



Risk Assessment - Nature Celebration Youth Exchange – August 1st to August 8th, Metsakartano, Finland

Overview –

Metsakartano National Youth Centre in Finland is hosting a Nature Celebration Event between August 1st and August 8th 2025. The Youth Exchange is organised by Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service, and is funded through the Erasmus+ Programme. The Centre is fully booked out by the Organisations involved in the Event, so we will have the venue to ourselves for the duration.

There are 3 separate groups involved in the Event:

1. A large Youth Exchange involving 60 young people and 16 Youth Workers from 4 countries (Ireland, Finland, Spain and Armenia).
This is a follow-on Project from the Key Action 2 'Pathways to Nature' Project, (using the Erasmus+ Accreditation Programme) which the young people have been involved in since the start of 2024. They are meeting together physically as part of a larger network, building on work completed, developing friendships and looking at the impact of the KA2 project.
2. The Project Management Team of the KA2 Project is meeting onsite at the same time to develop a Youth Work Resource as an output of the Pathways to Nature Project
3. A Study Visit by Youth Workers from the 4 organisations involved, plus representatives from the Finnish Network of Youth Centres

	Slightly Harmful		Harmful		Extremely Harmful
	1	2	3	4	5
Highly Unlikely 1	Trivial Risk 1	Trivial Risk 2	Tolerable Risk 3	Tolerable Risk 4	Moderate Risk 5
2	Trivial Risk 2	Tolerable Risk 4	Tolerable Risk 6	Moderate Risk 8	Moderate Risk 10
Unlikely 3	Tolerable Risk 3	Tolerable Risk 6	Moderate Risk 9	Moderate Risk 12	Substantial Risk 15
4	Tolerable Risk 4	Moderate Risk 8	Moderate Risk 12	Substantial Risk 15	Substantial Risk 18
Likely 5	Moderate Risk 5	Moderate Risk 10	Substantial Risk 15	Substantial Risk 20	Substantial Risk 25

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Inadequate Risk Assessment Planning	That participants and leaders on the Youth Exchange are not aware of the risks and the controls to be implemented	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get input from all members of the Core Youth Leader Team (from each country) about the Risk Assessment • Get input from all participants about the Risk Assessment (in an appropriate way) • Finalise Risk Assessment by 24th July, 2025 • Ensure all parties are briefed on the Risk Assessment, and that the responsibilities for risks are clear with all stakeholders 	1
That there are gaps in the necessary information and documentation, for example, Consent Forms / Information Evenings /Passports	<p>That all stakeholders are unsure of the details and risks involved from the outset</p> <p>That important information is not assessed correctly</p> <p>That harm may come about from inadequate consent and/or insufficient</p>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025 International Youth Work Consent Forms are used and fully completed. Any areas left blank are to be followed up. • Copies of the Consent Forms are to be brought to Finland. • Staff to review all information provided on Consent Forms and to have a plan to address all identified needs • Emergency contact numbers are checked as correct 	6

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
	<p>information about participants' needs</p> <p>That important documents can be lost</p>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every parent is met, either individually or as part of an evening meeting - this is proven through an attendance record • All passports are checked with each participant. Support is given as needed for the passport application process. • Photocopies of all passports and EHIC cards are given to the Group Leader • Information Packs with full Programme of Activities to be distributed to parents and young people within one week of the Programme start date (by 24th July) 	
Lack of Management Cover on the Youth Exchange	That there is a lack of support leading to potential danger	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager travelling with Youth Exchange Group and available on site at all times • DLP cover in place at all times • Appropriate levels of Youth Workers on place at all times 	4
Not having Insurance, and the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)	<p>That the group is travelling uninsured</p> <p>That there may be financial and</p>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance cover is in place for all participants – use Blue Insurance travel cover • Internal insurance checks are in place as appropriate to the activity schedule 	4

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
	logistical problems in the case of an emergency		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all participants have a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) • Photocopies of all EHIC cards are given to the Group Leader 	
Unsuitable gear for the planned Programme of Activities	That participants arrive in Finland with unsuitable gear and equipment, causing anxiety and discomfort	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear lists are gone through with each participant as part of the preparatory process • Funding is available to purchase any gear or equipment that is needed • Ensure that the hosting venue has appropriate equipment in place for Activities 	2
Lack of awareness of the habitat	That participants don't know about risks associated with wilderness	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will be informed about the risks of getting lost in the forest. Limitations to the venue will be clearly explained, and the consequences of going beyond the limits will be clearly explained. • There are also wildlife risks associated with being in the wilderness e.g. snakes, moose, bears – all participants will have safety briefings before all activities. There is limited risk around the venue, and anti-snake noise makers have been installed. 	

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Absence of necessary Medications and Vaccinations	That participants don't receive any relevant medications – causing participants to become unwell on the trip That unmanaged medical needs cause harm	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccinations are NOT necessary for Finland • Group Leaders go through the medication needs of each participant individually, and work with young people/parents as necessary to ensure that medication needs are carefully managed throughout the trip • Verify that when participants turn up on 1st August that they have the correct medication with them (i.e. ask to see the medication, inhalers etc.) • Do not proceed to travel with any participant if the required medication is not available 	6
Inappropriate Accommodation arrangements to meet the needs of the whole group	That young people are put into unsuitable accommodation with unsuitable people Behavioural risks from unmanaged group dynamic Young people being	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a large number of people attending at Metsakartano for the week, so organising accommodation is vital • There will be separate supervised accommodation buildings for Under 18's and Over 18's • There will be separate rooms for different genders • The room allocations, based on the needs and profile of the participants will be decided by the Group Leader Teams at an online meeting in late July BEFORE everyone travels to Finland 	3

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
	<p>discomforted or embarrassed</p> <p>Safeguarding risks</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall Group will need to have a Leader awake at night, just keeping an eye out – Roster will need to be done up. Each member of the Core Youth Leader Team will take a 4 hour shift once throughout the Youth Exchange Agreements about expected standards of behaviour and ‘house rules’ will be agreed BEFORE the Youth Exchange, reiterated on the Arrival night, then again on the 1st morning, and will be referred to throughout the week 	
Food will not meet expectations and/or dietary needs of the group	That young people will be challenged by the different foods that they will encounter	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food can often be a difficulty with expectations varying – manage the expectations amongst the groups at the preparatory meetings Ensure arrangements are made with the hosts to accommodate identified dietary needs There are no shops within a 27km radius of the venue, so ensure that participants can bring snacks if they wish Remain alert to emerging issues e.g. young people feeling hungry because they don’t like the food 	3

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Homesickness	Young people may struggle with homesickness	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all participants get to know each other before travelling (e.g. meeting as a group as part of the preparatory process; holding a BBQ at Ballybeg on 23rd July) • All participants will have good relationships with their Leader Groups • Ensure that there are male and female Leaders in the groups • Tune in to any behavioural changes or expressed concerns of young people and respond accordingly 	2
Problems arising from Staffing Levels and Group Sizes	<p>That there is not enough/too many Leaders</p> <p>Exposure to harm due to inadequate supervision</p> <p>That the groups are too big to contain leading to safety risks</p>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually a Youth Exchange will have a young person to leader ratio of 6 to 1. In this case we will have a ratio of less than 3.75 to 1, ensuring that high levels of supervision will be maintained at all times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ireland – 18 yp and 5 leaders ➤ Armenia – 14 yp and 4 leaders ➤ Spain – 15 yp and 5 leaders ➤ Finland – 13 yp and 3 leaders • Due to the size and complexity of the group, we will be effectively operating 2 Youth Exchanges – one for Under 18's and one for Over 18's 	4

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be 60 young people and they will be divided thus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Under 18's – 29 participants ➤ Over 18's – 31 participants • Each group will be divided again into 4 X 15 participants, and we'll be operating in 'pods' for most of the Activities • The pods will be separated into Under and Over 18's, and will be organised so that the Leaders know and have a relationship the participants in each group • Detailed planning and scheduling will be in place, ensuring appropriate supervision levels • The entire venue is hired by the Youth Groups, minimising and managing any cross over with, for example, other adults. • The Pods will be decided by the Group Leader Teams at an online meeting in late July BEFORE everyone travels to Finland • All Activities will be provided by Metsakartano Trainers, so Group Leaders will be able to focus on looking after the participants 	

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Failure to effectively manage the Group Leader Teams	<p>Conflict and disagreement within the Group Leader Teams/ different approaches and cultures</p> <p>Individual and group safety compromised due to inconsistency, poor boundaries and/or bad practices by Group leaders</p>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the Leader Group have previously met and worked together, and have working relationships • Bringing the Group Leader Teams together physically before the Youth Exchange (May 27th to 29th, 2025) • Meeting virtually before the Youth Exchange (2pm, Friday, July 24th, 2025) <p>Agenda on Practicalities –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programme and Activities ➤ Accommodation, ➤ Logistics, ➤ Approach with groups, including professional boundaries and the need for consistent practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily Evaluation every evening between 7 and 8 for all Group Leaders, facilitated by Project Management Team • Project Management Team to intervene where the practice of any Group Leader falls below the expected standards 	3

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Lack of clarity and buy-in around Group Agreements and Ground Rules	That different groups have different interpretations of the rules, and that these are not bought into correctly	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Group Agreement processes within national groups before travelling – Clear agreements on expectations and acceptable behaviour to be set in advance • Consequences of unacceptable behaviour to be explained clearly to both participants and parents • Use Group Agreement processes during the Programme – continuously refer back to these during the Programme • Daily Evaluation every evening between 6 and 7 for all Young people, facilitated by Core Youth Leader Team 	2
Participants or Leaders under the influence of Alcohol and Drugs	<p>That participants could access alcohol or drugs</p> <p>That young people travelling may have withdrawal symptoms from weed</p> <p>That participants or leaders over 18 may be unclear</p>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is 'dry' Youth Exchange – there will be no access to alcohol or drugs, nor will there be any opportunity to purchase same • The venue is 27km from the nearest shop • Discuss the issue of drugs beforehand in the preparatory sessions • Ensure that young people are aware of the consequences of attempting to take any drugs with them on the airplane. Reiterate the seriousness of such actions 	4

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
	about the commitment to a 'Dry Youth Exchange'		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate supervision at the Duty Free area in Dublin Airport • Manage expectations around weed withdrawal if this is expected – assess suitability of participants. • Work with young people concerned to commit to limit/stop consumption at least 2 weeks before the trip • Relevant staff briefed on marijuana withdrawal symptoms 	
Adverse physical or emotional effects of Flights and Travel	Travel can be stressful, especially as this is the first time abroad for some participants – could lead to anxiety and disruption	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buses to be organised so that everyone travels together to / from Clonmel / Waterford • Organise a Buddy system for the Airport • Ensure appropriate supervision in the Duty Free area • Each participant needs to have an assigned Group leader at security in the Airport – security checks can heighten anxiety • Buses to be organised so that everyone travels together from Helsinki Airport to Metsakartano 	4

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Activity Risks, General Injuries, Sun Exposure	<p>Not having appropriately trained people / suitable supplies could lead to danger</p> <p>Sunburn and heat exposure</p>	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metsakartano staff will be running any organised Activities • All staff are appropriately trained and vetted according to Finnish standards • All Activities appropriately risk assessed by Metsakartano staff • All staff travelling to have up to date First Aid training, and First Aid Kits available • All Metsakartano Trainers Are First Aiders and fully trained in outdoor education • Full awareness of all First Aiders will be needed at each Activity but also in general (all Irish staff are trained in First Aid) • Safety briefings in place specific to each Activity • Awareness raising, sunscreen reminders, water bottles, hats (currently 30 degrees in Finland) • In the event of an injury that needs to be treated in hospital, people will have to be nominated, and cars will be available 	4

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Danger arising from Water-based Activities	Metsakartano is surrounded by lakes – unsupervised access could be a risk, especially with the possible summer weather	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All water-based Activities must be supervised by a trained life-guard • All Metsakartano water-based staff are trained • All supervising staff to be vigilant while young people are participating in water-based activities • Lifejackets are available for all water based activities • Staff will be aware of swimmers and non-swimmers within their groups • Clear instructions to young people about not swimming or accessing water-based venues (e.g. the lake) unless supervised by lifeguards 	4
Social Media and Communications – Phones and WhatsApp		8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the WSTCYS policies on Social Media and Phone Use. Communicate these policies and follow them. • Ensure appropriate and relevant permissions are in place for photography and video 	3

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiterate constantly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not taking photos or videos of others to without permission and consent - No posting of images without permission - Respect others • Ensure that only relevant phone numbers are in place on any WhatsApp groups • Limit any use of WhatsApp to instructions and arrangements only • Ensure that Leaders' phones are able to ring Ireland (don't rely on Wi-Fi alone) • Ensure that Phone Locator Apps are switched on on all phones, and that each young person has an ICE (In case of Emergency) number • Phone use can be a significant barrier on Youth Exchanges – this must be addressed as part of the Group Agreement process 	

Hazards	What is the Risk?	Level of Likelihood versus Harm	Control Measures	Reassessed Likelihood versus Harm
Insufficient Finance available	That there may be unexpected need for extra finance in the event of Critical Incidents	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soldo card to be used as necessary • Declan to have access to additional money if necessary 	2