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# **Section 9: Guidance on crisis management**

## **Crisis management**

The purpose of this document on *Crisis management* is to ensure a successful experience for all involved in long term study mobility of pupils. The guidelines provide information on what constitutes a crisis (Chapter 1), who should be involved in preventing and managing a crisis (Chapter 2), how to prevent the crisis from happening (Chapter 3) and 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 *Crisis management* document should be distributed to all those involved in a study mobility; the mentor at the receiving school, the contact teacher at the sending school, the host family, the pupil and his/her parents/guardians. All these parties should also receive the *Crisis action plan* and *Rules of conduct* established by the schools.

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 mobility, 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 crises which could happen during a mobility period is not exhaustive, but may help illustrate various problem and solution scenarios.

* Medical problems
  + serious illness or allergy
  + serious injuries
  + accidents (e.g. traffic accident)
  + unwanted pregnancy
* Death of the pupil
* Psychological problems
  + depression
  + psychological consequences of suffering violence / rape
  + problems related to abuse of alcohol or drugs
  + eating disorders
* Mental and/or physical abuse of the pupil
  + sexual / physical abuse
  + bullying
  + racism / xenophobia
  + living in a host family and/or area where living conditions are not healthy or are insecure
* Being a victim of a crime
* Breaches of the rules of conduct and legal problems caused by the pupil
  + risk behaviour
  + the pupil goes missing
  + police arrest or detention
  + violent behaviour
  + theft
  + abuse of alcohol or usage of drugs
* Other
  + Family pressure to return home
  + Death/serious illness of a family member
  + Conflicts with the host family
  + 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 action plan* with phone numbers he/she can call if necessary.

The host family exercises parental supervision over the pupil. 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 should be able 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 Section 2 — *Roles and responsibilities*.

## 3. How to prevent crisis situations?

* The recruitment and selection of pupils should follow the guidelines provided in the Guidance for sending schools on selecting pupils.
* The mentor must understand and perform his/her tasks as outlined in the document Guidance for mentors
* The good selection of a host family, as set out in the document Guidance for receiving schools on selecting host families, is one of the key elements in preventing crises.
* Pupils and contact teachers at the sending school must attend the pre-departure training organised by the sending National Agency.
* Pupils should know and observe the rules of conduct provided in the Parental/Guardian consent form, and also those laid down by the sending and the receiving schools (the template Rules of conduct is attached in Section 10).
* Pupils should also know and observe the law in the host country.
* 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, should be provided in the Crisis action plan drawn up by the schools.
* Both schools must make the necessary arrangements to ensure that pupils do not travel alone from/to the airport/railway station etc. on their way to/from the home of the host family and to/from any training sessions organised by the National Agency.
* All parties should abide by their agreed roles and responsibilities as outlined in Section 2.

## 4. How to manage crisis situations?

### 4.1 Creation of a *Crisis action plan* by schools

The receiving school should coordinate the drawing up of a detailed *Crisis action plan* prior to the pupil’s arrival. A template is available in Section 10. All those involved in the mobility, including host family, mentor, sending school, parents and pupil, should have a copy of the *Crisis action plan* 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.
* If the mentor/school and the host family are not able or competent to solve the pupil’s problem at local level, they may contact the National Agency for help and advice.
* The mentor contacts the pupil’s parents/guardians.
* After a crisis situation, the pupil’s wish to continue the mobility should be respected, unless the pupil’s behaviour has already made it unlikely that the stay will be successful.
* In very urgent cases, the mentor in agreement with the sending and receiving school, can decide to terminate the pupil’s stay.
* 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. It should also be sent to the sending school for information.

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. They include serious illness, allergies, unwanted pregnancy, accident, physical consequences of violence and drug or alcohol abuse.

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 consent form,* the copy of the pupil’s *European Health Insurance Card* (the original stays with the pupil), a copy of the pupil´s insurance plan 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 consent form*. The mentor should keep the original of the Parental 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 should keep his/her *Health form* in a sealed envelope.

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 the pupil´s insurance company 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, rape, theft or robbery.

The following procedure should be followed:

* Either the pupil contacts the police immediately, or notifies the mentor, who helps in dealing with the police and possible insurance issues;
* 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 parents/guardians 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 pupil´s insurance company if necessary.

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, where
* Find out the details of the police staff involved
* Liaise with pupil and police
* Inform the pupil's parents/guardians and the sending school

In case of a serious breach of rules/laws of the country, the mentor in agreement with the sending and receiving schools can decide to terminate the pupil’s stay.

### 4.2.5 Family pressure to return home

* The pupil/the host family informs the mentor that the family would like the pupil to come back
* The mentor at the host school/contact teacher 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 mobility
* If the family still wants the pupil to come home, the mentor in agreement with the sending and receiving schools may decide to terminate the stay. The travel expenses should be 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 pupil´s insurance company and requests help in arranging a trip home for the pupil..

### 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 receiving school should provide for alternative accommodation 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 receiving school to make arrangements for alternative accommodation or repatriation. In case of repatriation, the travel costs should 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 should immediately remove the pupil from the family and provide the pupil with alternative accommodation. In case of a major local conflict, the National Agency in the host country should be contacted

### 4.2.8 Conflict with the mentor

* The pupil/the host family/the contact teacher at the sending school informs the principal of the host school about the problem
* In case of a minor conflict, the headmaster tries to mediate
* In case of irreconcilable conflict or a loss of trust, a new mentor is nominated
* In case of a major local conflict, the National Agency in the host country should be contacted

## **Insurance for pupils on long-term study mobility**

### 1. Pupil’s own health cover

* All the participating pupils should be covered by a national health scheme prior to departure. This cover entitles them to receive a European Health Insurance Card[[1]](#footnote-1).
* The pupil/parents/guardians should 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 should be transmitted to the mentor.

### 2. Additional insurance coverage

Schools should make sure that the participating pupils have necessary additional insurance coverage as requested in the Programme Guide, chapter "Safety and protection of participants".

1. Details on European Health Insurance Card can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559. Participants from Turkey and EFTA countries should contact their National Agency for advice on insurance. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)