Icelandic Culture and Nature

Final report submitted to Erasmus+; Húnaþing vestra, Iceland; Borås Stad, Sweden; and Háskólinn á Hóulum, Iceland

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List of Abbreviations

- APV  Advanced Placement Visit
- ELD  Experience Learning Description
- Órion  Félagsmiðstöðin Órion
- TYE  Tools for Youth Exchanges
- YE  Youth Exchange(s)
- YL or YLs  Youth Leader(s)
1. Dedication

This project would not have been completed without the help and support of many people. We would like to thank the community of Húnaþing vestra, Iceland and Borås Stad, Sweden for their interest in the project and support, and to all the parents and volunteers who helped gather resources and dedicated their time for the project. This report is dedicated to those who are interested in supporting youth engagement with the outdoors and to those who strive to assist the youth to take a more active role in shaping their own future and the future of their community.

Figure 1: Photo from the YE 2018. Picture taken from an Icelandic youth. Used with permission.
2. Project Summary

Background. Húnaklúbburinn is a children’s nature club that was established for Húnaþing vestra by U.S.V.H through partnerships with Félagsmiðstöðin Órion, the Icelandic Seal Center, and Hólar University College. The name Húnaklúbburinn, which means cubs club in Icelandic, was created for the youth as a nature club. The main goal of the club is to reconnect youth with nature by using a combination of environmental education with nature-based recreation. Students learn about how to preserve and protect the environment; and are able to express these concepts to others. In 2016, a needs assessment was taken of the local community in Húnaþing vestra, Iceland and it was decided that what was lacking was organized nature-based activities for the youth. The club was created in 2016 with its first year working with the youth in outdoor activities in 2017. During the needs assessment, it was noted there was no environmental education programs that engage youth with physical activities in nature. Also, it was noted that the engagement of the youth to organized would drop after the age of 13-years.

The municipality of Húnaþing vestra is located in the northwest of Iceland. The total area of the municipality covers 2,506km² and contains a total population of 1,173. Húnaþing vestra and northwest Iceland, in general, has seen a slow population decline over the years. Population decline from rural areas has been a concern for some time due to the changing economic structure of rural communities in Iceland—and because of the increasing importance of Reykjavik and Akureyri as a business, administration and political centers. Although Hvammstangi has recently seen a revitalization of businesses and services, its population has yet to recover to the same level as 1998 numbers (population 642). Hvammstangi, with 578 residents, is the business center and most densely populated area in Húnaþing vestra (Statistics Iceland, 2018).

The cultural diversity of Húnaþing vestra has increased over the years and now comprises 7.5% of the total population of the municipality and includes 11 nationalities. However, those not included in this count are people who have gained citizenship and those who work in the municipality temporarily in seasonal work. In March 2019 Húnaþing vestra is expected to receive a total of 25 refugees of whom are comprised of families with children. There is a concern for outmigration as young individuals and families move to larger cities for work or for education. Consequently, smaller rural communities in Iceland face greater
challenges in terms of their capacity to cope with change. Strengthening youth programs in Húnaþing vestra may have an impact on young individuals and families to move back to Húnaþing vestra and to reinvest in their communities.

The main objectives of the exchange were to 1) encourage an environment where children are actively learning about the natural environment and climate change; 2) create an atmosphere where children are encouraged to learn about other cultures and their history, and 3) establish lifelong friendships and lifelong learning. We did this by creating activities during the exchange that would engage youth in the outdoors. The aim was to develop their general awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life. Opportunities were given to the youth to talk about their culture in relation to their natural environments.

Participant profile. Both the Icelandic and Swedish youth group who were covered under the Erasmus+ grant consisted of twenty-one youths ages 13-17; seven youths ages 18-30; and six adults over the age of 30. There were ten youths ages 12 years-old during the exchange who were supported under Húnaklíðburinn’s budget. It was decided that the younger youths would participate because they are part of the club and because they are in the same grade together in school. More than ½ of the Icelandic youth who participated in the exchange came from rural farms. The Icelandic youth group also consisted of some children with special needs that required some assistance. In order to include the Icelandic youths who were facing economic obstacles scholarships were given to the families for assistance from the municipality of Húnaþing vestra.

Description of activities. During this 5-day exchange, the youth groups participated in outdoor activities that aided in the development of multiple intelligences such as linguistics, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial and interpersonal intelligences. The program was designed to encouraging the youth to become co-creators of knowledge and activities were carried out to aid in discovery, exploration, experimentation, and developing and testing hypotheses—the core of problem and inquiry-based learning methods. Two forms of evaluation were used during and after the exchange to understand the overall impact the program had on the two youth groups. During the exchange, the Swedish YLs (youth leaders) implemented a tool called, “the backpack.” This tool enabled the youth groups to start deeper non-verbal communication, it created an atmosphere of trust; and it helped the group express their needs, fears, and expectation in a creative way. The youth group could write or draw their refection
for the day’s activities. The second form of evaluation was through a process called ‘photovoice’ which was implemented by the Icelandic YLs for the Icelandic youth. During the exchange, the Icelandic youth were given cameras for the day to take pictures. Then, each Icelandic youth picked up to five favorite photos and met with an Icelandic YL individually. Photovoice is both a technique and process first developed by Wang and Burris (1997) and used in the field of community development to help create change by giving a voice to those who are not often heard (Krutt et al., 2018). In the case of this exchange, it was used to enable self-expression, reflection of experiences, promote critical dialogue for evaluation, and further program development through photography. Both youth groups used their selected photos for an exhibition open to the community to better express their experiences with the exchange.

The entire group participated in Youthpass. Meetings were held before the exchange describing what the Youthpass is, then a workshop was held after the exchange to validate the informal learning experiences of the youth acquired during the exchange. In Iceland, the Mayor of Húnaþing vestra signed the Youthpass certificates and these certificates were delivered to the Icelandic youth during the photovoice exhibition which coincided with the annual community festival, Eldur Húnaþing.

**Results and impact attained.** The expected impact after the exchange was growing students who are able to take a more active role in their own learning and the development of skills for lifelong learning. The youth group participants developed seven competencies during the YE to earn a Youthpass certificate. Participants gained competences in international and intercultural. The YLs gained a broader awareness and understanding of running an international and intercultural YE. Methods in implementation and evaluation of the YE was assessed resulting in lessons learned. From these lessons learned we have developed recommendations for future international exchanges for our organizations. The unexpected impacts from the exchange in Iceland was a growing interest in working with youth groups as a YL and an increased interest in learning about informal and non-formal education.

**Longer-term benefits.** Both youth groups would like to continue collaboration in order to further opportunities for lifelong friendships with our international friends. We would like to plan another Erasmus+ exchange between our two institutions with the following aims:

- To follow up on ongoing local youth lead projects and to collaborate internationally.
- Continue the development of photovoice as an evaluation method and youth empowerment tool.
• To explore the long-term benefits of international exchanges on youth groups through further research and exploration.
• To build capacity among our youth groups and
• To train our YLs in environmental education
3. Description of the Project

All the original objectives of the project were met. These objectives were: 1) Encourage an environment where children are actively learning about the natural environment and climate change; 2) create an atmosphere where children are encouraged to learn about other cultures and their history, and 3) to establish lifelong friendships and lifelong learning. 4) A fourth objective evaluation was later included in order to assess the overall project implementation and management.

How were the objectives met? The following table provided shows how each day’s activity during the YE met the three objectives above.

Table 1: Objectives, Assessments, and Achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Summary of Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1: Pre-exchange meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Video created by the Icelandic youth; Skype meeting between YLs and youth groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 and 2</td>
<td>Both the Icelandic and Swedish youth did research about their culture and nature and planned a presentation for the exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2: During the exchange.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1: Sweden and Icelandic Culture Day</td>
<td>2 and 3</td>
<td>Both the Icelandic and Swedish youth groups participated in planning this activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2: Wildlife Watching Day: The Vatnsness Peninsula</td>
<td>1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>The Icelandic youth planned and led this activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3: Greenhouse and Garden Project Day</td>
<td>1 and 2</td>
<td>Two Icelandic youths and an Icelandic kindergarten teacher led this activity. A Swedish youth prepared a presentation for the youth groups. The garden project was encouraged to continue both in Iceland and in Sweden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4: Icelandic Horses and Birdwatching Day</td>
<td>1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>The Icelandic youth group led this activity in coordination with the Icelandic horse instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5: Sports, Activities, and Free Time Day</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Swedish youth group planned and led this activity. A particular activity, the Photo Safari, was the most well-liked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation 1: The Backpack</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>After each activity at the end of the day both the Icelandic and Swedish youth groups would write or draw their refection for the day’s activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation 2: Photovoice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Icelandic youth met individually with YL, then together as a group to talk about their photos and their experiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post Exchange

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation 3: Youthpass</th>
<th>1, 2, 3, and 4</th>
<th>Both the Icelandic YLs and the Swedish YLs planned and prepared this workshop with their respective youth groups after the exchange.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photovoice Exhibition</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, and 4</td>
<td>A form of evaluation through the use of photovoice conducted with the Icelandic youth to enable self-expression, reflection of experiences, promote critical dialogue for evaluation, and further program development through photography. The Icelandic youth also used their selected photos for a photo exhibition open to the community to better express their experiences with the exchange.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to achieve these objectives, the project was broken up into three phases—pre-exchange planning, the YE, and post-exchange, and follow-up.

**Phase 1: Pre-exchange planning.** During the pre-exchange planning, the YLs meet several times on Skype in-order draft the ideas of the project for the application. Once we were awarded the grant, the YLs met several times more on Skype for preparation and planning. We set a date for the APV and outlined the agenda for this visit. During pre-exchange planning and the APV, we made sure that the schedule fit everyone’s needs, that it was interesting to both the Icelandic and Swedish youth groups; and that the schedule met the four objectives above. During the APV one YL and one youth participant traveled to Iceland to meet the Icelandic youth group. Here, we discussed more about ELD, the special needs for food, the overall YE, and our hopes for future cooperation after the YE. Both groups talked about the Youthpass in Iceland and in Sweden; then once again together as a group in Iceland during the exchange. The Swedish YLs introduced ELD as a form of evaluation and the ‘Backpack’ to the Icelandic YLs, and this was presented to the Icelandic YLs during the exchange. The Icelandic YLs discussed with the Swedish YLs how Photovoice would be used as a form of evaluation and documentation of activities. The YLs and youth in both Iceland and Sweden then divided the work and chose activities that they wanted to lead during the exchange. All of the information was shared and organized online through Google Drive.

**Phase 2: During the exchange.** The schedule of activities was developed by both the Icelandic and Swedish youth groups. Time was allowed to get to know one another using icebreaking activities. All activities were divided up into smaller groups with all groups containing a mixture of Icelandic and Swedish participants. Throughout each day there was a
mixture of YL led activity, youth lead activities, reflection, evaluation, and breaks for food. There was time set aside for social programs that included activities at the sports house, swimming pool, and youth center. The project was thematically based and each activity reflecting Icelandic culture and nature. The leaders from both youth groups were very new at creating YE. It was the very first time for the Icelandic group and the YLs had no experience with YE before. Although every care was taken to ensure that the program would run smoothly we made an effort to learn from our mistakes and we hope to implement these changes for future YE.

Phase 3: Post-exchange and follow-up. Evaluations conducted during and post YE the YLs felt that the project’s main objectives were met. The youth learned how the natural environment is important in our respective cultures—Iceland and Sweden—by comparing things that they have learned in Iceland and talking about similar issues in Sweden. The activities that were created for the exchange were designed to create a space for the youth to interact and to engage with nature. Feedback from both the Icelandic and Swedish youth groups during the exchange showed that the youth were interested and that they were learning.

The leaders from both youth groups were fairly new at creating and implementing YEs. In particular, it was the very first time for the Icelandic youth and YLs with a project that involved a YE. Húnaklúbburinn is a nature club with no formal youth leaders and it is a very new program. It receives all of it’s funding through grants, donations, community support, and membership fees. It was also the Swedish YLs first YE, however, they have more experience with non-formal learning and working with big youth groups.

The Icelandic YLs are new to informal education and non-formal education. The Swedish YLs have more experience with Youth Leadership and helped add into the schedule specific activities to help make the project successful. The Icelandic YLs learned from the Swedish YLs how to implement ELD and the ‘Backpack.’ It was the first time that the Icelandic youth group implemented Youthpass. Although Húnaklúbburinn is a very new youth nature club. However, the youth leaders who helped in the exchange were invaluable. The Icelandic partners helped in:

- Overall fundraising for the exchange.
- Organized the community to find reasonable prices to fit within the budget.
• Make sure that a safe environment was created for both groups to interact.
• Lead the project in both implementation, development, and application.
• Work with the Swedish youth group to develop the food menu during the exchange.
• Organized the logistics of the exchange in Iceland.
• Put forth the application.
• Organized the final report.

The Swedish partners helped in:
• Sharing knowledge about groups process and norm critical thinking.
• Using the evaluative tool ELD and Youthpass.

The Swedish and Icelandic youth contributed in:
• Insight on how we wanted the overall project to be, which included co-creating the activities and what we wanted to learn together as a group.
• The divided the activities on what they felt like they could contribute to the groups’ learning.

We measured the level of success of the project through evaluations with the youth groups during the exchange and after. These evaluations were done both as a group (all together during the YE) and then as a group after the exchange in each country. Individual evaluations with the youth and YL were also done during the YE and again after the YE. Observations were also used to see how the youths were interacting with each other and how engaged they were in the activities.

In Iceland, after the exchange, the Icelandic youth were asked to give an evaluation of the overall program. Photography was used to help with reflection and to those who are less able to express themselves vocally.
Feedback from the Icelandic youth during the post exchange evaluation showed that the Icelandic youth really enjoyed the project and they looked forward to interacting with their new Swedish friends in a future exchange. For example, as a few of the Icelandic youth expressed during their post evaluation, “I think [the exchange] was great! I always wanted something like this, something like the scouts. Thank you for creating Húnaklúb [the Icelandic youth nature club].” However, a few of the Icelandic youth expressed sadness as they talked about obstacles with keeping in touch with the Swedish youth. “I don’t use social media so I don’t know how to connect with them. I am going to miss them.” Another Icelandic youth expressed his reservation about getting closer to the Swedish youth during the exchange. “It was hard to get close to them [the Swedish youth] knowing that they were going to be leaving.” A few of the youths have kept in contact with their new friends through Snapchat. Both the Icelandic YLs and the Swedish YLs are working on ways to encourage communication between the two youth groups after the exchange. Both the Icelandic and the Swedish youth group has shared their photos. We have set up a Facebook group for the youth who use social media and we will encourage letter writing for the youth who do not use social media.

In Sweden, after the exchange, some of the youth have been working on the application for the next youth exchange in Sweden where they will invite the Icelandic youth to visit. They also held a photo exhibit to help talk about their experiences in their home community.
**Achievements.** In Iceland, from an organizational perspective, one of the biggest achievements that came out of this exchange is a desire to learn how to create better youth activities and the connection that we gained with the Swedish youth group. One of the YL from Iceland has participated in SALTO: Tools for Youth Exchanges and she is currently working with Húnaþing vestra to help further develop youth programs that incorporate informal and non-formal learning. We hope to gain the funds necessary to hire permanent positions for Youth Leaders to work with Óion Húnaþing vestra on developing new youth programs and strengthening established youth programs. These YLs will work with other youth groups in Húnaþing vestra with:

- Program development
- Funding
- Implementation

We are currently researching how to further develop YL training and who to partner with for:

- Networking
- Capacity building
- Sharing lesson learned and best practices
- Collaboration

From a youth perspective, both youth groups were able to see their achievements through the Youthpass. After the exchange, each youth group’s YL spoke with each youth individually and then together as a group. It was the very first time that the Icelandic youth group participated in a Youthpass and at first, the youths did not warm up to the idea. However, after lots of conversations—both one-on-one and as a group—the youth began to see their accomplishments. The community of Húnaþing vestra and Borås Stad learned about the youths’ achievements through the photovoice exhibition and the youth eager to share their experiences with others. For example, At the start of the exchange, both youth groups were shy in meeting the other youth group and they were nervous about speaking a foreign language. We saw that the youth groups did not want to mingle with the other groups, however, once we started the icebreaker activities, there was a noticeable difference in interaction. By the end of the exchange, everyone was comfortable with each other and they didn’t mind so much speaking English. They also learned something from the other group's mother tongue and learned some similarities in both the culture and their language.
Both youth groups had the use of a camera and used this as a tool for communication and self-expression. From this activity, many of the youth in Iceland discovered that they have an interest in photography and we have added this to the schedule for Húnaklúbburinn in 2019 to learn more about how to take pictures and landscape photography. The Icelandic youth are happy that they have more of a control in deciding the activities they want to see.
4. Implementation of the Project

4.1 Project Management

All of the communication of the planning and development of the project occurred online using google docs, email, and Skype. The YLs from Iceland and Sweden discussed how to create a Participant Contract (Appendix I) and Photo Consent Form (Appendix II). Sweden had established the Participant Contract first and Iceland translated it from Swedish to English and adapted the contract to fit the Icelandic youth group. Several meetings were held with the parents and with the youths before the YE and both youth groups were reminded of the Participant Contract throughout the project. The contract was successful in that everyone knew what was expected of them and of what to expect during the project. Also, rules between youth groups were adapted to make one set of rules for everyone. Because the size of the group and because Hvammstangi is so small the Icelandic youth group hired a cook to plan and prepare all the meals. The schedule of activities was kept up-to-date on Google Docs with notes to the YLs on the implementation of the YE. The APV Schedule and the Húnaklúbburinn Calendar of Events 2018 show some of the activities that the Icelandic YLs accomplished before, during, and after the YE (Appendix III).

A formal agreement between partners and the YLs was lacking within this project and is one of the lessons learned. The agreement of how the project should run, the learning topics, and how it should be implemented was done collaboratively between both youth organizations. However, the division of labor was difficult to set up. A formal agreement similar to the participant contract should have been created that divided the work and the responsibilities up among the other youth leaders more equally would have been a great help. The YLs continued communication online, however, the Icelandic YLs are not as familiar with Google Docs as the Swedish team. An effort to communicate on the phone would have helped in some situations and it is recommended for future exchanges.

The YLs’ meetings during the exchange were initiated mutually and issues were discussed with the YLs from both countries together and were either handled as a group or individually as appropriate.

Some research into how to continue learning as a group after the exchange is recommended. Post-exchange follow-ups were not as often as before the exchange. However, future efforts
to communicate more will be initiated; especially, since both our youth groups would like to continue the partnership.

4.2 Practical Arrangements
All of the practical arrangements in Iceland were handled by the Icelandic youth group. The planning and accommodations for the APV were coordinated by Húnaklúbburinn and Órion along with some other community efforts. Purchasing of the flights for the APV was handled by Borås Stad, while reimbursements were handled by Húnaklúbburinn. Additionally, transportation in Iceland was handled by Húnaklúbburinn.

**During the exchange:** Travel arrangements in Sweden were handled by Borås Stad including the purchasing of the flights. Reimbursements were handled by Húnaklúbburinn in Iceland. Roundtrip transportation from Keflavik to Hvammstangi; group accommodations; meal purchasing, planning, and preparation were arranged by Húnaklúbburinn. Health insurance was arranged by Borås Stad, while general insurance for the entire group was arranged by Húnaklúbburinn. Both the safety and protection of the participants were arranged by Borås Stad and Húnaklúbburinn. The local emergency team, SAR, and the local health clinic were advised of the arrival of the group and of our activities. During the Icelandic YLs evaluation of the project, it was suggested to create a laminated emergency handbook that can be posted at were the groups are housed and at the youth center. This will be implemented for future YE.

Mentoring and support of the youth group were provided by the YLs before, during, and after the exchange. However, since the Icelandic YLs are new to projects such as this, we have asked the Swedish YLs for peer-to-peer mentorship.

4.3 Preparation and Support of Participants
Preparation for the participants before the exchanged was offered by Borås Stad and Húnaklúbburinn.

Before the exchange, small group meetings with the youth and then the parents were contacted to identify any obstacles for inclusion and what would help to increase participation. About \( \frac{1}{2} \) of the population of Húnaþing vestra lives on farms. Some of these
farms are up to 50 minutes away from the town of Húnaþing vestra, where the exchange took place. It was decided that the youth who live on farms would be housed with friends or family in Hvammstangi so that they could participate. Húnaþing vestra also offered monetary support in the form of scholarships to the lower income youth to cover the annual club fees. Parents, teachers, and youth with special needs met to discuss what the needs were for inclusion for the exchange. The parents and teachers suggested that there should be more YLs to help with this project in order to make sure that everyone will be able to fully participate. Two teacher’s aides were hired to help with support for a few of the youth with special needs who needed one-on-one assistance. Evaluation of the program during and after the exchange also helped us to develop new methods in providing for a better YE.

The Icelandic youth met several times together as a group and then together with their parents to talk about the project and how to divide up the work. The youth looked up were the Swedish youth group is from. Then, the Icelandic youth group started to research looking at the cultural and natural history of Húnaþing vestra. From this, the youth met again to talk about what they wanted to present to the Swedish youth group and what activities they wanted to do. Some of the youth in Iceland wanted to prepare a video for the Swedish youth to show them Hvammstangi before the YE. The school loaned the Icelandic youth their video camera and a YL helped to edit the video. This was then posted on Facebook in the closed group.

In Sweden: Several meetings were held with both the parents and with the youth in order to prepare for the YE. The youth discussed what they would like to learn on the YE and the activities they wanted to lead. As a group, they started to research Iceland and they also started to research their community in Sweden so that they could present this to the group during the YE.

Both youth groups took the Participant Contract very seriously. A copy of this contract was given to the parent and some of the youth posted this on their refrigerator door to be reminded of it. There was some concern with the Icelandic youth group that they would accidentally break the rules on the contract so the YLs did some scenarios together as a group to go over the rules so that the youth would be more confident with the contract. Both in Iceland and in Sweden preparation was facilitated through the YLs and there was constant communication with the youth, the parents, teachers, and the YLs.
In Iceland, the YLs, parents, and teachers helped to monitor the participants by speaking with the youth and providing feedback to the YLs. Both the school and Órion (Húnaþing vestra’s youth center) offered their facilities for preparation and meets with the youth and their parents.

After the YE, both youth groups met at the school and Órion to discuss further what they would like out of a youth program in the future. Through these discussions with the youth, their parents, and teachers—and through the interactions with the Swedish YLs—it was discovered that what is lacking in Húnaþing vestra is someone trained in Youth Work to help strengthen youth projects. It was a great opportunity to learn about Youth Work through the Swedish YLs talk about their experience and watching them interact with the youth. After the YE the Icelandic YLs have been working with the municipality on further strengthening youth programs and we are discussing with the youth about what they would like for youth programs and activities.

4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

*During the exchange:* Two forms of evaluation were used during and after the exchange to understand the overall impact the program had on the two youth groups. During the exchange, the Swedish YLs implemented a tool called, “the Backpack.” This tool enabled the youth groups to start deeper non-verbal communication, it created an atmosphere of trust; and it helped the group express their needs, fears, and expectation in a creative way. The youth group could write or draw their reflection for the day’s activities. The second form of evaluation was through a process called ‘photovoice’ which was implemented by the Icelandic YLs for the Icelandic youth. During the exchange, the Icelandic youth were given cameras for the day to take pictures. Then, each Icelandic youth picked up to five favorite photos and met with an Icelandic YL individually. Photovoice is both a technique and process first developed by Wang and Burris (1997) and used in the field of community development to help create change by giving a voice to those who are not often heard (Krutt et al., 2018). In the case of this exchange, it was used to enable self-expression, reflection of experiences, promote critical dialogue for evaluation, and further program development through photography. Since some of the Icelandic youth who participated had a special need that impacted verbal and/or written expression, and because some youth are shy with verbal expression, it was decided that Photovoice as an evaluation tool would be appropriate for the Icelandic youth. Photovoice has been used successfully to evaluate programs for people who
were on the autism spectrum (Krutt et al., 2018), and it was successful tool for this YE to help the youth group express themselves creatively.

Both youth groups used their selected photos from the exchange for a photovoice exhibition open to the community. The aim was to help the youth better express their experiences with the exchange to their community.

![Figure 3: Photovoice Exhibition. Opening Day 25 June 2018.](image)

The entire group participated in Youthpass. Meetings were held before the exchange describing what the Youthpass is, then a workshop was held after the exchange to validate the informal learning experiences of the youth acquired during the exchange. In Iceland, the Mayor of Húnaþing vestra signed the Youthpass certificates and these certificates were delivered to the Icelandic youth during the photovoice exhibition which coincided with the annual community festival, Eldur Húnaþing.

In Iceland: Although our town is small (Hvammstangi population of nearly 600 and municipality population of around 1,100) we have a lot of assets that helped to alleviate some challenges. We approached the project using a community-building approach. We made a list of our assets and contacts and approached people from the community who we thought could help with the YE. Since this was the first YE we have ever done in the municipality of Húnaþing vestra, we spent a lot of time preparing and communicating with the community.
about the YE. The challenges that we faced was that we realized after applying for the grant that we did not have enough youth leaders in Iceland to help run the project.

There were some issues with communication and the division of the work among the other Icelandic YLs. This was addressed immediately by sending evening minutes on a closed Facebook group and with morning meetings. Any changes to the schedule were kept to a minimum and discussed immediately, however, some changes were beyond the control of the YLs. For example, during the Icelandic Horse Show and Farm Day, all of the YLs had met to discuss how to divide the group. However, we had to rearrange the group once we arrived at the farm so that we wouldn’t overwork the horses.

There were some issues with the Icelandic youth mixing with the Swedish youth and vice versa. During the exchange, the groups were split up into smaller groups with a mixture of both Icelandic and Swedish youth. However, we still saw that within these smaller groups, they still did not interact with each other as much as we had hoped. The Swedish YLs had more knowledge of team building activities and immediately put them to use. This helped the youth groups to interact with each other more.

After the exchange, everyone who helped in the implementation of the exchange in Iceland—i.e. parents, YLs, Teacher’s Aids, cook, and teachers—were asked to reflect on and evaluate the overall program. During the reflection and evaluation, we discussed how each part of the exchange went well and what we could improve on from part of the project—i.e. preparation, during the YE, and post exchange. From this evaluation, there were several lessons learned and we discussed what activities we should either try again (using a different method); what activities were successful, and what activities we would never do again. The conclusion was made that:

- Post a visual schedule and assign tasks to specific people.
- Funding for ongoing training for the YL
- Plan more icebreaking activities before the trip and within the first 2 days of the exchange.
- Use activities that help to “warm-up” and “cool-down” for each day. These warm-ups can be energizers or team building exercises.
• Have more YLs, volunteers, parents, or teachers helping out in the project at each stage.
• Plan more breaks for kids and free time, and small group projects.
• Morning meetings with the leaders to go over the day ahead.
• Final meeting to discuss how it went. Send out minutes immediately after the meeting.
• Research and evaluate our methods for inclusion. What are the needs of the youth?
• Everyone must participate (youths and leaders). What are the barriers to participation?
  What are their needs? What are our needs? What can we do to encourage participation?
• Age: was there too much of an age difference?
• How do we continue engagement after the exchange?

Discussion on next year’s activities during the YE:
• Do a talent show at night and then the next day wake up late. Start the preparations before the YE and hold the talent show during the YE.
• Dinner party. Funny attire and focused on language learning.
• Other short games that focus on getting to know the participants better.
• Hold meetings at the Granskóla (Grade school) so that the youth from farms can easily attend.
5. Activities

Húnaklúbburinn is a children’s nature club, established in 2016 for the youth of Húnaþing vestra, with the purpose of connecting youth and nature by using a combination of environmental education and nature-based recreation. The club’s philosophy is founded on two concepts. Children have the right and responsibility in shaping their own futures and the futures of their communities (UNICEF, 1989), and children develop a genuine appreciation of the natural environment—and a sense of their own competence—through direct interaction with nature (Hart, 1997).

Húnaklúbburinn’s activities are designed holistically to help youth develop awareness of their role in environmental stewardship, while also learning about how their culture relates to the natural and cultural landscapes. The activities for the YE were approached using the same purpose and philosophy as Húnaklúbburinn. We approached the project using community-building methods. We made a list of our assets and contacts and approached people from the community who we thought could help with the YE. Communication was done face-to-face, over the phone, and emails and flyers were sent out. The majority of people who live in Húnaþing vestra frequent the pool and sports hall in Hvammstangi. We posted a flyer and signup sheet there because it was the best spot to reach the most people from our community. Through constant communication about the project with the community, we were able to get lots of help from donations, discounts, and volunteers.

Changes in the schedule: There were some changes to the original activities that we had planned from the application stage. In the original application, we had planned a beach cleanup day and art day. However, we wanted the youth to have more of a control over the schedule and asked them what they wanted to learn and what they wanted to teach the other group.

Additional changes to the schedule were on the Wildlife Watching Day. The price of the boat trip did not fit in the budget and needed to be canceled. What was included later in the schedule was horse riding on Icelandic Horse Day and a bus and short hiking tour of the Vatnsnes Peninsula. The Icelandic youth were really excited to tell the Swedish youth about the history of the peninsula and show them its natural beauty. The Greenhouse and Garden Project Day was included because Húnaklúbburinn is currently working on a project with
Húnaþing vestra to develop a garden for the kindergarten in Hvammstangi in 2019. The youth felt that this was a project that could be done in Sweden for next year’s exchange. Below is the schedule of activities that were implemented.

Table 2: Summary of the Final Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1: Sweden and Icelandic Culture Day</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the day the goal was to learn about each other’s language and culture. We then got to teach each other basic words in Swedish and Icelandic and talk about food and customs. Some traditional Icelandic and Swedish foods were served. The youth were invited to share food that was special to them.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Day 2: Wildlife Watching Day: The Vatnsnes Peninsula.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic culture has strong ties to nature. The Icelandic youth did some research (and translating from Icelandic to English) and hosted a tour around the Vatnsnes peninsula. They talked about the sagas and an ancient Viking rock fortress at Borgarvirki; about the murders at Illugastaðir and the last execution in Iceland; and about Hvítserkur, a troll who was caught by the sun and turned into a large stone. We talked about the seals, its historical uses and Icelandic wildlife. Some of us were even attacked by birds!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 3: Greenhouse and Garden Project Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The youth learned the impacts that humans have on the environment and the steps that we can do locally to help reduce carbon emissions by growing our own food. Iceland imports lots of food and some of these foods can be grown locally through the use of a greenhouse or garden. This is an ongoing project and will continue until next year. The goal is to build a small garden nearby. We hope that the Swedish youth group will be inspired to go home and implement a similar project in Sweden. A Swedish youth led the discussion about greenhouses and the Icelandic youth talked about the overall project.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 4: Icelandic Horses and Birdwatching Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse show and farm visit. We learned about the maintenance of the Icelandic horses including their current and historical uses. Did you know that the Icelandic horse had around 1000 years to adapt to the Icelandic climate? We learned about traditional farming methods that are still part of Icelandic contemporary culture. Then, we went for a ride on the horses! Parts of the activities were led by the Icelandic youth. While some of the group were riding horses, those that are waiting their turn will go on a short hike to a pond for bird watching and the Icelandic youth pointed out the birds that they knew to the Swedish youth. We learned that there are some similar bird species in Iceland and Sweden.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 5: Sports, Activities, and Free Time Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Swedish youth took leadership on this day. Activities were planned for fun and relaxation. We taught each other games from Iceland and Sweden. We also went on a Photo Safari and made lots of memories. These photos were printed out and were placed on display after the YE at the Sports House in Húnaþing vestra. We had our goodbye BBQ at the local grade school, made thank you letters and shed a few tears.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Participants’ Profile

*Participant profile.* Both the Icelandic and Swedish youth group who were covered under the Erasmus+ grant consisted of twenty-one youths ages 13-17; seven youths ages 18-30; and six adults over the age of 30. There were ten youths ages 12 years-old during the exchange who were supported under Húnaklúbburinn’s budget. It was decided that the younger youths would participate because they are part of the club and because they are in the same grade together in school. More than ½ of the Icelandic youth who participated in the exchange came from rural farms. The Icelandic youth group also consisted of some children with special needs that required some assistance. For the purpose of this project we define a person with special needs as someone who needs some assistance—such as physical, emotional, health, and developmental—or adaptation in order to participate fully. To include the Icelandic youths who were facing economic obstacles scholarships were offered to the families for assistance from the municipality of Húnaþing vestra.

The participants in Iceland that were chosen are youths who are part of a nature club and have been very engaged in the club since 2017. These particular youths have been active in other activities and the community felt that they would make good ambassadors for Húnaþing vestra. There were two particular girls from Iceland who inspired many others to participate in the YE. They took it upon themselves to create a video to introduce themselves and to show Hvammstangi to the Swedish youth group.

7. Learning Outcomes and Impact

Participants earned a Youthpass for this YE. Below are the outcomes of what they have learned and their competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that they have gained from the exchange.

**Youth Leader Tasks**

Helped evaluate the activities and provided input for future activities and exchanges. Lead the youth group on activities. Facilitated activities for active participation. Resolved conflicts and provided support for the youth. Organize and provide support for program development.
**Food Facilitator’s Task**
Meal planning for the exchange, food preparation, and cooking. Worked with youth leaders to facilitate food and clean-up. Evaluated activities and provide input for future activities. Resolved conflicts and provided support for the youth. Organized and provided support for program development.

**Youth Participant’s Tasks**
Took pictures of the Erasmus+ exchange and then met with a youth leader to talk about the photos. Evaluated the activities and provided input for future activities. Prepared the photos for the Photovoice Exhibition. Used photos to express the experience of the Erasmus+ youth exchange to others.

**Communication in mother tongue**
The Icelandic participants study Danish in school and some kids could speak Swedish. That facilitated the communication a lot, it helped us understand and got to know each other better. Because it was some Icelandic kids that did know Swedish they could help us translate and understand each other better. Together we could learn much and we managed to figure out what we did not understand. We did see some similarities between the Swedish and the Icelandic language, some of our words are almost the same, but we spell them differently. Even when the Swedish kids could not understand some Icelandic words, we could always use our body language and also point at things so they could understand. We learned to communicate clearly through all of this and it gave us pride, laughter and brought us closer together.

**Communication in foreign languages**
We used English as a way to communicate throughout the program and we were encouraged to teach each other new words in our mother language. It was fun and exciting to have a reason to practice that knowledge. After a couple of days, it went better and it was easier to talk to others in English. Both the Icelandic and Swedish group managed to strengthen each other by helping others with the language. We learned new words from others and gave them the words that we knew. Because everyone was also learning English it made us come closer together and took away the insecurity that we felt. We felt that it was easier to speak English when we were together. At the beginning of the exchange, some people were too afraid to speak any English, because they thought that they could not speak English well. After a few
days of support from everyone in the group, we started to communicate better. Some of the
kids took leadership roles in the mixed Swedish/Icelandic groups. They noticed that no one
else spoke perfectly and then the pressure dropped. We are more self-confident now and
have grown in our own roles.

Digital competence
During the exchange, both the Swedish youth groups and the Icelandic youth groups had the
use of cameras to take pictures of the experience and to share them with the entire group. The
Icelandic group used the photos as a form of evaluation and expression. The Icelandic youth
used a camera for one day and took pictures of their favorite things. Then, at the end of the
activity, they met with an Icelandic youth leader to talk about their photos and to express their
experience with the youth leader. Then, the Icelandic group met together to talk about
everyone’s individual favorite photos. Next, as a group, we picked our overall favorite photos
and a photo that best represents the exchange. During the Photovoice Exhibition, we got to
talk to our friends and family about our experiences with the exchange.

Learning to learn
When we meet people with a variety of abilities we learned that we have to treat everybody
with respect as we expect others to treat us with respect. There were lots of opportunities to
interact with each other and we learned a lot from others. We learned Swedish has similar
games but that the names in Icelandic are different. We also learned how to invite others to
participate in an activity so that everybody can be together on the same basis. It opened our
eyes to new things. We were able to show the Swedish youth group a garden that has been in
our community for more than 50 years.

Social and civic competences
At first, it was strange to meet kids that we have never met before and who speak a different
language than ourselves. Some of us tried to interact with the Swedish kids while others were
more afraid or shy to interact with them. Sometimes there were conflicts because of cultural
differences but we worked together to try to talk about them with each other and with the
group. We learned a lot of interesting things about the Swedish group, like what they like to
eat and what they like to do. They showed us a PowerPoint presentation about their
hometown. We learned that although we come from different places and speak a different
language that we also have a lot of similarities. Through Húnaklúbburinn and the youth
exchange, we learned how to respect ourselves and others while also doing a lot of fun activities.

**Cultural awareness and expression**

It’s a big difference to read about something or see it on a photograph than it is to experience it in real life. The Icelandic group taught the Swedish group about the Icelandic culture and environment and we got to do it through first-hand experiences. Both the Icelandic and Swedish youth groups compared a lot between the Swedish nature/wildlife and we can’t wait to see it ourselves. The Icelandic group was able to show the Swedish youth group whales and seals; we learned about the Icelandic horse and wildlife. We learned a lot from the Swedish youth group through this exchange. We got a chance to take pictures and talk about the pictures with the youth leaders. We also got a chance to talk about our experiences with the community in Hvammstangi during the Photovoice exhibition.

**Other specific skills**

We have learned the following: Adapt ourselves to different backgrounds and what they carry with them in their backpacks. Be respectful towards new people and not to judge them. Accept each other’s differences. To show respect for different needs. That it's important to be well prepared for activities which makes it easier to get the most out of the activity. Adapt to a new society and its norms and rules. Explain in different ways and become clearer in explaining. To prepare activities for different needs.

*Individual reflection together as a group:* Two forms of evaluation were used during and after the exchange to understand the overall impact the program had on the two youth groups. During the exchange, the Swedish YLs implemented a tool called, “the Backpack.” How the reflection was implemented was that a Swedish YL talked about what kinds of things we learn as we move throughout life. The things that we learn are placed into our symbolic backpack which we later use in life. The group was then asked to take some quiet time and reflect on the day’s activities. Then, they were asked to write or draw their reflection on a piece of paper and then place this paper in the group's backpack. A small black backpack which stayed in the Icelandic youth center was used to place all of the reflections inside. Then, a few papers were chosen to read out loud and to discuss. The reflections could be written in Swedish, Icelandic, or English. Some of the youth could also choose to draw their reflections. This tool enabled
the youth groups to start deeper non-verbal communication, it created an atmosphere of trust; and it helped the group express their needs, fears, and expectation in a creative way.

*Individual reflection, then, refection together in Iceland and Sweden:* The second form of evaluation was through a process called ‘photovoice’ which was implemented by the Icelandic YLs for the Icelandic youth. During the exchange, the Icelandic youth were given cameras for the day to take pictures. Then, each Icelandic youth picked up to five favorite photos and met with an Icelandic YL individually.

Both the Icelandic and Swedish youth groups used their selected photos from the exchange for a photovoice exhibition open to the community. The aim was to help the youth better express their experiences with the exchange to their community.

*Documentation of the learning outcomes:* The entire group participated in Youthpass. Meetings were held before the exchange describing what the Youthpass is, then a workshop was held after the exchange to validate the informal learning experiences of the youth acquired during the exchange. In Iceland, the Mayor of Húnaþing vestra signed the Youthpass certificates and these certificates were delivered to the Icelandic youth during the photovoice exhibition which coincided with the annual community festival, Eldur Húnaþing.

8. Impact

The impact that the YE has had in Iceland are many, for example, the youth who participated in the YE have shown an increased interest in the outdoors. Some of the parents of the participants said that their children have shown more interest in engaging in the outdoors and on about the environment. One parent said, “this experience was great! He wants to learn how to ride horses.” Another parent said, “she is more concerned about the environment and asked the school to use less plastic when wrapping the leftover food. She found a paper product that could replace the plastic that they were using and it was the same cost as what they were using before.”

The YL in Iceland are more motivated to learn youth work and to further develop youth programs. Because of this YE, interest has grown in strengthening our youth programs with someone who specializes in supporting young people in their development. We also have people who are already working with the youth and are interested in further training and professional development. Because of this, we have created a project called, “Youth Workers
The main focus of this project is to strengthen youth programs in Húnaþing vestra by creating paid positions as Youth Workers. We are currently taking things in small steps, have created an action plan, and gathered resources to further explore how to grow youth workers in Húnaþing vestra. We have petitioned the municipality in hiring one part-time youth worker who—if funded—will work during the year 2019. Ongoing evaluation will occur and, if the program is successful, we will petition the municipality to create a permanent position with the possibility of hiring more youth workers.

Furthermore, because of the interest in Húnaklúbburinn as a nature club, the elementary school is considering hiring a teacher to teach environmental education as an elective. Then, the club meetings would be held during school hours, which would help to lessen the barriers of participation for the youth who live in remote farms. The youth would still meet on weekends for outdoor activities.

The youth group from Sweden were greatly impacted by the Icelandic nature. On first arrival, we stopped for a hike and to explore a volcano and Glanni Waterfall at Bifröst. While at the waterfall, one of the YLs was speaking to a Swedish youth who said, “Look at this! I never thought I would see this. This is what you see in movies!”

Because of this exchange, Félagsmiðstöðin Órion and Húnaklúbburinn wanted to learn more about Youth Exchanges and to increase their capacity to co-operate at the European/international level. Húnaklúbburinn was awarded a grant from Rannís and Erasmus+ to send one representative to attend a workshop on Tools for Youth Exchanges (TYE) on 27 October to 2 November 2018 in order to learn how to develop and implement better youth programs and to network with other youth organizations for further collaboration. The workshop took place in Laugarvatn, Iceland. Húnaklúbburinn Húnaþing vestra was one of 32 other representatives from 16 international countries. The information that we have learned from this workshop has helped us to increase our capacity to cooperate at an international level. From this workshop, we were given tools to help implement YE from idea to final report and beyond. Key points that were learned from this workshop was:

- The differences between formal, non-formal, and informal education.
- How do better prepare for an intercultural exchange
- The importance of Icebreakers and activities to get to know each other before and during the exchange. And steps in keeping the connection alive.
• We were given tools to help support learning before, during, and after the exchange. And, how to establish life-long learning.
• We also learned how to disseminate the experiences gained from our YEs by learning from the experiences of other YLs.

At an organizational level, the international networks that were created during the YE and during the training workshop TYE have been invaluable. Form other’s experiences we are learning how to implement international exchanges and best practices for program management. The exchange of knowledge and ideas have been the greatest assets that we have gained.

This project has had a wider impact. For example, the YL in Iceland are more motivated to learn youth work and to further develop youth programs. Because of this, we have created a project called, “Youth Workers Húnaþing Vestra,” and have strategically planned project that will help to strengthen youth programs in Húnaþing vestra. We are currently creating a list of youth programs and their contacts, both regionally and nationally, and we have reached out internationally as well as using the networks that were created during the TYE training.

Because of the YE and working with the Swedish YL (who are more experienced in youth work), it sparked an interesting training and capacity building with others who are already working with the youth. We are currently taking the Youth Workers Húnaþing Vestra project in small steps. We have petitioned the municipality in hiring one part-time youth worker. If we can successfully show that youth work improves the lives of our youth in Húnaþing vestra, then the hope is that we will be able to get a contract with the municipality to hire more youth workers permanently.
9. Dissemination of Project Results

The expected impact after the exchange was growing students who are able to take a more active role in their own learning and the development of skills for lifelong learning. Interest in the development of youth programs has grown both from the youth and community perspective. For example, the youth in Iceland are more interested in participating in youth programs when they are available. The community has an interest in furthering the development of youth programs and this interests as caught the eye of the local government in Húnaþing vestra. For example, with the creation of the new community project, Youth Workers Húnaþing Vestra. During the YE the Youthpass certificate was used in order to document competencies that were gained. These certificates were later signed by the mayor of Húnaþing vestra and presented to the Icelandic youth during the Photovoice Exhibition at Eldur Húnaþing. To see photos from the Photovoice Exhibition please go to http://bit.ly/IcelandPhotovoice.

The youth group participants developed seven competencies during the YE to earn a Youthpass certificate. These seven competencies were: 1) communication in mother tongue; 2) communication in foreign languages; 3) digital competence; 4) learning to learn; 5) social and civic competencies; 6) cultural awareness and expression, and 7) other specific skills.

Photovoice was chosen to communicate about the YE. Both youth groups, in Iceland and in Sweden, used their selected photos from the exchange for a photovoice exhibition open to the community. The aim was to help the youth better express their experiences with the exchange to their community. In Iceland, the Photovoice exhibition was held during the annual Eldur Húnaþing, which is a popular festival for the community. The presentations of the Youthpass certificate was handed out during the opening ceremony of the Eldur festival. The Mayor of Húnaþing vestra signed the Youthpass certificates and attended the Photovoice exhibition.

Before the YE took place in Iceland, the coordinator of Húnaklúbburinn went to a conference to talk about learning in YE and the methodology of Photovoice. Information was shared with policymakers about the importance of youth programs in general. Then, Húnaklúbburinn sent a representative to an international workshop TYE and share the results of this exchange there. As a group, the YLs have put together a final report which will be available online for a broader audience.
We have sent news briefs to the local newspapers and we continue to have one-on-one conversations about this YE and about future international projects. The photos from the photovoice exhibition are on display at the granskóla and the photos from the photo safari are on display at the sports house in Húnaþing vestra. We have observed the youth who have participated in this YE talk with their peers and other adults about their experience with this YE and some continue to talk with their friends in Sweden.

Promotion of the YE was linked to the Erasmus+ grant that was received for this exchange. In Iceland: The project was promoted on Sjónaukinn—the local paper—and through social media. The target groups were mainly the local community, however, we are working on coming up with policy on how we can promote our project with youth programs to a wider audience. Promotion of the Photovoice was also advertised through Eldur which has a much broader audience in Iceland. We used social media and print media to promote the Erasmus+ program. The use of social media was quite frequent before the YE, on average at least once a week. Then after the YE, the photos from the exchange with a short description have been on display.

During the Photovoice Exhibition in Iceland, the Icelandic participants stood in front of their photos and walked around the exhibit hall to talk about their experience. Their experience was also shared with their teachers and with the headmaster of the local grade school. An unexpected result from this was that the teachers are now interested in finding out more about Erasmus+ and other Nordic grants that could help strengthen training and learning. Currently, discussions are underway on how to implement this at the schools and how this would benefit both the teachers and their students.

The photos from the photovoice exhibition are currently on display at the granskóla (grade school) and the photos from the photo safari are on display at the sports house in Húnaþing vestra. Several of the Icelandic and Swedish youths have kept in touch using the social media Snap Chat.

A representative from Húnaþing vestra was selected to attend an international training called Tools for Youth Exchanges (TYE). During this training youth works, and youth leaders, come together for several days to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes around a certain theme. The training was facilitated by experienced training. The youth workers and youth
leaders of this training not only learned information from non-formal education, but they also learned from each other’s experiences. The representative from Húnaþing vestra shared her experiences of the YE between Iceland and Sweden and was able to gain tools for developing better quality youth programs and YE. In total, there were 32 participants from 16 countries during the TYE workshop, which was held in Laugarvatn, Iceland from 27 October to 02 November 2018. The ID for the Youthpass certificate which was earned for the participation of this workshop is EXV1-7BQ2-WQ1S-PS2B. To validate this ID, please go to https://www.Youthpass.eu/qualitycontrol/.
10. Future Plans and Suggestions

Both youth groups would like to continue collaboration in order to further opportunities for lifelong friendships with our international friends. And to multiply the results from the YE in 2018 we would like to plan another Erasmus+ exchange in the near future between our two institutions with the following aims:

- To follow up on ongoing local youth lead projects and to collaborate internationally.
- Continue the development of photovoice as an evaluation method and youth empowerment tool.
- To explore the long-term benefits of international exchanges on youth groups through further research and exploration.
- To build capacity among our youth groups and
- To train our YLs in informal environmental education.

Figure 3: Youth looking at a seal. Photo taken by an Icelandic youth. Used with permission.
11. Conclusions

This YE project has had a large impact on both Órion as a youth center and Húnaklúbburinn as a youth nature club. Participation in this YE as a project has shown to help to increase interest in youth programs for youth ages 13-16. The youth are excited to meet new people and enjoy sharing their experiences with others. They made efforts to communicate with each other in a foreign language even though they were shy or embarrassed. The youth leaders in Húnaþing vestra are more motivated to learn about youth work and to further develop youth programs. Overall interest in the community to strengthen youth programs has grown in general. Including actively seeking out someone who specializes in supporting young people in their development. Additionally, people in our community who are already working with youth have become more interested in further training and professional development. Because of this revived interest in developing youth programs, Órion, in collaboration with Húnaklúbburinn, has created a project called, “Youth Workers Húnaþing Vestra.” The goal of this project is to further the development of youth programs through the creation of a paid position as a youth worker. This youth worker will help create programs for the youth but will also help strengthen other youth programs through non-formal and informal education. Our next steps are:

- To create strategic partnerships (both in Iceland and internationally) with an organization who have successfully implemented Youth Workers in youth programs.
- To identify funding sources that can train youth workers, youth leaders, and people already working with the youth in Húnaþing vestra.
- To create a network in Iceland of people who are interested in—or who are already working with—youth workers and youth leaders for
  - Capacity building
  - sharing lessons learned and best practices
  - collaboration

Additionally, after this YE there has been some strengthening in partnerships. For example, Húnaklúbburinn will work more in collaboration with Órion in both researching ways to help strengthen youth programs in Húnaþing vestra and on community development projects. Together, along with Hólar University College we will learn more about non-formal and informal education. Projects such as Húnaklúbburinn are a great example of university-community partnerships that sees communities as intellectual spaces. These collaborative
efforts enable the youth, and those who are interested in strengthening youth programs, to participate effectively in their community to achieve a common good.

Órion is a NGO and youth center which focuses on local youth activities and programs that support health and wellbeing. Youth centers such as Órion contribute to the positive development of the youth by attempting to help them become more resilient and capable to cope with the challenges ahead. The conclusion of this project was the development of a philosophy that the youth are seen as a resource and increasing their exposure to developmental opportunities is an investment. Through informal and non-formal education Órion can have a positive and long-lasting effect on the youth and on the community. The strategy that has been adopted is in strengthening youth programs through a community development approach by working with a variety of partners in order to build organizational capacity and to gain experiences—locally, regionally, and internationally—through expanding networks and knowledge sharing. For example, as a community, Hunathing vestra takes stock of its assets and tries to encourage engagements with local knowledge. Húnaþing vestra has a group of talented people who help coordinate and implement youth programs. Although Órion is a small youth center, however, we “cast our net wide” in order to help gather resources.

The strength of Húnaklúbburinn as a youth nature club is that it helps to develop a sense of local identity and shows how the youth can contribute to the sustainable development of their community. Since the YE, we have done some significant research and evaluation into the development of Húnaklúbburinn. Feedback from Icelandic youth after the YE evaluation showed that the youth really enjoyed the 2018 project and they looked forward to continuing with Húnaklúbburinn in 2019. Ongoing research into developing a learning based project by designing and building a school garden within the playschool and/or grade school took the form of both informal interviews with Húnaklúbburinn youth, their parents, and other local stakeholders and experts during 2018. Through this research, and based on feedback from Húnaklúbburinn youth, it was decided that we would put forth efforts in 2019 to further development of this project idea.
12. References


Appendix I: Participant Contract

Youth exchange – Icelandic culture and nature
7 – 14 June 2018 Hvammstangi, Iceland

Participant Contract

The participant contract applies to all who participate in the youth exchange. (Young people and leaders regardless of age)

By signing this contract, you agree to the following:

- Respect and responsibility:
  - Yourself
  - others
  - and your surroundings
- No use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs.
- Icelandic youth are not allowed to visit the Swedish youth in their rooms. Living spaces and rooms are for the Swedish youth ONLY.
- No cell phone use! (you can reconnect at Órion)

I also understand that I take responsibility in helping to apply for the Erasmus+ exchange for next year. This means that I will respect others in my group by actively participating and helping my group to plan for next year's trip. In order for Erasmus+ to cover my trip, I must be 13 on or during the exchange. However, I will help out with fundraising to help cover the costs of my friends who may not be covered under the grant for next year. If I do not wish to participate next year, I will talk with Jessica or Tanja. If I violate any agreement or responsibilities my parents or guardians will be contacted.

Our Responsibilities

- We will respect our Swedish guests and their rules and not visit them at their hostel. Only those staying at the hostel can be inside.
- We will respect Hvammstangi’s curfew and the time set for us to come home by our parents or guardians.
- We will be responsible and help clean up and will not leave a mess. I will help wash and put away the dishes at Órion even if I didn’t use any.
- I am responsible for myself
  - I will pack and make my own snack and lunch at Órion
  - I will wear appropriate clothing and take care of my things
  - I will respect others and help when I can
  - I will leave no trash behind
- We meet at Órion every day at 8:45. We leave for all activities at 9:00 from Órion.
Once the activity has ended for the day you are welcomed to stay at Órion to hang out. If you would like to eat dinner with the Swedish group, please sign up in the morning.

- You must not leave without talking to a youth leader about where you are going.
- I am responsible to pay attention and be prepared for the day. The schedule might change because of specific activities or weather.

_________________________________  _________________________________
Participant Signature      Parent or Guardian's Signature

Húnaklúbburinn Contact Information

Jessica Aquino
611-3549
jessica@holar.is

Tanja Ennigarð
858-1532
tanja@hunathing.is

We have a closed group on Facebook. Look for Hunaklubbur and ask to be added in.
Appendix II: Photo Consent Form
Youth exchange – Icelandic culture and nature
7 – 14 June 2018 Hvammstangi, Iceland

Photo Consent Form

My child may be in photos that are not published (for example, for personal use)
Yes [ ]     No [ ]

My child may participate in photos published on social media (Hunaklubur closed Facebook group)
Yes [ ]     No [ ]

My youth may participate in photos used in marketing, research, university courses (website, posters, presentations, university classroom lectures, etc.)
Yes [ ]     No [ ]

My child may participate in photos used for the photo exhibit during the Eldur festival in July 2018.
Yes [ ]     No [ ]

________________________________________________________________________________
Guardian's signature
Appendix III: Advance Planning Visit
Advance Planning Visit. March 2018

Summary
Tentative Timetable of the advance planning visit for the Erasmus+ Exchange project titled: Icelandic Culture and Nature (ICN). Some of the activities may change because of weather or timing. The purpose of the trip is for the Swedish representatives to meet the Icelandic representatives to coordinate arrangements for the Erasmus+ exchange held in June 2018.

Site Visits: One Swedish Youth Leader and one youth Travel to Iceland.

Day 1: Travel Day. Friday 23 March
06:15 – Flight from GOT
10:45 – Arrive at KEF airport
11:00 – Jessica will pick up Johanna and Emmy
12:00 – Stop in Reykjavik for lunch.
15:00 – Drive to Hvammstangi
18:00 – Arrive in Hvammstangi and check in to the Hvammstangi Hostel
19:00 – Dinner at Sjávarborg with the Icelandic youth leader and 1 Icelandic youth representative

This schedule depends on weather and road conditions
Day 2: Surrounding area visit and Wildlife Watching Trip. Saturday 24 March
10:00 – 14:00 – Drive to Hvítserkur, Borgarvík, and Kolugljúfur (packed lunch)
15:00 – 16:00 – Meeting with Julia
16:00 – 17:00 – Meeting and Workshop. Discuss the overall administration of the exchange address any questions, special needs, and accommodations. Workshop on Experience Learning Description (ELD)
18:00 – 19:00 – Dinner at Sjávarborg

Day 3: Surrounding area visit and Húnaklúbburinn Open House. Sunday, March 25
09:00 – 10: 00 – Check out
10:00 – 12:00 – Húnaklúbburinn Open House
12:00 – 13:30 – Lunch at Sjávarborg
13:30 – 14:30 – Site visits and provider visits of Hvammstangi
14:30 – 17:30 – Drive to Reykjavik
17:30 – 17:45 – Check into Central Guesthouse Reykjavík

Day 4: Travel Day. Monday, March 26
7:30 – 7:45 – Check out of Guesthouse
7:45 – 8:30 – Drive to KEF
10:30 – Flight to GOT
18:30 – Arrive at GOT
Appendix IV: Húnakúbburinn Calendar of Events 2018
Húnaklúbburinn Calendar of Events 2018


Outline
Introduce Húnaklúbburinn to the community and sign up day. We will have the youth leaders from Sweden visiting which is part of the Erasmus+ exchange.

Goal: The goal of the activity is to introduce ourselves to the club and to talk about this year’s activities. We will also talk with the group about the Erasmus+ exchange and its activities. We will be learning about global climate change and how this affects us in Iceland and how it affects our friends in Sweden. We will learn about human interactions with the environment and what environmental education is.

Objectives: A meeting designed to introduce Húnaklúbburinn to the community. This year will be the second year that Húnaklúbburinn is gathering. This is a day where kids, both who have already signed up and those who have yet to sign up can meet with the instructor of the Club and learn about our activities. Parents are encouraged to attend so they can ask questions. We will have an activity on greenhouse gasses and the rising sea levels. We will also get a chance to hear from the Swedish youth leaders on climate change at their home.

Curriculum Outline 10:00 – 12:00

10:00 – Meet at Órion. Coffee, hot chocolate and snacks.
10:00 – 10:25 – Introductions with the staff and the teacher. The teacher talks to the group and explains the concept of Húnaklúbburinn.

This information is more for the parents:

- As we become a society dependent on technology, we see more children become disconnected from nature. This is a global trend. Fewer kids are playing outdoors and exploring nature. They are choosing video games, TV, computers, and smartphones overplaying and exploring outdoors.
- The basic philosophy of this program is to help kids disconnect with technology for a while and reconnect with nature. Try to bring a camera instead of a phone.
- The goals of Húnaklúbburinn are to cultivate a respect for nature using place-based environmental education and nature-based recreation.
- Discuss the Erasmus+ exchange and meet with the Swedish youth leaders
- This year, because of the Erasmus+ exchange we will be meeting in selected months (show schedule on drafting board).
- Discussion and answer questions

10:25 – 10:55
Activity with both the kids and parents – Greenhouse Gasses

Activity – Discussion 25 min
- Discussion on outdoor recreation safety, code of conducts, and respect for nature and the environment. During the Erasmus+ exchange, we will meet with SAR and have a longer presentation on outdoor safety and what to do in case of emergencies. We will discuss leave no trace philosophy and ‘Reduce, Reuse, Recycle’.
- Negotiated learning contracts. This year we would like to develop a negotiated learning contract. These contracts will be developed by the kids as a way for them to develop responsibility in how they learn and how they behave.
10:55-11:00 – Break

11:00-11:50 Activity – Sea Level Change

- Climate change not only affects us in Iceland, but it also affects us globally. Our Swedish youth leaders will talk about climate change in Sweden and we will learn about the rising seal leave.

11:50-12:00 wrap up

- The Scientific Method
  - A system of techniques for investigating phenomena and acquiring new knowledge, as well as for correcting and integrating previous knowledge.
  - A. Question – I wonder why...
  - B. Hypothesis – an educated guess, usually a guess to answer the question
  - C. Experiment – testing the hypothesis
  - D. Observation – making observations during the experiment and recording any other observations relevant to the hypothesis
  - E. Conclusion – determining if the hypothesis was proven to be true or false and interpreting results...
  - F. More Questions...

Preparation
About 25 kids, 10 parents, and 6 youth leaders (Iceland and Sweden) participating = 41 People

Coffee
Hot chocolate
Kleinur (80)
Reusable cups and paper napkins.
Event 2: Green Architecture and Hike – 21. April 2018

Outline

Goal: To learn about green architecture, Icelandic history and climate, sustainability, and ethics. We will review what we learned about during our discussion on climate change from our last meeting (see objectives above). We will also be recording parts of the trip to send to the Swedish youth group to help get them excited about their visit to Iceland.

Objectives: To learn about sustainability through architecture and Icelandic history, culture, and climate we will hike to a turf house near Hvammstangi. Before we begin our hike, we will review what we’ve learned about climate change and connect this with green architecture. Before we begin we will review some safety guidelines for hiking. We will talk about the 112 app.

10:00 – 10:15 – Meet at Órion
10:15 – 10:45 – Special meeting with parents about Húnaklúbburinn and Erasmus exchange. Introduce the “Project Wall.”
10:45 – 11:45 – Hike to Turf house – As we hike we will stop to talk about wildlife and climate change. We will use the landscape to talk about natural history.
11:45 – 12:30 – Break and lunch at Turf house (students bring lunch from home). Discussion on leave no trace principles.
12:30 – 12:45 – Discussion about the turf house and its uses in Icelandic history
12:45 – 13:45 – Hike back home
13:45 – 14:00 – Meet parents at Órion with hot Chocolate and warm up.

Review;
Climate change and the scientific method

Expected Participants 25 kids and 1 teacher and 2 adult = 28 People

Budget
Hot chocolate (at turf house)
Hot chocolate at Órion
Compasses
Maps
Event 3: Skype Meeting with Swedish Youth Group – 4. May 2018

Outline

Goal: To meet the Swedish youth group who will be visiting us next month. *Please note that this is Lambing season and it might be difficult for some of the children meet for this event. This event is meant to be short so that it will be more likely that the children who are needed for lambing will be able to come.

Objectives: The youth will:
- Discuss the Erasmus+ exchange
- Discuss the Youthpass and its objectives
- Discuss ELD
- Create/upload a video to introduce themselves to the Swedish youth group
- Learning contract
- Skype meeting

16:00 – 16:10 – Meet at Órión
16:10 – 16:30 – Discussions and answer questions about Erasmus+ exchange, Youthpass, and ELD
16:30 – 16:50 – Discussion on Learning contracts and what will be expected during the exchange.

16:50 – 17:10 – Let's think about what we would like to tell our Swedish friends! We will come up with a skit to record to send to the Swedish youth group (this will be added to the recordings that we took from the last meeting.) The Swedish youth are really interested to know what to wear in Iceland.

17:10 – 17:25 – Skype meeting. Húnaklúbburinn will answer questions for the Swedish youth group

17:25 – 18:00 – Parents will join the kids to ask questions about the Erasmus+ exchange. Húnaklúbburinn kids will turn in a document to their parents that describes the learning contract and more information that will help them prepare for the exchange next month (some of this information was already distributed during the open house in March and April).

Expected Participants 25 kids and 1 teacher and 2 adult = 28 People

Budget
- Materials paper, pencil, colored pencils
- Handouts for parents
- Learning Contracts
- Collect Signup Sheets
- Collect Permission Slips

Summary
This is a tentative Timetable of events for the Erasmus+ Exchange project titled: Icelandic Culture and Nature (ICN). The dates may change and some of the activities may change in order to better serve our group or because of weather. During the exchange, participants will have access to the community pool and gym and also to Órion. The group will receive more information about this on Day 2. Breakfast, pack lunch, and dinner will be available at Órion. It is expected that everyone will take part in the food prep and clean up. *Please note that when we split the groups up that the Swedish and Icelandic kids will be mixed together.

Thursday, June 7
Day 1: Travel Day:
This day our Swedish friends will be arriving in Hvammstangi. A member of their group has his birthday this day. Help us celebrate by stopping by Órion to have some cake and welcome our guests. Tanja will arrange a time for you to come to Órion to decorate and bake a birthday cake.

19:00 Birthday Party!
  • Name game

Friday, June 8
Day 2: Sweden and Icelandic Culture Day:
8:45 - Meet at Órion to make their snack and lunch for the day
9:00 – 12:00 Both groups meet at Órion and then we will walk to the Pool House. We will have introductions and the youth leaders will talk with both groups and answer any questions.
  • Introduction to Youths pass
  • Swimming, activities, and games. Don’t forget your swimming suite!
12:00 – 13:00 Lunch at Órion
13:00 – 15:00 Tour of Hvammstangi. We will meet at SAR at 13:00. See a demonstration and then the Icelandic youth group will take the Swedish youth group on a walking tour of the village.
15:00 – 17:00 Sweden and Icelandic Culture Day Party at Órion.
Throughout the day the goal has been to learn about each other’s language and culture. We will then get to teach each other basic words in Swedish and Icelandic and talk about food and customs. Some light foods will be served. If there is a special dish you would like to share please let us know and bring it to the party!
17:00 – 17:30 Reflection and evaluation

Saturday, June 9
Day 3: Vatnsnes Peninsula – Led by the Icelandic Youth.
We are taking a bus and touring the peninsula. The Icelandic youth will tell us about their knowledge of the history of the area.
8:45 – Meet at Órion to make their snack and lunch for the day
  The kids need to be ready for the entire day away.
  -Backpack
  -Hiking shoes
  -Water bottle
  -Lunch
  -Medicine
9:00 – Bus leaves for a tour around the Vatnsnes Peninsula.
12:00 - 13:00 Lunch at Hvitserkur
14:00 or 15:00 Back to Órion.
15:00 – 16:00 Reflection and evaluation

Sunday, June 10
Day 4: Greenhouse and Garden Project
The students will learn the impacts that humans have on the environment and the steps that we can do locally to help reduce carbon emissions by growing our own food. Iceland imports lots of food and some of these foods can be grown locally through the use of a greenhouse or gardens. This is an ongoing project and may continue until next year. The goal is to build a small garden nearby. We hope that the Swedish youth group will be inspired to go home and implement a similar project in Sweden. A Swedish youth will lead the discussion about greenhouses and the Icelandic youth will talk about the overall project.
8:45 – Meet at Órion to make snack and lunch for the day
   The kids need to be ready for the entire day away.
   -Backpack
   -Hiking shoes
   -Water bottle
   -Lunch
   -Medicine
   - A brief discussion about the environmental project that we will be doing. The Icelandic youth will talk about what they have done up until now.
   - A Swedish youth will lead the discussion on greenhouses.
   - possible tour of a greenhouse
12:00 – 13:00 lunch
13:00 – 15:00 Building
15:00 – 16:00 Reflection, discussion, evaluation, and final touches.
16:00 – 17:00 TBA/Free time at Órion

Monday, June 11
Day 5: Icelandic Horse Show and Farm Day:
Horse show and farm visit. We will learn about the maintenance of the Icelandic horses including their current and historical uses. We will also take a look at local farming practices. We will review Icelandic habitats and learn how the Icelandic horse has changed to adapt to the Icelandic environment. Also, we will learn about traditional farming methods that are still part of Icelandic contemporary culture. Parts of the activities will be led by the Icelandic youth.
8:45 – Meet at Órion to make their snack and lunch for the day
   The kids need to be ready for the entire day away.
   -Backpack
   -Hiking shoes
   -Water bottle
   -Lunch
   -Medicine
9:00 Walk to Horse arena.
   - Horse show
   - Lunch at Horse show.
   - Activity
13:30 – Bus to Gauksmyri Farm
   - Horse presentation with Erikur and volunteers
   - Group 1 Activity, Group 2 Bird watching, Group 3 Horse riding
   - Group 2 Activity, Group 3 Bird watching, Group 1 Horse riding
Final Beneficiary Report for 2017-3-IS02-KA105-001771

- Group 3 Activity, Group 1 Bird watching, Group 2 Horse riding
17:30 - 17:45 grouped together and final discussions
17:45 Bus to Órion. Reflection and evaluation

Activity – Icelandic kids to come up with an activity they would like to do on this day.

Tuesday, June 12
Day 6: Sports, Activities, and Free Time – led by the Swedish Youth.
Don’t forget your swimming suite!
8:45 – Meet at Órion to make their snack and lunch for the day
10:00-12:00 Games (Brännboll, Photo safari ( takes about 1 hour), swimming pool(?)
12:00-13:00 Lunch
13:00-15:00 Photo safari-show and tell at Órion!
  - Goodbye-time
  - Write things on a note on each other’s backs, “send a positive word to the left/right”
  - Do things together that will make us laugh!
  - Jungeltelegrafen?
  - Sound game
  - “I’m good at” and finish with a close circle
  - Take a group photo!
16:30 – 18:30 Goodbye BBQ and party at Granskóli
  - Youthpasses
  - ELD

Wednesday, June 13
Day 7: Travel Day.
9:00 – The Swedish Group’s Bus leaves
Event 5: Photo/Art Exhibition during the Eldur Festival – 25-29. July 2018

Outline

Goal: To display all that we have learned during Húnaklúbburinn and the Erasmus+ exchange. To help spread awareness of human impacts on wildlife and nature.

Objectives: Húnaklúbburinn kids will get a chance to set up and prepare for a photo and art display describing and reflecting what we have learned throughout the year. There will be an exhibit party where Húnaklúbburinn kids, their parents/guardians, and other members of the community will get to meet Húnaklúbburinn kids and talk with about their experiences. This event will be held during the annual Eldur Festival held every July.

We would like to serve light snacks such as Kleinur and juices during the exhibit presentation.

This day will be further developed in coordination with Eldur Húnaþing vestra, the pool house, the municipality, and with the Icelandic kids.

Description for Eldur Húnaþing vestra

Date: July 25 Time: 18:00-20:00 (11:00-18:00 every day of the festival thereafter). Location: Felagsheimili (Downstairs)

Húnaklúbburinn Photo Exhibition
A Photovoice exhibition exploring our experiences of the Erasmus+ exchange titled: Icelandic Nature and Culture. Come and join us as we reflect on what we have learned, hear our stories about our new friends from Sweden, and learn about what we will be doing next year.