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LEADERSHIP GUIDE

Types of Leaders and Activities for Cultivating Leadership

Erasmus+ Dissemination Material

Key Action 1 – Learning Mobility of Individuals, School Education (KA121-SCH)

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1. About This Guide

Leadership is not a title and it is not reserved for a few people. It is a set of skills, attitudes and habits that every young person can learn, practise and improve. This guide was created as a dissemination output of our Erasmus+ project to share what we learned about leadership during our learning mobilities and to inspire other students, teachers and schools to do the same.

Aims of the guide

- to explain, in simple terms, what leadership is and why it matters;
- to present the main types of leaders, with their strengths, risks and best use;
- to offer practical, low-cost activities that can be run in a classroom, a youth group or a school club;
- to give a glossary of key terms in English, supporting language and intercultural learning.

Who is it for?

Students aged 14–19, teachers, class tutors, school counsellors and youth workers who want to develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills in a non-formal and enjoyable way.

What you will find inside

Section	Content
What is leadership?	Definition, key qualities and common myths (page 3)
Types of leaders	Eight leadership styles explained one by one (pages 4–5)
Compare and reflect	Comparison table and self-reflection questions (page 6)
Activities	Eight ready-to-use activities with aims, steps and reflection (pages 7–8)
Everyday leadership	Habits, facilitator tips and ways to measure progress (page 9)
Glossary	Key leadership terms in English (page 10)

The Erasmus+ context

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. Through Key Action 1 (learning mobility of individuals) in school education, students and staff gain international experience, meet different cultures and develop key competences. Leadership, cooperation and initiative are at the heart of these competences, and this guide turns that experience into a resource that others can use.

2. What Is Leadership?

Leadership is the ability to **inspire, guide and support a group of people** towards a shared goal, while respecting each person's needs, talents and ideas. A leader does not simply give orders: a leader creates direction, builds trust and helps others to give their best.

Leadership can happen anywhere: captaining a sports team, organising a school event, leading a project group, helping a classmate or speaking up for a good cause. **You do not need a position to lead – you need initiative, responsibility and care for others.**

Leader or manager?

The two roles overlap, but they are not identical. A manager organises tasks, time and resources so that things work well. A leader gives meaning and direction, motivates people and encourages change. Strong teams need both.

Eight qualities of effective leaders

Quality	What it means in practice
Vision	Knowing where the group is going and explaining why it matters.
Communication	Speaking clearly, listening actively and checking that everyone understands.
Empathy	Understanding the feelings and perspectives of other people.
Responsibility	Keeping promises and accepting the consequences of decisions.
Integrity	Being honest and fair, even when nobody is watching.
Adaptability	Changing the approach when the situation or the people change.
Teamwork	Sharing success, delegating tasks and trusting others.
Resilience	Learning from mistakes and staying positive under pressure.

Three myths about leadership

- **Myth 1: “Leaders are born, not made.”** Research and experience show that leadership skills can be learned and trained, like a language or a sport.
- **Myth 2: “The leader always has the best ideas.”** A good leader knows that the best ideas often come from the team and creates space for them.
- **Myth 3: “There is only one right way to lead.”** Different people and situations need different styles – the next pages show how.

3. Types of Leaders

A leadership style is the typical way a person makes decisions, communicates and motivates others. No style is perfect in every situation. Below are eight well-known styles; most real leaders combine several of them.

1. The Autocratic Leader

Makes decisions alone, gives clear instructions and expects them to be followed. The leader controls the process and the group has little say in the decisions.

- **Strengths:** fast decisions, clear roles, useful in emergencies or when time is short.
- **Risks:** low motivation and creativity, fear of making mistakes, dependence on one person.
- **Works best when:** a quick decision is vital, the group is new or inexperienced, or safety is at stake.

2. The Democratic (Participative) Leader

Invites the group to share ideas and take part in decisions, while keeping the final responsibility. Discussion and voting are common tools.

- **Strengths:** higher motivation, creative solutions, strong sense of ownership and belonging.
- **Risks:** slower decisions, possible disagreement, can be frustrating if the group lacks knowledge.
- **Works best when:** the team is skilled and motivated, and there is time to discuss.

3. The Laissez-faire (Hands-off) Leader

Gives the group almost complete freedom, offering support only when asked. The team sets its own goals and methods.

- **Strengths:** independence, creativity and personal responsibility for experienced people.
- **Risks:** lack of direction, unclear roles, missed deadlines, uneven workload.
- **Works best when:** team members are experts, self-disciplined and highly motivated.

4. The Transformational Leader

Inspires people with a strong vision and high expectations, acts as a role model and encourages everyone to grow beyond their limits.

- **Strengths:** enthusiasm, innovation, personal development and long-term change.
- **Risks:** can neglect details, may exhaust the team with constant change.
- **Works best when:** the group needs a new direction, change or a big motivating goal.

3. Types of Leaders (continued)

5. The Transactional Leader

Works with clear rules, tasks, rewards and consequences. The leader monitors performance and corrects mistakes: “If you do this, you get that.”

- **Strengths:** order, clarity, measurable results, stable routines.
- **Risks:** little room for creativity, motivation depends on rewards.
- **Works best when:** tasks are routine, precise and need a fixed procedure, such as organising an event timetable.

6. The Servant Leader

Puts the needs of the team first and sees leadership as a form of service. The leader listens, supports, removes obstacles and helps others to develop.

- **Strengths:** trust, loyalty, a caring and inclusive atmosphere, strong team spirit.
- **Risks:** decisions can be slow, the leader may neglect personal limits.
- **Works best when:** building a community, supporting vulnerable members or working in volunteering.

7. The Situational Leader

Adapts the style to the task and to the readiness of the people: more direction for beginners, more freedom for experts. Flexibility is the key skill.

- **Strengths:** flexibility, fits many contexts, helps each person grow at their own pace.
- **Risks:** requires good judgement and constant observation; may seem inconsistent.
- **Works best when:** the group has mixed levels of experience or the situation changes often.

8. The Charismatic Leader

Wins people over through personality, energy and powerful communication. Followers are attracted to the leader's confidence and passion.

- **Strengths:** strong motivation, quick mobilisation of people, memorable public speaking.
- **Risks:** the team may depend on one person; success can be about the leader rather than the goal.
- **Works best when:** a group needs inspiration, for example during campaigns, presentations or fundraising.

4. Compare and Reflect

Leadership styles at a glance

Style	Decisions made by	Main focus	Best for	Main risk
Autocratic	The leader	Control	Emergencies	Low motivation
Democratic	Leader + group	Participation	Skilled teams	Slow process
Laissez-faire	The group	Freedom	Experts	Lack of direction
Transformational	Shared vision	Inspiration	Change	Overload
Transactional	The leader	Rules, rewards	Routine tasks	Low creativity
Servant	Shared	People's needs	Communities	Slow decisions
Situational	Depends	Adaptation	Mixed groups	Inconsistency
Charismatic	The leader	Personality	Campaigns	Over-dependence

Which leader are you?

There are no right or wrong answers. Think about the last time you worked in a group and answer honestly:

1. Who made the decisions, and how did I feel about it?
2. Did I listen to every member of the group, including the quiet ones?
3. When did I take initiative, and when did I wait for someone else to lead?
4. Which style did the group need most, and which one did I use?
5. What is one leadership skill I would like to improve this year?

Key message

The best leaders are **flexible**. They know their own natural style, understand the needs of the group and are brave enough to change approach when it is necessary. Leadership grows with practice, feedback and reflection – the activities in the next pages will help you to start.

5. Activities for Cultivating Leadership

All activities follow the same simple structure: do the task, then reflect. Reflection is where the learning happens, so never skip it. Adapt time and group size to your needs.

Activity 1: Leadership Line-Up

Time: 20 min | Group: 10–30 | Skills: self-awareness, communication

Aim: To discover how each participant sees leadership and to start a discussion.

How to do it: Draw an imaginary line across the room: one end means “I strongly agree”, the other “I strongly disagree”. Read statements such as “A leader must always be strong” or “Anyone can be a leader”. Participants stand on the line and explain their position in one sentence.

Reflect: Did anyone change their mind after listening to others? What surprised you?

Activity 2: Blind Maze

Time: 30 min | Group: groups of 5–6 | Skills: trust, clear communication

Aim: To experience how clear instructions and trust help a team succeed.

How to do it: Build a simple maze with chairs or cones. One blindfolded volunteer must cross it using only the voice instructions of a teammate. Rotate roles so that everyone is guide, walker and observer.

Reflect: What made instructions clear or confusing? How did it feel to trust someone else?

Activity 3: Style Switch

Time: 45 min | Group: groups of 5–6 | Skills: understanding leadership styles

Aim: To feel how different leadership styles change the atmosphere and the result of a group.

How to do it: Give each group the same task, for example designing a poster for a school event. In round one the leader is autocratic, in round two democratic, in round three laissez-faire. A different student leads each time, while observers take notes.

Reflect: Which round was the most efficient? Which was the most enjoyable? Why?

Activity 4: Rotating Tower

Time: 30 min | Group: groups of 4–6 | Skills: delegation, teamwork

Aim: To practise sharing leadership and giving every member a voice.

How to do it: Each group builds the tallest stable tower using paper, tape and straws. Every five minutes a new leader takes over and may change the plan, the roles or the method. Give a final presentation of the tower.

Reflect: How did it feel to hand over leadership? Did the changes help or disturb the team?

5. Activities for Cultivating Leadership (continued)

Activity 5: Leaders Around Us Gallery

Time: 60 min + homework | Group: pairs | Skills: research, presentation

Aim: To discover inspiring leaders and the values behind their actions.

How to do it: Each pair chooses a leader – historical, local, European or from their own family or school – and prepares a poster or a two-minute talk: who the person is, which style they used, and which quality you admire. Display the posters in a classroom “gallery walk”.

Reflect: Which qualities appear most often? Which would you like to develop?

Activity 6: Conflict Resolution Role Play

Time: 40 min | Group: groups of 4 | Skills: empathy, mediation

Aim: To learn how to stay calm and find fair solutions in disagreements.

How to do it: Give each group a realistic conflict, such as two members who want different ideas for a project. Two students play the roles, one acts as the mediator and one observes. The mediator uses four steps: listen to both sides, name the problem, brainstorm solutions, agree on one.

Reflect: Which mediator phrases helped? What would you do differently next time?

Activity 7: Servant for a Day

Time: 1 day or 1 week | Group: individual | Skills: service, initiative

Aim: To experience leadership as service by noticing and meeting the needs of others.

How to do it: Each student chooses one small act of help for the class or school, such as welcoming a new classmate, tidying a shared room or tutoring a younger student. Keep a short journal of what you did and how people reacted.

Reflect: What did you learn about yourself? How did serving others change the group?

Activity 8: Mini Community Project

Time: 4–6 weeks | Group: teams of 5–8 | Skills: planning, leadership, teamwork

Aim: To plan and lead a real initiative that improves the school or the local community.

How to do it: Teams choose a need (recycling, a charity collection, an intercultural evening), set a goal, share roles, make a timeline and carry out the project. A different team member is “leader of the week”. Finish with a short presentation and a thank-you event.

Reflect: What went well? Which leadership styles did we use, and when did we need to change them?

6. Leadership in Everyday School Life

Six habits of young leaders

- **Listen first.** Let others finish speaking and ask questions before giving your opinion.
- **Take small initiatives.** Volunteer for tasks, propose ideas and help organise class events.
- **Include everyone.** Make sure quiet and new members have a chance to contribute.
- **Ask for feedback.** Ask “What can I do better?” and accept answers without defending yourself.
- **Learn from mistakes.** Admit errors, fix them and share what you learned.
- **Lead by example.** Show the behaviour, such as punctuality and respect, that you expect from others.

Tips for teachers and facilitators

- Start with short, easy activities and build up to longer projects.
- Give every student the chance to lead, not only the most confident ones.
- Create a safe space: mistakes are part of learning and feedback must be respectful.
- Always leave time for reflection and connect the experience to real school situations.
- Mix groups regularly and encourage intercultural and inter-age cooperation.

How to measure progress

Method	How to use it
Self-assessment	Students rate themselves from 1 to 5 on the eight qualities (page 3) at the start and the end of the programme.
Leadership journal	Short weekly notes: what I did, what I learned, what I will try next.
Peer feedback	Teammates write one strength and one suggestion for each other after a project.
Final presentation	Students present a leadership challenge they faced and how they solved it.

Remember: leadership is a journey, not a destination. Every small step – listening, helping, speaking up – makes you a stronger leader and your community a better place.

7. Glossary

Term	Definition
Accountability	Accepting responsibility for your actions, decisions and their results.
Active listening	Giving full attention to a speaker and showing that you understand.
Adaptability	The ability to adjust to new situations and conditions.
Autocratic leadership	A style in which the leader takes decisions alone.
Charisma	A personal charm and energy that attracts and inspires other people.
Collaboration	Working together with others to achieve a common goal.
Conflict resolution	Finding a fair and peaceful solution to a disagreement.
Delegation	Giving tasks and authority to other members of the team.
Democratic leadership	A style in which the group takes part in decision-making.
Emotional intelligence	The ability to recognise and manage your own and others' emotions.
Empathy	Understanding and sharing the feelings of another person.
Empowerment	Giving people the confidence, skills and freedom to act.
Feedback	Information about how well someone is doing, meant to help them improve.
Followership	The ability to support, cooperate with and learn from a leader.
Laissez-faire leadership	A hands-off style that gives the group freedom to decide.
Mentoring	Guidance and support given by a more experienced person.
Non-formal learning	Learning outside the classroom through planned activities and projects.
Resilience	The ability to recover quickly from difficulties.
Self-awareness	Knowing your own strengths, weaknesses, values and feelings.
Servant leadership	A style based on serving and supporting the team first.
Situational leadership	Adapting the style to the task and the people's readiness.
Soft skills	Personal abilities such as communication, teamwork and creativity.
Transactional leadership	A style based on rules, tasks, rewards and consequences.

