn include advocacy, marketing and advertising, leadership, organisational skills, bookkeeping and public speaking. Many of our former activists are nowadays highly valued CEOs, ministers or experts in different fields of life and they all give credit to their success for being active in SLL.

SLL, Suomen Lukiolaisten Liitto, Finland

Why should students participate

As previously said, everyone is motivated by a different reason, but our previous experience showed that there are some common factors of motivation. The main sources of motivation can be some of the following: fighting injustice, being a part of a team, getting to know new people, seeing the result of one's work, getting compliments, gaining experience, getting official attention, gaining status, competition, doing something one is good at, experiencing new things and new places, learning new things, duty, working towards a goal one finds important, anger, challenge, etc. If you find any of these important to you, you might want to finish reading this Manual.

To move the students upwards on the map of school student activism and make as many people as possible engaged in the work of your organisation, it is important to take advantage of all these forces of motivation. Everyone should be able to limit his_her activism to the area in which he_she is interested.

Student's engagement in the organisation can firstly help improving themselves and they can get all the experiences needed for their university life or future job. By visiting different seminars and trainings they can get higher qualifications which might help them in the future. Meeting new people helps making new contacts and sharing your ideas with people of similar interests and it is a great way to broaden your mind and learn new things. Everyone likes to meet new people and places, and doing it while doing a fun job that activists do is a winning combination.

The thrill and excitement you get when you finish the project, event or document, how proud you are when you make a change, and seeing the impact of the outcome of your work are all feelings that every person, young or old, should feel from time to time. Working shoulder to shoulder with you peers can help you gain confidence and make new friends. It is up to you to create conditions that bring the largest amount of engagement to the participants. Where there is engagement and hard work there are the results, satisfaction of doing good deeds, experience, satisfaction of being a part of a team, knowledge, acknowledgement, identity, status and etc.

Members of the organisation usually have some duties which teach them responsibility at early age and the sooner one becomes responsible the better. This kind of organisations encourage teamwork and understanding among its members. In today's world when one is very dependent on others and cannot survive only relying on himself_herself it is very important to be able to work in a team and respect others.

Being recognised is a very powerful motivator. Every person likes to be seen as good and worthy, therefore being an active member of a school student union (SSU) or any other organisation, club, etc. can satisfy this human need. When being very active one may get caught by an eye of some officials or influential people. Getting their official attention pleases this need even more.

Most people love travelling, meeting new people and places and gaining experience. What a better way than being active in an organisation? Members of an organisation often travel to different towns or even countries to promote their work, exchange experiences and work on important topics.

As already said, there are many sources of motivation. The important thing is finding the one that is the biggest among the target group and working on it.

Organising informal meetings is one of the ways to attract people. It allows students to meet outside of the formal venues and gives them a chance to make friends and not colleagues. In less formal environments people tend to relax and share their ideas and stands in an easier way.
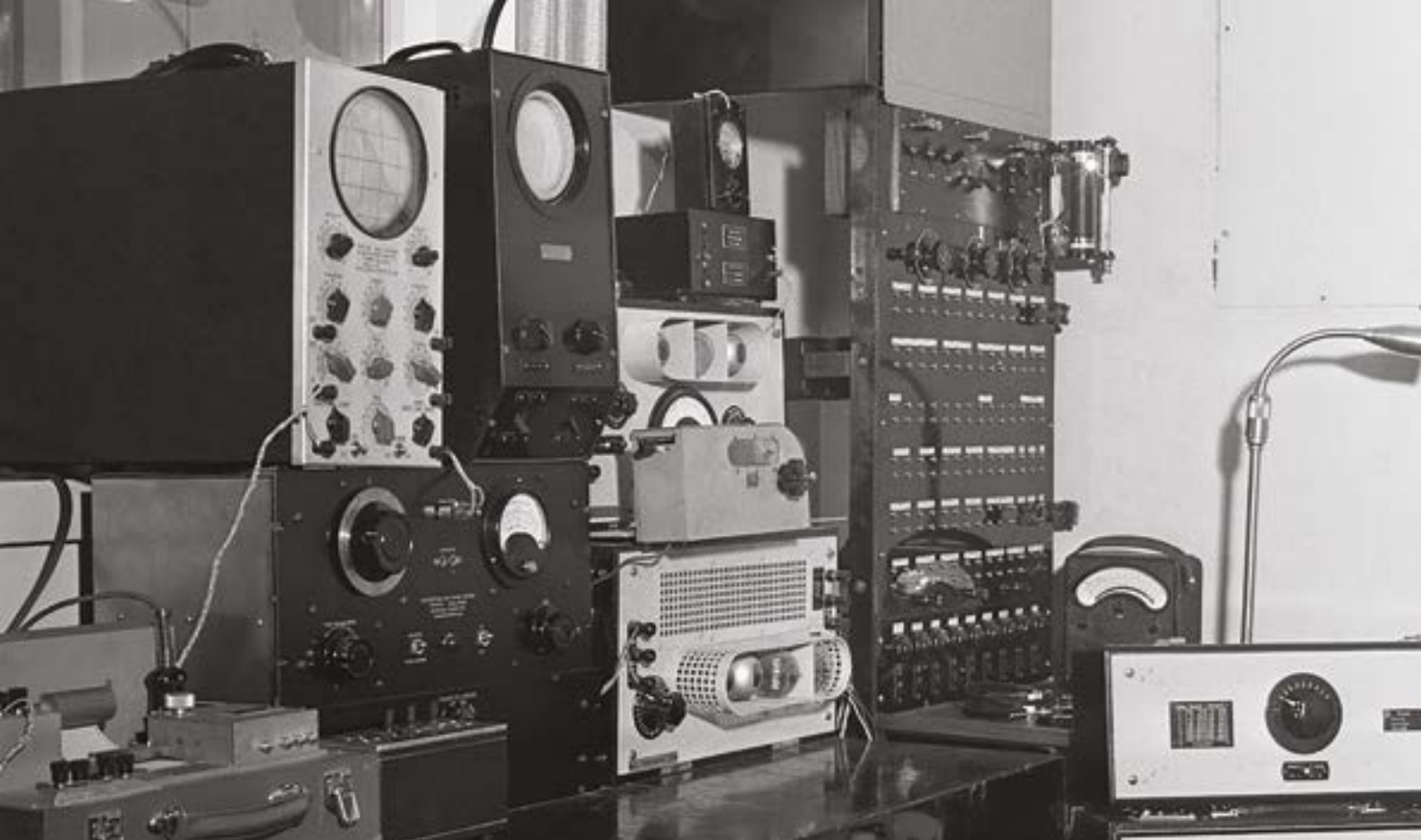
Time to speak up!

One important aspect about school student activism is that it teaches you to be inclusive. Being inclusive means having the ability to accept different types of people, treat them equally and comprehend their opinions even though you might not agree with them. In a student organisation, people of different backgrounds and political views participate in everyday activities sharing their ideas, opinions, habits, fears and challenges. This natural process leads you to get to know more about society, your and others' cultures, and it broadens your mind.

There are many ways to speak your mind and take your stand, from public speeches to flash mobs, from newsletters to having a blog. Even though sometimes we find it hard to express our opinion, we forget how easy it can be. Comparing to the past, nowadays we have more opportunities to speak up and get our voice heard and thanks to the latest technology developments it is easy to share information and influence the public opinion. Be aware that as it is for all the communication tools, there are pros and cons and you need to know how to use them. So do not miss the opportunity and speak up!

The activism that we talk about is not all about being a member of some organisations, it is about your participation in improving your own surroundings. However, things might not always run smoothly in the land of activism. As previously said, there will be de-motivators to stand in your way, but we've learned how to deal with them. Unfortunately, there is a great possibility that something else also won't be as expected. When that happens, do not let it surprise you – BE READY for a challenge.

Every school student is a person, and all people are different, so it will remain unlikely to satisfy everyone's wishes. There might be times when you will receive feedback that might be different from what you expected, but it is important that you always welcome the constructive criticism and that you are open to learn from the mistakes. Most likely, this negative feedback won't happen if you always carry out quality group discussions and you adopt a co-decision mechanism in the group. Sometimes an individual will have to take a lead in the process, but always keep in mind that this lead is a facilitating role and never a solo decision.

The other burden that you will have to overcome sometimes is dealing with teachers, decision makers, media, etc. In this Manual we will try to show you some basics of influencing, lobbying, public speaking and handling media, but if sometimes things slip out of your hands, do not panic! There is nothing in the land of activism that cannot be fixed.

How to keep the fire burning

Once you decided what to do with your idea and project, the real struggle is keeping people interested and involved into the project. Here are some tips how to make it work!

HOW TO KEEP MEMBERS INVOLVED

Always ask for the group's opinion
Even though you sometimes think you are right about everything, it is important to acknowledge the fact that we are all wrong sometimes and that the more people's opinions are heard, the better the chances are to get it right. It is therefore important to ALWAYS ask for other people's opinion about every decision you make for the group. You must let them know that their opinion matters. Students must be aware of the importance and effects of their own opinion. If they are not listened to in their own group, how would they believe in the effect they can have towards other stakeholders?

Discuss and try to deal with the most common problems in the organisation or group
It is well known that the bigger the group is the more conflicts may happen. One of the ways to prevent that kind of problem from happening is to talk with people in your group/organisation on a regular basis. Just ask them how they are doing and if they have noticed anything unusual or unpleasant that they would like to have a word about. Listen to their observations and problems, make sure they know you care about them. It is important to let people know that their group is a safe space for them and that it belongs to each and every member.

Mix it up
In order to keep your meetings engaging, remember to have a variety of fun activities and methods such as energizers and ice-breakers, so that it never gets boring or too official.

Spend time together whenever there is a chance to do so
Connect with your fellow activists even outside the official meeting; informal gatherings and relaxed events are a nice way to stay in touch and keep everyone engaged. Face-to-face meetings are an important part of communicating within your organisation!

Encourage conversation
An important part of good teamwork is mutual support and understanding between peers. The only way to be supportive to other people is to know their thoughts and ideas which they are willing to share. This is where the conversation plays its role. As a facilitator you should encourage all the participants to talk to each other, to find common language and discuss different topics, regardless of the mean of communication you use. If you feel like you don't have the skills and attitudes to facilitate this process, make sure you find a facilitator who can help with it.

Be reachable
As previously said, try to make students feel safe where they are. They should know that the group can help them whenever they have an obstacle while working on a project, that everyone would understand if they disagree with something or when they have some personal problems. There is no hierarchy when it comes to supporting team members, most of the time we are just friends reaching for the goal.

Share the responsibilities
When it comes to decision making process let everyone participate and have a say on what they would like to do and which topic to discuss and act on.

Let them think outside the box, let them broaden their minds! Encourage difference of opinion!
There is an old saying 'It takes all sorts to make a world', which would mean that every person in this world has its own attribute. Unfortunately, we usually just follow the scheme given by society and we stick to it, without using full potential of our minds. Your job as an activist is to encourage young people to think outside the box. It is good to have different opinions discussed at one table, it can only show possible reactions of people when they see your project or campaign. Make sure you explain them the importance of accepting different perspectives even when they do not agree with someone.

Compliment each person
It is important that every single member of your group or organisation knows that their work has been noticed and appreciated. Even if the work one has done is not flawless you should encourage her_him to keep going with a good work. We all like to be praised, so a little compliment to everyone can do no harm. This way you help building their self-esteem which is a very important need of every person.

Learn from other people's mistakes and let them learn from yours
You should never criticise without explaining what and how to do better. Each person should have a chance to correct their mistakes by doing the same task again after having thought about how to make it right, maybe with the help of a more experienced peer. When something goes wrong in a group it is a good lesson for everyone to see how to cope with it, so everybody learns. The

importance of debriefing can never be underestimated and is a crucial part of developing your organisation and yourself. After completing an activity, reflect on the following questions:
- Could I have done it differently?
- What would have made a difference?
- How would I do it now?
- What did I learn and how I can teach people not to make the same mistake?

To make a mistake is human

Because of the reasons written above, it is important to admit your mistake when you make one, so everyone can see that it is not end of the world if the mistake is made. Then you can hopefully also learn something from it. It can, however, be harmful not to admit it or even repeat it for no reason.

Remember to have fun!

After all the hard work you are supposed to do in order to make something work there is all new world of fun. There are times when you have to work hard, but be sure you do not waste all your energy on one particular project, there is a lifetime in front of you. Have fun with people after all the work is done, make jokes, do fun things!

TOPIC-WISE INVOLVEMENT

The excitement of being a school student activist is that you get to do so many different things. As a young person you sometimes do not know what you want to do in your life and maybe your answer might be here.

Imagine you had an idea how to implement free sport activities for students all around the country. The idea is sustainable and innovative, but you have a problem. You have no idea about school sport facilities in your country. Besides that, you are not very confident with public speaking. Fortunately, there are a lot of young people that play sports in school, so if you open a call for individuals or groups that would like to help out, they will contact you. If you are not good with handling media, find a friend that is, a friend's friend or open a call. The good thing is that a person helping with sport facilities does not have to be involved into media campaign if he_she does not feel like it. Lots of students like volunteering in this kind of events so they can always help out. When you have an innovative idea, it is inevitable to have some challenges, but with a right group of people where everyone is doing what they love, nothing is impossible. These challenges may slow you down sometimes, or make you want to give up, but do not! It is normal in everyday life to have some obstacles on your way to success and they should never discourage you.

Topic-wise involvement is dividing tasks according to everyone's interests and capabilities.

The topic-wise involvement method will keep students engaged for a long period of time, since they will have a chance to do what they like and improve themselves. In that way they will gain knowledge and experience in the field they might need for their future education or employment.

As in every working method there are advantages and disadvantages of this one. Topic-wise involvement in this kind of organisations can be both, good and bad. We will try to analyze it with the help of a SWOT analysis, which is commonly used in youth organisations.

It this case we can say that objective is to involve students into the work of a grassroot organisations or any other group using topic-wise involvement. In order to achieve this objective we have to identify the factors.

DEFINITION

Topic-wise involvement. Wait, what?

At the end of the day the membership of a School Student Structure is very diverse. "All different, all equal" is not just a saying, it is the reality. Each student is not only a student, it's a person with his_her own interests and hobbies, and who says that hobbies and interests cannot be a basis for involvement?

By **topic-wise involvement** we mean the ability of school student groups to offer a variety of activities and possibilities that are based on a specific **topic** or **interest** and attract people we would have not attracted otherswise. In this sub-chapter we explore the possible ways to involve in a topic and then generalise and make people feel **ownership** of the group or organisation you are building.

A SWOT analysis is a structured method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats involved in a project. It involves specifying the objective of the project and identifying the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective. When making a SWOT analysis keep in mind that you do not have to have the same number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This is just for you to know where and what to tackle afterwards.

REMEMBER!

There are always different ways to make a change or organise a group of students! Different projects and events require different approaches. Therefore, we encourage you to do experiments. Be brave, try out different methods and ideas – who knows which one will work out in you group!

Besides topic-wise involvement there are other things that will help you keep other students participating in the activities. It is not essential for the group to start an organisation, but to work together with other people and groups in order to achieve the goal!

STRENGTHS

* Students work in the field that they are interested in
* Everyone develops and improves in their own field
* Better organised activities
* More students can be involved in organisation's activities

WEAKNESSES

* Students are not involved in all parts of the project

OPPORTUNITIES

* There are other organisations working on that topic that you can partner with

THREATS

* People may use organisation just to gain working experience

How to start a democratic organisation.
It's a piece of cake!

Now, you are just few steps away from becoming an even better student activist than you used to be. We hope this chapter will help you with starting a democratic and inclusive group for all school students.

From country to country, the laws and needs of society are different and they all need different approaches but here we give you a general recipe to start a democratic organisation.

INGREDIENTS:

- Topic ~ to taste
- Context ~ 1 local surrounding
- Target Group ~ 1 you need to identify
- Objective(s) ~ to taste
- Values ~ Lots
- Democratic processes in democratic structures ~ as much as needed
- Group and members ~ as many as you can involve

PROCESS:

1- Take your topic(s) and ask yourself whether there is a need in your context to discuss this topic and create a movement around this. It is fundamental that you check on this before you start mixing the ingredients in your bowl in order to understand the right balance and maybe change the process according to your tastes.

2- As a second step you should take the "Group and members" and start cooking with them understanding the objectives of your work. Do you want the cake to be filled or topped? Try to ask yourself questions on what you are baking, why are you cooking it and who are you cooking it for (target group). Now you can start spreading the word about your topic.

3- At this point your democratic processes in democratic structures can be introduced in the process of this recipe. You will have to take decisions, talk about topics, define strategies, debate and dialogue. For this, you cannot forget

how the ingredient "democracy" is fundamental for the cake to be baked.

4- Your organisation as your cake is a process, it cannot be sped up too much, you need to respect the times imposed by the people you are cooking with. It is important that while cooking, you and the rest of the group agree on the values your organisation will have and you always take into account others' opinions. Some values you might want to put in your cake are democracy, respect, acceptance, inclusiveness, transparency, freedom, trustworthiness, responsibility, active participation, etc.

If you follow this easy recipe from now on we will be happy to help you in the process of running and developing your organisation with this Manual. In the following chapters you will get to know more about organisational skills, public speaking, project writing, chairing a meeting, marketing, and much more.

The launch

Running an organisation can be hard, time consuming and demanding. All the people involved might pursue varying interests, and a coordination of these interests and efforts has to be made in order to reach the organisation's common goals. As it is for other types of organisations and institutions, school student organisations may face different challenges in organisational management.

In this chapter you will learn some basic principles of leading an organisation, such as task division, which documents the organisation should have, how to hold a meeting and how to communicate and engage with members.

How to get organised

Members

It may seem obvious that school student organisations are clearly made up of school students, however, the organisation needs to further define which students are counted as members. Consider whether you are only working in the field of upper secondary education or if lower secondary students can join the organisation as well. Should you focus on just one area of secondary education such as vocational education or general secondary education or should you be open to everyone? Most local organisations work with one of the following methods:

- Automatic membership: All students in a school are members unless they terminate their membership;
- Active membership: Every student who wants to be a member of the organisation needs to take an active stand either through paying a membership fee, signing up as a member or something similar.

Automatic membership can save you a lot of administration work and guarantees an immediate large member base. At the same time, you have no clue of how well anchored you are in the student community, many students could be members of the organisation without even knowing it. The active membership on the other hand means a lot of administration but at the same time, you can claim to speak on behalf of the members of your organisation since every single member would have taken an active stand to join your organisation. The organisation can also easily see if it loses popularity among the students since it will be visible in the membership record. Also, active members might generally be more motivated to participate in the organisation's work and events.

It is also possible to have more categories of membership: a basic membership for each student, an advanced membership with a membership card and possibly some goodies for students paying a little fee and a patron or alumni membership without any voting rights for former students and other people supporting the organisation. Also, some national organisations do not have individual members, but only local school student organisations as members. This enables them to coordinate the individual member organisations and support them, but makes it more challenging to organise events and interventions on a national level, since these need to involve many different local organisations.

Having a clear aim

In order to create a well organised and efficient group you should know what your organisation is about, what your goals are, and how you will be able to achieve them. If you and the other people involved in your organisation do not develop a sense of purpose, if you do not know what you are doing and to what end, your organisation won't be able to do its work in a meaningful and effective way. In order to function in a sustainable way, it is important for the group members to share basic values and define the aim according to those.

When defining your aim keep the following questions in mind:
- What is the purpose of your action?
- What are the basic values of the target group?
- What are the things you are reaching for?
- What are your main motivations?
- What are your short and long term goals?

Task division

Getting things done should not be the responsibility of a single person. Instead, divide tasks. This does not only apply for the daily operations of your organisation, but also for smaller subdivisions such as working groups or event organisation teams.

To effectively assign tasks to people:
- Respect their abilities (and assign them tasks they are realistically able or feel comfortable to accomplish);
- Clearly define the task (to make sure nothing is forgotten or being done multiple times);
- Agree on deadlines;
- Hold people accountable;
- Make sure that team members who cannot accomplish their task will ask the team for help. Encourage an open culture of communication. Keep in mind that asking for help is good, while silently backing out can be harmful for the group dynamics;
- Find a coordinating figure that follows the work and makes sure tasks are fulfilled.

Structures

"The simpler the structure is, the easier your work will be", is something to keep in mind whenever you are talking about structures of your organisation.

The structure of your organisation is important in order to legitimise the claim of representing school students, to ensure democracy, to facilitate activities, to ensure knowledge management and to get a better overview of the organisation. Clear structures also allow students to access the right person within the organisation more easily.

However, structures can also be counterproductive. Make sure that the work with structures and regulations of the organisation never takes away time from the true activities your organisation should be engaged in by overcomplicating things. Keep the focus on the real work and put the bureaucracy in the background –

a bureaucratic organisation is not attractive for members either.

It is also important to remember that you should only introduce structures when you actually need them. If you, for example, have several activities that are being held at the same time, there may be a need for establishing a new group for each event, so that they are coordinated more easily. You should not first form the groups and then delegate activities, but the other way around. When you list all the things that should be done and make sure how many people will be involved in the work you may decide if there is a need to form a new organ or a group within the organisation.

The optimal structure of an organisation depends on its history, goals and activities, among other factors. School student organisations can serve the interests of students both by political actions and representation as well as by organising own events, activities and providing different services. When it comes to structuring your organisation you can often see a conflict between these two areas of work. When it comes to representing the students, it is important for the organisation to have a clear, democratic, representative structure where the majority of the members can control what their representatives are saying when they communicate with different decision-makers. Representatives will also be more convincing if they can show the authorities the strong student support they have. *(For more details, see page 37)*

When it comes to organising events, services and activities, the organisation results depend on how many students are engaged in the work and how accessible the organisation is. Since there is no need for a majority decision on most of the issues related to these kinds of activities, make sure you do not abuse the representative structures you decide to adopt and make sure that they never become an obstacle for the participation of the overall student community. You need to find a satisfying balance for the work of your organisation.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is a set of general guidelines and rules that apply to the way the organisation works and how its members, organs and officials treat each other. Defining a Code of Conduct is a good way to easily set binding rules in order to cooperate and facilitate a better atmosphere. Furthermore, it is not an overly formal document and should be kept compact.

When writing a Code of Conduct make sure you do it in a group, together with the people who are most affected by the Code. Since it is used to guide members of the group through their work, you should ask them for their opinion. Make sure everyone feels comfortable with the Code before deciding to make it official.

The Code of Conduct should have guidelines that team members should respect at all times such as the communication rules (whether team members communicate via emails, SMS or some other way), regularity of meetings, basic norms of the group, privacy, confidentiality etc.

A Code of Conduct reaches its inherent limits when you want to define more formal details of the organisation's inner workings or if you need more binding regulations. At that point, you should consider introducing Statutes. *(Read more about them at page 67)*

Budget

A budget is a document that provides an overview of where your money goes. It is often adopted at the beginning of a period (trimester, year, etc.) and therefore defines how much money the organisation can spend on which activities.

The benefits of having a budget is that you have clear guidelines on how much money you can spend for certain projects that you can be held accountable for. Also, it enables you to get a better overview of the financial situation of your organisation and to allocate financial resources to the events and activities where it is needed the most. Also, many donors that are potentially willing to support your organisation with money require a budget to see how you would spend their money.

There is no need for you to write a professional and very detailed budget if the event or organisation does not require one, but we advise you to at least have a list of things that have to be funded and how much money you are able or willing to spend. Dealing with the organisation's money is a job that requires a lot of responsibility and it is good to keep a record of how the money was or will be spent in order to make plans and see if there is a need for you to get funded in some other way.

However, there is always a possibility for you to organise a campaign or an event with no money. You may find more information about how to get funded later on in the Manual.

The disadvantage of a budget is that it means that you have to decide which activities and events you will hold

be a
LEADER
not a boss

long in advance. Also, it can be a tedious process to come up with a budget that suits your organisation.

Leadership

Leadership in volunteer organisations differs quite a lot from leadership and resource management in professional organisations. In a professional organisation, where people get paid for their work, human resources can easily be moved between projects and tasks. If a restaurant needs more waiters and has too many chefs, they could either ask a chef to start serving or lay the person off and hire another waiter. This is, of course, not possible in an organisation based on volunteer work such as a school student organisation.

If you ask people what is the most important skill to have as a leader most people respond "to know how to delegate". As explained above, a leader in a volunteer organisation such as a school student organisation cannot delegate in the same way as a leader in a professional operation. To handle this situation, a leader needs to try to avoid giving orders but rather "make" people volunteer and feel responsibility for different tasks. Inspiration is a keyword. As a leader you should be able to inspire the team members and help them see possibilities and a holistic picture of their work.

A leader should also encourage people to feel like experts in their area of work. If you see yourself as the one with the most expertise in an area you also feel responsibility to take care of that area. If you are not taking the responsibility, who will?

Remember, a good leader knows how to motivate volunteers and assign suitable tasks. If a student is working on a project, the amount of time he_she puts in the work is dependent on how motivated the student is to work for this cause. An activist engaged in putting up a concert or organising a demonstration cannot always be expected to be as engaged in drafting a policy paper or a press release.

Holding meetings

Meetings are a way to exchange ideas, opinions and discuss plans and activities. Meetings have been organised in human culture for thousands of years. However, we still struggle to hold meetings efficiently. While there are a lot of differences in meeting cultures, in our experience meetings are usually only effective if:

- All participants know the agenda points and are prepared for the meetings;
- Participants to the meeting are really interested in the topics discussed;
- The meeting is chaired efficiently - if you feel the need to have a chair;
- Decisions are made and assigned to people;
- Deadlines are clearly defined;
- Minutes are taken;
- The next steps are laid out clearly (everybody knows what to do until when);
- There is communication in between the meetings.

Before the meeting
The meeting is a place where members should discuss things happening between the meetings. At the meeting you are not supposed to do the tasks that you had agreed upon on your last gathering, but discuss what has been and what should be done. In order to avoid pointless and slow meetings, make sure you have already done all the

The difference between	
BOSS	**LEADER**
Drives employees	Coaches employees
Depends on authority	Depends on goodwill
Inspire fear	Generates enthusiasm
Says "I"	Says "WE"
Places blame for the breakdown	Fixes the breakdown
Knows how it's done	Shows how it's done
Uses people	Develops people
Takes credit	Gives credit
Commands	Asks
Says "GO"	Says "LET'S GO"

work before the meeting and that you are familiar with the agenda. If you have any suggestions and questions, make sure you prepare those too.

Simply, be prepared!

Have a purpose
Meetings that are badly organised unnecessarily take away people's time and motivation. Firstly, identifying the need and reason for a meeting is great, because it can provide purpose and structure. Bearing your ultimate goal in mind will prevent pointless meetings from being arranged. Some of the following are reasons that may help you outline the purpose of having a meeting:

- Group communication - updating, debriefing and evaluating what happened since the last meeting, keeping each other motivated and engaged;
- Planning - an event, project, action or campaign;
- Decision-making - how to take things forward or decide on executive and financial matters about the group or organisation;
- Information sharing - to share what you know and learn from each other;
- Briefing - letting people know what they need to do, clarifying any questions;
- Evaluation - after an event or action, feedback on how it went;
- Getting to know each other - new groups might want to use an opportunity to have a team building session to work together in the best way possible.

When to hold a meeting
Frequency of meetings is also something that should

USEFUL TIP
To ensure that people do not talk over each other – use a 'talking stick'. This is just a stick (or could be any other object e.g. a ball) which is passed around the group when people want to say something. Only the person with the object can speak.

REMEMBER!

One of the best ways of learning how to be a good chairperson is to practise and learn from your mistakes. You can always ask people at the end of the meeting what they would like to see improved at the next meeting and take it into account! They will appreciate your consideration and will feel listened to, which is important!

be thought about. Meeting too frequently could make meetings unproductive where people may not have much to say. Not meeting regularly enough could mean the group loses touch and people cannot touch base and feel inspired by one another. But when getting closer to something such as an event you are planning, more intense meetings may be necessary for a brief period of time. Ask your members how frequently they want to meet.

How to chair a meeting successfully
Chairing meetings may at first be a bit scary and intimidating or it might be exciting and fun! It just depends on who you are and your personality. However, as a school student activist you have several responsibilities, which you have to take care of. The following are a few points on how to successfully chair a meeting:

- Your primary objective is to chair an effective meeting! You will have to keep the meeting going, with the ball rolling and keep people involved – keeping their focus and attention. There is no point holding a meeting that people are not passionate about and not willing to contribute to;
- You will have an agenda that will lay out the meeting, which you will be responsible for keeping to; making sure each individual item is discussed appropriately, reaching a decision at the end of the debate. Remember not to be too bureaucratic; if you are, there is a risk that the participants of the meeting will not be engaged anymore;
- It needs to be a fair meeting – people need to have a fair opportunity to have their say – try to draw things out of those who are quieter. Equally, whoever is chairing the meeting will need to prevent people from dominating too much and taking over!
- The role of a chairperson is also to do the formalities: to introduce people – making people feel welcome, especially newcomers and guests and also to thank people!

The chairperson will also need to summarise key points, make sure everyone can hear what is being said and clarify anything people do not understand. The tasks of the facilitator are aimed (but not limited) to making sure every discussion is progressive and that participants do not go off topic.

How to keep the group's attention and motivation
Naturally some meetings are going to be a bit dry and boring – they cannot all be fun and games! However, there are methods you can use to make meetings a little more diverse and interesting!

1- Although some people would consider it a time waster, beginning a session or meeting with an ice-breaker/energiser is really worthwhile. It gives people the opportunity to relax, do something informal and get to know each other a little better – vital for good

teamwork! In fact, energisers do not just need to be used at the beginning of meetings, use them when you feel it is most appropriate! If you can see that people need something to give them a blood-rush, get them up and get them to shake their bits and have a bit of shaking if the mood is right! At the end of the day, taking 5-10 minutes to do that will improve everyone's overall level of work. Take a look at the online annexes of this Manual for some of our own suggestions for what you can do, as well as some great links that can give you some ideas!

2- People will interact well in different ways. This can be through visual, hearing or hands-on methods. In order that people get the most out of meetings, try and include all of these three learning styles. By varying the approaches used in your meeting, you keep people more engaged.

3- Conflict within a group could definitely be a downer, so having some ideas up your sleeve, on how to deal with conflicts, could come in useful. People will feel demotivated if they think things are not going well – it could well lead to disengagement and loss of membership! Therefore, take a look at our leadership and teamwork section for more info on how to mediate and deal with conflict situations.

4- At the end of the meeting: be positive! Round it up on a good note, summarising what was achieved, praising people for their good work and motivating them for the work ahead before the next meeting. People like to feel appreciated and also like seeing results – often people do not realise how much they have really achieved in a meeting.

5- Keep a balance between personal benefits and organisational benefits. Although some things will be achieved through the work duty members have with respect to the group, this cannot be done alone. The organisational benefits cannot and must not outstrip the personal benefits individuals will also achieve – making new friends, accreditation for work, something to put on their resume. So make sure participants are getting something out of it for themselves in the meeting!

Minutes

Short intro to minute-taking

Taking minutes can be quite stressful - especially if you - the minute taker - want to contribute to the meeting as well. Therefore the following paragraphs will give you some tips to make your job as easy as possible.

If you have time, try to layout a minute structure before the meeting starts, so that you can get on with the job as soon as the meeting begins without falling behind. Decide whether you are more comfortable writing minutes by hand and either photocopying them or typing them up after the meeting, or maybe you are a quick typist and prefer typing them directly and have the possibility to circulate them to members straight away.

At the top of your page write which meeting it is (e.g. what group it is, such as your local school organisation/council or national group meeting), the venue and at what time it was being held. Underneath, it is always good practice to include who was attending the meeting. This might sound like a waste of time, but there might come a time when you need to go back and look this up.

Then you can start writing your minutes! It is ideal to outline them in almost a chart format. In the first column, number the different items of discussion, as numbered in the agenda. The next column should show a record of the discussion that took place. This does not mean you need to write down what was said word by word. These should be brief notes that summarise the key points that were made, with a variety of arguments (you may want to decide in advance of the meeting whether you want to record who said what and whether names should be included - but these may have implications if the minutes are to be publicly circulated), but should definitely state any decisions that were made. This should be followed by a column stating all the action points that need to

be made, followed by who and by when. You can find an example document in the annex.

The minutes should include the date for the next meeting and the venue, if you already know it, so that people have no doubt when it is. Minutes need to be circulated as soon as possible after the meeting so that people can follow up their tasks and actions straight away.

Once written, minutes should be agreed upon as a correct record of the meeting that took place. If people are unhappy with it, they can make amendments. This normally takes place at the next meeting of the group. This prevents it from being a record from just one person's point of view. The document will then be a formal record to be filed.

Public or private
The group needs to decide whether the minutes should be available to the public. The advantage of public minutes is that the interested public can keep up with what your organisation/group is doing and which decisions are being taken. On the other hand, sometimes there may be issues that you are discussing and that are confidential and should not be recorded so that just anyone can access them. You may decide then not to make those particular minutes available at all, or to cut out the sections you do not want people to read. Another possibility is to just publish the decisions.

Keep it short and simple
Remember that sometimes "the more you say, the less is being said". If you have written 10 pages of minutes, nobody will probably read them. Rather focus on tasks and concrete decisions instead of arguments, although this might sometimes be necessary.

example

UNSS Union of Secondary School Students of Serbia

August Newsletter 2015

Hello dear Members,

We hope this newsletter finds you well! It is a #BackToSchool month and we in the Union are very excited to share with you what we did during the summer and which plans we have for the next few weeks.

First of all, we would like to inform you about the training that we had from 23-29th of August in the village of Bečej. The main aims of the training were to reinforce our team, learn how to write project applications and encourage the team members to share their knowledge and act as multipliers in their schools and counties. If you would like to know how it all went, make sure you read the report at the following link.

Secondly, UNSS Board had a meeting and discussed upon several very interestiong topics. So here is what they have decided:
- UNSS Public Debate on Student Participation will be held in Belgrade on 30th of September and you are all invited to join us! For more information, please read this article;
- UNSS General Assembly will be held from 30th October to 2nd November in Belgrade, so make sure your school does have a representative because we will talk about many important and super fun things!

How to keep the communication with the base running smoothly

Ensuring that members of your organisation are up-to-date with what is going on is naturally important. It means that everyone feels included, knows what is happening within its organisation, and prevents things from being too centrally run. Likewise, good communication means that members in different areas are feeding back the work they are doing, which is great for sharing good ideas and resources, keeping up motivation and prevents people from repeating each other's work. This section will give you tips on how to communicate well with everyone in your organisation in order to ensure the above. Be aware that, as your organisation develops, you might need to introduce a communication strategy. However, this is not something that can be pre-planned, and rather it comes with the growth of the organisation.

Good communication is always a great skill to have in an organisation and something you may constantly try to improve, especially as new methods of communication are introduced with the ever developing world of technology. Successful communication with organisation's members should never be underestimated. Members need to hear from the organisation to either be reminded of the work the organisation is busy doing, to be encouraged to take part in projects and events or to learn more about the organisation.

But at the outset, what is communication? Communication is either making known, sharing information, thoughts or feelings with others. The way you communicate will adjust to the situation, depending on what you are trying to communicate and to whom. This is something you should have clear in mind.

Nowadays, thanks to many solutions available for group collaboration and online working, you should be able to find the ones that suit your requirements. Popular online platforms, e-mail, instant messaging group chats, online group calls, are just a few examples of communication channels that you can use. Every communication channel has to be used accordingly to its purpose – it might not be very efficient sending e-mails for very small one-line messages, and on the other hand it might not make a lot of sense trying to work on a document using instant messaging. Do not forget the value face-to-face meetings can bring either.

Different methods will be appropriate for different situations, but when thinking about your communication, you should keep in mind the following three points:
- Identify your message;
- Think about who needs to know what;
- Decide which method of getting it across is the best.

When communicating with members within the organisation, you also need to be careful and well coordinated. If you give too little, too much or conflicting information to your members, they might lose interest in your organisation very quickly. Therefore, you should try to come up with a balanced strategy on how to communicate with your members, be coherent and stick to it! Here are a few tips on how to communicate effectively.

Engage on different channels

Do not focus on a single channel to contact your members, try to use various communication methods to be noticed more and to reach out to a broader public. However, keep in mind that different channels need different types of content and use them accordingly.

Slow and steady wins the race

Instead of maintaining a very high degree of activity in the run-up to events and other activities and blacking out in the periods in between, make your presence consistent. You do not need to surprise your members with an epic story every day, but try to use less intrusive communication channels (such as social media) in a regular way, posting (interesting and possibly engaging!) content every few days, just to show your members what you've been up to and to remind them that you're still around and even working behind the scenes.

Do not overdo it

Especially with more intrusive communication channels such as e-mail or face-to-face communication, you should make sure that you contact your members sparingly. Bombarding them with information that is of little relevance will lead your audience to tuning out, ignoring further communications from you and thus harming your goal.

Do not forget the value of face-to-face

Meeting up with members is an invaluable way to keep in touch with them, show that you care about them and get a grasp on the issues that are most relevant for them. If you have the possibility to meet members on a regular basis, do it! Remember that good quality communication happens only when it's bilateral, in other words when it's a process of giving and receiving.

Be interesting

Last but not least, do not forget the humanity of people. Engage them with intriguing, witty content that hits close to home, content that really interests people and leaves them wanting more. Bring up emotional topics, issues that are dear to your audience.

Representation

Most school student organisations want to represent school students towards headmasters, ministries of education or other institutions. In that process, the following questions are often asked:

- What is the opinion of the school students?
- Which of the students' concerns need our engagement?
- Which institution (ministry of education, headmasters, secretariat, teachers' assembly, etc.) do we need to address?
- How do we best present our demands?
- Which options do we have?

Let's start from understanding what are the different bodies you can address in a school. These bodies might not be exactly the same you have in your context but we can say that they are the most common.

Teachers and teachers committee
Teachers are the third biggest component of a school community, yet very influential when it comes to decision making processes. They are often organised in trade unions but also in committees that discuss curricula, educational choices and school related policies. You might want to tackle them for example when it comes to taking decision concerning school activities or extracurricular activities and you need support to convince other parts of the school community.

Principal
The principal is usually the legal responsible in a school and the one with the very final word of many issues concerning the school running. Often if you want something you need to reach out to the principal in order to make sure you can actually achieve it. Principals sometimes have the perception of being evil people sitting at a desk but we can prove you wrong if you think so - with the right attitude and convincing arguments you will be perfectly able to be friends with them.

Parents
Most of people do not think of parents as part of the school community but they actually are. They are in fact a very important part of the school, but they are often not taken into account. Parents can be your allies or your enemies, but keep in mind that you stand on the same side and it might be very useful to find a compromise with them.

Board of management
The Board is often the highest decision making in the school. It is often composed by teachers, students, parents, staff and it ratifies the decision on curricula proposed by teachers, it defines the activities and most importantly it is responsible for the budget. Often the students in the Board, when they are included, do not have the right to vote. However, you should remember that if you want something, for example money for your study trips, then you should address these people and ask them to make room in the budget.

Student representatives
These are often few students elected to bring the voice of students to the higher levels of a school. They can be either nominated by the student council or elected ad-hoc for this task. Keep in mind that being a student representative is not a popularity contest but a serious responsibility to be held with accountability and readiness to receive inputs, take them in and make them become concrete outcomes.

Student councils (also known as Student Government group, Student organisation, Student Activity Council, Student Council Association or Student Body)
This is a curricular or extracurricular activity for school students. It is a student body whose main role is to ensure that all student rights are respected and to help better communication between students and teachers and school principals. The important duty of members of student council is to recognise and introduce others with students' interests and concerns. Student councils teach students democracy, leadership and teamwork while giving them a chance to get more than just formal education. Often this body is elected by students and then runs democratic elections to identify internal roles (president, chairperson, vice-chairs, committee members,etc) but it can also be a body that is not elected and just gathers all the students who want to join.

Other school staff
This component of the school community is always the silent one. They are the people working in the offices, the cleaning staff or the receptionist. They are not often listened to in the Board of Management but for you it is important to also include them in your work as they do belong to the community and will be happy to work with you to make it better.

Local/regional educational authorities
These are bodies that do not belong to the school but are strongly interconnected with it. They are the "big bosses" who make the decisions. Sometimes in school representation bodies you also have nominees to local and regional student councils which work directly with these bodies in policy-making.

Other bodies
The above-mentioned bodies are the most common ones, but school structures can differ a lot and it is possible that in your particular school there is another important body which is not mentioned here.

Opinion forming

Before you can represent the students, you need to know exactly what their opinion is. Of course, it will never really happen that they all have exactly the same opinion. Therefore, you have to orient yourself to the majority opinion. You can do this using a variety of methods.

At the beginning of an opinion forming process, there is always the need that you have to express your views on a particular subject. This might be the case because an institution approached you asking for a statement, because a change is about to happen and you are unsure what the students' opinion on it is, or because you would like to organise an activity that focuses on a particular topic.

If your organisation does not have a fixed opinion or you have solid grounds for believing that a once firmly held opinion is no longer representative, it is your task to ask the students. Why so? Being representative of the opinion of students does not only strongly support your action, but also make students feel part of the struggle and ownership of the actions you are taking. To consult the students on what are the hot topics, there are different methods available, some of which are explained in more detail below. In some cases, it might be possible to combine multiple methods.

Student Assembly

The student assembly is usually the highest decision-making body of an organisation. It should define the basic opinion of the organisation. Therefore, members' meetings are particularly good, since it allows to bring the opinions to a common denominator through discussions and because the decisions taken are democratically supported. The disadvantages are that at a meeting, not all interested people might be present (if it is an assembly of delegates) and that there might not be enough time to discuss all the relevant points. This also means that it could turn out to be more difficult to find a common point of view.

Public discussion

If you only need a rough overview of what the students think, you can hold a public discussion. You might also integrate the internet (for example social media platforms) into this discussion. The advantage of this approach is that the interested parties participate in the discussion and that you gain quality feedback. However, many students might not feel like they need to take part in the discussion and you might not get a representative picture of the entire student body. However, this method can be useful in connection with the student assembly.

Survey

A survey is very suitable to ask a large number of students about their views. You can vote either by classes or give a questionnaire to each student. In the first variant you get probably more feedback because it is per class and only one person needs to take care of it. However, the questions need to be simple. The second option allows you to ask more open questions and to get more precise and concrete answers. The return will be lower however, since all students have to complete the questionnaire on their own. You do not have to do this on paper, since there are a variety of online services that help you to do a survey - but sometimes, a paper version might be more efficient.

Working Groups

If you want a detailed position, it may be useful to establish a working group that involves interested

students. You can make sure that certain groups are adequately represented by reserving seats for them. Working groups allow to discuss various aspects in detail. The disadvantage here is that they require a large organisational effort and motivated and involved members.

Consultations

Once you have drawn up a draft opinion, you could submit this to consultation. This process means that the proposal is available to interested people and organisations, which may submit their comments on it. The feedback is collected, analysed and used as a basis for the final version.

If you want to have a consultation, you need to ask yourself who should participate. Many issues do not affect the entire student body, but perhaps only a certain age group. The advantage of a consultation is the accuracy. Some people might comment only on a small detail, while others express their views on the entire document. In this way, you can find out what the controversial points are. The main disadvantage is the long time this process takes (a few weeks, in the best case).

How to organise small events

Just do it! Organise a small event

Having a great organisation is fantastic, but the best way to get in touch with people and letting them share their ideas and inspiration is to bring them together at an event.

Before

Before you can start planning your event, you need to define what your event is about and what its goal is. Also, define your target group and how you want to promote your event.

As a rough guideline, you could separate educational and entertaining events. The first are about sharing knowledge, while the latter mostly aim to be an opportunity for your members to socialise and relax. Do not think that it is forbidden to mix the two, though!

Come up with an aim for the event. You can organise a workshop to train new activists or have a party to improve your publicity among students and raise their awareness for both your organisation and possibly a good cause, if your event is charitable.

example

A small event can be a MovieForum. You can pick a topic and timing (monthly, every other week, every six months) and then you open a poll for a movie to be chosen. Movies should be for sure related to the topic. For example if you want to organise a MovieForum on the topic of racism you can open a poll where you put film description and trailers of films like "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner", "Hairspray", "La haine" and "Gran Torino". You can organise the small event in the school or in a place outside of the school like a Youth Centre in your city. You can invite the whole student community and other young people, organise a small refreshment and play the movie. The crucial part is that after the movie you should open the floor for the discussion on the topic, link it to your actions and maybe involve some external actors who have experience on the topic you discuss. For example on racism you can invite organisations that work on anti-racism on your local level, institutional actors and tell the stories of the best practices on the topic. This can also be an opportunity for you to practice topic-wise involvement.

When drawing up your event, also keep in mind the resources that you can mobilise to hold your event. This includes both material resources, including meeting facilities, documentation, accommodation, food, financial resources and last but not least, human resources, which include the support staff you can count on for your event.

The run-up

After you've come up with a plan for your event, you can start organising it. This is quite a lot of work and, in fact, there is no magic formula that you can apply when organising any event, as it varies a lot depending on its different characteristics as defined above. However, here are some tips that we hope are useful for you when preparing an event.

Have someone in charge. Preparing an event is a lot of work. At the same time, it involves a lot of practical issues and details. In order to keep the process simple and fast, it is a good idea to make the organising not the responsibility of your entire organisation, but to have someone or a small team in charge.

Checklists. It is a good idea to have checklists that lay out the work that needs to be done and the deadlines by which something needs to be organised. Come up with these checklists in advance or, if the event is not completely new, recycle it from the last similar event. do not be afraid to modify the checklist if the need arises, and try to have everything ready a few days in advance, so you can still react if you notice that something crucial is missing or if something does not work out.

During

Be flexible. Many things can go wrong during your event, but you should not be afraid of them. Be ready to react flexibly if something goes wrong (e.g. technical equipment malfunctions or, most terribly, food is not delivered) and come up with solutions as fast as possible.

Have clear responsibilities. In order to react to unforeseen challenges, make sure all the support staff knows who to address in case of difficulty. Give these troubleshooters enough power so they can effectively react to an issue.

Make sure the entire support staff knows what to do and what is available. It is of utmost importance that your support staff knows exactly what to do when and can be reached by the responsible people. Have a schedule that helps people understand what they need to do when. Remember that the support staff is composed by people with human needs so don't underestimate their wellbeing.

Communicating and sharing. It's good to promote and share your event online by posting pictures and tidbits on social media.

After

Feedback and follow-up. When your event is over, the work is not entirely done. To make the experiences you have made during the event as long-lasting as possible, establish a culture of reporting. Have the participants give feedback on how they thought the event was (you do not need to make this formal but rather in very hands-on ways such as having everybody say something or drawing smileys on post-its – just make sure you find out where and how you can improve!).

Make a more detailed analysis of how things went and what should be done differently (and how?) internally: Have the support staff report what should be improved upon and make sure they are not afraid to give honest feedback. Have the event leaders write a detailed report how they did things and what was good, what was bad and how they would do it in the future and make sure it will be available to future event organisers. Also, to facilitate future events, create a checklist of the things that you had to get done in advance of the event and include a timeline. This will be very helpful if you want to repeat the event later on.

REMEMBER!
Remember to focus on the good things and celebrate your achievements!

Peer education

What is it?

Peer education is an educational process where people with a similar background or social group undertake non formal education activities to learn and explore a certain topic or field of interest for this group. The point of this process is to develop the group's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills through dialogue and mutual understanding, always linked to the needs and interests of the participants.

Peer education aims at influencing the development of young people in a positive way. It can help young people to get information and talk about sensitive topics. The core idea is that it is easier to confront a peer because of the shared background and shared interests. The peer educators are often seen less as authority figures and less likely to have a judgmental tone, they are considered to be rather friends than distant trainers.

Why?

Peer education is a powerful form of education because it comes from within the group. If a group has motivation to learn about a certain topic, the learning will be meaningful and the impact will be greater. When identifying a problem or a topic to tackle together with the group, the impact of what you learn and the actions that you will take will directly respond to the needs of your group and therefore will be even more powerful. Designing a learning process from the perspective of the participants is even more natural when we look at the world from their perspective anyway. We know what is needed and relevant to our target group because we are part of the target group. Evaluating what we have learned together is easier when the power-distance between the participants and the facilitators is smaller. It is then talking with each other, not to each other.

Furthermore, peer education activities (like the MovieForum we have introduced before) can be a great tool to enhance participation, the sense of belonging within your organisation, strengthen democracy and the overall internal functioning of your school student organisation.

How can you use peer education in your school or organisation?

There are many peer education activities that you can develop within your organisation. The main element you need to keep in mind is that it has to respond to the learning needs the members of your organisation have identified.

Maybe some of your members are interested in topics related to feminism/environmental issues/migration/ human rights/etc and feel they would like to learn more about these topics. They can get organised to debate around those topics, to educate each other and, who knows, you might have cool campaigns developing from these initiatives.

Maybe the active members of your organisation feel they don't have enough experience in financial management. To resolve this, you could contact former members that have been active in the organisation and run a small training on financial management.

What are the qualities a peer educator should have?

Interested: genuinely interested in the issues.
Concerned: wants other people to learn about the topic/ issues.
Committed: able to give of own time and energy.
In touch: aware of interests and attitudes of young people today.

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example

Many Mediterranean countries are facing a continuous flow of incoming migrants and many organisations, including students organisations, realised that the education system wasn't giving enough space to the needs of these people. Therefore, they decided to organise peer-to-peer education activities where they taught the basic language to the migrants for free; this helped a lot not only in developing linguistic skills but also starting together on the path of inclusion and understanding for each other and each other's background.

Accepting: tolerant of people and their opinions, regardless of race, culture, sex, ability.

Respectful: respects peoples' rights to their own choices, ideas, opinions.

Confident: but not arrogant.

Good at relationships: forming friendships and maintaining them.

Approachable: others talk to her_him openly and trust.

Self aware: knows her_him own strengths and needs.

Open: asks for help and learns from mistakes.

Trustworthy: can be relied upon to keep an agreement.

Good team member: can work with others towards a goal.

No cash, no fuel

Even though we all want to do great things, it might be difficult to do them without money. Luckily, there are a number of ways to get funding for your great ideas. In the following chapter, you'll find a few of them – but keep in mind that an open-minded approach and the willingness to jump at any opportunity will often help you, too. At the same time, it is important to stay attentive as to where your money comes from – if you accept **government-funding or corporate sponsorships**, one might argue that you are no longer independent. Try to assert your neutrality without scaring off sponsors.

Corporate sponsorships

Receiving money from companies is often more difficult than from the governmental public sector.Try to offer companies something in return and make it as appealing as possible. For corporations, school student organisations can offer an invaluable approach to a promising group of potential customers, that is young people. By convincing companies that you can give them a lot of positive exposure, they might be willing to support you. You can for example propose them to put their logo on the banner of the event you are organising, but you should always make sure that their money won't influence your way of working and that you stay independent from their interests.

Merchandising

Many school student organisations have shops where they sell office supplies such as pens, erasers, notepads etc. to their members, at competitive prices that still include a small profit for the organisation. If your turnover is large enough, you might be able to make this another source of income for your organisation. If you are running actions on a particular topic you can make nice t-shirts and then sell them for something more than you actually paid for them, but keep in mind that your organisation should not become a business and you should never make a profit with these activities, otherwise you lose accountability towards the students. Merchandising can be cheap if you invest in bigger quantities, so make sure you print out stuff that you can actually use for long and not only for one week. And hey, it is a very effective way to share your message, your visual identity and to catch new members!

Want to do something eco-friendly whilst getting some cash? You can print hard-plastic cups or water bottles with your logo on it and then sell them so that students do not have to waste the plastic cups that the canteen in the school provides.

If you do merchandising on a wider scale, you should look up the rules regarding Value Added Tax (VAT) in your country, in particular if you are a non-for-profit organisation, which usually has a different regulatory framework.

Concerts and other events

If you keep the costs of the event down, revenue from tickets will be a good source of funding for your organisation. Another possibility is to have a lottery where participants can win prizes (which should not be too expensive for you) if they buy a lottery ticket. Sometimes you can decide to have concerts with no fixed price, which will not scare off people who want to come, and you can have an up-to-you box at the entrance. Moreover you can organise a small bar or bake delicious cakes and cookies and sell them for very little money. Other events can be sport tournaments where you ask for a participation fee and you use part of the money for a prize and the rest you use for funding other activities. More tips? Try to think of organising dinners, or a small market with handmade objects or second-hand books. Fundraising is all about being creative and we are very sure that you and your group are very ready to accept the challenge and come up with amazing strategies.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a way of getting funding by the crowd, as the name suggests. It is usually done online and based on a particular project. It's pretty easy to create a crowdfunding campaign but you have to be ready to share and disseminate as much as possible, as there is a lot of competition on this field. In order to create a fundraising campaign you need:

- An idea, a concrete project and a promoter for this;
- One or more concrete outcomes to give as a reward;
- A supporting group (at least a small one to start from);
- A platform where you want to start your crowdfunding campaign;
- To share the campaign on social media.

For charity-based crowdfunding you can also not have a reward but usually people appreciate it more when they can get something out of the money they donate. You can decide on different rewards for different donated amounts.

When trying to get funding, be persistent. Try as many sources of funding as possible, and write to any company you can find, even if you do not believe they will support you – you can only be surprised positively. And last but not least, do not believe there is no happiness or fulfilment without money. You can also do a lot on a small or non-existent budget, you just need to be even more creative. Many organisations that have been started have managed to operate for a long time without much money, so don't panic and don't get stuck here - just do it!

The School Student Organisation of **NoMoneyForStudentsLand** organises a writing contest for emerging writers in the school and they have no money to run the activity, so they decide to have a crowdfunding campaign. They realise that they can use the outcomes of the contest as a reward for donors so they put the campaign online and offer the following:

Donate 5€ and get an awarding certificate
Donate 10€ and get a online copy of the winning text
Donate 15€ and get a certificate with a printed copy of the winning text
Donate 20€ and get a printed and signed copy of the winning text printed in paperback

They share the crowdfunding campaign among the participants to the contest, among the families and the friends and raise 500€ so they can print some copies, disseminate them and the donors get something back out of the money they donated.

Floating in space

You have now come so far that it's time to start working on promoting your agenda and trying to defend the rights of the students. This is the phase where we will help you to start reaching out to your members and actually start influencing and promoting your agenda. In the following chapter we will give you advice on how to influence, on media handling and on how to build partnerships.

How to influence

The point of your organisation is to influence and promote your agenda. In this chapter we will share different ways how you can influence decision-making processes, decision-makers and public opinion.

It is the right of school students to develop and express views freely on matters affecting them. School students must be seen as stakeholders in the educational process, simply because they are competent to say what they think or how different educational decisions affect them, as well as given the fact that students are expert on what is good and what is bad in schools.

School student organisations have a unique mandate in their work - to speak on behalf of the school students and to influence decision-makers to listen what the school students have to say or think.

Through strengthening school students' legal situation, many hope that school students may influence their education much more. The struggle with improving the school students' legal status (the rights) is very important but it is not everything. To fully take advantage of the situation, school students need to be effective when it comes to influencing decision makers. School students must be seen as part of the decision-making processes and an equally respected party in creating policies.

The influence of the school student movement is not guaranteed, but this must never be the reason to stop influencing and working for being seen as a relevant stakeholder. Sometimes you will feel inexperienced and not so respected by decision makers but our suggestion is that you lift your head, look ahead and show the outside world that in that situation you are representing a group of students with a precise need and that you have a mandate from them, either elected or not. It is necessary that you do not remain alone on the way, but get teachers, parents and politicians to understand our viewpoint and support your efforts. This may be done through lobbying, advocacy and discussions.

Lobbying and advocacy

As a school student organisation you might want to lobby and influence the following actors: teachers, headmaster, national agency for education, ministry of education and the school board. When you draw up your strategy, you also need to identify your target(s).

To influence the bodies mentioned above, the school student organisation needs to understand how a decision is made. It is easy to think that all questions live their own lives without any real rules but the following model defines the process of all questions from when they are

mentioned until they are implemented. Here, we list the steps that a decision making body (e.g. a government, a minister, a member of your parliament) will follow to take a decision, from the idea to the actual implementation of the decision converted in law:

- The problem is defined, structured and its source identified;
- The different solutions are defined;
- A possible solutions is singled out as official proposal;
- The formal decision is made;
- Practical implementation - this part includes putting in place the decision with the tools described in the law, the timings set in the discussion and so on;
- How did things go?
- Learning from the mistakes and successes.

Where in this process an issue has a big impact, whom you should try to influence and what kind of demands you can lobby for? The basic rule is: the longer the process has been going on, the harder it is to influence the decision. One should remember that the process is cyclical and therefore it might be good to act even though you cannot win this issue but you can always take a stand before the next process.

Just raising an issue or giving also a concrete solution?
When the school student organisation puts a new issue on the agenda a problem is lifted. This is relatively easy to do and therefore, the competition on the "problem market" is hard. The problems lifted by the school student organisation are competing for attention against other stakeholder's problems. Remember that you are a citizen and not a decision maker or a policy maker so your role in society is to be active and provide the ruling bodies with ideas, suggestions and a mandate to do something. For this reason when you analyse a problem and find a solution this does not have to be necessarily concrete and detailed. If you for example are fighting against budget cuts in your region you need to have a set of precise claims to bring to the politicians but you will not necessarily need a counter budget proposal. It's not your task; do not overload yourself and your fellow students!

When the process has started there is no reason to lift problems, the decision maker has already decided on a problem that he_she wants to solve. Here is a possibility to influence through presenting a solution. This demands that the school student organisation has been informed and consulted. Therefore, it is very important for the organisation to be recognised as a stakeholder in the decision making process and to follow it closely. If the organisation can produce solutions, its possibilities to influence are increased immensely.

Lobbying and advocacy are a central part of the agenda. To succeed with lobbying you need extensive planning, analysing and a good strategy.

Planning your lobbying

Most school student organisations have a political programme that defines the organisation values and opinions. The programme often contains several issues of which the organisation can choose what to lobby for at the moment, depending on what issues are on the agenda of the other stakeholders/bodies active in the field. The current shape of the political landscape will affect the success of the lobbying. Maybe all of the teachers have recently been to an anti-bullying conference or to a presentation on new teaching methods. You should take advantage of timing your lobbying right. To increase the prospect of success, the school student organisation could select issues that are fitting in the political landscape. But some pressing issues need to be promoted however limited the prospect of success might be.

Much of the success of the lobbying work will be defined already in the analysis phase. That is why it is important that the organisation analyses the issue as well as the political landscape. These two are tightly connected.

In the analysis of the issue the following questions should be asked:

- What is the concrete objective?
- What is the background of the matter?
- Are there any other issues that this topic is based on?
- What are the different viewpoints about the issue? Do you have arguments to debate on those viewpoints and bring your counter-proposal forward.
- Whom do we lobby for? (Who is benefiting from the change we propose, what school student groups are we reaching?)
- How strong is the support among the students?

In the analysis of the political landscape following questions should be posed:

- Can we succeed in this issue?
- Who has the power over the matter?
- Can we access this person?
- What alliances can be built?
- What are our potential opponents?

Once the analysis is made, the strategy can start to take form. The strategy should include the answer to following questions: how? when? who? but also focus on what media you are using.

Strategic work, meaning to focus on the objective, can be described with the following model:

- Objective identification – In this phase you will identify what is your goal, in other words: what do you want to accomplish.
- Analysing and planning – Now it's time to start planning how and what you will do to be able to accomplish your goal.
- Action - In this big part of your journey you will have to act following the plan you came up with in step 2. For sure you will have a detailed plan and a set of precise objectives but sometimes things do not go as smooth as you expect and you need to re-assess and change your plan of work. During the action part, it is important to introduce the element of negotiations (refer to next page, Demonstrations). In fact your objective might not be easy to accomplish so you and your team will have to manage the delicate phase of coming up with new objectives and negotiate to accomplish those at least.
- Accomplishment - You have now accomplished your goal if everything went according to your plan, but sometimes you might only partially accomplish your goal. During the negotiation phase you might need to come up with a compromise with policy makers to partially realise your objectives. From time to time you might not want to reach a compromise and want to keep fighting to reach your original objective but keep in mind that this decision needs to be shared by all the students and cannot be a decision you take for the sake of looking cooler. It's always important to celebrate the good work you have done so far.
- Evaluation – Now it's time to go through the process, what went well and what bad. Evaluate the work so that you can improve your skills and then you can be even more successful next time.

Concerning lobbying activities it is usually much more effective to choose a smaller number of issues to work with. Doing this the organisation also seems more focused and can promote a clearer message to the public.

In your city the mayor decided to shut down a school because there are too few students going there. It's a vocational school for hairdressers and the nearest one is 150 km away. The public opinion is split on the positivity or negativity of this situation but your local school student organisation believes this is going to put students of that school in a difficult position and there will be a high percentage of drop-outs. Families are not interested in this topic and students do not know how to work to keep the school open. You realise you have this problem and define your objectives. You want the mayor to understand the importance of the school and want it to be kept open. Now you know what your objective is you might decide to plan these activities:

1. Organise a students' assembly to coordinate actions and divide the work
2. Organise a public assembly with families and teachers where you invite experts to speak about the negative effects of this desion and the risk of dropouts; also you present the economic aspect of this.
3. Organise actions and demand a meeting with the mayor now that you convinced a lot of families to join your struggle
4. The mayor tells you that students will benefit from free accommodation in the city where the school is situated. This is the moment where you might need to re-assess and decide with the other students what you want to do: you can accept the compromise or you can decide to fight again, whatever you decide with the rest of the students we remind you that the decision should be democratic and ideally in this situation should be done by consensus.

(Whatever you decide, we invite you to read further to know how to carry on negotiations, how to fight harder and how to run a campaign)

example

Demonstrations

Demonstrations are a good way to show power and will to the decision makers. It's good to bear in mind that different countries have different customs regarding demonstrations, so remember your country's culture.

One of the best-proven methods of voicing a large group's opinion is going out on the streets, and making it heard by the ministry of education, the public, authorities, teachers and whoever else is concerned. But as it is a powerful activists' tool, it also comes with a number of responsibilities, things to watch for (security, primarily), and potential conflicts to manage. This chapter will guide you through the different steps of a demonstration, from the idea of a demonstration to the debriefing meeting after it has happened.

It is often forgotten, but although demonstrating can a be very powerful and effective tool to obtain what the demonstrators want, it is not always the best thing to do.

Here is a checklist to see if what you want to achieve should be done through a demonstration or not:

- You want to raise awareness on an issue, or change a situation or someone's opinion and you have tried all other less conflict-oriented methods;
- The issue is very precisely and clearly defined;
- You know who can make things change;
- You have good arguments to act upon that issue;
- There is a general interest and support from the students' side regarding this issue.

Some practical things to keep in mind when you are organising a demonstration

In some countries you need to let the local authorities know if you are organising a demonstration, so check if this is the case in your country. You might take the decision of running a demonstration or an action that is not legally authorised for several different reasons, nevertheless we strongly encourage you to follow all the rules and make sure that you have all the permissions that you need. It is important in this situation that when you take the decision all the members and the participants are informed about what is likely to happen from a legal point of view - if foreseen by legislation. Even if the authorities are not on your side, if you are a huge and powerful group, you will have an upper hand and can easily reach an agreement with the authorities, in the end it is your democratic right to express your opinion.

Remember to plan your demonstration. What will you need to bring to the demonstration? Divide the tasks between team members. You might need to have preparatory meetings with all the different actors participating to the demonstration to coordinate actions, communication, organisation during the event and presence of different people.

If your demonstration is going to be fairly large, it's good to coordinate with the local authorities and police. The police might want to come to protect your safety as well to ensure that everything runs smoothly with traffic. Again, police are there as public authorities and their behaviour depends on your behaviour, so this is also something you might need to discuss in your preliminary meetings. It is also important when running a big demonstration to have a self organised security group that keeps everything under control.

Remember about safety; work with the police and authorities so that you can guarantee the safety of the participants. Also, be prepared for conflicts among the participants and have a plan on how you will resolve these conflicts. For example, self-organised security can be a starting point. If the situation escalates, the police will be glad to help you. In order to completely avoid conflicts you can try to make sure that everyone is on the same page before the demonstration through the coordination meetings, that the journey of the march, the actions and the objectives are clearly defined and agreed on by consensus.

Remember to evaluate and debrief in order to learn from your mistakes and make your next actions. Some questions you might want to ask the group are: Did we reach our objectives? Was this what we expected? Did we reach out to the right public? How was the media coverage? Did we involve students and got new members? What did we learn from this experience?

Follow up is always important in order not to lose what you built with your demonstration. It is often necessary to call for a meeting after the demonstration to both evaluate (as above) and decide how to continue the action. As you will learn in the chapter "Floating towards new horizons", you should never drop your cause and always continue your journey.

Negotiations

School student organisations have a lot to win in a successful negotiation. The key to influence is often found in how much a headteacher, municipality or school board chooses to listen. These power holders are often experienced, confident and skilled negotiators. It is important for the school student organisation representatives to rise to their level and become equally skilled negotiators. However, negotiating is not a proper way of influencing decisions, but more of a skill you need to have in order to face the challenges you will encounter during your path through decision making and influencing the decision makers.

Decision makers do not usually get scared or more willing to help just because you are angry. To influence decision makers, more improved and sharpened methods than anger are needed. When you try to influence someone that might not be ready to actually listen and change things you and your group might get pretty angry, and we recognise it happens pretty often. Anger is not the emotion that will help you reach out for your objective if you do not convert it to constructive criticism, passion and determination. Acting under the influence of anger and emotions makes us less rational, but is not to be completely avoided when emotions make us more human and real. The decision makers also respond better if you present a solution instead of just complaining.

When one has chosen to negotiate one has more to win if the counterpart is onboard. As a result everything that makes the counterpart more positive in relation to a common solution is good for one's cause. Understanding the counterpart, his_her thoughts and signals is, therefore, fundamental.

Just like in all lobbying work, planning is everything. The first step is to analyze the situation and build a strategy for your lobbying.

You can use the following way to develop the strategy.

Analyse the situation
- What is the purpose of negotiation?
- Can the aim be achieved without negotiating?
- Who is the counterpart?
- Why does the counterpart want to talk to you?
- What are his_her options?
- What is the counterpart's attitude towards you?
- Does he_she trust you?
- Do you trust the counterpart?
- What needs and motives drives him_her?
- Try to see the counterpart's view of the situation;
- Define your interests clearly;
- Think of how you handle the counterpart's actions if the negotiation does not go your way;
- Think of an appropriate approach towards the counterpart.

Influencing the decision making
Often as an organisation you want to change the mind-set of the decision makers or you want them to listen to your opinion. This is often done through meetings; in this chapter you will get some advice on how to handle them. These meetings are a way for you to promote your ideas but you also to promote your organisation. Influencing people through meetings is not always easy, so focus on the long-term result and do not expect fast results.

Preparing the meeting
When you have set up the meeting, it's time to start preparing. It's often good if you write a statement paper to take with you to the meeting so that you can leave it behind and the participants of your meeting can take a closer look later. In this policy statement, it's good to have more facts and arguments to which you can refer during the meeting. It is also helpful to do some research on the person or organisation you are meeting

with so that you know their opinion on the topic.

When presenting your topic, remember to be realistic. If you do offer a solution, you will be taken much more seriously.

Follow up - what to do after the meeting?

After the meeting, it's good to have a follow up. Politicians may promise a lot, so it's your responsibility to remind them of the promises they made. After each meeting you should take notes and think how you can preceed and what the next step is. Lobbying is an ongoing process and you will hopefully see results in the long run.

Building public opinion AKA campaigning

Instead of just influencing decision makers, it's also important to bring public opinion behind you. To change the public opinion to support your cause is vital since most decision makers are elected by people and if most of the people change their mind so will the decision makers. One way to influence public opinion is through campaigns.

Everybody in a society has a lot of opinions when it comes to discussing school issues, since more or less everyone has attended it. It is relatively easy to build up opinion and start debates concerning education. It is also a fact that most people feel really strongly about education and hold education to be one of the most important things in life.

Campaigning is a way to try to change or influence public opinion. Campaigning could be used not only to change public opinion but also to set an item on the public agenda, provided that decision makers discuss students' view.

Campaigns tend to become rather expensive - not only when it comes to money, but also when it comes to human resources - but you do not necessarily need a big budget to do a successful campaign. Campaigning, in general, means using several different channels and tools to spread a message and hopefully win political support for it.

But what are these tools? We can divide 4 categories of tools and give some examples

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Social actions

- demonstrations
- flash-mobs
- guerrilla campaigns
- petitions
- strikes
- surveys
- take part in other debates
- protests
- school strikes
- citizen initiatives
- occupations
- banner drops

Media actions

- social media
- newspapers
- tv
- press conferences
- communication gadgets
- flash mobs
- petitions
- researches
- banner drops
- interviews

Discussion actions

- debates
- round tables
- public assemblies
- meetings with decision makers
- presentations
- talks
- seminars and trainings

Internal actions

- trainings
- surveys
- internal meetings
- social events

Public campaigns can only reach results if they are balanced with a well-planned lobbying strategy, but it can be a good compliment to meet decision makers and at the same time, it is often good for the student organisation's public image.

Before going public with your campaign, it is important that the issue is clearly defined and understood within the organisation. People should be well trained and prepared. Hence it is a good idea to organise campaign-training courses, where the members get a detailed overview of the topics that are tackled in the campaign. Only if the members of the organisation stand behind the campaign fully and feel well trained, the campaign can be strong and powerful.

Once you have a strong crew of well-trained people, it is time to address the public with your message. There should be a starting point such as campaign launching event, media action or panel discussion, accompanied by a press release.

A clear message
To have an impact, your campaign should have a clear message that can be grasped easily. You should have a catchy title and slogan. In the era of social media you shouldn't forget to have a hashtag so that people can share their thoughts and participate online.

Ways of action
Secondly you need to offer the target individuals a way of action, your campaign needs to be easily accessible for the people. How can they support your campaign and help you reach your goals? Can they sign a petition? Write to their political representatives? Wear a symbol? Enter a website to find out more? Show their support on social media? Whatever way you choose you need to involve the people in your campaign and this needs to be easy and not need a lot of effort.

Different levels of campaigns demand different strategies
Building opinion is usually done in three arenas: the street, the café, and the media. An important part of monitoring the political landscape is done in these three arenas.

The street - The street symbolizes small talk, no long discussions just general chitchat about things to which people do not necessary feel strong emotional attachment to. What do people talk about when they meet in the corridor? How can the student organisation make sure that people talk about their issues?

The café - This, of course, does not refer only to an actual café, but any similar place where people meet and discuss and debate. What is being said? Who is in the majority? To affect the café, you need more information than just slogans. People need to relate to the issue and feel some kind of deeper interest in it. How can the student organisation create this interest among the public?

The media - What is being said not only in newspapers, TV and radio but also on blogs and social media? How can your organisation affect this?

When the picture of the situation is clear your organisation can choose to act following a strong opinion or start to work to change a "wrong" public opinion. It is important to differentiate between a public opinion among the people and a public opinion among the students. The organisation should never try to change the students' opinion - that is the organisation members and the organisation should not be working against their members. If you, as an individual, find the students' opinions to be wrong you can work personally to try to change it but never in the name of the organisation.

"The street" can be influenced by posters, t-shirts, stickers, flyers, notebooks, street theatre, etc. Everything that can catch the school students' attention is interesting. A good idea is that they carry the slogan of your campaign, an image that is the logo of your campaign (an eye catcher is very important). The material should also give brief information about the content and background of your campaign

Reaching the café is harder. Deeper information is necessary for people to be able to discuss the issues more than just briefly. Spread pamphlets, set up info points in school cafeterias and organise public events like debates, seminars, panel discussions, etc. For example, if your campaign is about racism in schools you can invite people who have different opinions on the topic (politicians, people from anti-racism non-governmental organisations, etc.)

Reaching media is often based on contacts and the news value of the issue. There must be a public interest in your message for the journalists to publish it. If the school student organisation is well-known and has a good reputation this is easier. Press releases are not the only way of addressing the media, prepare a "campaign-kit" for the media and other stakeholders, to have them informed about your campaign, its content and your goals.

The follow up - the importance of evaluation
This part is often forgotten. How did we manage? What has been done? What has gone well? What could be done better the next time? There is no "perfect campaign", but in order to reach your goals, evaluation is important to value your actions and make the next campaign even better.

1. Realise and analyse

My school does not have facilities for students on wheelchair.

2. Gather information

My organisation and I look for laws that confirm it is necessary to have them, we search for documents of the school that say something about this.

3. Look at the end of the road (Expected outcome)

We define that our expected outcome is to have ramps within 2 months.

4. Together we stand, divided we fall (Find partnerships)

We cannot fight this battle alone so we call on parents, on the organisation of people with disability and the teachers union to work together in this campaign.

5. The path to the tunnel (tools)

What should we do for this? What kind of tools do we want to use? Together we decide to have a flash mob, a strike of students on wheelchairs that won't come to school until they have ramps, we also organise public discussions and media actions in TV.

6. Could I do this differently?

We call our partners and check if they agree or have suggestions on how to make our plan better. They suggest we also have a training in the organisation and with partners on the topic of accessibility.

7. Check your resources

Together with our partners we check our budget but also how many people we have for the campaign running and we divide into teams.

8. Prepare the ground

During this phase we go again through all the steps, we have a general recap and we establish deadlines, responsibilities and coordinating people for each aspect and action of the campaign.

9. Kick-off the campaign

With a lot of excitement we run the campaign and the plan as we had it, ready to face challenges and negotiate but willing and determined to will our battle. We raise the case, we struggle and… we win!

10. Evaluate and follow up

We hold an evaluation meeting and we decide together if there's anything else to do for the school community.

+ Celebrate your achievements

We party with our partners and our community for the victory!

External communication

As you will be well aware, the media is one of the most powerful tools you can use, so getting well equipped with your media skills is worth your time. Why should you approach the media? Among different reasons, they have the power to influence others' opinions; they can be your free publicity; they can spread a message and raise awareness on different topics you are tackling; they can be used for producing a positive image of something and raise profile; they can influence government and get students interested or active in your organisation. However, another reason why you need to know how to handle media it is also because these tools can also have negative effects and you have to prevent this as much as possible! This section will give you the opportunity to think about how to work best with the media.

There are many different types of media: newspapers and magazines, television, radio, social media and internet. Developing a good relationship and being flexible with them will be fruitful in the future and having the media on your side will hopefully mean better and more positive coverage about your organisation.

First of all, if you are thinking about having media coverage for whatever you are doing, you need to make sure that it would be attractive to the media. If it is not an interesting story, who would want to hear about it? Why would any media want to cover it if the story will not "sell"? (However, do not let this overtake your fundamental reasons for doing something.) Journalists spend their working lives coming up with stories that reveal something new to either entertain or inform their audience about what is going on in the world. The 'newsworthiness' of a story usually fits into one of the following categories: conflict, hardship or danger to the community, novelty, scandal or individual achievement.

But stories can be interesting to journalists for a number of other reasons such as:

- It illustrates a trend - small, single issues are not always of great interest. Journalists are more interested in stories that have something to say about society as a whole and how it is changing;
- It is a surprise - evidence that counters a commonly held belief will always gain attention. It is concise and easy to understand - the essentials must be able to be compressed into no more than one short paragraph;
- It can be understood by anyone - your story should be interesting to the widest audience possible and be free of jargon or narrow, specialist issues;
- It shows why something is unique - some stories may just be about what a particular organisation is and does. It is powerful and memorable;
- It has a news hook or 'peg' - try to relate what you are doing to something that is already in the news or topical. To get out stories into the news, try to work out angles that will appeal to journalists.

And do not forget that your story also needs to be attractive to your target group! For instance, if you are running an event to recruit students, there is no use in running something that will attract the elderly because it would not achieve your goal. Run something that is lively and that would make a good news story that would attract a youthful eye.

Once you think you have pitched your event correctly, you need to contact the media - creating a good relationship using personal contact will mean that they are more likely to listen to you as well as know that you are a good organisation to work with. Thus, when they need a contact to get a quote or opinion when a related story comes up, they know who and where to turn to!

Action: have someone from your organisation as a media contact, who can file official responses to articles and who can maintain a consistent relationship. It would be helpful if this person is readily available as well.

Journalists work on a tight schedule and do not have time to wait around to see if you are free. However, this does not mean that you must always provide an immediate response to their questions. It might sometimes be

better if you take a little time, in order to have a good think, collect views from other members of your group and make sure you give a good answer. Quite likely you will be able to agree with the media a deadline by which you need to respond.

It is good to have communication with the media before, during and after your event. This will enable you to get the best coverage possible

How to write a press release/ statement

One way of being in touch with the media and getting your message out is by posting a statement and press release. This is a piece of text where you state your opinion or comment an ongoing topic. While writing the statement, it is important to be consistent so that it's interesting to the busy journalist who reads it. It's also good to have a few quotes that the media can use in their articles. Also focus on your title and how you present your opinion, remember to be interesting and do not forget your target group. A piece of advice is also to write the most important things in the beginning so that the journalist actually reads it as well. Also, if your press release is too long, they will most likely start leaving out parts from the end. There are different platforms where you can share the statement, such as publishing it on your website, social media and sending it to key people/actors such as journalists, politicians etc. It's also important to include the contact information so the press can easily reach you for commenting. If your press release is about

an event that has already taken place, include one or two high quality photos with good resolution.

Social media

Today, the use of social media is rising and having a presence online is nowadays really important. Here are a few pieces of advice on how to build your presence and act online.

First of all it's easier and better for you and the organisation if you have a clear plan on what your presence is online. This plan should consist of at least the following points:
- What picture do you want others to have of your organisation? How do you want to be perceived?
- Who is your target group?
- How do you use different online platforms? Which ones are more suitable for formal communication and which ones for more relaxed and informal content?

In an organisation, it's also good if you have someone in charge of social media. The rules and tips that you have for "traditional media" also apply for social media, so be careful - journalists can quote your online posts as well.

Sharing pictures is a nice way of showing your members what you're doing, so post pictures of meeting, conferences, etc. Social media are a great platform to engage in debate online, so simply be active. You can also share and promote your events online especially in a time when most people get most info from social media platforms.
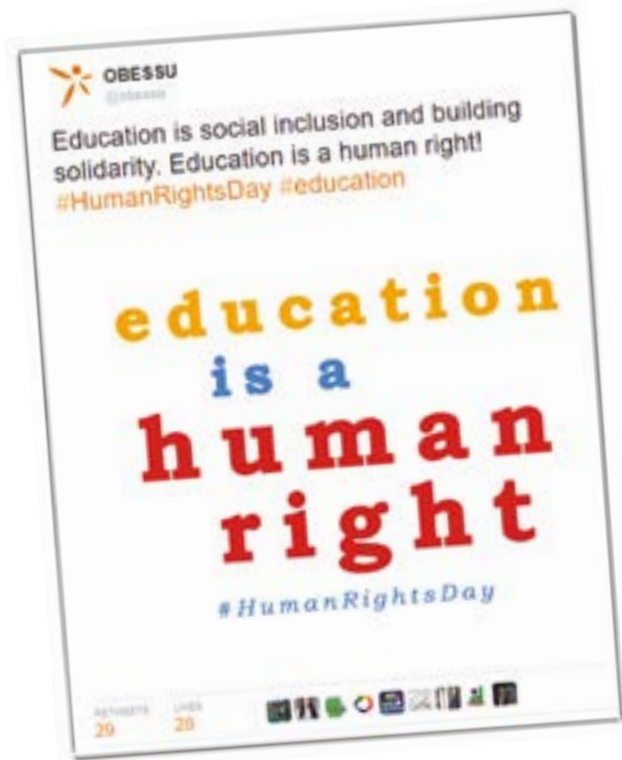
There are a few good pieces of advice to follow for online communication. First, be short and concise. Second, be catchy because in today's society you are "competing" for people's attention more than ever so you really need to have an interesting message to get people's attention. The most important thing, however, is not to forget your target group - make sure you are properly reaching out to young people.

OBESSU
@obessu

Education is social inclusion and building solidarity. Education is a human right!
#HumanRightsDay #education

education
is a
human
right

#HumanRightsDay

Building partnerships

Partnership is an agreement or arrangement between two parties (partners) which is made for the sake of advancing their mutual interest.

Good partnerships are a vital part of an organisation and can often be really helpful and important. You seem more powerful if you can partner up with some other actors so that together you can have a louder voice. Partnerships are also good because you can combine different organisations' expert fields.

For example, one organisation might have the work force, another one the cash and the third one the network. This is using the resources effectively and wisely. You can partner up with similar organisations, for example an upper secondary school student organisation could partner up with higher education student organisations and together try to influence some overlapping topics. Other examples on good partners might be teachers unions, journalists/newspapers and youth organisations. Political parties' youth sections can also be a valuable partner in your advocacy work.

Remember that you do not need to share all of the same values as the youth parties, but only the same goal, and make sure you do not let them instrumentalise you, but stay neutral. Often partnerships are built on overlapping topics or projects. It's also good to have partnerships abroad so that you can influence on an international arena, but local partnerships are at least as important if not even more.

When building partnerships, you should have a clear answer to the following questions:
- What are our goals of this partnership?
- How can we benefit from it?
- What can we offer?
- What is our timeline?
- Do we have the necessary resources?

Here you find a list of possible partners and institutions you might want to network with. They are very different and depend on the answers to the questions proposed before.

Who do you network with?
- Ministry of education;
- Foundations;
- National youth councils;
- Trade unions (teachers unions) ;
- Education centres;
- Training centres;
- Members of parliament;
- Charity organisations;
- Other school student organisations;
- University student organisations;
- Any other civil society organisations.

What do you do with them?
- Networking;
- Mutual support;
- Seek for money / fundraising opportunities;
- Project;
- Capacity building;
- Campaigns;
- Trainings;
- Visibility;
- Debates.

Why do you network?
- We are more powerful together;
- Together we can have an impact on education policies;
- We promote our politics and policies;
- We represent the same group;
- We learn and share experiences;
- To get money.

Hopefully, after this chapter, you have learned the ways how you and your organisation can start influencing the decision-making process and you feel ready for the next challenge in front of you. It's time to start working on achieving your goals and your agenda. We wish you the best of luck in raising the school student's voice and making the schools better step by step. And remember that you won't always win when advocating and lobbying - so be persistent and do not give up easily.

Floating towards new horizons

The success of the project you started depends on you and the ability you and your fellow students have to keep up the good work and keep on building the capacity of your organisation. Building a school students organisation – of whichever kind – requires a lot of care and a lot of curiosity. In this chapter we will explore the different steps you will have to take to "not let the beauty die" and to make sure you can grow and face the challenges that come from the development of your project and your group.

Knowledge management

Knowledge management is certainly one of the biggest challenges and threats that you can face during the development phase of your organisation or group. What do we mean by knowledge management? The group you will build will develop a set of **knowledge, skills, capabilities** that are often difficult to mantain with the passing of time. You, your fellow activists and the people who helped you with establishing the organisation will not be there forever and what you have to make sure is that the heritage these people will leave does not get lost in transition. We would all love to be Peter Pans and be school students forever but, unfortunately, there's a moment of our life when we stop being such and we progress in our life. Here are some ways you can ensure continuity between your generation and the next generation, in order to pass on projects, knowledge, tips and methods.

Documentation and Archives

Written documents are a very important and easy to access tool. You should always keep in mind that future generations might not be able to access your memories and the understanding of different projects and processes you had "back in the day". It is therefore important to consider the different methods to pass on knowledge.

Minutes

Whenever you hold a meeting it is a good practice to note down what has been said, which were the different ideas, which was the final decision and what are the next steps and the task division. Not only it is very useful in the ordinary management of the organisation but it also helps newcomers to get familiar with the working methods, the rationale behind certain decision and an idea on how to structure their work. When you take minutes keep in mind that someone else will have to read them so be honest, be clear, be short and make sure you do not assume things other won't assume. Transparency also means accountability and possibility to reproduce actions! Refer to the paragraph "Minutes" at page 25.

Short reports

Short reports are similar to minutes but they report different processes and the experiences the different people, or generations had. They are a "logbook". But being a good captain also means that in this case you should make sure that everyone can access your log without going crazy. Be honest and be precise, these are the two main rules. You can use short reports when you plan a campaign, when you create a political project, when you have internal and external meetings, when you have meetings with partners and above all with institutions. You can also use them to report about big events like General Assemblies, conferences and seminars, demonstrations and parties, but above all it's important you leave something about your and your group's experience.

What should you include in the report?
- The process of ideation of the event you are reporting (needs analysis, aims and objectives etc);
- The process of organisation and fundraising for the event;
- Practical issues and obstacles encountered;
- Failures and successes in the process;
- The overall results (what was good, what was bad);
- Tips for the future.

It is also a good idea to report about the year overall and write an annual report considering the different aspects: from membership to funding, from the milestones to the projects you run and the campaigns you created.

Social media and email backup

What makes an organisation living in the years of digitalisation it is for sure its online content production. E-mails will for sure be one of the primary means of communication between different people in an organisation, and for sure backing-up relevant email conversations is one mean to help newcomers understand the different decision-making processes, above all when decisions are taken online. Other than emails you can also share contents, articles, pictures and other kind of information on social media platforms. Backing up social media allows the conservation of a lot of content that risks to get lost in the transition between different times and different social networks for example.

Paper archives

Organisations live also out of posters, publications, newspapers where you might be quoted, pictures and gadgets. This stuff tends to be forgotten, taken or finished and also live on the walls of an activist's room instead of in the minds of the school student activists following you. Our suggestion is to always print one more copy of every graphic you publish online, of every demonstration poster and every campaign publication to keep in a secure material archives. It is indeed true that in order to have a material archive you need a physical place but keep in mind that this is not necessary a room with shelves and a password to enter, it might also be a paper box to be stored in a safe place where it doesn't get easily lost or ruined. Just think how cool will it be for students after you to open the box in twenty years and find out the common struggles, the won battles and to build a common memory and sense of ownership!

Short manuals

Okay, maybe this is not the perfect example of a short manual but if you try to detach the different chapters and subchapters and imagine writing them from time to time when you developed enough knowledge you can already think of many short manuals which will help a lot with the knowledge management in your structure. In the groups there are always different kinds of people with different interests, knowledge, tasks and responsibilities. You can ask them all to write a short manual on the main relevant things in their area as a handover material to the next generation. Some important issues on which you can write manuals are: social media management, student involvement and participation in your particular context, decision-making processes, fundraising, campaigning, how to win small battles, how to build a training. These manuals should not exceed twenty pages and should be short, easy-to-read, reader friendly and full of examples. If you want you can also decide to use bits of this manual, translate them and make them yours without changing the content or the sense of it.

Internal education and overlapping systems

In order for people to build their own knowledge and their own way of working they have to be given the tools to do so. Internal education is for sure one of the main resources that can help when it is used together with the tools mentioned in the previous paragraphs. We can identify two main kinds of internal education, both very valuable: **self-education and training courses**. By self-education we mean your total autonomy in learning what you prefer and with your own timing and spaces, for example, making a list of suggested readings. This method is very self-based but also very individual and leads to uncontrolled group dynamics where not everyone is on the same starting point. If you want to use the method of self-education but still control the group dynamics you can organise study circles on a specific issue or area of work for those who are interested in the topic. A study circle should meet regularly and should have someone in charge of planning the meeting, inviting experts and coming up with cool lists of materials for preparation. Training courses, on the other hand, help newcomers and activists to go in depth on a particular focus following the exact same educational programme and going through the same planned learning activities thus facing the learning in different ways and with different outcomes. Indeed, there will be different starting points but during a training course, a role play, a workshop or a simulation all participants should start from the same level. In order to run a successful and effective training course with the methods and the objectives tailored on you and your needs you can either ask one of your more experienced activists and trainers or facilitators or you might also ask someone external that can understand your context. In the additional online content you will find a toolkit from which you can gather some inputs on cool facilitation tips and activities to run with your constituency.

Technologies also allow you to build online platforms for peer education where people can exchange materials, articles and interesting educational tools.

Another method of training and passing on of knowledge is the overlapping system in mandates or in groups. It applies both if you decide to have a group of people

with an executive power or not. Overlapping consists in "oldies" from the organisations joining the group during the mandate and leaving the group during their following mandate. In the box you can find an example of this.

Networking and alumni

Another way of educating members internally is to set up networks of people from the same kind of realities in different context. For example, you might set up networks of all different responsible persons for fundraising in all the local school student organisations near you who gather every once in a while and exchange experiences and knowledge, different approaches and solutions to the problems you might face. In this way, the participants can get very concrete tips and good practices through a process where they learn from each other's mistakes and successes. This type of peer education is both enjoyable and successful.

You can also think of establishing alumni network: a network of former activists. The alumni network could have various people who have established valuable contacts and might help in your work or they might have

a super memory and help you when you face a problem you cannot overcome. Still, remember that it is the current activists who run the organisation and although the thoughts and ideas of the previous generations are useful they should never prevent your and your organisation's self-development.

Coaching

Coaching aims at helping people to develop their skills and knowledge through individual guidance. The activist is supported to make progress both by feeding directly from the experience of the coach and from the possibility to discuss with someone outside the group he_she is working in. It is not easy to be a coach. You need to resist the temptation "to catch the fish". The coach is "teaching how to fish". There are many aspects of coaching which we present in the additional online materials. Check them out!

OBESSU in its statutes has introduced the overlapping system for the Board. The Board consists of 5 or 7 people among which 2 are overlapping and it stays in charge for 2 years. This is how it works: at a General Assembly different candidates run for the position. The General Assembly (GA) votes on if they want a Board of 5 or 7. Let's say that delegates choose to have a Board of 5 and let's assume some fantasy names. Marco, Martin and Julia were already elected 2 years ago so they will leave the organisation, but Irma and Jack have been elected as overlapping Board members 1 year ago so they will stay for one more year and Fel and Andrea will join them and will stay for 2 full years. This way there's always someone to pass on knowledge and give continuity and info on current open processes and project.

example

"give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime"

Increasing and renewing membership

To not let the beauty die and to pass on the knowledge you will for sure need some new activists to pass the knowledge on to. Usually it is a pretty natural process with the turnover of members, but some other times this process needs to be facilitated. Sometime it might happen that you are so over-excited by the team you built with so much effort that you forget that others might be willing to enter your team. This is fundamental to keep in mind: school student structures have to live under a continuous work of team-building because there should never be a moment when the organisation is static, and if there's one, well, it's time to shake it up a bit!

When you decide to renew the membership, you can follow the next steps:

- Choose a topic which is common among people in your school/city;
- Choose an affordable reading or to watch list – remember there might be people who have no possibility to buy books or movies. You can, for example, think of providing printed or digital copies of the articles, extracts of books you want to read as a preparation. Also make sure that the material is easy to read and that you do not need previous knowledge or preparation to understand it;
- Choose a day and a time which allows participation – remember that there might be people travelling to go to school and this means having a time that allows people to take trains, buses back home;
- Print some advertising material. Make it visible and cool, do not be complicated and try to attract students to read it;
- Share on the internet and create a hub of spreading info on how cool this will be!
- After the study cycle make sure you ask for contacts and create a personal contact with the participants. Talk to them about who organised the study cycle and ask if they want to try come to the meetings and be partially in charge of the study cycles. Students love to have responsibilities from time to time.

Another important way of involving new people is to make them feel how concrete the work of the group is. Give them the feeling that behind advocacy and negotiations there's a lot of work and shared tasks. Make them feel the ownership of their struggles by for example identifying together the struggle priorities and the expected achievements. Once you choose your battle, try to stick to it and be consistent.

Here are some suggestions:

- Create a "suggestion box" in the school for activities they want to organise and then ask the suggesting person to organise the activity together with you;
- Ask people how they feel about the school and what would they change, then explain to them how to reach the objective and together create your strategy. You'll win it!
- Create a space for information and suggestions on student rights, advertise it and make sure students are aware of their rights. Once they contact you make sure you keep up a good contact and do not just behave like an information machine. Follow the process, the failures and the successes and be motivated. The seeds you plant will definitely become a nice plant;
- Organise parties, movie nights, debates where you advertise your organisation but you also give people a less serious space for getting to know each other and understanding that being a school student activist is COOL AND FUN!

Once you involve new members do not forget that they do not like to be at a side of the meeting not understanding what you are discussing. Make sure you follow them during the meetings, you assign them small tasks and responsibilities and you do not speak like they knew all of the things you have been discussing. Motivation, engagement and ownership of every activist starts from here.

all the new things I learned
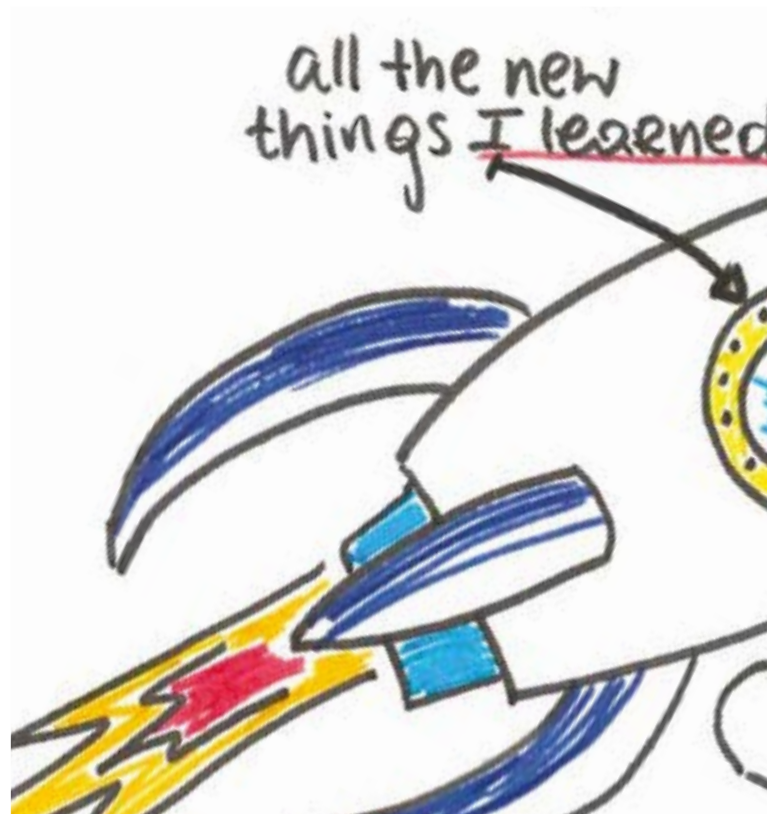
Evaluation and feedback

Evaluation and feedback are two keywords to success which you need to further develop your organisation. First, in order to acknowledge the beauty of your project, you need to evaluate it, and secondly, in order to make it even more beautiful, you need feedback provided both from the inside and from the outside.

It is important for you not to consider evaluation as something that happens every once in a while. Evaluating is not only the process of saying if something was good or bad, evaluating is an attitude that allows you to identify what works and what doesn't work in your groups from different points of view. You can evaluate every meeting or you can evaluate from time to time on the different aspects like workload distribution, overall management, financial management, team work, logistical and political work. Moreover, evaluation is stronger when accompanied by feedback. Remember that, in order to work, feedback needs to be wanted from the ones who receive it and needs also to be followed by an action plan on the elements that composed the feedback. For example, if you receive a feedback on the length of your meetings and the boredom that comes from your meeting with some suggestions on how to get better you should be ready to accept the critiques in a constructive way and start experimenting with new forms of discussion, including the ones suggested in the feedback.

For putting evaluation into practice there are many different techniques, here you have a few ideas that are not exclusive; on the contrary they can be fruitfully combined.

Evaluation groups

This is maybe the most interactive and participatory technique for evaluation. It consists of dividing participants into small groups that would evaluate, with a certain frequency (e.g. daily) the activities and the general features of the event/activity. This would be done with a member of the team who would work as a facilitator.

The Mailbox

You place a box in a visible location where participants can anonymously introduce pieces of paper with thoughts about the meeting/event/activity such as critique (both positive and negative), ideas or just reflections. Participants should be encouraged to "mail" the team on everything they feel concerned about. This method has the advantage of allowing completely anonymous comments.

The wallpaper

You can also place a big piece of paper on one of the walls of the facilities where you are at. You can write different areas for evaluation and leave some pens and markers available. Participants will be this way able to write any comment at any time they want and react to other people's comments. The interactivity among participants is the main advantage of this evaluation method.

The questionnaire

You can create a questionnaire to be filled in by the participants. Normally it should include both open questions (with some lines to be filled in) and closed questions (for example yes/no or a scale from 1 to 10). Open questions have the advantage of offering a lot of information about the person's opinion. Closed questions have the advantage of enabling quantitative analysis of the data you get. This means that, with the questions you can get objective data with which you can create graphs and statistics. You can, for example, create the questionnaire online and get the data automatically analysed by the software.

The evaluation space rocket

Participants are supposed to to reflect on the event and express it by drawing a space rocket, that will symbolise different aspects of their experience. Please refer to annex at page 78.

These, anyway, are just some small suggestions of methods. You can always experiment new ways of evaluation keeping in mind that...

... evaluation is not just made for the sake of giving people a chance to speak their mind without being listened to...

... feedback has to be followed by a concrete action plan to make the experience of the activists better and the work more efficient and effective...

... evaluation has to have a clear objective and the facilitators have to have this clear in mind...

... you should never take evaluation personally and should react to all kind of critiques in a constructive and proactive way...

... in order to have a real and honest evaluation you have to create a safe space for the people to openly speak up...

.. evaluation and feedback are food for thought but also for democracy and for building real democratic processes and decision-making.

Stop defending, start attacking

School student associations, committees or whatever kind of structure you have in mind to build always start from the same point: responding to the needs of students. You would never start a school student structure without an objective. This can vary greatly depending on the different starting point of the country, the region or the school. You can feel the need of gathering to defend your right to welfare, you can gather to create a space for socialisation, you can gather because you want to create alternative cultural offers or because you feel the need to defend the rights established by your national ministry which are not respected in your school. But as we said, that's a starting point.

We are not saying you should ever abandon your primary objective, because that's where you come from and roots are necessary not to miss the path to success of your organisation. What we want to do with this section is to stimulate your ability to look forward during the process of development of your organisation. Let's imagine a possible scenario to make the picture clearer.

You created a school student structure because your local government decided to cut down completely the budget dedicated to the support for students. This would have resulted into students not getting any income anymore. There has never been an organisation in your city but every school has a committee. One day you met with the rest of the student representatives from all the schools and decided to create a democratic structure working as a network of all different committees. You, together with the others decide to call it SAC, Students Against

Cuts. SAC meets weekly and creates an overall strategy to win the battle on cuts. You create a page online, you create a logo and elect a committee in charge of managing the communication, the agendas for meeting and the facilitation for events. You start meeting politicians and other civil society organisations and create a strong campaign around this issue. After some months of hard work you finally manage to meet the government and you convince them with your counter proposal to not cut the budget on student support. You won your battle because you managed to think big and maybe also because you followed some advice from our manual.

The big question on which this paragraph gives some inputs is: **what happens to SAC now?**

There are many possible scenarios. We don't have a crystal ball but from our experience this is what might happen:

- Students celebrate and celebrate. SAC becomes a hero and people start becoming too much of heros and too few of school student activists. SAC becomes some other project but it doesn't develop into an organisation;
- Students are happy for having won but they assess that SAC has done its job and is therefore ready to be shut down;
- Students are so happy and proud that they feel they can get even more out of SAC and feel that it needs to be developed.

This last option is what we hope will happen in your case. For sure, it is not easy to give new objectives to something that was born as a response but we believe SAC can stop defending and start attacking on what are the main claims and demands of school students. This is something that is not easy to do when you are a newly created structure, because you need some experience and expertise also to involve students in your project, which might be felt as very broad and not so concrete. Demanding new rights can in fact be less concrete than creating a defense battle. On the other hand, though, big changes start from big demands.

What would we suggest SAC to do?

- Celebrate and celebrate the victory. It is necessary for people to feel the ownership of the victory and of the project. Celebrating strengthens also the community feeling. There will be no "I made it" but a lot of "We made it";
- Give a small rest and reflection to the people but still call for a meeting the week after. This meeting will serve to reflect on the process, evaluate it overall and identify strengths and weaknesses. It will be a good meeting for celebrating a bit more but also for reflecting with a fresh and rested mind;
- Keep on using the online tools of SAC;
- Discuss with the students individually and ask them

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about their own priorities. Let them understand that it's possible that you won't win everything but do not cut down their amazing ability to dream and imagine the perfect educational system. You can use many different tools, from the questionnaire to the suggestion box, to an assembly to several small assemblies building up towards a last one where you define your new priorities.

Without even noticing we are already moving from defending to attacking. Defining your new priorities and your new strategy is a process which needs to start from SMART objectives. What does it mean?

Specific - Is your objective specific enough? What is your goal? When will it happen? What will happen? Who will be responsible?

Measurable - How will you measure your objective? What evaluation and feedback mechanism will you implement to guarantee the quality and oversee that the objective is being achieved?

Achievable - Objectives should be ambitious and push you to discover your limits and your possibilities, but still they should be achievable. Are your objectives achievable?

Realistic - This doesn't refer to how achievable they are, but instead to how much your objective is realistic for the time and the space you have foreseen.

Timely - Timeframes help organisation, motivation, accountability, evaluation and monitoring. Does your objective have some defined time schedules?

This means that you can't just decide to start a random generic attack but that it is necessary for you to identify your renewed aim, your specific objectives, your target group and the strategy that comes from this. Remember that this step is very depending on the other paragraphs in this chapter. For example you cannot keep up the organisation and plan to go on if you do not handle with care the knowledge from the previous group who won the SAC battle.

We suggest you write on paper your objectives, your demands and your strategy. This will help newcomers to familiarise soon with your structure and will make it easier for them to contribute. What also helps is to have a plan of activities which will include all the activities you plan on having, from the General Assemblies, to the different committees meeting, the social and cultural activities, the events, the campaigns and the trainings. An activity plan should not be fixed but flexible, but still it leads the way to an easy and effective way of working.

You, dear reader, wherever you are reading this booklet, you have to always keep in mind that being young and being a school student activist means having something special: the capacity to build strong actions with a lot of creativity, innovation and personal background; be motivated and pass on the motivation!

Think nationally and look forward

Now we get to the bigger picture. We would never suggest you to build a top-down national organisation which falls back on the local level, and we are sure that if you are reading this manual you also didn't, but maybe you thought you'd love to spread your project nationally, and – why not – internationally. During the previous paragraph we saw how SAC was strong also thanks to the network of the different school committees in the city. Now think about how strong could it be when it starts spreading regionally, then nationally and then internationally.

How do you become nationally relevant? Well, again, we do not have a magic formula in our hands but we can try to suggest you some important steps to take.

In order to think nationally you have to start from a strong local basis. This means that you should have a good number of motivated activists who are willing to get engaged and engage new people. Having a strong local basis also means that you should have a well defined set of priorities and a concrete plan of activities.

Before going nationally we suggest you network in the region with the different organisations which are similar

to the one you are in and that with them you explore different cooperation possibilities. Here no one is in a hurry, so there's no need to make steps longer than your leg. First, check if your priorities match, if your plans of activities are similar and how can you adjust them for planning something together to get to know each other and see what can happen from there on. At this stage it is better for you to start looking for some funding, donors, sponsors or national fund that you can use to organise your training sessions or your events, otherwise participation might not be so easy for everyone.

The regional cooperation is going ok? Then why not starting to think on the national level? At this stage you need to start wondering about some keywords.

Compromise is the first and most important. In order to build a national organisation you need to keep in mind that every region, and every school has different backgrounds and that you should make a change for everyone. This means that no one's position is worth more than anyone else's and that it is also your responsibility to build up shared priorities and objectives.

Safe space is the second keyword. For sure you also need to build your safe space in your local organisation, but on the local level it is somewhat easier as the level of confidence and the size of the group are different. Working nationally means gathering together very heterogeneous targets which has to fall back into policies to make the working and learning experience matter for everyone, otherwise people do not feel safe, do not feel motivated and the democratic engine gets rusty. No discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or political ideas should be allowed in your organisation.

Democracy is also at the basis. Having a national organisation with a national group of responsible people doesn't mean that someone has more power. It means that a group of peers is gathered in a powerful project where everyone has the right and the duty to speak their mind, be active and "be the change they want to see in the world". We do not want to tell you how you should exactly build your democratic structure, but keep in mind the principles of democracy and make sure that these are respected at every level of your structure.

Once you agree on the keywords – and we hope you came up with many more – you should start thinking concretely on what to do to build a national organisation. Here is a list of questions that can help you in the process:

- Have you already organised a joint event between the different regions?
- Have you already talked about how to run the national organisation in democratic terms?
- Have you already created a common framework of aims, objectives, demands and priorities?
- Have you already started imagining the educational activities you want to build to share the knowledge between different people?

- Have you already started looking for funding from the government, from donors, from sponsors, from schools?
- Have you already established contacts with the national Ministry to make them aware of your presence?
- Have you already built participatory ways of involving new members to your national organisation?
- Have you already thought of a name and a logo?
- Are you already online with your content and your image?
- Have you already thought on how to spread the news of your organisation (e.g. brochures, posters, newsletter, newspaper, internet courier)?
- Have you already contacted different organisations similar to yours?
- Are you already in contact with teachers unions, other students organisations also on different levels (e.g. university)?

On the last two points we want to stress the importance of partnerships. You know, as a national organisation, you are already growing bigger, but the more members and activists you recruit, the stronger you will get. For this reason we highly encourage you to look for all possible partners who are similar to you in terms of objectives, who share the same set of values and to start working together as much as possible. In many cases, school reforms which were unwanted by students and teachers have been stopped only thanks to the close work between school student organisations and teachers unions. When you gather together you can invent new forms of organisation, you can mix different cultures, different generations and different expertise. Possible partners can be national teachers unions, parents associations, youth organisations working on shared topics, trade unions and apprentices organisations and VET (vocational education and training) providers. As we already said, in order to make a real change for everyone and in order for everyone to be a part of the change, you need a strong network.

Creating a national structure, anyway, is not the easiest process on earth, also because it is a process and not only something you can put on your to-do list. You cannot just decide you need a national student organisation, you can only facilitate the process of understanding the needs of the students. Once a student feels a priority and the need to be represented then you have the legitimacy to represent him_her, even though you are still not representing the overall student population. Remember that it is very unlikely that you will ever be representative of each and every student in your country. It is due to the amazing diversity that we see in humanity and to the fact that you can have people agreeing on single issues and disagreeing on other issues, it's normal, so remember this while trying to involve new members.

Establishing a national student organisation depends a lot on the national context so we can only help you around with some fundamentals which will allow you to create a democratic, engaging organisation defending the interests and the rights of school students. What we might have a bit more of experience on is international networking. This is what we meant by "look forward" in the heading of the paragraph.

International cooperation is not as pragmatic as national cooperation but it has a number of pros that make it worth the experience. How can one benefit from international cooperation? Indeed it is an experience that makes you richer, it leads you to getting to know a lot of new people and new places, but above all it gives you the opportunity to get to know other realities similar to yours in different places. International cooperation helps you to learn new ways of reacting to the same kind of problems, it gives you new tools and best practices, it helps you to develop your organisation's analysis on many shared topics, it gives you a sense of belonging to a big project where many different students fight the same battle, for example for free quality education with no barriers.

As for the national organisation we wouldn't suggest you to skip steps and just try to become members of an international organisation. Again, structures come right after processes of familiarising and understanding of the different realities. Here we list a sort of roadmap you can keep in mind if you want to go international:

- Again, define the objectives of your international cooperation (e.g. finding new friends, finding partners for a campaign, meeting similar realities, learn a best practice on evaluation);
- Define the responsible people for communication. International communication is not easy to establish or maintain often. We suggest you

define one/two persons responsible for keeping in touch and redirecting the communication to the other members of the organisation responsible for different tasks. (e.g. Martha is responsible for international communication and contacts Javier at first. Afterwards, she redirects Javier to Paula but she still follows the process so that nothing gets lost);

- Schedule online meetings with your potential partners and ask them materials you can check out, including their website which you can translate online without much effort – usually;
- Try to identify some possible cooperation topics and ideas. (e.g. common problem with overcrowded classrooms);
- Define one possible project including objectives, actions, budget and funding possibilities;
- Keep in mind diversity and differences between cultures and organisational structures and praxis;
- Start from these small steps while you can start contacting umbrella organisations (like OBESSU) who are also very willing to help you setting up international contact while also engaging you with their activity. OBESSU for example, is used to inviting contact organisations to their events to help them networking and also understanding the context they might be willing to engage with;
- OBESSU is waiting for you to go through the process and apply for candidate status. Remember that in most organisations on an international level you need to fulfil certain requirements. Make sure you know the organisation well enough before applying, your engagement, motivation and satisfaction depend on this. If you want to find out more about how to apply to OBESSU you can check out on **www.obessu.org.**

If your organisation wants to do an international project, there are some funding opportunities "out there". Remember that applying for project money is time-consuming and that the project life-cycles are very long; it is therefore important to start planning well in advance, usually a year or so before the actual event. Also note that most funders do not cover 100 % of a project's costs so you may need co-funding from your own organisation, for example through participation fees or other sponsors.

There are two major sources of public funding on European level:

Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme for youth and education 2014-2020. It supports youth exchanges for projects in the EU plus Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey and Macedonia. For certain Erasmus+ activities, EU neighbour countries like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina can also join. Check the most recent version of the so-called Programme Guide for latest updates. In order to get started, a first step can be to contact your National Agency.

European Youth Foundation is a programme from the Council of Europe. It supports youth activities with topics related to human rights and social inclusion. The applications are a bit more user-friendly than those of Erasmus+ and their activities cover all of Council of Europe member states and are therefore wider in scope than Erasmus+.

It is also definitely worth looking for funding opportunities on national level. In some cases it might be easier to approach them, depending on which topic you want to work on.

Project management and big events

All the activities of an organisation are events in a way: a small training on communication is an event, a movie night is a small event and a fundraising party is also an event. Here we want to focus on how to write and run a project, how to get away with big national events and some European funding opportunities.

What is a project? A project is a set of activities organised with clear objectives and aimed at a specific target groups. A project is in a word a plan to realise an idea that you have clear in mind. Identifying the different phases we can easily go more in depth on the concept.

Needs assessment and preparation – a project is driven from a specific need that is faced in a context.

Formulation and design – During this phase you go to the crucial part of writing up your project. When writing, you could consider these paragraphs as necessary:
• Introduction and summary of the project
• Needs assessment and context analysis
• Aims and objectives
• Target group
• Partners (when applicable)
• Detailed plan of activities and draft programme
• Dissemination and communication
• Evaluation (ex ante – during – ex post)
• Expected results and multiplying effects of participants
• Final outcome
• Follow up
• Budget

Agreement and review – This phase is fundamental if you have involved partners but in general from this moment on your project is not a draft anymore and you have to go back thinking to the SMART process we listed previously. Is your project specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely? If yes and if there's an agreement within the organisation and within the partners, you can move to the exciting part: submitting the project in case you need to wait for it to be approved or rejected or move to the realization if you already have secured funding.

Implementation and monitoring – Once your project is hopefully approved or you found an alternative funding opportunity, you can implement the activities you had foreseen, the evaluation you had in mind and you can realise the objectives you defined as crucial. This is a hard phase but we'll see also later how to manage big events and we are sure you learnt quite a lot on how to get organised and run activities by now. It is very important not to forget the word *monitoring* in this phase, because the expected results will depend on how you monitor your work, reassess priorities and methods if necessary and evaluate your work.

Reporting and evaluation – This phase is also very important and it is usually underestimated. Once you finish your set of activities, produce your final outcome, evaluation and reporting are fundamental both for the participants to the project, for you and for who will come next. For evaluation methods you can check out the previous chapter. It is important to evaluate various aspects:

1. Have you fulfilled your objectives?
2. Do you still feel the need in your context or have you filled the vacancy?
3. Did you find ways to multiply the effects not only on the participants to the activities?
4. Did you work well as an organiser?
5. Were the targeted participants happy with your project? Did they learn?
6. Are you satisfied with the outcomes?

Reporting means also creating some important materials for the next generation – remember knowledge management? – so remember to keep everything from the project in an ordered file accessible by the ones who can benefit from it. When you report to donors do not forget that you also need to report financially on the basis of your budget, and this depends on how you worked during the implementation phase. We suggest you find someone experienced to take care of this aspect for the whole duration of the project, otherwise you might find yourself in the situation of having to pay back the money to the donors, and it can be very unpleasant when you run your project properly.

These steps are a cycle, so from the last phase you'll have to start the process again and again with the follow up, again, not to let the beauty die and to be able to always ask for more.

In the youth field, there tends to be a lot of solidarity and mutual help, and this is also helped by networking, so do not hesitate to ask for help to some friend organisation or some other professional person if you realise you cannot handle one or more parts of the project you are designing, implementing, reporting.

Often, in national projects you foresee big events, which are not easy to handle. We are going to go through the theory and then more into a real life example.

The process of organising an event can be divided in 4 stages:

1. **Before the planning** - It is necessary to think about

the general event's objectives, the financial and material resources needed, the scale of the event, constituting a team, etc;

2. **Planning** – Once the nature of the event is defined the team gets to work together to further develop its shape and its content;

3. **During the event** – While the event is running the team has to work hard to keep the pieces together both logistically and content wise also through a continuous evaluation process;

4. **Follow-up** – After the event took place, ensuring comprehensive follow-up and reporting is what will make it meaningful and profitable for future events.

1 . Before the planning

Firstly you need to identify some characteristics of your event that will define the rest of the planning. These characteristics are:

Purpose – Is your event an event to just gather people? Is your event aimed at extending the knowledge of your activists? Is it a networking event? You need to define purpose and target group before defining the rest;

Core/Internal/External – Core events gather people working strictly within the organisation (e.g. executive committee meetings or trainings); internal events are only for members of your organisation and open to some partners (e.g. seminars, general assembly); external events are open to the public, meaning a specific part of the public (e.g. school students) or civil society in general;

Length and involvement –The length of an event means its duration. It can be a short event or a longer event. Usually for national big events it is meaningless to have them shorter than one day and a half but very unlikely to find events which are longer than two weeks. The involvement required is on the other hand the amount of time and involvement that participants have to dedicate to the event (e.g. two hours a day, eight hours a day, half a day etc);

Final beneficiaries – In the very end who will benefit from the event or its follow up? Most of the time it will be students themselves, but it could also be an institution that gained knowledge on a certain situation and can then act on it, or teachers who have been trained to use participatory methods. In the end, it should always be beneficial for most of the groups in the educational system or the possibility of having a positive effect in a long term perspective becomes very unlikely. It is important to focus on the final beneficiaries throughout the organisation process as everything should be aimed at this final objective;

Resources – The resources you are able to mobilise will influence the whole event. This means you have to think very carefully about them in the planning, and in particular you have to focus on all kind of resources. We can list material resources – including meeting facilities, documentation, hosting for participants, food, posters, flipcharts, name tags; financial resources – you always have to have a clear budget for the event and you should secure your budget before the planning as this will be necessary for you to know how far can you go; human resources – maybe the most difficult to find and to manage, in human resources we can include experts, staff working on logistics, the educational team and any other kind of supporting volunteers. Do not forget they are human and not only resources and they deserve to be treated as such.

2. Planning

All the planning of an event (whichever characteristics it has) requires quite a lot of work. In fact, there is no magic formula that you can apply when organising any event but here are some tips that can help you preparing an event.

Preparatory teams – The preparation of an event usually means a huge amount of work and a specific expertise and motivation. This is why normally it is very useful to build up one or several teams of defined size (e.g. you can have a team of 6 with a group of 60 participants and a group of 30 with 1000 participants) Within the team you can identify also specific tasks, for example you can have the people in charge of running the activity from a content point of view and those responsible for logistics, you can also have a specific team on communication if you have a very big event that needs a lot of effort from that point of view. The prep-team needs to be selected in advance to have the necessary time to be prepared.

Preparatory meetings – Besides the preparation done through phone calls, emails, social media posts or any other kind of communication you need it is essential to always set up at least one meeting in advance. We suggest you have at least one face to face meeting and all the necessary online or phone meetings, and that you give different lengths and discussions according to the kind of meeting you are having. OBESSU, for example, has one face to face meeting before every event, ideally one month and a half before, and several small online meetings to catch up on the progress of work, but the main content, the agenda and the objectives are defined by the team in the face to face meeting. It is important to remember that prep-meetings are done to set clear objectives, divide tasks, and work individually and as a group but they are also run in order for the team to start working together and create a positive working environment.

Planning – The planning of an event should be neither too wide nor too strict: a balance has to be found on a

comprehensive planning that is at the same time flexible enough for facing possible and – likely- changes and difficulties during the development of the event. Taking into account your aims you should build, step by step, the different contents it will have: from the general to the most specific. It can be useful to think about different phases and flows in the event you are organising, if it is long enough. Once you identify all the contents you can decide to choose specific methods in the team collectively or, as we suggest, you can divide the different elements of the programme (of which we talk in the next part) and assign each of it to one team member. This gives responsibility to everyone and makes the work more efficient and fast. In this phase you also need to decide if you want to call an external expert, a speaker, and send out the invitations. You also need to make a list of material and technical requirements that the person in charge of logistic will have in advance in order not to have things missing at the event.

Defining the programme – It is necessary both for the work of the team and for the participants to have a clear written programme of the activity. This agenda should be handed out in advance and on the spot in a handy format. The programme should follow a clear educational path and should be thought carefully by the team, balancing educational activities, free time and time for reflection. Nevertheless, the team might face the need to reshape and change the agenda on the basis of the discussions or the situations you encounter during the event, and you should never be afraid of doing so. In the online materials you will find a template of an agenda we use in OBESSU for events, you can easily take inspirations from the timing or the format.

Experts – It can be enriching for participants to have an external opinion on certain topics or on very specific issues on which you might not have the expertise to run a workshop for example. For choosing the person you have to identify exactly what do you want from this person and their characteristics, also you should think about the characteristics of the kind of workshop/lecture you want them to have. Once you understand all these different aspects you can look for the person in your network, in the institutions you work with or look outside your world and seek for the right person. Remember to balance the presence of guest speakers with moments of discussion among the participants to the event. It is very important, as previously mentioned, to establish a clear and professional communication with the experts in due advance to the event, and you should make clear shared agreements on logistics. Experts are very important for future networking and work, take care of them as you take care of participants.

Planning the informal dimension – An event is not just made out of activities. It also includes a whole set of informal spaces that you should take into account when planning an event. You should never forget that the success of the event depends also on the happiness and the social and human dimension of participants, who need to find space for themselves, to build relationships and friendships. Planning spaces for creating a positive social climate is also the responsibility of the team. You can imagine evening activities like playing games, movie nights, parties, quizzes or you can ask participants to self organise activities together, being always inclusive towards all the group.
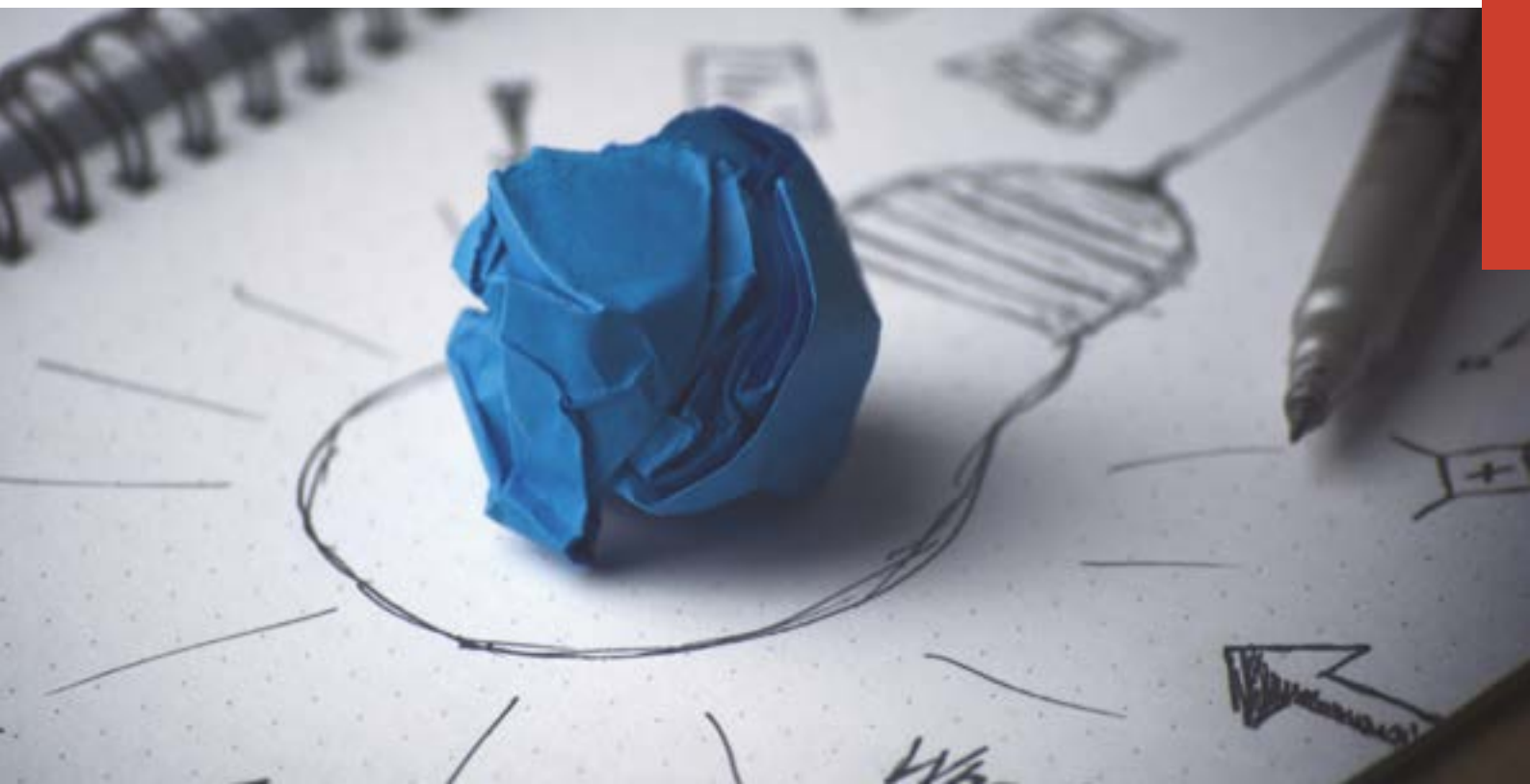
3. During the event

If you run everything smoothly during the preparation phase, running the event will be difficult and heavy but it will be a success. Things to keep in mind are:

- Something can always go in a different direction. You and your team will sort it out for sure, and you can also refer to chapter "How to get from problem to solution";
- The team is human, do not get overloaded with work and make sure you respect your own times and spaces. The motivation of participants depends on the motivation of the team;
- Sleep, have fun, live your educational experience and make the most out of this experience. You played your cards as you could and this will be fruitful;
- Evaluate, evaluate and be ready for a lot of feedback. You should always be open for the reactions of participants during the event [Refer to paragraph "Evaluation and Feedback at page 53];
- It is important to think about the reporting already during the event. Make sure you have someone always taking notes of the feedback, the outcomes of each session, the evaluation of the team and of the participants and the overall flow of the event. In order for your report to be relevant you need to be sure it includes: (1) purpose and objectives of the event and analysis of whether these objectives have been reached; (2) highlights of what went particularly well and what went particularly wrong; (3) feedback from participants;
- During the development of the event you will be, for sure, in the position of having some team meetings. We suggest you schedule a brief daily meeting in which you report the daily evaluation and check on the next day's programme and task division. (Who facilitates which session? Who takes notes? Who is in charge of the evening activities? And so on.);
- Make sure you develop your follow up plans during the event, these are crucial for next steps.

4. After

Yes, you will have some work to do also after the event. This will mainly consist in:

Team debriefing and evaluation – The team should take some time to reflect on the event and then reflect on the work as individuals and as a team, on the overall event, on the participant's and on your own learning experience.

Follow up – You should decide in the team the how, who, when and where of the follow up. For example, if participants decided on some action plans after the event, someone in the team, or all team, will have to check on the implementation of this follow up. It can be useful to set deadlines and quality indicators for the follow up and to always follow this process with a lot of attention because new needs and new objectives can start from this phase.

Report – We mentioned it many times. When dividing the follow up tasks do not forget to assign the reporting, both financial and content reporting.

We are going to illustrate this with the example of Riot Village, a real life example from the Italian school student organisation Unione degli Studenti (UdS). UdS faced the need to organise a summer event to give students a place to relax and live an experience of sustainable tourism which was alternative to the usual expensive and non-formative holiday. They thought it was necessary to give students a space of discussion and non formal education from peer to peer after the school period. So they identified their target group, their objectives and their need. This event happens every year almost in the same period (July-August) and UdS has now a lot of expertise thanks to knowledge management and handovering, so they can host every year almost 1.000 students for 14 days at a campsite in the summer. The team they work with is composed of 40 people; 12 of them are responsible of content, 4 of them work on logistics, administration and fundraising and 24 work on a daily basis in the camping doing the day to day work and are responsible for the overall management as support groups, from evening activities, to the material booking, to sell the merchandising and follow communication. The camping is for them a 14-days-socialisation-event but also an educational experience as they run at least one seminar, one workshop a day and other internal moments like Council of Members and General Assembly. The team starts working on the camping in September writing the project, looking for new partners, fundraising and submitting the project to the Ministry of Education or to European actors. After the funding is ensured the team starts working on inviting guests, booking hotels and spreading the news in different channels. Around May, the team opens the booking because this is an open event and it's also a fundraising event. Then the event starts and for 14 days students are gathered together in a camping to discuss politics and educational policies, as well as to network and be trained for the new school year starting in September. At the end of the event, the team responsible for administration does the accounting work and reports the financial side to the donors, while the content team gathers all the material need for training and for potential knowledge management and sends it to participants as a follow up.

UdS, Unione degli Studenti, Italy

example

How to get from problem to solution

It can happen that in your everyday work you face some problems and difficulties you will have to solve. Here we want to give you some suggestions for problem solving. Remember that the rule number 1 is not to focus on the cause at first, but on the problem itself. You will have time to explore the causes later on.

Work with small steps

Now through all these methods to imagine a strategy you will for sure have your own "strategy". We are sure this will be made of small and big steps to take, and we suggest you take the necessary time to focus on the small steps and start from them. The small interventions are small but fundamental for the rest of the plan to work smoothly. When defining the steps to take, both the small and the big ones, you can either start from the beginning of your "journey" or you could start from the end of your "journey" and go back until the beginning. The first option is very easy to plan and consequential whilst the second helps you to avoid taking a path that is far away from your final objective, and helps you identifying micro-objectives.

Define the problem in concrete terms

What does the problem look like now? What is actually the exact problem? Who is involved in the problem? Where, when and how does the problem happen? When answering these questions you will have such a concrete approach that you will get a different, detached perspective. In case your objective is not to find a precise solution to a problem but to find a general way of making things better, then you will have to start from analysing the objectives to reach, to then think about the gaps or the immediate problems you will face (e.g. no experience to reach the objectives etc). For this first step do not be afraid to spend a lot of time thinking, it is totally worth it and it helps you saving a lot of time for next steps.

Agree on the objective(s)

Once you define the problem the next step is agreeing, still in concrete terms, on the concrete changes that – once in place – will make it possible for you to say that the problem has been solved. In a word, you have to agree on your desired objective. What do you have to see in order for you to say that the problem is solved? For this step it is very important for you to work in a team and agree all together on what the solution will look like.

Adjust the plan

Following a plan is not easy and sticking to the plan is very important. You always need to think globally about the objectives and the possible links and interactions between the different elements of the path. Do not be afraid of adjusting and changing the plan you are following and your problem will be solved soon.

The scenario over the problem

This is a strong imaginary technique that will help you to overcome the problem, imagining an ideal situation in which the problem is fully solved or there is a strong improvement of the situation. Then you need to try to "merge" the immaginated situation with all the aspects you could realise concretely.

What is the worst thing that could happen?

What would have to happen for the worst-case scenario? Try to answer this question again in very concrete terms. This plays a key role into identifying again all the tools, the methods and the outcomes and gives a lot of awareness and motivation on the positive actions to take. For example, if your problem is that your communication is pretty bad and you ask yourself the question "What is the worst thing that could happen?" one of your answers "people do not care about each other because they do not talk to each other". In this case you know that you need to take actions for people to communicate face-to-face and care about each other in order to develop their relationships and also communicate better

Analyse and evaluate all the approaches you tried until now

Sometimes the attempted approaches and the failures are one of the causes of the problems and the fact that they cannot be solved. In order for you to find solutions you have to identify all the elements that do not work, this way you can identify what not to do, you can highlight what worked well until now and what best practices you can learn from.

Formally establishing the organisation

We said it more than once: establishing the organisation is not the first step in the process of establishing a structure. We could list an infinite number of kinds and forms of school student structures but this would not be of any help in your reading through this manual. We have been calling it structure, union, organisation but this doesn't change its nature: a body made by students for students coordinating the work to defend and amplify their rights and interests. Here is a short list of different structures you can decide to choose depending on your organisation's choices and history.

Union - A union is an organisation defending the rights and the duties of a group organising them but also guaranteeing a number of services to their members and their affiliates. Union is also usually referred to as the generic term for an organisation uniting a specific part of the society. School Student Unions or Unions of School Students are organisations formed for the students by the students and usually run by the students or young people.

Association – This is the general term which is seldom used as a way of describing an "official" or officially registered union. We do not often use this term because it's very much depending on national legislation, as in many cases there are a specific legislations for associations.

Youth organisations - In general, are organisations that deal with issues concerning the youth, or specific group of young people. These organisations may be national and international and do not include only student but everyone else, too.

Committee – A committee is a very specific organisation, usually working on one topic instead of many different ones. For example, you can have a women committee, both inside the Organisation or as something specific, not linked to any other structure. Committees are usually informal and more self-organised, less structured than, for example, associations.

Council – A council is usually something more formal than an organisation. We refer to a national or local student council when they involve formal representative bodies like the elected representatives in school councils. Whilst usually the school councils are something compulsory and dictated to be elected – in the interest of students – from the national ministries; local and national councils that gather councils together are mainly not determined by the ministries and are born on the need and will of students and are based on the structure they ideate. Student councils are a curricular or extracurricular activity for school students whose main role is to ensure that all student rights are respected and to help better communication between students and teachers and school principals. The important duty of members of the student council is to recognise and introduce others with students' interests and concerns. Student councils teach students democracy, leadership and teamwork while giving them a chance to get more than just formal education.

Self-organised groups - are not that common practice in Europe but are very productive. In this Manual, we also considered a group of motivated individuals/students, who work together towards a goal, have the ability and authority to take decisions to be a self-organised group. What makes them different from school council is, at first, the fact that it can gather more people with different background. There is no official leader, but everyone is equally responsible and that creates a working environment where everyone shares the sense of commitment. However, self-organised groups usually have a help of a mentor or a trainer. This type of a group encourages sharing ideas, responsibilities and leadership.

Network – A network is not an organisation, it doesn't need to take a stand or to defend the rights of the students in particular. It is mainly a space for networking and exchanging ideas and practices. Networks are usually informally established but widely recognised when they gather many different stakeholders.

Informal group – An informal group, as the word says, does not depend on any formal registration and doesn't have a precise structure we can suggest. The problem with informal groups is not linked to their amazing spontaneous development but to the fact that there's no security given by, for example, a statutes. If you choose this option make sure you still define a set of "rules" that will help you to make your organisation democratic, inclusive and monitored.

Interest group – This kind of group is not exactly an organisation even though it defends the interests of students. An interest group, only uses lobbying institutions as a mean, which makes it much different from all the forms we listed above.

Whatever name you give to your organisation, remember that formally establishing the organisation has many positive sides which open many doors (e.g. access to public funds, further recognition by stakeholders and institutions) but it also leads to many duties you'll have to respect (e.g. financial duties, statutory duties). It is still our suggestion that, once the democratic and participatory process is at its climax, you take your time to also discuss formalities. Are you wondering what formalities? We are going to name some of them, mostly structures, which you can take an example from.

Objectives – By now we are sure this is your mantra: objectives always come first, also because they define the rest of the plan of your organisation.

Members – Who are your members? Try answering these questions in order for you to state it clearly. Are your members from general schools, vocational education and training institutions or both? Are your members individuals or are the schools/their councils the members of your structure? Do your members pay a membership fee? If yes, do they get any service back as members? Do you have a distinction between activists, members, affiliates, supporters etc? Do you have criteria for membership?

Decision making bodies – Now that you know who your members are, you have to discuss how are the decisions taken. Usually decision making bodies are Council of Members, General Assemblies (GA) and Board of regional representatives for example. The General Assembly is the core of every organisation. It is a meeting formed by students who represent their organisation. The GA usually lasts more than just one day and participants get to share different ideas and practices with each other which helps their future work and cooperation. You can name them as you wish, again, but it is crucial that you give space and time to members to feel the ownership and the control of the organisation, take the political decision, approve the financial report and the budget, decide on the activities to be carried on, elect representatives and different positions, approve position papers.

- **Board** is a body who cooperatively oversee the activities of an organisation. The number of members and their meetings, as well as their duties and responsibilities are defined by the organisation's statutes. It also defines how are members of the board selected, how long their mandate is and other matters of equal importance. It is important to note that the board is subordinate to the organisation's full group which decides on how the board will be run and which duties it will have. The board might - but doesn't have to - have a president who is usually a person legally responsible for the work of an organisation.
- **Secretariat** usually represents the coordination and information centre. It may consist of one or more people who run the administrative and financial business or write projects, depending on job description from organisation to organisation.

Monitoring body - Another important body is the Monitoring Committee, whose members are being elected usually by the GA and its responsibility is monitor the Board and their work in order to ensure that they follow the decisions made by the members of the GA.

The political programme – The organisation views are recorded in the organisation's political programme. By deciding on a common political view the organisation ensures that no-one representing the organisation promotes his_her own view unless this is shared by the majority. When thinking about this, go back to the paragraph on how to go national and think about the importance of the word compromise. The political programme – or platform – is the basis of your organisation. You can decide when and where you discuss it, how often you do it, how you write it, but we suggest you adopt one as a shared motivating community piece of paper.

The plan of activities – In the plan of activities the activity for the next 1/2/3/10/100 years are stated. By setting a clear agenda the members will make sure that the executed activities are truly shared and demanded by members.

The budget – Activities, political actions and representation need proper financial plans. By deciding on the budget, members can prioritise the resources to the events and actions where they find it most necessary. The money, in the end, are members' money, so they deserve a continuous update on how the money are spent with a proper reporting.

The statutes - It is good to establish clear rules on how the organisation is supposed to work, in order for the democratic process to be safeguarded and the monitoring bodies to be able to do their work. The statutes, in brief, puts together all the elements previously stated and the bodies and elected representatives in the organisation, together with a clear and transparent explanation of the democratic decision-making process. Make sure that in the statutes you include all the bodies like General Assemblies, Council of Members and all the other executive bodies as for example a Board, an Executive Committee, a Board of Regional Presidents, a President, a Treasurer, a Secretary and a Secretariat (if you foresee also a professional Secretariat). All these bodies do not have to be in your statues, you need to look at your need and context and pick or invent the bodies you need. You will find an example of a local student organisation statutes in the annex at page 75.

Conclusions

So, you got this far. You might have read a chapter, a paragraph or the whole Manual but we are still happy and proud having shared this experience with you, even though only on these pages. We hope this Manual was a learning experience for you and for the people you shared it with.

Our hope is that there will be more and more democratic and independent organisations in Europe and around the world which will give voice to the school students and which will promote participation, democracy, engagement, inclusiveness and active citizenship inside and outside schools.

Of course we do not think that we have provided you with all the knowledge you need for this adventure. We know that Europe with its diverse background and different realities demands different solutions and we do not mean to give universal truths about how to do things and how to create participation. However, we hope we made a relevant contribution to your critical thinking development and your journey to a better school and a better society.

We are sure this is not a straight path; it's full of bends, climbs, stops and starts but there are stations at the side of the road (like OBESSU or your national student organisation) that will help you to make your journey fun, motivating, useful and unique for you and for the rest of the group.

Good luck!

Glossary

Organisation: an organisation is an entity comprising multiple people gathered around certain idea or group of ideas with a specific common goal.

United Nations: an international organisation which promotes international cooperation and peace. It consists of many bodies and the one dealing with education is UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation).

Energiser: a quick group activity which is used to energise a group. It is usually done in the morning, after a meal or when the meetings are static and long so a group has to shake up a bit.

Topic-wise involvement: a working method which includes division of work and responsibilities depending on one's interests and specialisation, taking into consideration needs of a project, organisation, union, etc.

Aim: as a verb "to aim" means to go towards a specific goal, but as a noun it stands for "ability to hit the target". When talking about school students' activism or projects we refer to an aim as to a specific point or a goal of a meeting, project, action, etc.

Goal: an exact thing that the group is reaching for. The group may define both short and long term goals.

Objective: something one's actions are intending to accomplish.

Values: a set of beliefs that drive the consciousness and the actions of a person or a group (e.g. democratic values, inclusive values...)

Minutes: a document in which a person or more of them keep a record of what has been said and decided in a meeting or a debate.

Chairperson: a person facilitating a meeting (making sure that agenda is respected, resolving the disputes if there are any and making the speakers list so that everyone speaks in particular order, etc.)

Evaluation: The most important element of any educational activity is the evaluation. It is a process in which participants are led through the three phases of **reflecting** (what has happened and why?), **generalising** (is this also happening in our context or in society in general?) and **applying** (if we would encounter this situation again, what would we do differently?). If evaluation is not well thought-through or is rushed, we may not reach the expected learning outcomes and the activity is reduced to the level of a game, that can be fun, but will be soon forgotten.

Team building: a process when a group of people gets to know each other in order to build an effective and functional team. There are many activities that may be used for this cause.

Facilitator: a person keeping the track of the work in the group and facilitating the work or the learning process of a group.

Peer to peer activities: support programme or activity in which two or more people of a similar age work on the same matter.

Stakeholders: a person or a group that has a share or an interest in something (in the case of school students those are students, teachers, school staff, etc.)

Decision-makers: the people that have a jurisdiction of making important or less important decisions which usually affect many people.

Decision-making processes: the processes in which the decisions are being made. The process might involve structures, hierarchies, bureaucracy. It is a long process in which many important stakeholders and decision-makers are involved.

Ice breaker: an activity used to relax the group and get people interested into the teamwork and the topic.

Annexes

The Declaration of School Student Rights

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions - OBESSU proclaims this Declaration of School Student Rights as a common standard for all education systems. As a matter of educational and social justice, the Declaration shall promote the end that all actors in the educational community and wider society uphoald their duty to ensure the effective observation and recognition os school students' rights.

The declaration of the inalienable rights set forth herein shall promote respect for school students and further the cause of school students in their struggle to realise and mantain their rightful place in school and in society.

Article 1
The right to Association

1.1 The right to associate at any level of education must be guaranteed by legislation.

1.2 In every school there should be a legally recognized student council, which has been democratically elected by the school students. All students have the right to run for elections.

1.3 School students and school student associations should have the right to establish national school student organisations.

1.4 Finances, facilities and support should be provided by the school, as well as by the local and central authorities in question in order for school student associations and organisations to function properly. However, this shall never restrict the autonomy of the associations.

1.5 School student organisations at all levels of education should have the possibility to perform the their activities during schooldays.

1.6 School students must have the right to assemble, strike, demonstrate and express their opinion both inside and outside the school. They must be able to do so freely and without sanctions.

Article 2
The right to Participation

2.1 School students must be involved in the decision-making processes in all matters of concerning the school. This must be guaranteed by legislation.

2.2 The power of decision making must not be concentrated in the hands of single individuals; decision making bodies at all levels must be representative and democratic.

2.3 There must be an organ of collective decision making such as a school board when the decision making process of a school is concerned.

2.4 School students must have influence on the content of the lectures, the methods of teaching, the curricula and books.

2.5 Students should be guaranteed proper, transparent evaluation of their work. Students have the right to a global and continuous evaluation. Furthermore, school students should be given the opportunity to evaluate the teaching.

2.6 School students must have equal influence as teachers have in the school decision-making processes.

2.7 School students have to be guaranteed sufficient time for learning.

Article 3
The right to Appeal

3.1 School students should have the right to appeal against unfair treatment and have the right to demand disciplinary actions in case of such violations. The appeal should be handled by an impartial structure.

3.2 Any appeal through internal or external channels should not cause any harm to the school student(s) appealing.

Article 4
Civil Rights

4.1 Civil Rights must apply to all school students.

4.2 Education must be based upon mutual respect, understanding, democracy and tolerance and equality. School systems will promote the fight against discrimination in all forms, fascism and xenophobia. School students have the right to a safe learning environment.

4.3 Privacy of information concerning individual school students must be respected and used only with the student's explicit prior consent.

4.4 All school students must have access to an ombudsperson responsible for education.

4.5 School students must be protected from all kinds of exploitation.

Article 5
The right to Quality Education

5.1 School students must have the right to high quality impartial education.

5.2 There should be quality assessment at all levels of education.

5.3 There should be no fees of any kind. School students should get their public secondary education funded by the state.

5.4 Vocational training should enable students to find a job responding to their qualifications and interests. Social partners should be consulted in the decision-making process concerning vocational training. Vocational training should leave flexibility in the later choice of careers.

5.5 Secondary education in general should provide students with the practical skills and preparation in order to enable them to bring the theory that they learn into practice in their further education and future (working) lives.

5.6 Schools should provide the adequate materials and technologies necessary for the studies.

5.7 Every type of education at secondary level should contain general education.

5.8 Schools must provide special measures to compensate in any specific deficits due to shortcomings in the upbringing and previous education of school students. They should also be provided free of charge.

5.9 All parts of the secondary school systems are of equal importance and should have the same rights and the same status.

5.10 At the beginning of a school year the school board must give proof of validity that new books must be used in the classes. The use of books must not be changed for reasons of economy but for educational reasons.

5.11 School students must have adequate and flexible timetables and study schedules throughout their education.

Article 6
Training

6.1 Vocational training should enable students to find a job responding to their qualifications and interests. Social partners should be consulted in the decision-making process concerning vocational training. Vocational training should leave flexibility in the later choice of careers.

6.2 The school is responsible for the periods of training in external companies and guarantees that they have a real formative objective. The students have the right to be informed at the beginning of the school year about the activities they are going to do and about the way in which they will be evaluated.

6.3 Students have the right to have a course regarding the legislation regulation the rights in the working environment and about safety on the working place.

6.4 Students doing practical work experience are not to be considered replacements for employed workers.

Article 7
The right to Access to Education

7.1 There should be no technical, financial or sociocultural barriers to secondary education.

7.2 Entry to any type of higher education should be available to all who have completed secondary education. Higher education entrance criteria should be flexible and be aimed at encouraging access.

7.3 School students should not be required to specialise before they are fully aware of the importance and impact of their choice.

7.4 Facilities must be provided for disabled people enabling them to receive education on an equal basis with non-disabled students.

7.5 Any break during a study career must be allowed without loss of any achieved study credits and without loss of the right to continue education.

Article 8
The right to maintain Cultural and Personal Identity

8.1 Every one should have the right to maintain their cultural heritage. School students speaking a minority language should be offered lessons in the language in question. Optional courses on minority language and culture should also be offered to students representing the majority population

8.2 The school must respect the individuality of school students. Equality in education shall not mean uniformity: students have to be allowed to develop their personal abilities and identities towards the direction they want to.

Article 9
The right to gender Equality

9.1 Discrepancy in skills between school students because of a gender specific socialization should be compensated by means of education. Schools will actively work for gender equality in society.

9.2 In order to achieve education promoting gender equality, sexes must not be presented in stereotypes in the educational process.

9.3 The staff at secondary schools must be hired due to competence and ability, with no regard to gender,

religion, origin, sexual orientation and so on. In order to offer school students a representative vision of our diverse societies.

Article 10
The right to a flexible school

10.1 The authorities in question should give the school a flexible framework still defining general guidelines and minimum requirements.

10.2 Education and learning should not be regarded as occurring only during the years in school. The school system should adapt itself to serve the principle of continuous education. Students must be taught abilities and given facilities to actively seek information themselves and not only to receive knowledge passively through the teaching process.

10.3 School students must have the right to receive education in the required form when they are absent from school due to illness or any other legitimate reasons.

Article 11
The right to a proper school environment

11.1 School students should have the right to be educated in an adequate (learning) environment. Legislation securing a good work environment should be applied to schools too.

11.2 The social function of the schools should be taken into account and cared for.

11.3 School students must have the right to a free insurance during school time and activities done within the educational programme. They must also have the right to free medical assistance when they get involved into an accident during school activities, this including practical work as a part of the education curriculum.

Article 12
The right to Information and Guidance

12.1 School students have the right to be adequately informed about their rights and possibilities as well as about the educational and participatory structures.

12.2 All school students must be provided with proper guidance and orientation in all matters of their own concern. Social and psychological help should be provided within the schools.

12.3 School students should be informed about everything that is of relevance for their education and its procedures. Plans for each subject in the curriculum should be presented to the school students before the beginning of each term.

12.4 School students have the right to access all kinds of information and knowledge without censorship or other limitations.

Article 13
Internal regulations

13.1 In every school there shall be a set of internal regulations. The school board or the school community will decide upon the content of these rules. In unclear cases, the school board, not the headmaster or teachers, shall do the interpretation of the regulations.

13.2 At the start of each school year, a written copy of these regulations will be distributed among all the students. Any changes made by the school board or the school community during the year will be handed out in the same way.

Article 14
The right to Global and Society Education

14.1 School students have the right to receive education in areas that are of importance for understanding the world we live in, such as:

- Intercultural education
- Sex education
- Education promoting democratic participation in society
- Environmental education
- Tolerance and solidarity
- Social skills
- Diversity of gender and sexuality

SAFEGUARD AND SUPERVISION

To safeguard that once adopted the contents of this charter are properly used and that the legislation concerning the school student rights is being followed, it is of the greatest importance that there are supervising authorities at every level that are competent to take disciplinary actions against the party which is in violation.

Template for Minutes

Name of the Organisation:

Place, Date, Time:

Participants:

Excused:

Number	Subject and discussion	Next steps
1	Budget cuts We do not agree with the proposed cuts The organisation has to do something against the cuts	Everybody: Brainstorm and try to come up with ideas on what to do Until March 1
2	Cake sale The cake sale went well	Mirko: Write report and put it online Until April 25 Carla: Put the money in our account Until April 25
...	...	...

Statutes of a local school student organisation

The Statutes include the rules, regulations and procedures of a local organisation. They are there to **guarantee that the democratic processes are safeguarded** and that every member has the tools to understand better the purposes and the regulations. Nevertheless, you can also have an organisation that lives without a formal statutes, it is in this case important, anyhow, that you agree with the members on a code of conduct, or some regulations that everyone is familiar with.

Remember, also, that **the statutes is not the first step when creating an organisation**. Statutes usually come with praxis, when your organisation is already running and you and the rest of the members agree on the principles, the structure, the leadership.

Here is a draft version, you can take it, adapt it, change it completely, scratch it, just remember that democracy is the real essence of school student activism and participation!

Art.1 – The Organisation

1.1 – The Organisation is named "_____". The official abbreviation of the name is "_____".

1.2 – The Organisation is legally based in "_____".

Art. 2 –Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the Organisation are:

   a) To represent School Students and their interests in the education system.

   b) To protect and promote students' rights and their educational, social and economic interest.

   c) To give a safe space for democratic participation to the school community.

   d) To promote equality and anti-discrimination policies in the school environment.

2.2 In order to reach these objectives the Organisation will:

   a) Organise campaigns and events.

   b) Consult students every time a decision that concerns them has to be taken.

   c) Elect representatives in the School Board/School Council/School Parliament.

   d) Promote dialogue between the local decision makers and the school students.

Art. 3 – Membership

3.1 – Any student of the CITY/SCHOOL/SCHOOL NETWORK can become a member of the Organisation by SIGNING THE AGREEMENT/PAYING THE MEMBERSHIP FEE/COMING TO EVENTS.

3.2 – Every member is equal and has the same voting right.

3.3 – Members need to adhere to the objectives of the Organisation in order to be such.

Art. 4 – Internal Organisation

4.1 – The Organisation meets X times a month.

4.2 – Membership can meet in:

   a) General Assemblies

The General Assembly is the highest decision making body in the Organisation. It is called at least X times per year. At every General Assembly the Membership agrees on the regulations proposed by the Chair of the Meeting. The General Assembly is called at least 30 days in advance and members are invited with a formal invitation containing an agenda and all preparatory documents. The General Assembly should adopt regulations concerning the voting procedure, the speaking right and the election of people.

b) Council of Members

The Council of Members meets X times a year and discusses internal policy and actions. This meeting is called to organised the campaigns and activities of the year/semester/month and is composed of all members.

c) Committees

Members of the Organisation can form Committees for any projects and activities they want to organise that does not conflict with the will of the other members of the Organisation.

d) Informal networks

Members can gather in Informal Network for discussion. The Organisation will provide space for these gatherings to happen upon previous communication.

4.3 – The Board is the executive power of the Organisation. It is composed of X members elected democratically by the General Assembly and they are responsible for:

a) Executing the decisions of the General Assembly, the Council of Members and the official resolutions of Committees;

b) Making decisions that cannot wait until the next meeting;

c) Representing the will of the members towards headmasters, teachers and local policy makers;

d) Administrating the union and its economy;

e) Making sure that the work is done properly.

4.4 – The Board can identify internally different positions:

a) President, responsible for organising main Meetings, calling for General Assemblies and chairing Board Meetings.

b) Secretary, responsible for the documentation and archiving, as well as for minute taking of all meetings. The Secretary is also responsible for communication to the members and the partners.

c) Treasurer, responsible for the economy, the reports and the financial documentation. The Treasurer, together with the President, prepares and presents financial plans and budgets. He_She is also responsible and has the right to withdraw money from the Organisation account, ensuring transparency of transactions.

4.5. – The Monitoring Committee is the overseeing body of the Organisation. It is composed of X members who oversee the management, the finances and the policy. They are also in charge of mediating conflicts based on the Statutes and other written regulations of the Organisation.

Art. 5 – Statutes' changes

5.1 – The Statutes can only be changed at the General Assembly with a 2/3 majority.

Questions for Evaluation and Feedback

We already went through why are evaluation and feedback crucial in the development of an organisation in paragraph at page 53, in which you can also find a lot of useful methods for evaluating your activities.

Here, we want to go a bit deeper into what is evaluation and what are the questions you might want to ask yourself and the rest of the group when evaluating.
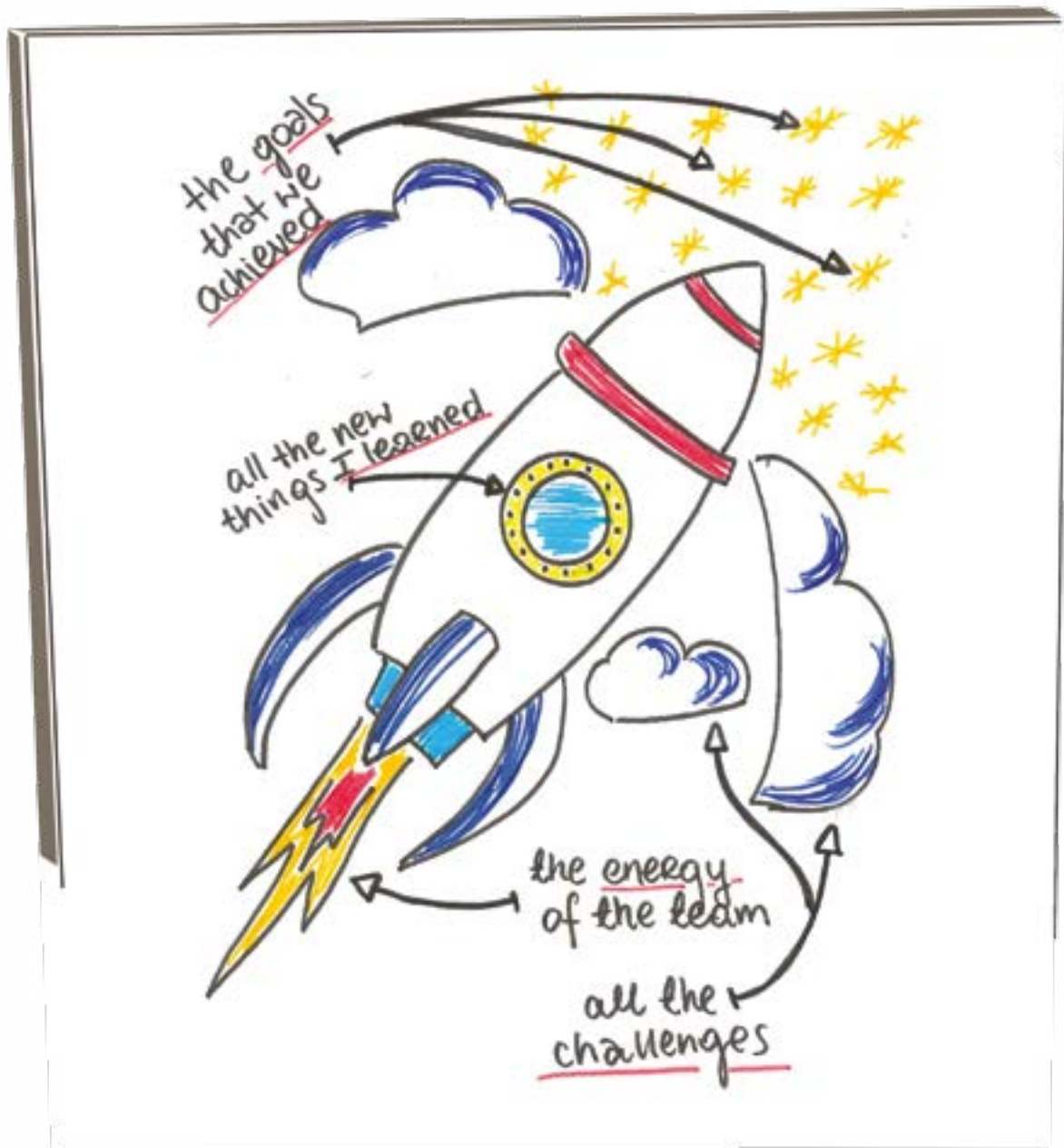
As already said, don't rush or underestimate evaluation. Always take notes and internalise what other people highlight, evaluation processes are always an opportunity to learn about yourself, your organisation and they are a way to improve your future activities!

Some questions you might want to ask to participants or members of the team are:

- How did you feel during the activity?
- Do you think the method was appropriate for the participants/target group? Why or why not?
- Do you think the organising team led the activity/event appropriately? Why or why not?
- How did you work in the team? How did everyone feel in the group? Was the workload balanced? Did everyone feel comfortable? Did everyone have the opportunity to fulfil their responsibilities? Why and why not?
- What do you think you contributed to the discussion/event/activity?
- What do you think you learnt from the discussion/event/activity that you will you apply from tomorrow?
- Is there anything you would do differently after this activity/event/reflection? Do you have some suggestions?

Remember, there are many methods you can use for evaluation and feedback, but you have to be convinced of the process. As well, you have to ensure that you have the trust and confidence from the whole group in a safe space where everyone feels free to speak their mind.

The evaluation space rocket

the goals that we achieved

all the new things I learned

the energy of the team

all the challenges

Participants are supposed to reflect on the event and express it by drawing a space rocket, that will symbolise different aspects of their experience. It is a very open evaluation method, because as there is no template, they create the entire drawing themselves, and so they can decide on what aspects will they comment and what symbols will they use.

INSTRUCTIONS

Think of our activity - try to remember all the things we have done, discussed and achieved. Now draw a space rocket that will represent all that you want to share about your experience here. You can choose the shape, colours, what elements it has, where it is - anything! It is important, that different elements have some meaning.

Look at the example here - there are some ideas on how to do it!

This Manual could not have been printed without you!

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