

Evaluation of International Youth Exchanges with i-EVAL

*Evaluation finished - and now what?
Using the i-EVAL data pedagogically!*

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Background and objectives

The free evaluation tools i-EVAL (for International Exchange Formats) and i-EVAL-Freizeiten (for children’s and youth camps) offer a simple and efficient way to evaluate your own youth exchange activities. Yet, for the evaluation to truly contribute to quality development, it is not sufficient to merely conduct a survey. Real benefits emerge only when the collected data is subsequently evaluated, interpreted, and discussed. To this end, the data from the evaluation are valuable feedback from the team members as well as the participants, and it is essential to take them into consideration.

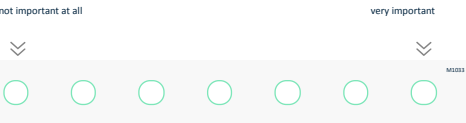
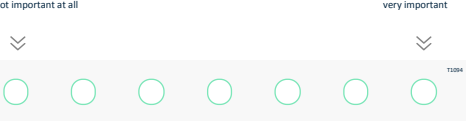
This factsheet is intended to provide guidance on how the evaluation data can be used at different levels. And it is not only about the quantitative data that can be presented in bar charts and percentages. For example, the „Other comments“ field at the very end of the standard questionnaire is used by many participants to express their thanks or greetings, but also to evaluate the exchange programme time beyond the aspects asked for in the questionnaire and/or the evaluation categories provided there. It is also used as an opportunity to give critical feedback or to report on specific experiences. The online platform cannot evaluate such qualitative data, but simply lists the answers one after the other. But what do you do with such feedback? How can you use it and work with it?

This fact sheet outlines the significance of the staff questionnaire and demonstrates how discussing participants’ feedback with the staff can be beneficial. Finally, we will show how the data can be discussed with the participants.

Benefits of using the questionnaire for staff members

The main idea of the evaluation tool is not only to have the participants fill in a questionnaire at the end or after the exchange programme to find out how satisfied they were, but – most importantly – to compare the participants’ feedback with the goals the staff members have set for themselves. In fact, the goals a team sets itself for the programme are as important as the satisfaction of the participants regarding the exchange programme. It cannot be assumed that there is that one goal which would describe a „good“ exchange programme in general. Rather, the staff members should name their own goals. Their profile of goals then becomes the frame of reference for assessing the participants’ feedback.

Here is an example of the relation of the questions from the questionnaires:

Staff member	Rating scales from the questionnaires	Participant
The participants should have the opportunity to discover new sides and talents in themselves.	not important at all very important 	I discovered new sides and talents in myself.
	not important at all very important 	

Many teams miss this opportunity when using i-EVAL. The common goals and whether they have been achieved become clear only if the whole team has answered their questionnaire before the exchange program starts (in addition to the questionnaire for participants). Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of international youth exchanges includes not only the completion of the questionnaire by the participants, but also the completed questionnaires of the staff members, as both questionnaires correlate in terms of content (Fig. 1).



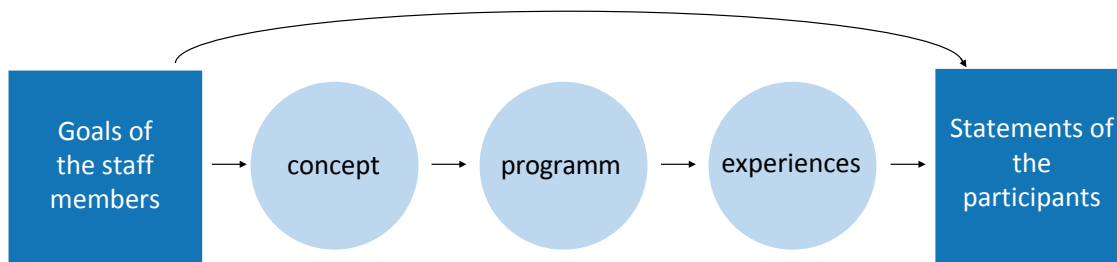


Abb. 1: correlation between goals and achievements (Ilg 2008)

Before the exchange programme begins, all team members are asked to answer the questionnaires and define the goals they personally aim for in the upcoming programme. The questions (or: items) are a great opportunity for the whole team to discuss the common goals. Only if those goals are clear, a corresponding concept can be developed together, which then leads to further programme planning.

But the programme is not the one and only source of experiences for the participants. Rather, all of the staff's pedagogical activities create the framework and are far more complex than can be represented by a concept and programme. Therefore, the questionnaires cover diverse fields of experience. According to this model, the team's goals are successfully implemented when the goal-setting in an area is accompanied by a corresponding feedback from the participants. Fig. 2 shows the relation between the staff's goals and the statements of the participants.

If the same questionnaires are used regularly, a team can, for example, check whether the intended changes or the priorities they have set themselves have been realised over a period of several years and whether this has had a noticeable effect among participants, e.g. with regard to catering, participation or in the area of programme and experiences.

As mentioned above, the questionnaire can also be used as an impulse to discuss ideas and goals within the team. In doing so, commonalities become just as clear as relevant differences, which can then still be worked on. It is crucial to be aware of these differences and to be open to discussions about individual and common goals.

Evaluation of the questionnaire of the Participants

In addition to the use of the staff questionnaire, the analysis of the evaluation results of the children and young people with the team is the second key element. Evaluation results can (and should) play an essential role in reflecting on and further develop the planning and design of exchange programmes. Interpreting and discussing them together in the team can be instructive on several levels:

Those who work regularly with the questionnaires in i-EVAL are able to evaluate changes made on the basis of the participants' feedback in the following year, and may let new impulses from the participants' feedback contribute to the planning of the next youth exchange programme - always true to the motto: „After the exchange is before the exchange“. By incorporating the feedback, children and young people can directly contribute to improvement and help shape the exchange programme in a participatory way.

The standard questionnaires ask for a wide range of topics. The following subjects can be considered for reflection and planning with the team:

- general conditions of the meeting, such as location, catering and travel
- socio-demographic data of the participants
- satisfaction ratings of the participants, e.g. with regard to the team, the programme, the rules
- and finally the comparison of the participants' experiences with the goals of the team.

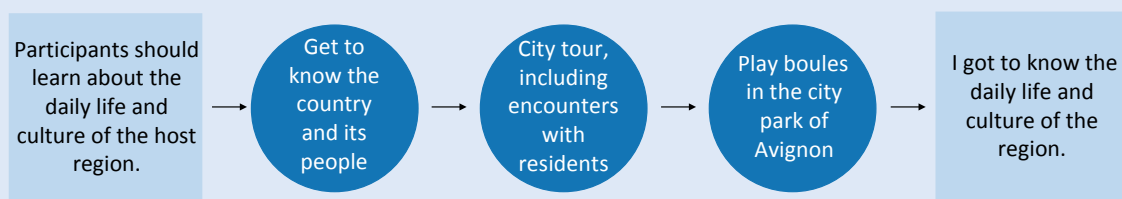


Fig 2: Example of a correlation between goal and statement.

Reflecting on the data with the participants

Reflecting on the evaluation results is not only worthwhile within the team. If we take evaluation seriously as a method of participant orientation and participation, it seems particularly important to reflect on their feedback together with the participants. This can be done both at the end of an exchange programme or during a follow-up meeting; as soon as enough questionnaires have been filled in and the survey has been closed, it is possible to look at the results.

Various perspectives can guide the process:

- A conversation about the results of the evaluation can help to better understand the feedback of the participants - even beyond what the questionnaire asks for. The questionnaire then serves as a starting point for dialogue.
- The discussion can be used to ask for concrete ideas, suggestions for improvement and wishes of the participants, especially on critically evaluated points, so they can be taken into account in the preparation and planning of future programmes.
- Last but not least, such a discussion can serve as an important methodological step in which participants and staff further process and reflect on their own experiences through the exchange of perspectives and the attempt to formulate what has been experienced. In this way, the evaluation itself becomes part of a learning or educational process.

A simple and quick way to prepare such a discussion is to select those items from the questionnaire, for which the participants' answers are the most surprising and/or to select the items in which the team is most interested. These items can then be discussed with the participants by using the respective bar chart or the percentage of positive answers given in the compact evaluation as a starting point. It may be particularly helpful to bundle several items that cover certain aspects and to look at them together.

It may be somewhat more time-consuming, but tends to be all the more profitable, to supplement the quantitative data with qualitative data, i.e. to put the pure figures alongside corresponding answers to open questions. On the one hand, the qualitative data can help to better understand and contextualise the pure numbers. They make explicit, for example, what „things that are common at home“ participants see „differently now“ (item T310) or what kind of conflicts there were according to items T216 and T218.

On the other hand, the free written answers as well as the quantitative data can encourage reflection both with the participants as well as in the team.

Guiding questions for the discussion of the quantitative and qualitative data can be:

- You seem to have considered this aspect particularly positively/ particularly critically – why is that?
- There are very positive and rather critical statements on this aspect in the questionnaire – how did you perceive this?
- Look (for example) at item T094 „I discovered new sides and talents in myself.“ - Here xy percent of you agreed. Can you tell us about these things you discovered?
- As a team, we were very surprised about the answers to item xy, because we perceived that aspect quite differently. Can you tell us more about this?
- One particular issue is raised again and again in the open answers: Can you tell us more about this? What is it about? Why is this such an important experience?
- Let's discuss some particularly critical statements - strictly anonymised (!): Have you also experienced this? What would you have wished for in this situation?

Absolutely essential for such a processing of the evaluation results with the participants is the team's openness to really engage with the perspective of the participants, to listen to their stories and opinions, to take them seriously and to let them be heard - even and especially if they express criticism. The focus is on the opportunity to learn about their perceptions - which can only be achieved if the children and young people feel taken seriously and listened to.



Abb. 3: Cover photo of the homepage of <https://i-eval.eu/>, Evaluation of International Youth Encounters

i-EVAL



Abb. 4: Cover photo of the homepage of <https://i-eval-freizeiten.de/>, evaluation of children's and youth leisure activities

**i-EVAL
FREIZEITEN**

Working approach from RPD



Networking and coordination



Cooperation projects



Research and evaluation



Innovative concepts

The process facilitation by transfer e.V./FPD as well as the development of the quality criteria was financially made possible by:



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Since its foundation in 1989, Research-Practice-Dialogue (RPD) has contributed significantly to research activities regarding trends and future perspectives of international youth work. Research-Practice-Dialogue encompasses interdisciplinary and cross-organisational exchange between academia and practice in the field of international youth work.

transfer e.V. is the coordinating body of the network.

Fact Sheets inform about projects, research (results) and innovative concepts relevant for the further development of International Youth Work and children and youth group travel.



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For further information in English see www.camp-evaluation.de as well as www.i-EVAL.eu.