

# Training Standards

On the issue of FGYO certificates for basic training courses for intercultural youth leaders

*"The entire training course was and is memorable. It's almost impossible to pick out one individual formative moment from all the fantastic, educational and emotional moments I experienced."*

*Participant, 2014*

# Editorial information

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# 1. Introduction

This revised version of the training standards pertaining to the issue of FGYO certificates for basic training courses for intercultural youth leaders was drawn up by a steering group comprising representatives of the Franco-German Youth Office's Department of Intercultural Training in cooperation with German and French youth work organisations with extensive experience in this field. On their basis, certificates may be issued to participants who have completed the training courses in question.

The revised version was reworked extensively to reflect insights gained during the more than three-year introductory phase and the steering group's ongoing evaluation of the training seminars and of the process itself.

These standards now extend to include the FGYO's certificate scheme, which applies to all training courses offered by the FGYO for which certificates are available. Besides the training courses for intercultural youth leaders, these include training for group interpreters and language animation providers.<sup>1</sup> The FGYO's certificate scheme is described in more detail in chapter 2, which covers the principles and attitudes applicable to the FGYO's basic training courses and certificate scheme, as well as in section 4.4, which covers learning processes and learning support.

These standards closely correspond to the practices in place in intercultural exchanges. For more detail please refer to the footnotes, which contain further information as well as references to scientific and other sources.

## History and aims of the FGYO certificate project

In 2004, a number of German and French providers of Franco-German and also trilateral youth exchanges plus basic training for intercultural youth leaders approached the FGYO to inquire about collaborating on a scheme for certifying team leaders and building a team leader database.

### ➤ The aims of the project were and still are

- > to safeguard and raise the visibility of the **quality of training** for team leaders by defining training standards and curricula,
  - > to **recognise and document the qualifications gained by team leaders through a certificate** in response to a growing need among participants,
  - > to safeguard the **quality of exchanges for children and young people** by deploying qualified team leaders, and to this end
  - > **include the qualified team leaders in a database** where German and French youth organisations can find professional, suitable leaders for their intercultural exchanges, as well as to provide team leaders with an opportunity to showcase their qualifications and lead more intercultural exchanges,
  - > to draw up a **practical, viable process** that reflects the values, principles and methods behind the training courses on the one hand, and is aligned with the resources and needs of the implementing organisations and trainers on the other, without losing sight of the quality aspect.
- Following a brief interruption, the project was relaunched in mid 2009 and extended to include training courses for language animators and group interpreters.
- ### ➤ The project comprised
- > **adoption of training standards** to ensure the visibility and quality of the training courses provided (2009-2010),
  - > **definition of learning targets and vital competences** team leaders need to have, plus the **development of a process to support and evaluate competence acquisition** (2009-2011),
  - > **development of a website, creation of a technical system to generate certificates** (2010-2011), and **setup of a team leader database** (2011) (see <https://teamer.dfwjw.org>),
  - > the **testing, evaluation and improvement** of these processes (2011-2015).

<sup>1</sup> When referring to all three forms of training and their respective target groups, the umbrella term "team leader" or "team leader training" is used henceforth. Otherwise, the text uses the specific terms – (training for) intercultural youth leaders, language animation providers, group interpreters – where appropriate.

## FGYO certificates

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### ➤ Principles of the FGYO certificate scheme:

- > The FGYO does not certify organisations; rather, it authorises them to issue certificates to those who have completed a training course. In advance of this, the precise requirements are discussed in a personal meeting with a representative of the FGYO's Department of Intercultural Training.
- > Training providers that wish to issue FGYO certificates pledge to include the training standards in their curricula.
- > The trainers accompany participants as they undergo the learning process and acquire the competences they need to lead youth exchanges. This is done by means of various evaluation processes and an interview at the end of the course.
- > The decision to issue a certificate and admit a participant to the team leader database lies with the trainers who have accompanied the future team leaders during their training.
- > The training courses and indeed the entire system are based on the same principles and values that apply to non-formal learning.
- > The project takes account of and actively contributes to the debates at the EU and national level surrounding the recognition and validation of non-formal learning outcomes and the verification of competences acquired in this manner. At the same time, it is closely aligned with the specific practices in place in the field of Franco-German and trilateral exchanges and seeks to raise the quality of the work being done in this field. The intention to have certificate holders included in a database was one of the reasons why it was considered necessary to design a scheme specifically for the FGYO.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Specifically, one of the primary aims of the project to design a proprietary scheme was to validate learning achievements made in non-formal settings, namely in **a training course with defined learning targets** (not during a youth exchange); in other words, the acquisition of a certain set of competences, the exact nature of which is based on insights gained in Franco-German and trilateral exchanges. This was necessary since the objective was to both issue certificates and list qualified participants in a team leader database so as to raise the quality of intercultural youth exchanges. Furthermore, the duration of the process was not to extend beyond that of the training course, ensuring it would be implementable in practice. While other methods to validate non-formal learning achievements in interna-

tional youth work do exist and did in fact serve as a source of orientation – such as the European Portfolio for youth leaders, *Youthpass* or *Kompetenznachweis International (KNI)*, they could not be taken into account given the defined aims of the project and the specificities of validating competences in connection with training. That said, the FGYO's certificate scheme is seen as a contribution towards quality assurance in the youth exchange field as well as towards the recognition of competences acquired in non-formal settings.

## The three FGYO certificate types and corresponding activities performed by team leaders in youth exchanges

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The three different training courses for which FGYO certificates are available prepare team leaders for the various tasks they are expected to perform during a youth exchange. In this regard, the training courses are designed to complement each other. Many team leaders complete several courses or have already acquired competences in other areas when they begin their training.

### ➤ Intercultural youth leaders

undergo **a two- to three-week Franco-German or trilateral training course** (with one module in each of the two countries) and **complete an internship during a youth exchange**. This form of training can be seen as a **foundation course in the field of intercultural youth exchanges**.

**Curriculum:** The course covers the entire organisation and implementation of a youth exchange. Subjects include project planning, programme design, intercultural learning methods, cultural diversity, linguistic aspects of an exchange, language animation, legal aspects, group dynamics, intercultural team work, and youth exchange evaluation.

**Role in an exchange:** Intercultural youth leaders have learned to organise and implement intercultural youth exchanges. They are able to manage the exchange in methodical and linguistic terms, and are capable of assisting participants as they undergo an intercultural learning process. They may offer language animation. As a rule, they work in intercultural teams. Should they wish to acquire further competences in the field of language animation and/or interpreting, they can undergo further training in these areas.

**Language skills:** Many intercultural youth leaders have excellent communication skills in the other language; however, this is not a prerequisite. The basic training courses do not prepare them for acting as interpreters during an exchange.

### ➤ Language animation providers

complete **at least four days of Franco-German training**.

**Curriculum:** The training course covers, *inter alia*, language animation theory and methods, intercultural learning, group dynamics and evaluation.

**Role in an exchange:** Language animation providers have learned to apply language animation methods in a targeted way during youth exchanges. As a rule, they work in intercultural teams. Should they wish to acquire further competences in the field of interpreting or as youth exchange leaders, they can undergo further training in these areas.

**Language skills:** At a minimum, they have basic knowledge of the other language. While many language animation providers have excellent foreign language skills, it is not their job to provide interpretation during youth exchanges.

### ➤ Group interpreters

have completed a **nine-day Franco-German training course**.

**Curriculum:** The course covers interpreting in youth exchanges and seminars, intercultural mediation and communication, support during youth exchanges, and intercultural learning.

**Role in an exchange:** During training, group interpreters are prepared for acting as language facilitators in both directions, which involves interpreting consecutively during an exchange and ensuring intercultural communication between participants. Should they wish to acquire further competences in the field of language animation or as youth exchange leaders, they can complete further training courses in these areas.

**Language skills:** Group interpreters must demonstrate strong foreign language skills.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our partner organisations in Germany and France for their cooperation and critical and constructive input to the project. These shared training standards have created a stable framework for training and qualifying team leaders, thanks to which we are able to maintain the quality of the training itself as well as the quality of the youth exchanges. This would not have been possible without a willingness to subject the process to constant evaluation and reviews to ensure its practical applicability.

Besides the FGYO, the steering groups included representatives of the following organisations in Germany and France:

### ➤ Basic training courses for intercultural youth leaders

- bapob e. V. (Berliner Arbeitskreis für politische Bildung)
- BDP (Bund Deutscher Pfadfinder\_innen)
- Europa Direkt e. V.
- Gwennili
- interkulturelles netzwerk e. V.
- Union Peuple et Culture
- CEMEA (Centres d'Entrainement aux Méthodes d'Education Active; until 2013)
- UTC (Une Terre Culturelle; since 2014)

Thanks are also due to other associations and organisations that issue certificates to those who have completed a course of training (BAK Arbeit und Leben, CEFIR - Centre d'Education et de Formation Interculturel Rencontre, Culture et Liberté, Gustav-Stresemann-Institut, Roudel – Relais d'Ouverture et d'Echange Culturels et Linguistiques), and to all trainers whose feedback and reports have helped to improve and streamline the project.

### ➤ Training courses for language animators

- AGFJ (Arbeitsgemeinschaft freier Jugendverbände)
- AFCCRE (Association Française du conseil des Communes et Régions d'Europe)
- BILD/GÜZ (Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation/Gesellschaft für übernationale Zusammenarbeit)
- CEMEA (Centres d'Entrainement aux Méthodes d'Education Active)
- CNOSF (Comité National Olympique et Sportif Français)

- DSJ (Deutsche Sportjugend)
- Dock Europe
- Entraide Allemande
- Gwennili
- Interkulturelles Netzwerk e. V.

### ➤ Training courses for group interpreters

- BDL (Bund der Deutschen Landjugend)
- BILD/GÜZ (Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation/ Gesellschaft für übernationale Zusammenarbeit)
- CASF (Centre d'Animation Social et Familial) de Bischwiller
- La Ligue de l'Enseignement
- ROUDEL (Relais d'Ouverture et d'Échanges Culturels et Linguistiques)

For quality assurance reasons, the steering groups continue to meet once or twice a year to evaluate and where necessary, improve the training scheme as well as the process at large.

Berlin/Paris, 17 May 2016

## 2. Principles and attitudes underlying training for team leaders and the FGYO certificate scheme

The following principles and attitudes underlie the training courses for intercultural youth leaders, group interpreters and language animators. They hence also form the basis for the FGYO's certificate scheme.

### Diversity of training providers, approaches and methods

Defining training standards ahead of issuing certificates should not be interpreted as an attempt to standardise the different forms of training. The Franco-German and trilateral youth work field is characterised by a multitude of very different circumstances, situations and methodologies. This diversity is what makes it so valuable. These training standards have hence been designed to serve as a shared qualitative, formal and conceptual framework that respects and preserves the diversity of approaches and methods used by the training providers. The training courses for which certificates are available are not the only form of team leader training that receives FGYO funding.

### Pedagogical approach: Non-formal learning

The training courses share the same pedagogical approach. This approach in turn is based on the principles of non-formal learning which, unlike formal learning, takes place outside mainstream school, vocational training or higher education settings. It uses different forms of learning and other methods, but does follow a structure (unlike informal learning) – meaning it involves learning targets and phases.<sup>3</sup>

Non-formal learning is characterised by the following essential features and learning/teaching methods:<sup>4</sup>

#### Essential features of non-formal learning

- Balanced co-existence and interaction between the cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning
- Linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidary and symmetrical teaching / learning relations
- Participatory and learner-centred
- Holistic and process-oriented
- Close to real-life concerns, experiential and oriented to learning by doing
- Using intercultural exchanges and encounters as a core learning device
- Voluntary and (ideally) open-access
- Aims above all to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life

#### Non-formal teaching/training and learning methods

- Communication-based methods: Interaction, dialogue, mediation
- Activity-based methods: Experience, practice, experimentation
- Socially-focused methods: Partnership, teamwork, networking
- Self-directed methods: Creativity, discovery, responsibility

The instructors cover the course contents in a practice-oriented and experiential manner, using exercises, simulations, workshops, games, group work and discussions etc., and encourage participants to reflect and interact. The participants, in turn, take charge of their own learning process and play an active role in shaping it. Participation in the training courses and in the certificate scheme must be voluntary.

Informal (unstructured, unintentional) situations encountered during the course represent equally valuable learning settings,<sup>5</sup> so the curriculum deliberately includes unstructured periods to allow for informal learning.

<sup>4</sup> This categorisation is based on the report on the Council of Europe Symposium on Non-Formal Education, which took place from 13 to 15 October 2000 in Strasbourg (2001). Cited in: Fennes; Otten (2008:13).

<sup>5</sup> The Council of Europe has "...reiterated the equal importance of all different kinds of learning – formal, non-formal and informal learning..." (Council of Europe/European Commission 2011:14).

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed definition of formal, non-formal and informal learning, cf. Fennes; Otten (2008:12).

These unstructured phases are an opportunity for participants to discuss the subject matter they have covered with their peers or with the team.



"I've learned so much here, both in theory and practice and on a professional and personal level. (...) On a practical level, which included language animation and many other exercises we did over the three weeks, the training has been extremely intense. On a personal level, I appreciated the equally intense relationships and informal situations I encountered here. During this three-week course I have acquired as much knowledge as I would have in a one- or two-year degree programme."



## Intercultural learning as a means of shaping attitudes

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The Franco-German and trilateral training courses offered by the FGYO and its partners aim to initiate an intercultural learning process in participants and to empower them to do the same when they work as team leaders on youth exchanges.

For us to remain able to communicate and interact in a highly complex, multicultural world that is in constant flux, intercultural learning is indispensable. It can be seen as a way to approach life's daily challenges in which we are constantly confronted with unfamiliar, constantly shifting value systems and people from various personal backgrounds.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In an initially unpublished paper from the 1970s, B. Müller and M. Pagès describe intercultural competence in broad terms as "... being able to negotiate situations in groups and/or organisations for which there are no hard and fast rules, or where established rules or value systems do not work or become dysfunctional, meaning that new forms of communication and activity have to be found. The many facets of the intense international and interethnic relations we experience every day represent a particularly relevant sphere, albeit not the only one, in which we are called upon to deal with the ever stronger 'deregulation' of our lives. Naturally, this deregulation cannot be complete; in any case we would not be able to deal with that. The disappearance of all unquestioned rules, conventions, hierarchies and dependencies would also mark the disappearance of our social life and of all the structures we consider to be a given. However, that does not change the fact that we need to learn to deal with less certainty and develop a stronger capacity for self-regulation, unless we want to succumb to the overcomplexity of life as it

In the context of Franco-German and trilateral exchanges, we consider intercultural learning to involve developing an awareness or an attitude that requires us to approach each situation individually (in other words, to not apply ready-made solutions). It is a form of social learning that is not just useful in international settings, but also in everyday life – and it is a lifelong process.

The intercultural competences and attitudes we wish to encourage through our bi- and trilateral training include, *inter alia*:<sup>7</sup>

- > Awareness of one's own identity, values, philosophies, attitudes and perceptions;
- > Recognition and reflection of one's own actions, thoughts and emotions in the context of one's own cultural identity (self-perception);
- > An understanding of others while considering their contrasting cultural backgrounds and to demonstrate respect, tolerance and interest vis-à-vis alternative cultures and lifestyles without denying one's own value systems (external perception);
- > Ability to respond openly and flexibly in new and unfamiliar situations, act appropriately, and contribute;
- > Ability to recognise one's own roles, to step back from them and where necessary, to adapt them (role distance);
- > Ability to put oneself in others' shoes (empathy); Awareness of the mechanisms and functions of prejudices; ability to recognise one's prejudices and to review them critically;
- > Awareness that cultural differences may not be immediately obvious, and curiosity about the significance of visible differences and their origins;
- > Ability to respond adequately to confusing and frustrating situations, discrepancies and contradictions (tolerance of ambiguity and frustration);

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is today." (1997:118; translated from the original German). The authors consider intercultural education to function as a form of "anti-fundamentalism training", defining fundamentalism in this context as "...a reaction to an unbearable wave of intercultural experiences that one is unable to process. The attraction of fundamentalism lies in the fact that in this overwhelming situation, it ostensibly provides apparent certainty" (119; translated from the original German). In this context, intercultural education ought not to denounce or combat this need for certainty and structure, but reduce it objectively.

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<sup>7</sup> This section refers to sections of an unpublished paper on intercultural learning by a group of FGYO pedagogical staff (*Pädagogische Mitarbeiter/-innen/permanents pédagogiques*) which existed until 2006, and is aligned with the general literature on intercultural competences and the practices applied in Franco-German and trilateral exchanges.

- > Acceptance of unfamiliarity and an inability to understand; ability to not be threatened by it;
- > Ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally;
- > Awareness that intercultural learning is a lifelong process and willingness to embrace that process at all times;
- > Application of what one has learned in an international context to one's own personal environment;
- > Recognition of culturally-induced conflicts and ability to distinguish them from other types of conflict.

To trigger intercultural learning processes, it is vital to have experienced them oneself. For this reason, intercultural training courses for team leaders are oriented to **learning by doing, experiential, and practical**.<sup>8</sup>

The training courses are attended by participants from various countries, modules are completed in both countries and the languages are given equal weighting – a concept that promotes intercultural learning and encourages the development of the corresponding attitudes. This setting is ideal for conducting a dialogue among equals and learning about the realities of life, creating fertile ground for mutual understanding. Intercultural exchanges and dialogues are core elements of the educational approach behind these courses.<sup>9</sup>

Ideally, intercultural learning happens in **situations that ensue during the training courses**, which participants **reflect on and evaluate**, and which are **relevant to participants' daily lives**.<sup>10</sup>



"For me, the exchange as a whole carried the greatest significance: to meet people in my age group, all of whom were great people and whose values chimed with mine, from two neighbouring countries, to witness how the group developed and how everyone negotiated the language barrier. That was a great source of motivation. I'm sure it's an equally valuable experience for adolescents to witness that a group can run into problems because people disagree, to develop a 'culture of debate', and to consider other people's points of view."



<sup>8</sup> "You learn to act by doing what you wish to learn in the first place. You teach actions by placing learners in the situations which they should learn to deal with." (Bauer; Brater et al., 2010:32; translated from the original German); cf. also Fennes; Otten: "Experiential learning means confronting learners with new and unfamiliar situations which may produce ambiguity, tension or even crises, but which can lead to new learning opportunities." (2008:19; translated from the original German).

<sup>9</sup> "...The training should require participants to share with one another what they thought and felt in certain situations when it comes to the behaviour of other participants, especially those from other cultures, which demonstrates the relationship between cause and effect, which is often conflicting." (Blomberg; Fouquet et al., 1987:11; translated from the original German).

<sup>10</sup> On this, cf. Demorgan; Lipiansky et al., who consider evaluation as part of the intercultural learning process and its relevance in two ways in particular: one, as a way to process "unexpected, surprising, spontaneous but also irritating, annoying experiences" since this is vital for intercultural learning; two, as a way to connect "the experience of an international exchange with participants' everyday lives" (2001:83-85). "The goal of intercultural learning only becomes apparent in the learning process, so evaluation must be a part of that process." (2001:101; translated from the original German).

### 3. Aims of the FGYO's training courses for team leaders

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#### Why training for intercultural team leaders is relevant to the quality of international exchanges

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Since its foundation in 1963 as part of the Treaty of Franco-German Cooperation (commonly known as the Elysée Treaty), the FGYO and its partner organisations have worked to strengthen the relationships between children, adolescents, young adults and decision-makers in the field of youth work by offering a place for dialogue and exchange,<sup>11</sup> initially in order to promote reconciliation and friendship between France and Germany, later and to this day to encourage intercultural and diversity-aware learning in an enlarged Europe and beyond.<sup>12</sup>

International youth exchanges have been proven to have a lasting impact on how young people develop an identity<sup>13</sup> and personality: amongst other things,

they promote confidence, tolerance, commitment, intercultural learning and language skills, and impact on young people's interest in and relationship with other cultures<sup>14</sup> in both international and local contexts.<sup>15</sup>

However, bringing together young people from Germany, France or other country in one place does not suffice to trigger intercultural learning processes. Merely coming into contact with people from other cultural backgrounds or a simple trip abroad will not necessarily lead to tolerance, respect and mutual understanding. On the contrary, in the absence of a well-trained guide, existing negative prejudices and defence mechanisms may well be reinforced.<sup>16 17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> cf. FGYO guidelines (2015:15).

<sup>12</sup> On this, cf. Müller; Hänisch; Thomas (2012) and Thimmel (2012).

<sup>13</sup> In "Begegnung schafft Perspektiven", a summary report on the project "Evaluation Internationaler Jugendbegegnungen" of the FGYO, the German-Polish Youth Office and the 2011 project to evaluate youth exchanges, the concept of identity development is defined as follows: "Youth exchanges are particularly suited to helping young people to understand other people's identities in the context of their cultural backgrounds. Reflecting on such experiences of unfamiliarity leads participants to reflect more profoundly on their own lifestyles and cultural peculiarities of their home country. Experiencing the 'other' leads them to shape their own personal identity and develop a tolerance of unfamiliar identities." (Ilg; Dubiski, 2011:65; translated from the original German).

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<sup>14</sup> A study on the long-term impacts of international youth exchanges on participants' personal development (Thomas; Abt; Chang, 2006) found that even ten years after the exchange, an impact was still felt in the following areas: Self-referenced traits and competences; tolerance; flexibility; composure; self-perception/self-awareness; social skills; intercultural learning; foreign languages; constructive activities; cultural identity; vocational training and careers; relationship with host culture/other cultures, etc.

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<sup>15</sup> On this, Rafik Mousli writes: "The issue of interculturalism is transferable to the local level (part of town, city, society) and is not limited to encounters between people of different nationalities. Generally speaking, international youth exchanges help to make young people aware of intercultural aspects in a local cosmopolitan context, which encourages greater intercultural sensitivity at the local level. As such, they can trigger intercultural interpersonal processes at the local level." (2014:2; translation based on the translation into German from the original French).

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<sup>16</sup> cf. Thimmel (2012:197).

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<sup>17</sup> The training curricula serve to deconstruct prejudices by helping learners to understand the underlying functions and mechanisms (cf. Nicklas, 1989:16). It is more a case of "living with prejudices" – that is, to learn to decrypt them and contrasting them with those of others – than eliminating them completely. Above all, the idea is to learn how to deal with prejudices with much more composure and less guilt." (Blomberg; Fouquet et al., 1987:16; translated from the original German).

## Responsibilities of team leaders on intercultural youth exchanges

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To ensure that learning processes are initiated and supported and in turn, lead to high-quality youth exchanges, it is necessary to have well-trained team leaders who are able to create an environment where intercultural understanding can flourish. In other words, team leaders are responsible for creating an atmosphere that is obviously and entirely free of prejudice, giving participants the confidence to open up to unfamiliar experiences and negotiate the uncertainty that is required to trigger a learning process without running into mental blocks.<sup>18</sup>

Providing the team leaders with the tools they need to do that is the goal of the training programmes. The idea is not to hand them a set of blueprints, but rather to assist them in exploring their own ideas and support them as they embark on a (life-long) learning process. Training, in this sense, also means unlearning existing and learning new ways of interacting with oneself and with others.<sup>19</sup>



"During the course I discovered a whole load of exercises that are vital when it comes to encouraging young people to open up."



## Aims of basic training for intercultural youth leaders

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Accordingly, the training courses for future intercultural youth leaders aim to achieve the following:

- > Provide them with basic knowledge about the settings, realities and complexities of a Franco-German, trilateral or international exchange and let them allow participants to experience and reflect on these themselves
- > Confront participants with the material covered in section 4.2, which is vital when it comes to organising international youth exchanges, and encourage them to participate and contribute actively
- > Provide them with tools for working in the intercultural field and give them the confidence to develop their own flexible approaches to organising international exchanges and dealing with multicultural groups
- > Encourage them to continue exploring the world of youth exchanges and international youth work, other countries, and intercultural issues
- > Make them aware of intercultural processes by allowing them to experience them at first hand, and allow them to reflect on their own intercultural learning process so they can better understand the mechanisms and impacts underlying intercultural communication<sup>20</sup> and hence provide support to young people at a later stage
- > Make them aware of the local dimension of their intercultural learning process
- > Assist them in their personal development
- > Trigger a personal learning process in each individual participant and assist them in becoming aware of their own competences so they can take responsibility for acquiring the additional competences they will need as leaders of youth exchanges
- > Allow them to explore their own aims and motivation for leading international youth exchanges, and reflect on this
- > Discuss the transferability and applicability to their own voluntary or full-time educational work (local, international, intercultural).

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<sup>18</sup> On this, Professor Hans Nicklas writes: "In any case it ought to be clear that a change in one's everyday situation, a dissonance, a sense of uncertainty is necessary to trigger a learning process and bring about a change in behaviour. On the one hand, how much uncertainty do we need for us to become aware of it in the first place, and to question our familiar thoughts and actions? On the other, how severe should it be in order to not trigger fear and resistance, which would then render any learning processes impossible?" (1989:17; translated from the original German). Blomberg; Fouquet et al. add that "responsibility for adjusting the degree of confrontation with other cultures to the point where participants are 'shaken up' but not blocked lies with those managing the exchange." (1987:7; translated from the original German).

<sup>19</sup> cf. Blomberg; Fouquet et al. (1987:11-12).

<sup>20</sup> cf. Lipiansky (1996:26).

The training standards defined in chapter 4 are divided into four sections. They serve to reach the above objectives and in turn, to safeguard the quality of training. These standards must be met before a certificate can be presented to youth leaders after they have undergone training. They describe the framework conditions and material to be covered in basic training courses, and also include a section on learning process support and competence acquisition. The principles described in this chapter are fundamentally applicable in this context.

# 4. Standards for basic training courses for intercultural youth leaders

## 4.1. Principles

The following principles apply to basic training courses for youth leaders for which certificates can be obtained.

### ➤ Structure of training courses

Certificates are available for participants completing either a Franco-German or a trilateral training course. At least one part of the training takes place in each of the participating countries. The group is composed of an equal number of participants from each country; the same is true of the trainer team. The training course itself hence takes place in the form of an exchange. Interpretation is provided, especially in the trilateral courses.

#### Franco-German basic training courses comprise

- > at least two training seminars, one in Germany and one in France, over a period of at least 12 days in total, plus
- > an internship of at least five days in an international youth exchange in cooperation with an experienced team.



"Being consistently provided with interpretation in the three languages allowed me to explore the languages spoken by the other participants, even though I don't understand them well."



#### Trilateral basic training comprises

- > at least three training seminars, one each in Germany, France and the third country, over a period of at least three times five days, plus
- > an internship of at least five days in an international youth exchange in cooperation with an experienced team.

### ➤ Participants

- > are at least 18 years of age,
- > ideally have basic language skills in the other language (binational basic training) or at least in one of the two other languages (trilateral basic training),
- > plan to lead international youth exchanges, have the motivation to learn in a non-formal setting on a voluntary, independent and experiential basis, are curious, and are willing to open up to intercultural learning processes,
- > opt voluntarily to work towards a certificate (which is by no means a requirement for participating in the course) and in turn, to meet all the relevant requirements, such as active participation over the entire duration of the course plus internship.

### ➤ Trainers

The trainer teams of the Franco-German training seminars are binational and work with both languages; in the trilateral seminars they are trilateral and work with all three languages. The trainers are responsible for complying with the training standards. They accompany participants throughout the various phases of the learning process and towards the end of the course, conduct evaluation interviews with those participants who wish to be issued with a certificate (cf. the following chapters). Certificates for basic training courses may only be issued if **at least one trainer from the FGYO's trainers' pool for basic youth leader training courses was a member of the trainer team** for the entire duration of the course.

#### Members of the trainers' pool must meet the following requirements:

- > They are at least 24 years of age.
- > They hold a **certificate for youth leaders in intercultural youth exchanges**.
- > They have led at least four international youth exchanges and in this context, have worked in various teams in different places.
- > Over the entire duration of a basic training course for which certificates are available, they have been full members of an experienced trainer team. In this capacity, they have been taught to design learning processes and support learners. At the beginning of the course they have set themselves learning targets that are regularly reviewed and adjusted, and have discussed these both during and at the end of the course with other experienced members of the trainer team. These experienced trainers have approved their inclusion in the trainers' pool.
- > They regularly take part in the FGYO's train-the-trainer courses.

## **Role and attitude of trainers<sup>21</sup>**

- > Trainers consider themselves initiators, designers and supporters of participants' learning processes who themselves are responsible for making the most of the circumstances under which they learn and to leverage their full potential as learners.
- > Trainers have already undergone an experiential, reflective process in regard to the special nature of intercultural work and are able to support participants as "cultural mediators" and "cultural interpreters"; meaning they can "recognise national concepts and translate them into other cultural contexts" and "assist (...) all participants in understanding what motivates people to act in certain ways." (Blomberg; Fouquet et al. 1987:23-24; translated from the original German).
- > As part of an intercultural team, trainers are responsible for preparing the course, setting learning targets, selecting the pedagogical approach and structuring the course, as well as for evaluating the course and debriefing afterwards. In this context, any difficulties they encounter themselves inside the team can be used as a valuable intercultural learning experience.
- > The trainers' relationship to the participants is symmetrical in nature and is based on cooperation, trust, respect, appreciation and equality. Participants and trainers are "partners in the learning process".
- > Trainers are themselves learners. They learn through reflection, evaluation, and the analysis of activities and processes, including feedback they receive from participants and fellow trainers.

The FGYO regularly offers advanced train-the-trainer courses.

## **4.2 Curricula**

The organisers pledge to ensure that the curricula of the training seminars cover all the aspects that are detailed in the following. They are based on the objectives applicable to training for intercultural youth leaders that are discussed in the introduction; prior experience with exchanges has shown that these are particularly relevant.

### **Overview**

- > Intercultural and diversity-aware learning (cross-cutting theme)
- > Knowledge of the participating countries
- > Role and attitude of youth leaders
- > Working in intercultural teams
- > Project and programme design
- > Exchanges and group dynamics
- > Methods for intercultural exchanges
- > Youth cultures and target groups
- > Enabling multilingual communication
- > Evaluation and reflection
- > Institutional framework of youth exchanges

The training standards form a framework that allow for flexibility and diversity when it comes to the methods and structure of the actual training courses. The course contents are covered in a manner that corresponds to the principles of non-formal learning – while theoretical in nature, they are taught in a hands-on and experiential manner. Particular attention is paid to encouraging participants to reflect and interact.

Overall, the idea is not to provide the soon-to-be youth leaders with ready-made solutions for leading intercultural youth exchanges; instead, they are to be empowered to find their own approaches. In this contact, they are responsible for their own learning processes, however with the backing of the trainers, who will also inform them of opportunities to continue learning and studying.

The educational concept of the basic training courses involves questioning and examining existing structures. Since intercultural processes are open processes, too, the courses should offer ample space for unexpected developments and opportunities for informal learning.

The points mentioned in the following thematic sections serve to define the themes in question and provide guidance. The list is, however, not exhaustive. They are not presented in any particular order of significance; to some extent they also overlap.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Blomberg; Fouquet et al. (1987:23-25) and Fennes; Otten (2008:18-19; 25-26).

The first thematic section on "Intercultural and diversity-aware learning" discusses a cross-cutting issue and should hence be seen as relevant to all other themes. It does not just relate to training; rather, it describes an attitude, a philosophy and an approach (cf. also the chapter on principles and attitudes).

The course contents provide an indication of which competences are relevant for intercultural youth leaders and if followed, will help them to acquire these.

## ➤ Intercultural and diversity-aware learning (cross-cutting theme)

- > Basic principles of intercultural processes and pedagogy
- > Culture and identity
- > Cultural diversity, membership of multiple cultures
- > Culture and language, verbal and nonverbal communication
- > Perception of oneself and of others
- > Differences in cultural behaviours, systems and functional mechanisms; origins thereof and how to manage them
- > Prejudices, their functions and mechanisms and how to manage them
- > Taboos and how to manage them
- > Intercultural competences such as empathy, role distance, tolerance of ambiguity and frustration

## ➤ Knowledge of the participating countries

- > Cultural differences and differences in social systems
- > History of the participating countries; the role of history
- > Differences in the pedagogical concepts and approaches in the participating countries
- > Various dimensions of the relationship between Germany and France
- > Germany, France and Europe in a European and global context.

## ➤ Role and attitude of youth leaders

- > Diverse nature of the role of youth leaders: Translator, (intercultural) mediator, moderator/facilitator, initiator, role model, team member, logistics manager, port of call in social/emotional matters, supporter of the intercultural learning process, etc.; recognition of strengths and weaknesses when it comes to fulfilling these roles; awareness of one's own competences
- > Requirements and expectations placed on youth leaders by parents, organisations, funding providers, participants and fellow team members
- > Different applicable laws in France, Germany and third countries: Legal issues, responsibility, insurance matters, child and youth protection, and prevention
- > Differences and similarities between participating countries concerning the interpretation of the role of a youth leader
- > Youth leaders as participants in an ongoing learning process
- > Youth leaders' own objectives and beliefs when it comes to working in the field of international youth exchanges

## ➤ Working in intercultural teams

- > Various aspects of teamwork: Communication, compromise, conflict, decision-making, constructive criticism, etc.
- > Team models
- > Advantages and limits of teamwork
- > Culturally motivated differences in work ethics and how to manage them
- > Conflicts as an opportunity to learn and understand in an intercultural setting
- > Distribution of roles and tasks; complementary nature of competences
- > Time management



"I've learned to overcome difficulties when working in trilateral small groups, to describe my ideas in precise terms, and to clearly explain the cultural contexts underlying certain terms."



“It was particularly interesting and enlightening to discuss the taboos, histories and lifestyle differences in the various countries – these are important issues but it's rare for people to talk about them in casual conversation.”



## ➤ Project and programme design

- > Definition of rough and detailed objectives of an international youth exchange; selection of methods and educational approaches to reach these objectives; reflection and where necessary, adjustment of objectives and processes
- > Aims and principles of non-formal learning
- > The role of informal situations and how they relate to the activities
- > Flexibility and room for the unexpected
- > Exchanges as an opportunity for encounters
- > Adjusting the programme to age, target group, venue etc.
- > Forming well-balanced groups from various countries when designing the programme and considering linguistic aspects
- > Creation of opportunities for reflection
- > Role of briefing and debriefing the exchange within the team and with participants
- > Ways to encourage participants to take an active role in shaping the exchange
- > Familiarisation with participants' daily lives
- > Appropriate duration of programme elements
- > Logistics and organisation

## ➤ Exchanges and group dynamics

- > Difference between an exchange and travel for tourism
- > Group dynamics and how they develop
- > Group phenomena
- > Creating informal situations and their significance for group dynamics
- > Relationship between group life and the environment
- > Provision of space for encounters (literally and metaphorically)
- > Role of conflicts in intercultural groups: conflicts as a learning opportunity and their relevance to learning; conflict management methods
- > Impact of culture and religion

## ➤ Methods for intercultural exchanges

- > Finding, selecting, adjusting and preparing, presenting, evaluating and reflecting methods
- > Methods for specific applications, e.g.:
  - o Group dynamics
  - o Discovering the town or city, country, Europe and the world
  - o Language animation
  - o Conflict management
  - o Intercultural and diversity-aware learning
  - o Managing prejudice
  - o Exchange, evaluation and reflection of experiences

- > intercultural aspects of selecting and applying methods

## ➤ Youth cultures and target groups

- > Visions, expectations, needs and interests of young people in regard to intercultural exchanges
- > Orientation towards the young participants' lives and interests; corresponding selection of themes
- > Profile of participants
- > Developmental issues during adolescence
- > Legal framework when working with various target groups
- > Young people's media behaviour

## ➤ Enabling multilingual communication

- > Managing two or more languages in an exchange setting
- > Balanced presence of all languages
- > Relationship between language and culture
- > Modes of communication (verbal, nonverbal, virtual), especially in multilingual settings, and the resulting challenges
- > Potential of an exchange in regard to language motivation and acquisition
- > Ways and means to encourage a curiosity and interest in learning other languages
- > Language animation: Aims, principles and methods
- > Role of interpreting and/or translating
- > Multilingualism and language diversity: Making use of the diversity of languages spoken in the group

## ➤ Evaluation and reflection

- > Relevance of the meta level and of reflection for the learning process
- > How evaluation impacts on the quality of youth exchanges
- > Designing and supporting learning processes
  - o Reflection post-exercise
  - o Applying what has been learnt to everyday situations
  - o Evaluation formats and methods: e.g., end-of-day evaluations, evaluation of exercises, interim and final evaluations
  - o Levels of evaluation: e.g., evaluation by individuals, by peers, in the whole group or in small groups, between trainers and youth leaders
  - o Analysis of group and learning processes and corresponding adjustment of the programme
  - o Aims and significance of feedback and constructive criticism

## **Institutional framework of youth exchanges**

- > The civil society significance of youth associations and clubs in a political context
- > Implementing organisations and funding providers in the international youth work field
- > Role and significance of the FGYO in current and historical contexts
- > Educational objectives of the FGYO
- > Educational and financial support by the FGYO
- > Visibility of implementing organisations and funding providers in a PR context

> The organisers of the training courses can provide internship opportunities, but are not required to do so. The trainee youth leaders are responsible for finding a youth exchange where they can complete their internship. The organisers of the training courses and/or the FGYO may assist them where possible.

> The interns are given feedback at the end of their internship. They produce a written report to reflect and evaluate their experiences and submit this to the trainers and/or organisations providing the training, who are also on hand to answer any questions. Where possible, interns are given an opportunity to evaluate the internship during the next training phase.

### **4.3 Internship in an international youth exchange**

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Trainee intercultural youth leaders must complete an internship in an international youth exchange, giving them an opportunity to gain some practical experience working alongside an experienced intercultural team, apply what they have learnt in practice, and explore their new role.

Ideally, the internship should be completed before the last training seminar so the trainees can evaluate their practical experiences together with the trainers and other participants.

Information leaflets are available containing more detailed information on administrative and financial aspects and ways to find internships. Organisations wishing to offer places for interns during their youth exchanges can apply for an internship scholarship.



"Thanks to this course and the internship, I managed to gain a foothold in the intercultural community. This has improved my competences and allowed me to start working in the field of intercultural exchanges and youth mobility."



The following requirements must be met:

- > The internship is completed as part of a bi-, tri- or multinational youth exchange.
- > The team leading the exchange must include at least one experienced youth leader.
- > To ensure that trainees have ample opportunity to learn, only one intern should be present during a given exchange.
- > The trainee youth leader is a member of the organisation team and takes part, if possible, in preparing the exchange. The team sits down with the intern to discuss how they can contribute to the exchange and what role they should occupy. The intern should be exposed to as much practical experience as possible.

## 4.4 Designing and supporting learning processes and validating newly acquired competences

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### ➤ Preliminary remarks: certification in the non-formal learning domain – the biggest challenge of the project

**Certification in the non-formal learning domain – isn't that a contradiction in terms? Doesn't that transform the underlying character of non-formal youth work?** This issue is raised time and again at the EU and national levels in connection with recognising and validating non-formal learning outcomes.<sup>22</sup>

It has also been a constant subject of debate since work began on this process.

<sup>22</sup> A detailed summary of the European debate on this subject is provided by Baumbast; Hofmann-van de Poll; Lüders (2012:31-34). In their working paper "Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe", the European Commission and the Council of Europe call for the validation of such achievements at various levels – formal, political, social and personal – through self-recognition. A public consultation by the European Commission in 2011 on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning revealed that certification is desirable in order to raise "the status and value of non-formal and informal learning" and improve "the visibility of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside of formal settings". In the European debate on this subject, the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes is often motivated by a desire to enhance employability and competitiveness (cf. the Council of Europe's Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning). The validation of competences for this purpose is often desired by adolescents and young adults who consider it useful in getting them an apprenticeship or job. By contrast, the youth work community is concerned that the fundamental character and function of youth work will change in the long term if recognition is implemented with a view to enhancing the employability of young people and if non-formal education programmes are redesigned with this in mind. In 2010 the German Federal Youth Council took a very clear stance against the instrumentalisation of youth work by the government and the private sector, stating that "society can only undergo constant and necessary change if young people are allowed to make their own choices as they grow into adulthood (...) For this reason, the development of young people's personalities may not be channelled to fulfil certain purposes nor engineered to meet the needs of the state; instead, young people have to be put at the centre of the process" (2010:3; ; translated from the original German; cf. also Merl 2012 and Grein, 2013). Although the competences that are acquired through basic training courses are highly applicable in everyday life and in turn are also very relevant to participants' careers, we believe that the primary objective is to strengthen and develop participants' personalities and encourage them to make their own choices and participate democratically in society.

For the steering group, it has always been crucial to ensure that the modalities for validating learning outcomes and the acquisition of competences in non-formal settings – in other words, the issue of certificates – correspond solely to the principles of non-formal learning, some of which are highlighted in the following:

### Principles underlying the FGYO's certificate scheme

- Certificates are offered only on a voluntary basis – participants decide themselves whether they wish to be issued with one. All training courses can be completed without the intention to gain a certificate.
- The scheme is transparent and process-oriented. From the beginning participants are made aware of the requirements and the overall process. They have ample opportunity to obtain feedback during the training course.
- The scheme is participatory and is based on interaction, dialogue and appreciation. While participants are responsible for their own learning outcomes, the trainers provide them with support during the learning process (partnership-centred learning/training relationship). In line with the principle of learner centricity, the focal point is the learning process of each individual participant.
- The process is confidential, in particular when it comes to support given during the learning process, whether in the shape of self-reflection or feedback. Each participant's learning process is a personal matter.
- The process described here is mandatory, although the principle of the diversity of methods remains valid here. The validation methods, too, correspond to those applicable to non-formal learning.

## ➤ Learning targets of the training course and competence acquisition

Basic training courses for youth leaders are designed to enable participants to acquire the competences they need to fulfil the role of a youth leader and in this capacity, to perform the complex functions that are required to ensure high-quality intercultural youth exchanges (see description above) while responding flexibly to the situation at hand.

By "competences", we mean the attitudes, values, awareness, knowledge and abilities that enable someone to respond to the need for action in complex situations – in this context, managing an intercultural youth exchange and supporting adolescents and young adults throughout their learning processes. These competences emerge in concrete situations, depend on the situations in question, and are dynamic in nature. They can be considered the outcome of a process of learning and reflecting on one's prior experiences.<sup>23</sup>

Based on prior experience with youth exchanges, the steering group has defined a set of competences that have emerged as most relevant to leaders of intercultural youth exchanges and in turn, to the quality thereof. These competences can hence be considered the "official" learning targets of the training courses. They are made transparent from the very beginning and represent a framework for reflection and development that spans the entire training phase, as well as for the final interview during which participants' learning process and competence acquisition are evaluated.

The learning targets of the training course and the desired competences are:

### To be able to motivate oneself and others

- > To be aware of one's own motivation and reasons for working in the field of youth exchanges
- > To be able to motivate oneself even in challenging situations
- > To be able to motivate young people and create a constructive group environment
- > To be motivated to learn and be curious about learning

### To be able to take independent action and manage stress

- > To be able to show personal initiative and actively provide input to the exchange
- > To be able to present one's points of view and be open to those of others
- > To be able to handle several tasks at once
- > To be able to respond to unexpected situations
- > To be able to manage stress and fatigue and handle failure
- > To be able to procure any necessary information independently

### To be able to fulfil the role of youth leader

- > To have knowledge of the legal and institutional frameworks of the countries in question
- > To be able to take responsibility and remain aware of the consequences of one's actions
- > To remain aware that one is a role model for the participants and be able to command the respect of others
- To learn methods, apply them, adjust them to the context and target group, and present and evaluate them

### To be able to work in an (intercultural) team

- > To be able to recognise differences in team members' way of doing things and to manage/discuss them
- > To be able to contribute and let fellow team members contribute at the same time
- > To be able to provide and accept feedback

- > To be able to recognise, assess, handle and resolve conflicts
- > To be able to take decisions in a team and respect them

#### **To be able to manage group dynamics**

- > To be able to shape the different phases of group development in a methodical manner
- > To be able to observe how a group develops, analyse this and apply appropriate methods in response
- > To be able to lead a group

#### **To be able to shape intercultural learning processes**

- > To be able to create an awareness of intercultural learning processes and give meaning to the term "intercultural learning"
- > To be able to recognise intercultural communication phenomena and respond accordingly
- > To be able to recognise and use conflicts as learning opportunities
- > To be familiar with methods that trigger intercultural learning processes, support these processes and evaluate them together with participants
- > To be able to create learning opportunities and initiate reflection

#### **To be able to design an exchange project**

- > To be able to define goals for the respective target group
- > To be able to adjust activities to fit the defined aims of the exchange
- > To be aware of the methods that promote dialogue in an exchange and to be able to adjust these to the target group
- > To maintain an "intercultural perspective" when it comes to designing the programme, taking the participating countries into special consideration
- > To be aware of the various evaluation and reflection methods and to be able to apply them at different points in time and at different levels
- > To be able to "manage" time: to schedule formal and informal sessions, set the duration of sessions and at the same time remain flexible in response to group processes and the possibility for participants to provide active input
- > Have knowledge of the organisational, logistical and financial aspects of a youth exchange

#### **To be able to enable multilingual communication**

- > To be willing to enable communication in an intercultural setting (e.g., involving nonverbal communication)
- > To be motivated to extend one's own language skills and encourage participants to do so as well

- > To be aware of the goals of language animation (LA) and be able to apply LA methods
- > To be able to create an environment in which multilingual communication can thrive
- > To be aware of the relevance of interpreting and translation and succeed in enabling all participants to benefit fully from the exchange regardless of their language skills

#### **Intercultural attitudes and competences (cross-cutting theme)**

- > To be aware of one's own identity, values and moral compass, attitudes and perceptions
- > To recognise and reflect one's own actions, thoughts and emotions against the backdrop of one's own cultural background (self-perception vs. external perception)
- > To understand others in the light of their distinctive cultural and social background and demonstrate respect and tolerance for other culturally induced lifestyles
- > To be able to respond openly and flexibly in new and unfamiliar situations, make an adequate contribution and conduct oneself appropriately
- > To be able to recognise one's own role, maintain a distance to that role and adapt it (role distance)
- > To be able to put oneself in other people's shoes (empathy)
- > To be aware of the mechanisms and functions of prejudices and recognise them in oneself
- > To know at which level hidden differences may exist, and to be curious about the significance of obvious differences and their origins
- > To be able to consider differences and contradictions as normal, to bear them, to allow differing attitudes and values to coexist and to acknowledge these (tolerance of ambiguity)
- > To accept unfamiliarity and an inability to understand (tolerance of frustration)
- > To be able to communicate verbally and nonverbally
- > To remain aware that intercultural learning is a life-long process, and to embrace any opportunity to learn

These learning targets and competences are not presented in order of importance; neither is this an exhaustive list. Youth leaders always work in a team, so their respective competences can complement each other.

The training they undergo provides the trainee youth leaders with a vital set of tools for leading youth exchanges. However, these competences will only become second nature if they are consistently and regularly applied in practical situations and if youth leaders continue learning by themselves. Intercultural learning processes are lifelong by their very nature.<sup>24</sup>

“I’ve learned so much: to work in a team, to understand others, to listen to others (...) I’ve learned to reflect on things that seem difficult to grasp at first glance. I’ve also learned to plan a project and design a programme. And beyond these technical issues, I’ve absorbed values such as solidarity, respect for others, and acceptance of differences.”

In line with the principles of non-formal learning, we consider the learning targets of the training courses and competence acquisition to be strongly connected to personality development, civic and democratic education, and peace education.

“This training course has taught me to think about the influence of my culture on my daily life, my behaviour and my thought processes.”

## ➤ Designing and supporting learning processes

Designing and supporting learning processes is crucial for preserving the non-formal character of the training and the certificate scheme.

At the beginning of each course the process is explained in detail to the participants before they decide whether they wish to join the FGYO’s certificate scheme, since one important principle of the scheme is that it is voluntary.

The process involves intense support throughout the learning process, which is detailed in the following:

### Definition of learning targets

When the course commences, participants reflect on the above-mentioned learning targets of the training course and the competences they are to acquire, and on this basis determine their own personal learning targets. The list above is not exhaustive; other personal learning targets may be added. Some competences may have already been acquired in other areas. It is clear that not all conceivable subjects can be covered by the training courses. Defining one’s learning targets can be an opportunity to deal in greater depth with certain issues outside of the actual training course. Learning targets can be adapted and extended at any time during training.

Participants carry personal responsibility for their learning process; however, the trainers and their fellow participants support them as they learn.<sup>25</sup>

### Learning atmosphere

This refers to the creation of a constructive learning atmosphere that is appreciative, motivating, interactive, participatory and process-oriented. “Mistakes” are seen as a learning opportunity. Trainers function as partners in the learning process. The training course should be fun and make learning enjoyable.

### Self-reflection, evaluation interview and feedback

Evaluating exercises, reflecting on learning processes and getting personal feedback are integral elements of the learning process. Without in-depth reflection and feedback, learning is much less intense; in other words, self-reflection and feedback are crucial for effective

<sup>24</sup> cf. Blomberg; Fouquet et al.: “No group leader should assume that just because they’ve taken part in a training course they have all the tools they need for their work. The training they undergo is nothing but an encouragement to keep returning to the issues discussed, to keep learning from the practical experience gained in exchanges, to continue collecting information and so forth” (1987:12; translated from the original German)

<sup>25</sup> This emphasis on learners’ responsibility is based on the assumption that competences can only develop if learners manage their own personal learning process; in other words, they do not develop as a result of instruction from above, but of being guided throughout the process (Bauer; Brater et al., 2010:23).

learning to take place, especially in the intercultural sphere.<sup>26</sup> Feedback helps participants to steer the competence acquisition process in the right direction. It is an opportunity to consider oneself and one's own behaviour as it is perceived by others and to compare one's perception of oneself with that of others, thus producing a differentiated view of oneself and improving the ability of self-evaluation.<sup>27 28</sup> One important goal of feedback is to produce an accurate picture of one's own strengths.

To establish a culture of feedback and evaluation and to take account of intercultural differences in providing and accepting feedback and evaluation, this subject is discussed during the training course on a variety of levels.

### **Levels of designing and supporting the learning process**

Here, again, the diversity of methods and approaches comes into play. Throughout the entire training course participants are engaged in evaluating their learning targets. How this is done is up to the trainers.<sup>29</sup> In any case, though, this includes self- and peer evaluation plus feedback from the trainers.

In response to the symmetrical character of the learning/teaching relationship, participants can also provide feedback to the trainers.

### **Self-reflection and evaluation interview at the end of the course**

Upon completing the course, participants are asked to attend an evaluation interview. **The interview is based on a prior self-reflection** during which the learners consider in-depth the learning targets as described above and any additional competences they have acquired, as well as the learning process they underwent since commencing their training.<sup>30</sup> To aid reflection, any thoughts are put in writing for the sole personal use of the learners. In doing so, a variety of methods can be employed (e.g., mind maps, tables, etc.). Self-reflection involves considering situations and examples that were experienced during the course, the internship, and any other experiences made in other contexts. The idea is to initiate a reflection on one's competences and to note down any additional learning perspectives. **This process of self-reflection is the most important part of the final evaluation, and forms the basis of the subsequent evaluation interview with the trainers. No feedback is given on intercultural competences and attitudes; this point is only considered during self-reflection.**<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> cf. Demorgan; Lipiansky et al.: "We believe that effective intercultural exchanges, or indeed training in this field, are impossible without making evaluation an integral part of this work. It is pointless to limit oneself to activities that are only evaluated after the fact and/or externally. It is only once that is accepted that evaluations 'ex post' start to make sense. In other words, we propose that evaluation be seen as a function of intercultural animation itself. This theory is based on the (...) assumption that intercultural work in the narrow sense is impossible if not approached in an experimental and research-centred manner." (2001:245-246; translated from the original German).

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<sup>27</sup> On this, Nina Guillerme writes: "Self-evaluation is the ability to recognise one's own strengths and weaknesses and to not over- or underestimate one's own achievements, learning outcomes, competences and behaviours. This is an ability that develops through interaction with others, by comparing different people's feedback. It is hence vital to create a space for dialogue; not just in order to recognise that one has achieved something, but also to develop confidence in those achievements." (2009:27; translated from the German version of the French original).

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<sup>28</sup> cf. also the "Johari window", which was developed by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1950s and provides an insight into personality traits that are known or unknown to oneself or others. In this context, learning in groups and through feedback from other group members provides a space for becoming aware of traits that, although unknown to oneself, are known to others (the "blind spot") and in turn, for developing one's personality.

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<sup>29</sup> e.g., feedback after leading a session, small group feedback, a daily "apéro reflexif" with the same feedback group, peer feedback in a tandem or with several participants, or personal daily reflection sessions.

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<sup>30</sup> While developing the process, the difficulty with evaluating competences and the fact that they often only emerge much later on was discussed several times.

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<sup>31</sup> "What is normally termed 'intercultural learning' cannot be verified by means of objectively measurable behaviours or by identifying a change in one's knowledge or conduct. It can only be evaluated through self-evaluation on the part of the learners themselves, who don't just gain experiences but reflect on them, discuss them and evaluate them, maybe even just by letting it all 'sink in'. Intercultural learning happens while we self-evaluate what we have experienced." (Demorgan; Lipiansky et al., 2001: 244; translated from the original German).

The interview represents a special moment in the course of the training. The participants enter a sheltered space where the trainers who have accompanied them throughout their training give them feedback on their self-reflection that is again based on concrete examples and observations. The atmosphere during this interview is interactive, motivating and process-oriented.

The aim is for the learner to become fully aware of their own competences and become able to identify them also in other contexts. Should the learner not have yet achieved all of their learning targets, they cannot be issued (yet) with a certificate. However, they can gain a certificate later once the gaps have been closed (e.g., in further training or through practical experience).



"The evaluation interview is a great way to round off the training course. I was given fresh input that I can now go and work on."



## 5. Issue of certificates and inclusion in the team leader database

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### Issue of certificates

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Once participants have completed all phases of the basic training (including the practical module) and are proven – in the final evaluation interview – to have acquired all the competences necessary for leading youth exchanges, they receive the FGYO certificate for youth leaders in intercultural youth exchanges.

### Team leader database

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If they so wish, certificate-holders can be included in the FGYO team leader database.

The database brings together qualified youth leaders and German and French organisations seeking qualified personnel for their youth exchanges.

For the youth leaders, the database is a platform for them to present their qualifications (e.g., additional training they have undergone, thematic specialisations and any practical experience).

For partners, associations, schools, city twinning committees and other implementing organisations from the Franco-German youth work community, the database is a resource that helps them to find and contact qualified youth leaders and ask them to lead their youth exchanges, thereby ensuring and improving their quality.

For more information, visit <https://teamer.dfjw.org>



*"In any case, this has been a very enriching experience. Everything I learned on a personal and professional level will be valuable guidance for me from now on."*



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