

Learning Mobility in Times of Climate Change

Recommendations for a climate-sensitive learning mobility



Manual

ijAB





Table of contents

Introduction	4
Project Overview	6
Background and context of the recommendations	8
Young people's perspectives and resulting recommendations for a climate-sensitive learning mobility	10
Practical tips for organisations	14
Consequences for finance and funding	20
Partner organisations	22
Imprint	24

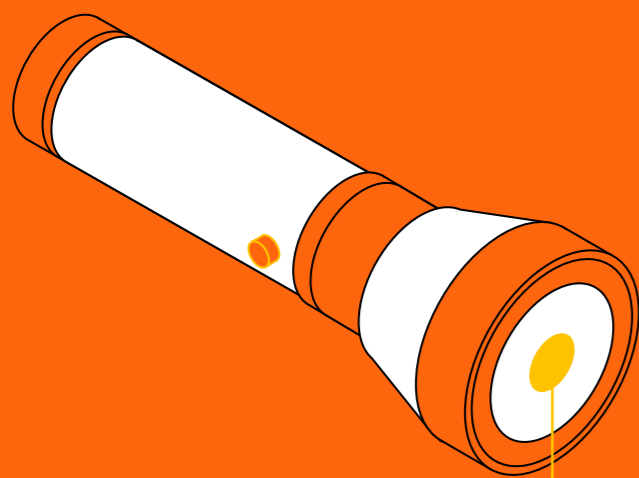
Introduction

The global development of climate change has recently brought the discussion about the harmful effects of travelling on the climate to the fore. For young people, this topic impacts on their lives in different ways, including youth mobility. Consequently, youth work and youth mobility for learning purposes have been increasingly confronted by questions of environmental compatibility and sustainability. Not only can travelling be made more sustainable; youth exchanges, too, can apply sustainable principles through the implementation of the programmes themselves.

The project “Learning Mobility in Times of Climate Change” therefore explored how learning mobility can become more climate-sensitive.



Project Overview



Project
Learning Mobility in Times of Climate Change (LEMOCC)

Background

2019/2020: In the “International Project Labs” of IJAB, its partners and its member organisations – climate change is identified as a topic of major interest

2021/2022: Realisation of the LEMOCC project with the aim of developing recommendations for a climate sensitive youth learning mobility



Objectives

- **To gain knowledge** on how measures of international youth work can be designed in a more climate-sensitive/eco-friendly way
- **To develop recommendations** for policy- and decision-makers as well as for the international youth work community of practice
- **To develop a collection of good practices**, projects and actors in the field at international level



Project partners

- **19 organisations** in seven countries (see page 22)

Project elements

- **Partner meetings and international working groups** of the partners

Youth consultation

- **Questionnaire, focus groups**
- **Workshop "F22 Future me"**
- **Participants:** Young people aged 15-30 from China, Estonia, Finland, France, UK, Germany and Türkiye

Further project publications

- **Report: “Listening to young people: Mobility for future”** by the Institute of Social and Organisational Education of the University of Hildesheim, which evaluated 1,527 questionnaires completed by young people from the seven participating countries as well as the results of four focus group sessions
- **International Mapping:** Policies, key actors and examples of good practice
- **Toolbox:** Toolbox for more sustainability in international youth work: Mobility, diet, waste and energy

Further information: <https://ijab.de/en/projects/learning-mobility-in-times-of-climate-change>

Background and context of the recommendations

The LEMOCC project aimed to support the organisations and providers of international youth work on their way towards a climate-sensitive international youth mobility. The views of young people played a central role in this context. We wanted to know what young people expect of environmentally friendly mobility programmes. In the course of the project, the young participants shared their hopes and fears as well as their ideas on how international youth work can develop further in a sustainable, climate-sensitive manner. They stated clearly that experiencing mobility is important to them and that they appreciate the value of international youth work.

Indeed, international youth work not only makes a huge contribution to the development of young people's personalities, skills and self-efficacy, it also plays an important role in sustainable development because it brings young people from around the world together, encourages cooperation between them and helps them develop an understanding of the living conditions of others. It contributes to civic education by fostering the competences that young people urgently need to form a global movement for sustainability: the capacity to work in a team, intercultural skills, and an ability to see things from other perspectives. It stimulates learning processes that help develop an understanding of the needs of others and that motivate young people to work together for a sustainable and peaceful world of tomorrow. This calls upon providers of international learning mobility and funding organisations to recognise the importance of a sustainable future and contribute towards making it a reality. In fact, this is exactly what young people expect from international youth work, as the survey made clear.

Our project brought together experts in international youth work and environmental education from seven different countries and public and independent organisations working nationally or at local level. Also, a team of researchers was part of the project. This enabled the results of the youth surveys and the demands of the young people to be analysed, discussed and evaluated from many different perspectives and under different conditions. We are aware that the youth survey is not representative. The majority of the young LEMOCC participants already had relevant experience of mobility. They were sensitive to climate change issues and considered them a serious problem. In practice, of course, this does not apply to all target groups for which international youth work offers programmes.

We wanted to know what young people expect of environmentally friendly mobility programmes

In developing these recommendations, we have been inspired by the demands of the young people involved in the project. We have also taken into account the diverse realities of the target groups and varying practices of the international youth work organisations involved in the project. It is our aim to inspire those with an interest in this topic to make some initial changes and try out some new climate-sensitive approaches.



Young people's perspectives and resulting recommendations for a climate-sensitive learning mobility

What did the young people tell us? And which conclusions can be drawn by practitioners and stakeholders in the field of international youth learning mobility for the future development of their work?

★ It became clear that digital events and meetings cannot replace physical encounters, although young people see them as a useful way to reduce travelling and hence carbon emissions. Therefore, they recommended considering online elements when planning an international activity.

→ **Explore digital methods and activities in your programmes. Define an educational goal for each part of the programme. Consider whether this goal can be achieved in a remote setting. Use this as a rule of thumb: Elements involving an exchange of information work well in digital settings, while developing trust and stable relationships requires personal encounters.**

★ Many young people stated that they would be willing to travel less often but for longer periods. The duration of an event and the carbon emissions produced by the journey to get to the venue should be in proportion.

→ **When planning your annual programme of activities, consider organising longer stays. Funding must be adapted in order to make longer stays possible.**

★ Some young participants felt there was too much responsibility on their shoulders. They said: You shouldn't ask us if there should be more climate-friendly activities! Instead of waiting for ideas from young potential users, the organisers of learning mobility programmes can take action themselves and pivot their programmes towards more sustainability. At the same time, the young participants expressed their wish to be involved in developing future sustainable learning mobility activities.

→ **When planning your programmes, you should explore all the possibilities to make the general framework more sustainable (see Section: Practical tips for organisations). Explore your target group thoroughly and find out to what extent they would be able and willing to contribute additional resources (time, money, effort, etc.) in return for a more sustainable programme. Discuss with your target group(s) what kind of international learning mobility activity they would like to participate in.**

★ During the project it emerged that young people sometimes feel weighed down and helpless in the face of the enormous problem that is climate change, on top of all other global challenges that the world is facing, and sometimes cannot find the strength to become active. International youth work with its combination of stimulating new contacts and non-formal methods provides a good foundation for tackling sustainability topics. They offer the opportunity to learn about complex issues in a hands-on, fun way in a group of young people from different backgrounds, and to gain concrete experience.

→ **Make full use of the potential of international learning mobility. A youth exchange on sustainability topics can provide the perfect mix of**

- hands-on suggestions for more sustainable behaviour,
- opportunities to try out new approaches, and
- additional facts and figures illustrating why this is important.



→ It can be difficult to get clear information on a certain topic. Making the right decision on how to live one's life in a sustainable way can be complex. Information can be contradictory or turn out to be wrong, also because new insights have been gained, for example. Make this transparent to the participants. Discuss in the group how to deal with this ambiguity and still find a way to take concrete steps towards sustainable action.

Above all, it is the small practical steps that the young people can easily integrate into their everyday lives that are already very valuable and usually more promising than complex plans.

★ Over 90% of the young project participants consider climate change a serious or very serious topic. Especially participants from EU countries had a very strong sense of their own responsibility and the importance of their personal choices. At the same time, when asked about their concrete engagement on climate issues, only a relatively small number mentioned regular activity. This shows that in this field, too, international youth work organisations could support and empower young people on their way towards stronger engagement.

→ Think about including concrete actions in your learning mobility programmes to provide concrete experiences for the young participants. Use your network and your access to young people to open up their way to information, contacts and resources. Inform them about active groups, interesting local solutions and positive environmental examples and put them in touch with each other and their active peers. Provide information about hands-on steps everyone can take to be more sustainable. Highlight that small steps count, too! At the same time, be sensitive to signs of eco-anxiety or overconcern, which have a paralysing rather than activating effect.

★ Moreover, when asked about their interest in becoming active in the future, the vast majority of respondents pointed out that they would be interested in joining activities focussing on climate protection. When asked about the kind of activity they would prefer, a clear majority of young respondents from all countries mentioned they would like to join "projects in my school/training institute/university/workplace". In the focus group sessions, the young participants explained this further. First of all, young people seem to feel that their formal education takes up so much time that they don't have the space, energy and means for other commitments. Hence taking action on climate issues wherever they have to spend their time anyway is simply practical. This calls for including time slots for civic engagement in formal education curricula.

→ Look for cooperation possibilities with the formal education system. Schools might be interested in non-formal-education activities/workshops to enrich their daily schedule. If you already have contacts in formal education, you can bring ecological groups or initiatives to this network to introduce their work, give a presentation on certain topics, etc.

★ Besides the lack of time, it was discussed in the focus groups that it can feel challenging to approach a new, unknown group of people or context even if the issue tackled by the group is considered important. This feeling of insecurity can be reduced, the young people said, when some persons in the group are already known and hence some contact is already established.

→ Look for opportunities to cooperate with civil society groups and build bridges to relevant activist groups. The peer-to-peer approach can be encouraged. Climate activist groups, political parties and initiatives can be invited to school or youth groups to make the first contacts easier.

>90%
of the young
project participants
consider climate
change a serious or
very serious topic



Practical tips for organisations

Young people not only shared their thoughts and feelings with us, they also gave us concrete ideas about what the organisers of learning mobility programmes can do to become more climate-sensitive. These impulses were taken up and supplemented by the international project partners. Here are the resulting practical tips.



Before the activity

Consider the climate already in the planning phase and note that planning can also be done online.

- Involve your target group already in the planning phase of the project.
- Talk to your international partner organisation(s) about their understanding of sustainability and about the standards and priorities they attach to the topic. The reasons for global climate change and the appropriate measures to take against it are prioritised differently in different parts of the world. We cannot take it for granted that all of the partners have the same perspective and starting points.
- Make transparent to the participants what measures you have taken/will take during the activity to reduce its carbon footprint and impact on the environment. If you are in doubt which measures will be accepted by the participants (e.g., the kind of food, the means of travel or the length of stay), discuss them with the group in advance. Explain the different options and their advantages and disadvantages. Involve the young people in the decisions.



Programme

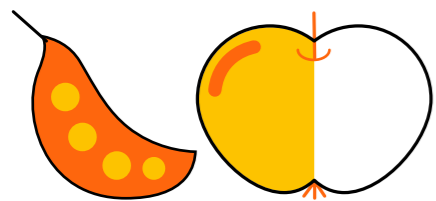
An international exchange is an excellent opportunity for holistic and experiential learning. Everything is different from home. Participants come to the exchange with an expectation of and

openness to new experiences. This creates an ideal ground for learning also in the field of climate and environmental protection. Young participants learn about the severity of climate change in a practical way and discover that small steps, too, can make a difference. They can try out new behaviours without the obligation to change their daily life immediately. The following tips concentrate on educational approaches that can be taken during international mobility activities that focus on topics other than environment or sustainability.

- During an activity we use electricity, we shower, we eat, etc., so the choices we make during a project are also always connected to the environment. We can use these concrete occasions to hold short creative workshops on recycling, food or energy consumption to encourage participants to consider the principles of more sustainable behaviour like eating less meat, separating waste properly, etc. Even a one-hour-workshop in a one-week exchange can make a difference. Furthermore, this will give the young participants more experience that they take back home with them.
- It is preferable to choose activities that enhance the positive connection to nature and environmentally friendly practices. Positive experiences with the environment and environmentally friendly and carbon-saving behaviour will encourage the young participants more than pointing out all the things that are harmful to nature.
- We can try to involve the local communities in the activity as much as possible. This includes using locally produced products, integrating local culture into our activity, informing the local media about the exchange, or using the regional infrastructure for programme activities.
- It is useful to raise the topic of climate sensitivity with international partners before the event
 - to create awareness amongst the partners, and
 - to find out about examples of good practice or existing methods.
- Travelling by train, coach or other slower but less CO₂-emitting means of transport will take longer. There are a lot of ways to use this travel time already as part of the programme, e.g., for group interaction, for playful preparation of the exchange, or to collect/spread information. Slow travel is an oppor-

tunity to observe how landscapes, architecture and people change, or how visible or invisible borders have become. You could stop on the way to learn about the regions you are travelling through. You could invite people to travel with you for a part of the way to learn from and interact with them. There are lots of ways for a longer period of travel to even add to the quality and fun of the activity. Maybe your partner already has a collection of ideas. Some countries have more experience in using travel time because of their geographical settings.

- Think about methods. The use of active and creative pedagogical methods such as arts, drama, games and role-play will encourage holistic climate learning in your mobility programmes.



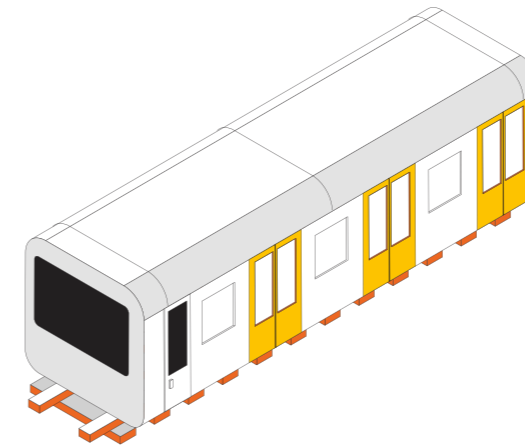
Food

The way we approach food plays a major role in regard to the carbon footprint. Many factors influence the ecological assessment of food (sun-ripened tomatoes, for example, have a much smaller carbon footprint than tomatoes that ripen in artificially heated greenhouses although the former travelled a long way).

- Choose seasonal and regional products.
- In general, the production of plant-based food has a smaller CO₂ output than the production of animal-based food. So when planning the activity, you should think carefully about your options concerning vegetarian and vegan food and discuss them with your partners. Is it possible to provide only vegetarian and vegan food? Remember that the assessment of what is “good food” can be different for different people. Some people could even consider it disrespectful to guests not to serve

meat. If you think that your target group will not accept only vegetarian and vegan food, provide vegetarian/vegan catering on at least one or two days. Take some effort to provide tasty vegan/vegetarian food.

- Provide as much organic food as possible, but remember that according to recent studies, seasonal and regional produce has a smaller CO₂ footprint than organic food that has come a long way.
- Plan the catering in such a way as to avoid left-overs. When self-catering, make a plan what to do with left-overs if there are any.
- Provide smaller portions and the possibility for a second helping. This allows you to reuse any unserved, untouched left-overs. The food offered should be labelled to avoid left-overs and prevent food intolerance problems.
- Inform your participants if the tap water is potable. If tap water in good quality is available, serve it in jugs and offer soft drinks etc. in returnable bottles.
- Encourage your participants to bring a reusable water bottle that can be refilled, rather than drink water from plastic bottles. If the local tap water is non-potable, buy big water containers instead of small bottles.
- Only use reusable tableware. Consider labelling cups/glasses so that only one set is used per person per day.
- Avoid disposable and single-portion packaging; instead, buy in bulk. Avoid single-use containers.



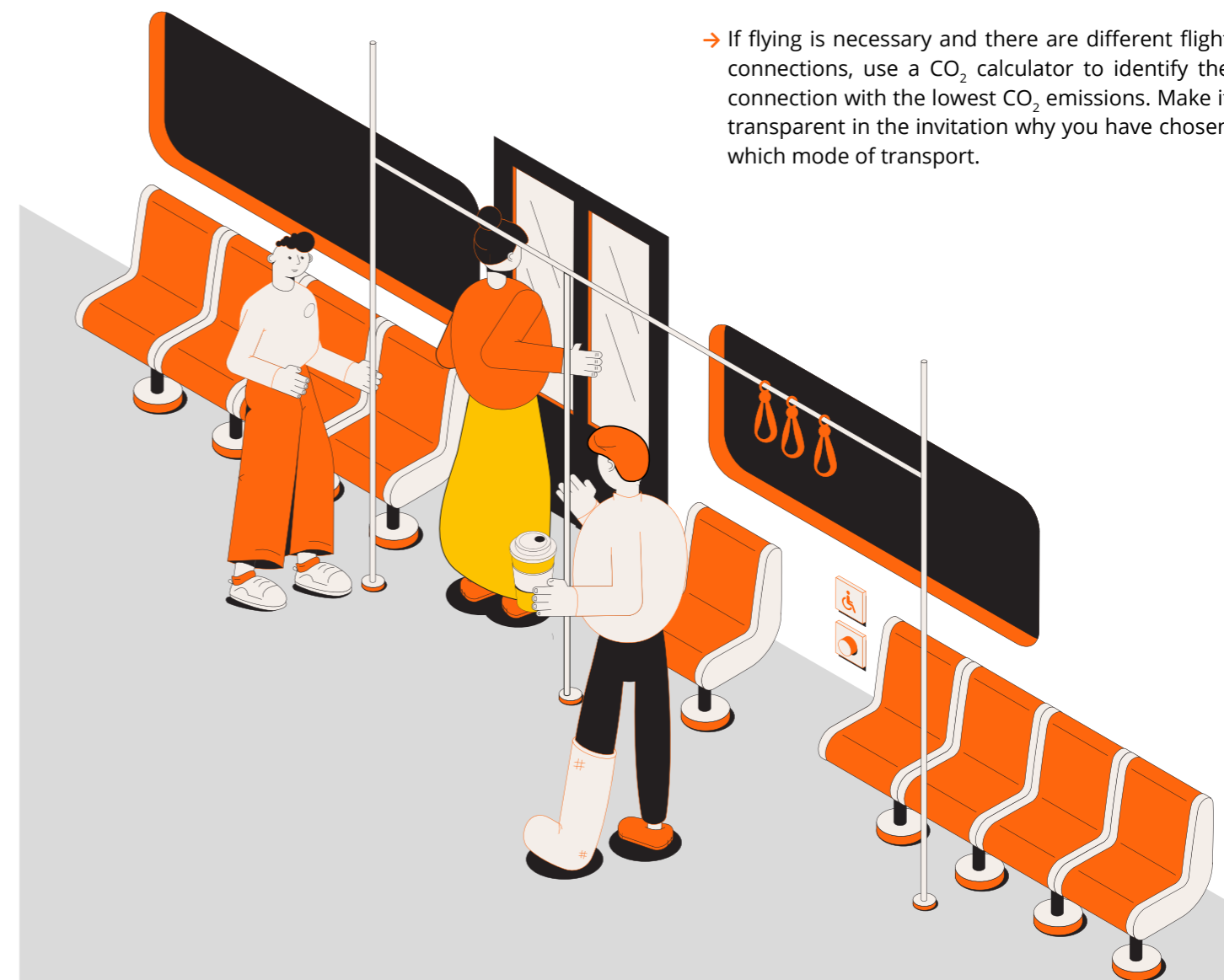
Travel and transport

Even if the young people did not consider mobility to be the dominant problem when it comes to climate change, they were concerned about the carbon footprint of their means of transportation. A vast majority would consider alternatives to flying when travelling. They also were conscious of the issues of local transport.

- Travelling by coach or train is much more climate-friendly than flying. Avoid flying by using another means of transport whenever possible. This takes longer but participants might be happy to spend more time at the activity if they travel in a climate-sensitive manner. Also, night trains and overnight coaches can be an opportunity to get to one’s destination and have a great travel experience in the process. For bigger groups, renting a coach might be an option, too.

- Less CO₂-emitting means of transport that take longer opens up new possibilities. Consider how to make travel time an integral part of the activity. (For more about this, see the section “Programme” further up.)

- If flying is necessary and there are different flight connections, use a CO₂ calculator to identify the connection with the lowest CO₂ emissions. Make it transparent in the invitation why you have chosen which mode of transport.





→ Carbon offsetting is criticised by some for not having the hoped impact. Another option is to donate directly to NGOs that advocate for carbon-neutral transport. When you discuss these options, explain that making a donation does not compensate for the flight itself. Also, you can discuss with the participants how to deal with carbon offsets. If you decide in favour of carbon offsetting, you can motivate the participants to contribute to the costs by earning the amount to be paid, or realising an activity to earn it.

→ Choose a venue in such a way that once at the project, activities can take place nearby. If the venue is close to a train or coach station, arrival and departure are less CO₂-intensive.

→ To remain mobile during the activity, use public transport or bikes if possible.

→ Check for ways to get more financial support when travelling by train or coach.



Managing resource and energy consumption

Energy production and large waste volumes were seen by the young people as one of the factors causing climate change.

→ Think about a resource-sensitive way to advertise and apply for the activity, e.g., online or using a poster with a QR code instead of printed flyers.

→ Use digital participant management.

→ Put documents online in advance rather than print them out.

→ Use less paper and re-use paper whenever possible (e.g., by using the other side, too). Instead of providing a printed programme to everyone, produce a poster and display it in a central location.

→ Agree with the whole group to turn off appliances when not in use and turn off lights when not in the room.

→ Create awareness about the energy that is needed for the use of online tools, e.g., streaming.

→ Avoid plastic wherever possible.

→ Produce as little waste as possible. Recycle the waste if possible.

→ Clearly label waste separation and recycling bins. Use colour coding and place the bins in a clearly visible position.

→ Re-use materials when possible. For instance, you can do an exercise with the group to collect ideas on what can be re-used during the activity.

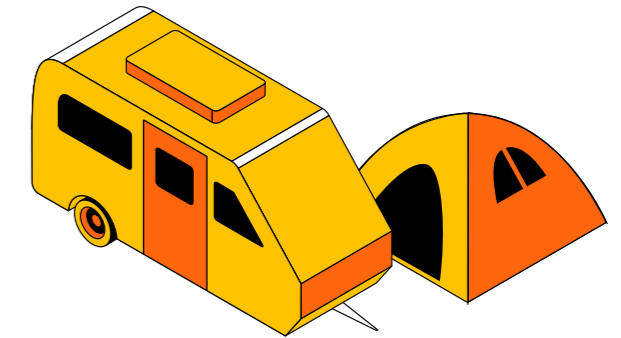
→ Explain that water is a sensitive resource and discuss options to save water, for example when showering. Maybe there is a water meter available in the venue that can be used?

Think about a resource-sensitive way to advertise, e.g., online instead of printed flyers

→ Use eco-friendly cleaning products and toiletries.

→ For activities during summer when it is hot: Think about other ways of cooling down the room before turning on air conditioning. If possible, organise as many activities as possible outside in natural shade.

→ When heating is needed, use an energy-efficient way to air the room (brief shock ventilation by opening opposite windows and doors instead of tilting windows open for a long time) and explain it to the group. Avoid heating unused rooms.



Accommodation

Many young people would choose climate-friendly accommodation when going abroad.

→ Before booking a venue, check the venue owner's background. Check whether sustainability and decent working conditions are relevant to them. Prefer venues that are owner-operated/non-profit over those owned by big companies.

→ Camping might be an option.

→ Aspects in the selection of environmentally friendly venues can be energy supply, energy efficiency, (building) materials, catering offered (see the section "Food" above) and waste management.

→ There is currently (2022) no satisfactory search option for sustainable meeting venues. However, on some platforms sustainability aspects can be included when searching for accommodation. Try to find locations with environmental certificates such as Green Key.

→ Choose a venue with good possibilities for cooling down the room by opening the windows instead of having to use air conditioning.

→ Choose a venue with rooms with as much natural light as possible and less need for electric light.

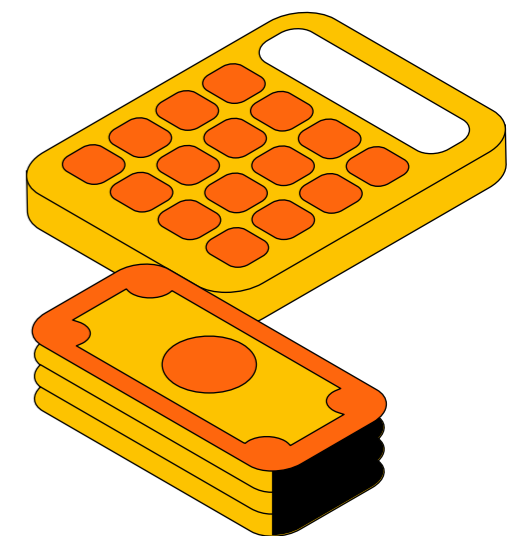
→ Ask the venue about their measures regarding sustainability. If there are no such measures, discuss with them what can be done during your stay. Check whether sustainability aspects can be included in your agreement with the venue.

Consequences for finance and funding

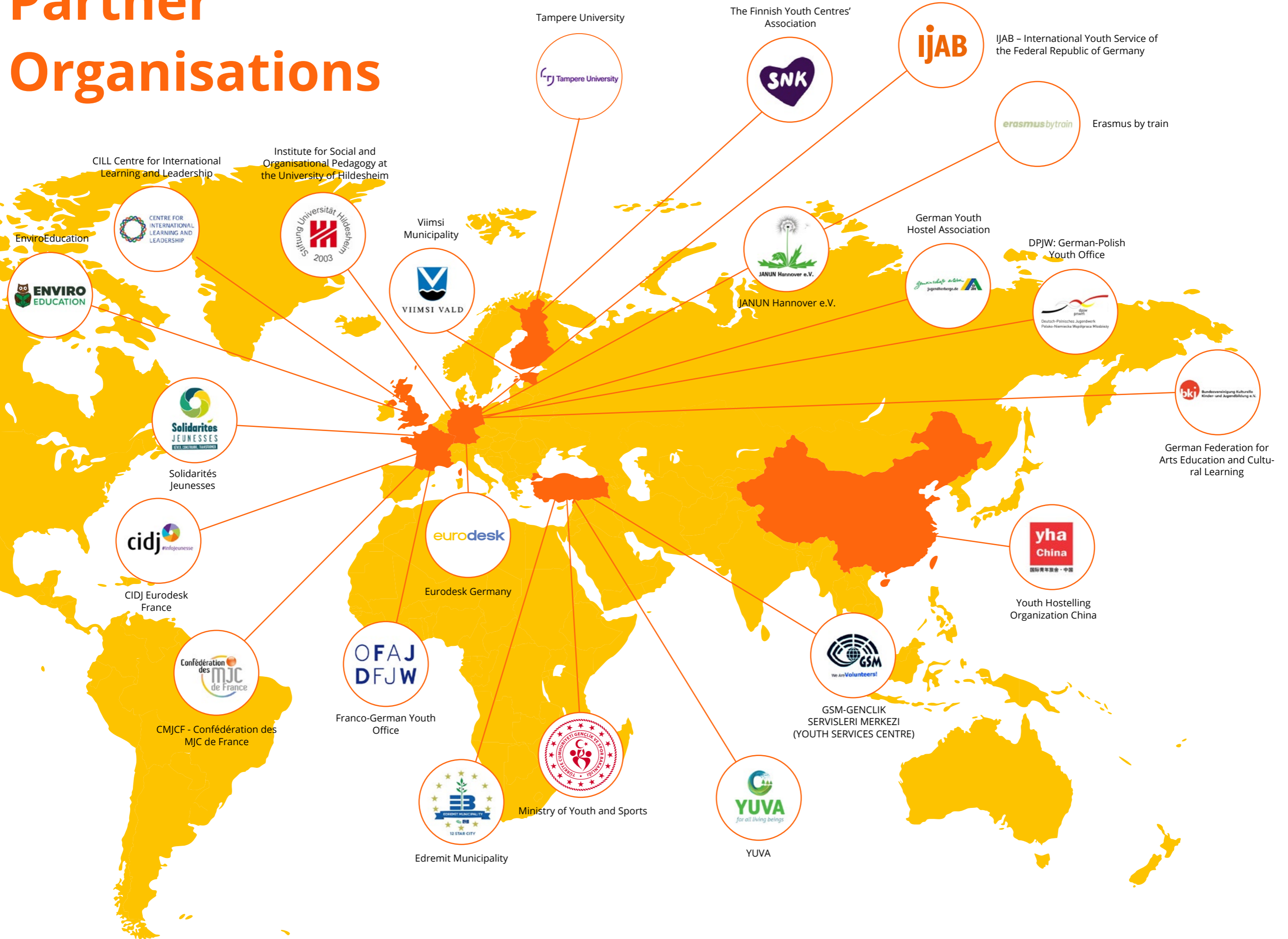
Funding bodies have enormous influence on the practical implementation of youth mobility activities. Through their funding, they determine whether a climate friendly realisation of youth mobility activities is possible. A powerful instrument in this respect could be to offer a bonus for climate-friendly programme organisation or to implement a sliding scale for funding – the greener the activity, the more funding it gets.

Concrete steps towards innovative funding may include the following:

- Encourage less CO₂-intensive means of travel such as trains or coaches. Promote the benefits of slow travelling for the environment as well as for educational purposes.
 - Provide funding for alternative means of transport even if they cost more than flying.
 - Consider a bonus for “green” means of transport.
 - Acknowledge that “green” travel might take longer and create ways to cover any additional costs. The duration of the programme on site should not be shortened because of longer travel.
- Encourage and fund the use of travel time as an integral part of the programme. Longer journeys can be used for team-building, improving cultural awareness along the route, and planning activities to be realised upon arrival. (For more about this, see the section “Programme” further up.)
- Fund the development of new methods for the pedagogical use of travel time and a collection of existing examples of good practice.
- If flying is unavoidable,
 - enable CO₂ compensation,
 - promote longer encounters to make the flights worthwhile,
 - enable organisers to choose less CO₂-intensive flights even they are more expensive than, e.g., a direct flight.
- Promote exchange projects in neighbouring countries, e.g., close to the border.
- Promote the use of digital formats having in mind for which educational aims physical encounters are more valuable. Allow for funding of digital programme elements and formats (necessary soft- and hardware, technical support, etc.).
- Promote and reward the use of non-printed material.
- Adapt policies to the needs of each country. For some countries, it is more difficult to avoid flying due to their remote geographical position. However, avoiding flying should always be an option and should be rewarded rather than punished.
- Promote and fund the climate-friendly implementation of an activity (e.g., additional costs for “green” food and accommodation).
- Create incentives by applying a funding scheme that rewards climate-sensitive programme organisation and implementation.
- Create special funding schemes that promote and reward cooperation between the providers of youth mobility activities and formal education – some young people would see it as an advantage to get active against climate change in places where they have to spend time anyway.



Partner Organisations



Imprint

Publisher:



Godesberger Allee 142–148
D-53175 Bonn

Phone: +49 (0)228-95 06-0
E-Mail: info@ijab.de
Internet: www.ijab.de

Responsible:

Daniel Poli

Editor:

Claudia Mierzowski, Cathrin Piesche, Christiane Reinholz-Asolli, Karin Walker

Layout and design:

Simpelplus, Berlin

December 2022

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth