

# Rural Divide - Exploring Rural Realities

13-20 October 2026  
Alcala la Real, Spain  
Erasmus+ Youth Exchange

Date of Participant Selection : 1st of August 2026  
Deadline of Finalising Travel Arrangements : 1st of September 2026

# About Youth Exchange

Across Europe, young people living in rural areas face growing social, economic, and territorial inequalities. Limited employment opportunities, insufficient transport and digital infrastructure, reduced access to education and public services, population ageing, and youth migration continue to affect the sustainability of rural communities. These challenges can restrict young people's participation, weaken their connection to their local communities, and reinforce the belief that educational and professional opportunities are mainly available in urban areas. At the same time, rural territories possess valuable resources that can support sustainable development. Agriculture, local food production, traditional crafts, natural and cultural heritage, rural tourism, community networks, and digital connectivity can create new opportunities for social entrepreneurship and local revitalisation. However, many young people lack the knowledge, competences, and opportunities needed to identify these resources and transform them into practical responses to local challenges.

The project responds to this need by combining rural awareness, social entrepreneurship, active citizenship, and intercultural learning. Through field visits, stakeholder discussions, problem tree analysis, SWOT analysis, design thinking, storytelling, photography, simulations, and prototype development, participants will explore rural realities and co-create solutions for sustainable rural development. Visits to olive oil producers, artisan workshops, and rural tourism projects will help participants connect theoretical learning with real community experiences.

## General Objective:

To strengthen young people's capacity to understand rural challenges and develop creative, entrepreneurial, and community-based solutions that contribute to sustainable rural development.

## Specific Objectives:

- To deepen participants' understanding of rural challenges, including unemployment, depopulation, ageing populations, limited infrastructure, restricted mobility, and unequal access to services.
- To support young people in identifying and valuing rural resources such as agriculture, crafts, rural tourism, cultural heritage, natural resources, and digital connectivity.
- To develop entrepreneurial competences through problem analysis, design thinking, SWOT analysis, co-creation, prototyping, and the presentation of rural business ideas.
- To strengthen active citizenship by involving participants in dialogue with local producers, artisans, entrepreneurs, community organisations, and other stakeholders.
- To support participants in developing local follow-up plans and adapting rural entrepreneurship ideas within their own communities.
- To disseminate the project's results through prototypes, photographs, stories, local action plans, presentations, and a project booklet.

# Participant Profile

- **Age:** 18 to 30, mainly 19 to 25.
- **Profile:** students, young professionals, unemployed youth, and young people interested in rural development and social entrepreneurship.
- **Priority** will be given to participants who joined the first activity and completed the local activities between the two exchanges, as well as rural youth and young people with fewer opportunities.
- **Interests:** rural development, social entrepreneurship, sustainability, intercultural learning, active citizenship, and non-formal education.

# Information About the City

Alcalá la Real is situated 71 kilometres (44 mi) from the provincial capital, Jaén, and 53 kilometres (33 mi) from Granada, on the slopes of La Mota, a hill in the Sierra Sur. It has an area of 261.36 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>[3]</sup> The town is dominated by a large Moorish fortress around which, some centuries ago, the settlement evolved. Alcalá la Real is connected to the Guadalquivir valley via the Guadajoz tributary.



Remains from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age show the human presence in the area in Prehistoric times. It has been hypothesized that this was one of the last places inhabited by Neanderthal Man. Despite the presence of remains from the Iberians, dating to the late Bronze Age, the first traces of urban structures (perhaps identifiable with the ancient Sucaelo) date to the Roman times. Archaeological findings include a marble statue of Hercules, now in the National Archaeological Museum of Spain at Madrid.

After the Muslim conquest in 713, the town was renamed Qal'at (قلعة), an Arabic term meaning "fortified city". In the following centuries, Umayyad caliph Al-Hakam II (971–976) had a series of watchtowers built to defend the city from the Viking/Norman incursions; today 12 of the 15 original towers remain. Around the year 1000 the main of these tower, the Mota, became a true fortress, one of the mainstays of the Al-Andalus defence against the Christian Reconquista. In the 12th century it was the fief of the Banu Said family, and became known as Qal'at Banu Said, or Alcalá de Benzaide in Christian sources.



After the dissolution of the caliphate and its fragmentation in a series of taifa small kingdoms, Qa'lat was a stronghold of the Kingdom of Granada. From here numerous raids were launched against Jaén and other frontier areas of the Kingdom of Castile. The city was finally captured on 15 August 1341 by Alfonso XI of Castile, who conceded it the title of "Real" (Royal), which after that was part of its name.

Alcalá remained under the jurisdiction of Jorquera until 1364, when king Peter I gave it the privilege of a Government Council, under the royal crown and the state of Villena. It was elevated to the rank of city in 1432 by king John II. After a flourishing period, the conquest of Granada in 1492 stripped Alcalá of its strategical importance. The population started to move from the upper hill to the now safer slopes, thus gradually creating the current settlement. The city remained under the marquises of Villena until the early 16th century, when the centralism introduced by the Catholic Monarchs started to reduce the power of the barons, although the marquessate remained in existence until the 19th century. The depopulation of the La Mota hill ended after the Peninsular War against the Napoleonic troops who occupied the fortress from 1810 and 1812. On retreat the Napoleonic forces set fire to the upper city, resulting in partial destruction of the Abbey Church.

# Before the Youth Exchange

Due to the connected structure of the project, participants are expected to complete short preparatory activities before the second youth exchange. These tasks will help them connect the urban realities explored in Munich with the rural realities addressed in Alcalá la Real. The activities will take approximately 2 to 3 hours. **Priority will be given to participants who joined the first exchange and completed the activities implemented between the two exchanges.**

- **Personal and Intercultural Introduction:** Participants will introduce themselves and share their personal background, interests, expectations, and motivation for joining the youth exchange. Each national group will also prepare a short profile presenting the realities of rural young people in its country, including common challenges, available opportunities, and relevant cultural or regional characteristics. This task will support initial interaction and help participants understand the diversity of rural experiences represented in the project.
- **Urban-Rural Reflection and Local Research:** Participants will reflect on the urban challenges explored during the first activity in Munich and consider how these issues are connected to rural development. They will identify and briefly examine one challenge affecting a rural community and one local resource that could contribute to its development. The selected issues may include unemployment, depopulation, limited public transport, restricted access to services, youth migration, agriculture, crafts, rural tourism, cultural heritage, natural resources, or digital connectivity. Participants will bring their observations to the exchange for further discussion and comparison.
- **Entrepreneurship and Youthpass Preparation:** Participants will review introductory concepts related to social entrepreneurship, design thinking, problem analysis, and community-based solutions. They will consider how local resources can be used to respond to social, economic, or environmental needs in rural areas. Participants will also complete an initial Youthpass self-assessment based on the eight Key Competences, reflect on the learning gained during the first activity and the local phase, and define personal learning goals for the second exchange.

## Travel Costs

### General Rules

**Travel cost reimbursement will be done by NextGen e.V. and the following rules should be done for the full-reimbursement of the costs.**

**! Note:** Reimbursement of travel costs will only be done upon presentation of all (including return tickets) original tickets, receipt/invoices and boarding passes. You will receive an e-mail about the Google Drive to upload your documents after your selection. In the drive, prior to the start of the project, all tickets ( **except than the ones which cannot be bought prior to the travel ( metro tickets, bus tickets etc. )** ) has to be uploaded so that, we can provide your reimbursement during the project.

This will be very helpful for us to begin processing the financial and reimbursement data so that all payments may be made as efficiently as possible. **Not uploaded tickets ( except than the ones explained above ) will not be reimbursed.**

**Please do not lose your boarding passes; you will need them for reimbursement of travel cost.**

**!!! Note:** Reimbursement will be done in EUR, regardless of the currency indicated on the ticket and receipt/invoice. Any tickets purchased in a local currency other than EUR, will then be converted and calculated according to the exchange rate of the **January 2026** as stated in the official European Commission web-site at <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/index.cfm?Language=en>

### Keep in mind !

**You should arrive to Alcalá la Real in 13th of October and leave on 20th of October.** We will not have any activities during the arrival (13th of October) and departure days (20th of October). **You can stay up to 2 days before or after the project in Spain. You should arrange your own accommodation in that case, during this time no accommodation and food costs will not be reimbursed or provided by us.**

# Travel Costs

As it is closed to Granada, one of the nicest cities in Spain, We recommend you to visit Granada before or after the project and so, take that into consideration when buying tickets. Be aware, we will NOT ORGANIZE ANY EXCURSION TO GRANADA DURING THE PROJECT, and GOING TO GRANADA DURING THE PROJECT IS COMPLETELY FORBIDDEN so, if you want to visit that city, must do before or after the project, never during the project time.

Travel Costs will be covered regardless of the budget in actual costs upon the presentation of the receipts.

The travel costs will be reimbursed up to the amounts indicated below for the countries.

| Country | Pax                    | Travel Allowance |
|---------|------------------------|------------------|
| Germany | 7 ( 5 pax + 2 leader ) | 309 EUR          |
| Estonia | 6 ( 5 pax + 1 leader ) | 580 EUR          |
| Poland  | 6 ( 5 pax + 1 leader ) | 395 EUR          |
| Türkiye | 6 ( 5 pax + 1 leader ) | 395 EUR          |

## Travel Arrangements :

We will try to arrange private transportation for the participants according to the time schedules of the arrivals and departure. In case the participants are coming from **Madrid Airport(MAD) or Sevilla Airport (SVQ)**, they should take a bus to Granada. For the other cases that arrives to following airports, we will provide a transportation from the airport/city to Alcala la Real Malaga Airport (AGP), Granada Airport (GRX).

**For buying the bus ticket, you can use [alsa.es](https://alsa.es), there is no any other bus company operates in Spain.** That's the only page that has bus services.

**!!!!!! BEAR IN MIND !!!!!!**

**AT ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ANY FLIGHT BOUGHT FROM KIWI, EDREAMS, GOTO GATE OR LIKEWISE TRAVEL AGENCIES WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED EVEN IT IS CHEAPER OR WHATSOEVER. IN CASE OF FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS, DELAYS AND ETC OR ADDITIONAL COSTS WILL NOT BE COVERED BY US!**

THAT'S THE REASON, WE SUGGEST YOU TO BY FLIGHT TICKETS AT ANY CIRCUMSTANCE FROM THE WEBPAGE OF THE COMPANY THAT YOU ARE GOING TO FLY WITH.

## List of To-Do and Not-To Do Before the Project



Uploaded the all tickets to drive before 1st of August  
Bought tickets on time  
Arriving in 13th of October ( latest )  
Departing in 20th of October (earliest)  
Bought tickets from the flight company page  
Flying to Madrid / Sevilla / Malaga or Granada  
No plans to visit Granada during the project  
**NO TRAVELLING AROUND SPAIN TO COME TO THE PROJECT**



Arriving later than 13th of October  
Departing before 20th of October  
Buying tickets from travel agency pages  
Travelling around Spain before the project  
Flying to Barcelona or Alicante or some other airport not in Andalucia  
Visiting Granada during the project

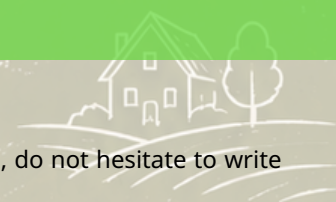
These are forbidden acts, if you do, we cannot accommodate it and we want to inform you about it before! So please DON'T!

# Participant Info Form

Please fill out the following form before you start to make your travel arrangements :

<https://forms.gle/57RqL92x4Sh2XRR77> (Please fill this form before 1st of August 2026)

In case of any hesitations or issues that you want to discuss or raise any questions in your mind, do not hesitate to write to us.



## Accommodation

We will provide you with quadruple room with private bathroom or double or quintuple rooms with shared bedroom according to your genders in the Verdesur House. You will need to bring towels and necessary personal hygiene products that you might think it is important to have. We will try to put you in the in different rooms mixed concerning to nationality and with people from same gender. **The place has laundry, kitchen and likewise facilitates and the activities will not be carried in the accommodation place due to size of the group.**

**NOTE!!** Please inform us about any dietary requirements that you might have in advance in the application form that we are ready to accommodate your needs. Here you can reach the accommodation pictures : <https://links.verdesur.org/ZofFKT>



You packed the following :



Slippers - Towel - Water Bottle - Tooth brush

You are happy to share the room with other people! You can stay in bunk bed alike in the picture in the right!



You didn't pack your slippers, towel or tooth brush, we will not be able to provide these during your stay in the accommodation. During your arrival day, the volunteers can assist you to get them, but we suggest you to get them in advance, so you don't have to spend money on them once you are in Spain.

You cannot share the room or cannot stay in bunk-bed!

- We do not provide and will not be able to provide any single room at any circumstance.
- We do not have any beds rather than bunk beds, so please be sure while coming that you are alright to sleep in a bunk bed ( up or down, you manage with your room mate : ) )
- Projects are for you to engage with the other people from different countries, unless you have a special need or justification to stay with people same country, the participants will stay in mixed rooms.

## Contact Information

For the urgent cases, in the border, during your arrival if you could not find our team or you miss the flight or some assistance you need! Please feel free to call :

- **Jesus** : +34 695 16 97 34 - **Responsible of the youth exchange content**
- **Estibaliz** : +34 601 52 69 71 - **Responsible of the youth exchange content**
- **Eric** : +34 655 28 90 07 - **Responsible of Travel Arrangements**
- **Alban** : +46 73 719 48 45 - **Responsible of Local Logistics ( Accommodation and Local Transfers )**
- **E-mail** : [projects@verdesur.org](mailto:projects@verdesur.org)

