Annex 8: Guidance on crisis management

Crisis management[1]

The purpose of this document on *Crisis management* is to ensure a successful mobility experience for all involved. The guidelines provide information on what constitutes a crisis (Chapter 1), who should be involved in preventing and managing a crisis (Chapter 2), on how to prevent the crisis from happening (Chapter 3) and on how to handle crises and ensure that pupils involved, responsible teachers, host families and parents have a common framework of reference in such an event (Chapter 4). It should also ensure that a possible crisis will be dealt with effectively and will not escalate.

The present *Guidance on crisis management* should be distributed to all those involved in an exchange; the mentor at the host school, the contact teacher at the sending school, the host family, the pupil and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s). All these parties should also receive the *Crisis contact list* by the schools *(see appendix 9)*.

All parties should be aware that any sensitive information concerning the pupil must be kept confidential and can only be disclosed when needed to those who are directly involved in dealing with the crisis.

1. What is a crisis?

A crisis can be defined as an extreme situation which would lead to a serious disturbance of the visit, and which requires urgent action. Crises should be distinguished from problems, which are not extreme and which do not require immediate action. However, problems can develop into crises if not correctly handled.

Crises call for urgent action, but should, as far as possible, be prevented. It is at least as important to work on risk prevention as on crisis management. Despite all preventive measures, crises might happen. In that case, it is essential that all the parties involved know how to react and whom to contact.

The following list of extreme situations which could happen during a visit period is not exhaustive, but may help illustrate various problems and solution scenarios.

- Medical problems

  o serious illness or allergy
  o serious injuries
  o accidents (e.g. traffic accident)
  o unwanted pregnancy

- Death of the pupil

- Psychological problems

  o depression
  o psychological consequences of suffering violence
  o problems related to abuse of alcohol or drugs
  o eating disorders

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[1] The content of this form is adapted from the European Voluntary Service crisis manual.

- Mental and/or physical abuse of the pupil

    o sexual / physical abuse
    o bullying
    o racism / xenophobia
    o living in a host family and/or area where living conditions are not healthy or are insecure for the pupil involved

- Being a victim of a crime

- Breaches of the rules of conduct and legal problems caused by the pupil

    o risk behaviour
    o the pupil goes missing
    o police arrest or detention
    o violent behaviour
    o theft
    o abuse of alcohol or usage of drugs

- Other

    o Family pressure to return home
    o Death/serious illness of a family member
    o Conflicts with the host family
    o Conflicts with the mentor

2. Who has to be involved in preventing and managing a crisis?

The mentor and the host family have a key role in crisis prevention and management during the pupil's stay in their country. Their efficient collaboration and communication is crucial in preventing and managing crises.

The mentor needs to build a supportive relationship with the pupil. This can happen thanks to regular, frequent and face-to-face contact. The mentor should be available to deal with any matters that the pupil or host family would like to raise, and be easy to reach in case of emergency. A replacement person for the mentor should be nominated in case the mentor is absent or unable to perform his/her tasks. The school must make sure that the pupil can always contact somebody in case of emergency. The pupil must have a copy of the *Crisis contact list* with phone numbers he/she can call if necessary.
The host family acts as the actual parent or guardian would do. The host family should establish smooth and efficient communication with the pupil and the mentor.

If the pupil shows signs of serious difficulties (e.g. serious personal problems or difficulty in adapting to the host country) the mentor and the host family has to act quickly to prevent any dangerous situation. This may require more intense counselling of the pupil or helping him/her to overcome emotional challenges. However, both the mentor and the host family should seek expert help if the pupil shows signs of serious difficulties and not try to solve them on their own. The mentor and the host family should look out for any signs that the pupil is feeling uncomfortable and should encourage him/her to speak honestly about his/her feelings.

An overview of the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved is listed in the document
"*01_Roles and responsibilities*".

3. How to prevent crisis situations?

- The recruitment and selection of pupils should follow the guidelines.

- The mentor must understand and perform his/her tasks

- The correct selection of a host family is one of the key elements in preventing crises.

- Pupils and contact teachers at the sending school must attend the pre-departure info-session organized by the sending school.

- Pupils and mentors at the host school must attend the on-arrival info-session organized by the receiving school

- Pupils must know and observe the rules of conduct provided in the Parental/Guardian consent form

- Pupils should also know and observe the law in the host country (info provided by the hosting school).

- Pupils must always know in advance the persons they can turn to in case of problems. In principle, these should be the mentor and the host family. Contact details of these persons, and also emergency numbers, are provided in the *Crisis contact list* drawn up by the schools (*see annex 9*).

- Legal representatives/guardians of the pupil must make the necessary arrangements to ensure that the pupil does not travel alone from/to the airport/railway station/other to/from the home of the host family.

- All parties must abide by their roles and responsibilities.

4. How to manage crisis situations?

4.1 Creation of a *Crisis contact list*

The host school coordinates the drawing up of a *Crisis contact list* prior to the pupil's arrival. The template is available in a n n e x 9 . All those involved in the visit, including host family, mentor, sending school, parents and pupil, should have a copy of the *Crisis contact list* so they are informed of who is responsible in an emergency, what are his/her contact details and what each actor is expected to do.

4.2 Basic emergency procedure

Basic procedure to be followed in case of crisis:

- The first action to solve the situation has to be taken by the mentor or the host family, depending which is informed first (i.e. calling emergency, expert help).
- The host family/the mentor immediately inform each other about what happened and the pupil's parents/guardians must be notified as soon as possible.

- If the mentor and the host family are not able or competent to solve the pupil's problem at local level, they should contact the Management of the hosting school for help and advice.

- The mentor contacts the pupil's parents/guardians.

- After a crisis situation, the pupil's wish to continue the visit should be respected, except in cases where the pupil's behavior has already made it unlikely that the stay will be successful.

- In very urgent cases, the mentor can propose to terminate the pupil's stay. However, he or she should consult with the Management of the hosting school, which will finally decide.

At the end of the crisis, a detailed report should be produced by the mentor, summarising the circumstances and consequences of the case, and giving an evaluation of what to do in the future (e.g. recommendations on how to avoid similar situations and on how to act in a similar crisis). This report may be necessary for purposes of insurance, legal action or other administrative procedures.

This basic procedure should be applied in any case of emergency. In addition, specific procedures apply to certain types of emergencies, as described below.

4.2.1 Medical emergencies

Medical emergencies can be any situation related to the health and well-being of the pupil.

The basic emergency procedure should be followed as described above. The following documents should be kept together and be available for medical emergencies: the *Parental/Guardian consent form,* the copy of the pupil's *European Health Insurance Card* (the original stays with the pupil), the copy of the Insurance certificate and ID card with contact details to the insurance and assistance companies (the original stays with the pupil), as well as the translations of the *Health form* and the *Parental/Guardian consent form*. The mentor should keep the original of the *Parental/Guardian consent form* and the copies of the other above mentioned documents. The host family should keep the copy of all the above-mentioned documents. The pupil has to d e l i v e r his/her *Health form* in a sealed envelope to the medical service of the hosting school as well as to the host family.

The first action must be taken by the mentor or the host family as explained above. The mentor/host family should be able to quickly collect and provide the following information (all the information must be treated as confidential):

- Exact condition and safety of the pupil

- Correct name and birth date of the pupil

- Symptoms and complications

- Treatment already received and given by whom

- Documents needed for the health emergency (as stated above)

- In case of death, further facts have to be checked:

- Circumstances of death (time, place, event)

- Who has been notified

- Where is the body

- Liaison with police and notification of the embassy concerned, if necessary.

- Collection of all medical reports, death certificate and police reports

- Liaison with Insurance regarding the return of body and the funeral.

4.2.2 Psychological emergencies

This category includes situations that require special psychological treatment/monitoring, such as illness, unwanted pregnancy, psychological consequences of crime, drugs and alcohol abuse, depression, eating disorders, etc. Intervention for problems in this category can either be requested by the pupil him/herself or warning signs should be detected by the host family, the mentor, other teachers or fellow pupils.

The mentor, in cooperation with the host family if necessary, should help to find a skilled person to give psychological support to the pupil, e.g. among the resource persons of the host school.

- If the situation also involves health problems, and in all cases where there is a serious crisis, the same procedures as for medical emergencies should be started.

- Contact with local specialist institutions is recommended.

4.2.3 In the event of crime committed on the pupil

This category can include situations in which the pupil is a victim of a crime such as violence or theft.

The following procedure should be followed:

- Either the pupil/host family contacts the police immediately, or notifies the mentor, who helps in dealing with the police and possible insurance issues; if possible, the pupil's parent/guardian must be notified beforehand;

- If the pupil contacts the police himself/herself (or if this is done by the host family) the mentor must be notified as soon as possible;

- The host family and parent(s)/guardian(s) are informed by the mentor and involved where appropriate.

- The mentor assists the pupil in reporting the case to the relevant authorities.

- The mentor assists the pupil in contacting the Medical Insurance whenever psychological assistance is needed.

Some of the action in the 'psychological emergencies' section may be necessary for psychological support to the pupil.

4.2.4 Breaches of the rules of conduct and legal problems caused by the pupil

This category can include breaches of the rules of conduct and also legal problems caused by the pupil such as violence, drugs and alcohol abuse, accidents or police arrest and detention. The basic emergency procedure should be applied. The mentor/host family should also be able to:

- Quickly collect the reasons for arrest or charges made

- Find out whether the pupil has been detained and, if so,

- Find out the details of the police staff involved

- Liaise with pupil and police

- Inform the Management of the hosting school (via the mentor)

In case of a serious breach of rules/laws of the country, the mentor can propose to terminate the pupil's stay, after consulting the Management of the hosting school. The final decision is to the Management of the hosting school.

4.2.5 Family pressure to return home

- The pupil/the host family tells the mentor that the family would like the pupil to come back

- The mentor at the host school/contact person at the sending school discuss the reasons with the family

- Unless the reason is related to serious illness or death in the family, the mentor/contact teacher should first try to convince the family that the pupil should continue the visit

- If the family still wants the pupil to come home, the mentor and the Management of the hosting school will terminate the stay. The travel expenses and all other costs are borne by the family.

4.2.6 Serious illness/death in the family

- The pupil informs the mentor about the serious illness/death in the family

- The mentor contacts the Insurance at the dedicated phone number and requests help in arranging a trip home for the pupil. Arrangements that are made and paid for by the mentor/school/host family/pupil without the agreement of the Insurance will not be reimbursed.

4.2.7 Conflicts with the host family

- The pupil/the host family informs the mentor about the conflict

- In case of a minor conflict, the mentor tries to mediate

- In the event of irreconcilable differences between the host family and the pupil, and where mediation has been tried and has not led to an acceptable solution, the body which has helped

finding a host family originally will support finding an alternative as soon as possible, however, it is within the responsibility of the parents/legal representatives/guardians of the pupil to find alternative accomodation, or repatriation of the pupil within a maximum of 3 days.

- In the event of a serious breach of rules by the pupil, the host family can ask for the immediate termination of the pupil's stay and require the legal representatives of the pupil to make arrangements for alternative accommodation or repatriation. In case of repatriation, the travel costs will be borne by the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the pupil.

- In the event of any doubts in relation to a host family and child protection risk issues, the mentor together with the Management of the hosting school will immediately remove the pupil from the family and provide the pupil with alternative accommodation. Costs will be borne by the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the pupil.

4.2.8 Conflict with the mentor

- The pupil/the host family/the contact teacher at the sending school informs the Management of the host school about the problem.

- In case of a minor conflict, the director tries to mediate.

- In case of irreconcilable conflict or a loss of trust, a new mentor is nominated.

Insurance for visiting Pupils

1. Pupil's own health cover

- A participating pupil must be covered by a national health scheme prior to the departure. This cover entitles to receive a European Health Insurance Card2.

- The pupil/parent(s)/guardian(s) must compile documentation related to the pupil's national or other health scheme and make sure that the pupil has a European Health Insurance Card.

- Copies of this documentation must be transmitted to the mentor.

2. A pupil participating in a mobility programme must be covered by an Assistance Insurance (travel insurance). Copies of the Insurance Plan documentation (insurance certificate and ID card) should be transmitted to the mentor.

The Insurance guide for visiting pupils will be made available on the website of the European Schools: www.eursc.eu .

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[2] Details on European Health Insurance Card can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559.
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