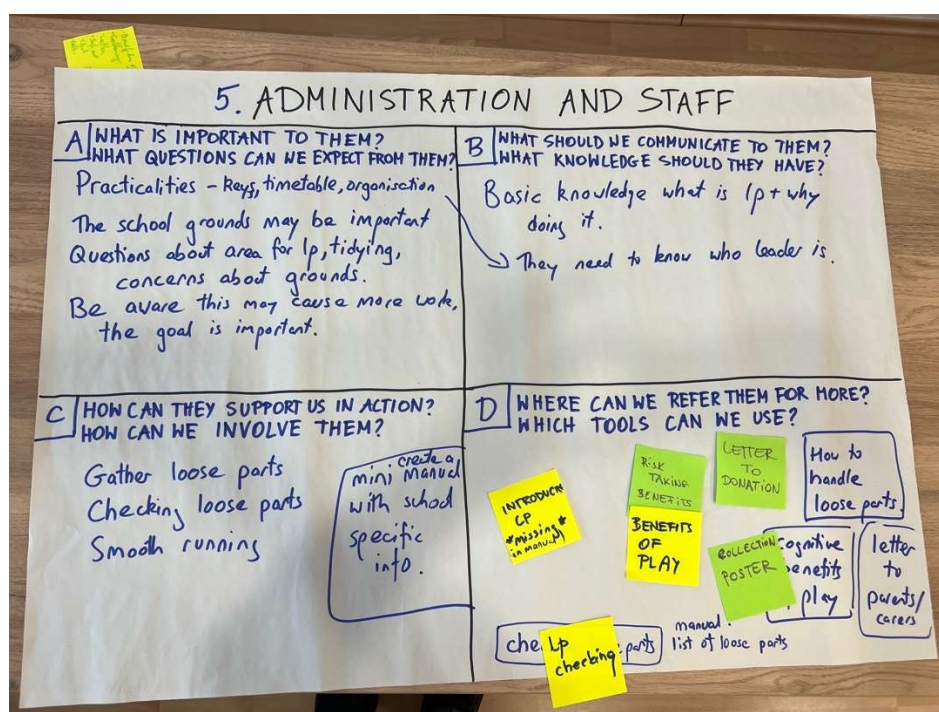


Erasmus + Loose parts play

Module 4: Practical guidance to get started

Module summary

In this session, participants will learn about the practical aspects of introducing free play with loose parts into schools. An important element of this session is to build a model of communication with the different target groups that will (directly or indirectly) be involved in free play in schools. In addition, participants will gain knowledge on how to plan individual activities and bring them together in a clear action plan. We recommend holding all or part of the session outside. Being outside while developing the activities in this module will help you look at the space and loose parts more fully. If possible, we recommend bringing a selection of loose parts to the workshop as a reference point.



Target group

The target group is teachers who will be organising and providing children with access to play in schools and those who make up the school community but do not work directly with children (e.g. management, administration and staff, parent groups etc.).

Previous training or experience required to attend

Participants should have knowledge of children's play, in particular the nature of play and its principles, types of play, and the accompanying role of adults during play. They should have knowledge and experience of loose parts play.

Length: 3 – 4.5 hours depending on how the trainer chooses to organise the session.

Module 4 Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, participants will:

1. have gained a practical understanding of the steps they need to take to set up their loose parts project
2. have practiced assessing current provision using a range of methods
3. have developed their own draft plan for setting up their loose parts play project including acquiring loose parts, storing them, checking them, and introducing them
4. be able to present their plan in an appropriate format(s) for the community of the school.

Learning indicators

Confidence in providing free play for children. Curiosity about playing with loose parts. Willingness and inner readiness to introduce free play into own school.

Resources required: Loose Parts Play Manual, large sheets of paper (A4 and A3), prepared ABCD sheets (see below), marker pens, crayons, sticky-notes, copies of tools.



Manual: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5



Tools: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24

Introduction

Time: 5 minutes

Resources required: none

Let participants know that this session will be very practical and will focus on the key elements that need to be in place for free play to happen in the school. We are keen to prepare something that could work with this aspect and be used immediately after the workshop. Certain elements of the exercises proposed in this module can be analysed from many sides and different angles. The discussions and work can take many hours. It is important to control the time we give the participants, to guide them in this, while reminding them of the most important objective of the session - "We want to plan the activities so that the play can happen".

Remind participants that after the session they can continue to discuss issues for which there wasn't enough time - some valuable ideas may not emerge until some time later.

Icebreaker of your choice

Time: 5 minutes

Resources required: none

Activity 1: People forming the school community (two exercises)

Time: 30 minutes

Resources required: A4 sheets, pens, flipchart, marker pens

Exercise: brainstorming

In this section we will reflect on the people who make up the school community and who will be the target group of the LPP project. To carry out this exercise, divide all participants into smaller groups so they can reflect on the people who make up the school community. Ask participants to take a note of their ideas.

After a few minutes, ask participants to call out their ideas so you can write their suggestions on a flipchart.

The list may be very long. Ask participants to identify who are the key people to get us started and support us in taking action. To move on to the next task, reduce the list to about five or six main target groups (e.g. teaching staff, administrative staff, decision-makers).

Trainer notes

Schools can vary in size - not only the building, but also the number of people who form the school community. In addition to children, parents and teachers, schools also have a large group of people who have no contact with children, but their work and activities have a huge impact on what a school day looks like.

Different schools may employ different people - so one team may include, for example, a gardener, plus a technical person, a maintenance person and a janitor. It is important to list as many people as possible - but keep in mind those who will be the real recipients of our project, and whose involvement will be crucial to the success of our efforts.

Exercise: Perspective of target groups - working on ABCD sheets.

Resources required: large sheets of paper, marker pens, crayons, sticky notes.

In the previous exercise, we tried to capture the target groups of the LPP project. In this exercise we will try to step into the roles and reflect on their perspectives.

Divide the participants into five groups. Each group is given one target group to focus on throughout the exercise.

Target groups

- Children
- Parents and carers (both those already supportive and those yet to be convinced about LPP)
- Teaching and education staff (both supportive and non-supportive of LPP) including playworkers
- Management
- Administration and other staff (cleaners, maintenance worker, gardeners, cloakroom workers, cooks).

Each group works on a different target group, focusing on three pillars.

A. What is important to this target group? What questions can we expect from them about introducing LPP?

B. What would we like to communicate to them? What knowledge and experience should they have?

C. How can they support our action for introducing LPP? How can we involve them?

Inform participants that there is also a point D, which you will come back to later after the selection of tools in Task 3 and 4. They do not need to complete D now.

D. Where can we direct them for more information, advice or support? I.e. Which tools can we use?

This module focuses on developing the most necessary areas when introducing play into schools. The focus here is on the key elements, i.e. those that will enable play in school to take off and take hold for years to come. We want to limit ourselves to the key elements and avoid looking too broadly at the subject - looking too broadly at play in school can bring anxiety about the number of things to implement and change and thus slow down our efforts.

At the same time, we want to evoke reality and focus on the nature of play and its practical aspects, so as to evoke what is important and implementable each time, with little work.

Trainer notes

The basis for this exercise is to work on large A3 worksheets. It is advisable to prepare these in advance, with space to write in the target group that participants will be working on.

The worksheets should look more or less like this:

A.	B.
C.	D.

Suggest participants try to work quickly with clear focus. Bear in mind that new ideas, perspectives and experiences may emerge and be shared between participants as they work.

Keep your finger on the pulse, stay close to each group and steer them in the right direction as necessary.

1 TEACHERS

A WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM? WHAT QUESTIONS CAN WE EXPECT FROM THEM?

- HOW WILL IT EFFECT/IMPACT THE SCHOOL LIFE
- HOW LONG ARE PLAY BREAKS

(WHAT WILL HAPPEN) BENEFITS FOR THE SCHOOL, PARENTS, CHILDREN, TEACHERS
HOW MUCH EXTRA WORK DOES IT MEAN? WHAT EXACTLY? WHAT

- WHICH AGE GROUP IS INVOLVED?
- WHAT ARE THE BOUNDARIES? WHAT IS ALLOWED/PERMITTED?

B WHAT SHOULD WE COMMUNICATE TO THEM? WHAT KNOWLEDGE SHOULD THEY HAVE?

- VALUE OF PLAY, GOALS OF LPP.
- WHAT LOOSE PARTS ARE? (VIDEO, TRAINING, PRESENTATION)
- THE ROLE OF THE PLAY WORKERS, RULES, INTENTIONS TO PLAY
- WHAT FACILITATION MEANS → NOT TEACHING SELF-
- EXPERIENCE IN USING THE LP + TOOLS
- PLAY AS A PART OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

C HOW CAN THEY SUPPORT US IN ACTION? HOW CAN WE INVOLVE THEM?

- GENERAL TEACHERS (1-4 GRADE), AFTERNOON TEACHERS
- ⇒ THEY WORK AS PLAYWORKERS, PILOTING THE PROCESS TO OTHERS, TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE, ALSO THE IMPACT/CHANGE, THEY TALK TO PARENTS DIRECTLY
- MOBILISE PARENTS TO COLLECT LP, THEY CONTACT BARNABES, OR PSYCHOLOGIST/SCHOOLWORKERS
- OTHER "NORMAL" TEACHERS: COLLECT LP FOR PLAYWORKERS
- SUBSTITUTING IN PM SESSION
- EXTERNAL TEACHERS DESIGNING INVOLVING THEM INTO PREPARING THE SPACE
- "EXPERIENCE" THE TOOLS THEMSELVES
- CRITICAL CARTOGRAPHY
- OPPORTUNITY TO OPT OUT PERSONALLY (IF POSSIBLE)

D WHERE CAN WE REFER THEM FOR MORE? WHICH TOOLS CAN WE USE?

- ROLE OF ADULTS IN SUPPORTING PLAY POSTER
- LETTER TO TEACHERS
- BENEFITS OF PLAY (BENEFITS OF SCHOOL PLAY)
- COLLECTION POSTER
- SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS
- THE FIVE TIDY UP
- WORKSHEET FOR TEACHERS
- RISK TAKING BENEFITS
- VIDEO TO PLAY WITH FOR CHILDREN
- LETTER TO PARENTS
- CHECKLIST FOR LP



Pictured - an example of a fully completed ABCD card, during the LPP Project pilot training.

Activity 2: Applying the toolbox

Time: 40 minutes

Resources required: printed tools from the toolbox



Tools: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24

Presentation of the toolbox: Present and briefly talk about the above tools. Explain what they are, what their purpose is and what they can be useful for. Inform the participants that while they are familiarising themselves with the tools, they should start to think about which ones are suitable for their target group - this will be their task in a moment.

Distribute the Tools to the workshop participants and give them time to familiarise themselves. It is important that during this activity the participants remain in their assigned group to avoid confusion.

Trainer notes

The LPP project has developed various ready-to-use tools. It is important that workshop participants are aware of this and know that they do not have to create tools from scratch.

Exercise: Toolbox tool selection

Resources required: printed tools from the toolbox

Each group should receive one complete set of tools.

We are now returning to the ABCD exercise.

D. Where can we direct them for more information? I.e. Which tools can we use?

The task is to choose tools that are suitable for the target group. Have participants write down their choices on sticky notes and stick them on ABCD worksheets.

Trainer notes

Familiarisation with the tools and their selection is a time for group discussion, as well as familiarisation with the content - often for the first time. Give participants adequate time to do this. Be present if there are questions about the tools. If there are questions about a specific tool, try to answer to the whole group present at the workshop - perhaps this will also clear up others' doubts in the process.

Exercise: Presentation of results from ABCD worksheets

Resources required: ready (completed) ABCD worksheets + selected tools for point D.

Participants present to the whole group with their answers to the ABC questions and comment on their choice of tools in point D.

Trainer notes

The amount of text produced in the five groups can be very long, and the emerging content can provoke discussion among the participants. It is advisable to keep an eye on the time and agree that each group has five minutes to present. At the same time, if you have more time at your disposal, it is worthwhile to stop at the emerging issues and explore them further. In this case, choose the one that comes up most often to focus on. Refer participants to the LPP manual as there is a good chance they will find the answer to the question there.

This may be an appropriate point for a break in the session. Let participants know if refreshments are available and when and where to meet after the break.

Suggested energiser: Treasure hunters - things to play with through the eyes of a child

Time: 10 minutes

Resources needed: items found by participants in the park, garden, outdoor space of the training room.

During this activity, participants go out into the garden or park, where they collect items that can be used for play, or take photos when they are unable to bring an item. As they search the area, they try to see the world again through the eyes of a child, for whom a variety of sometimes quite ordinary objects can be an inspiration to play. This is a time for the participants' own reflection and even a return to their childhood days. The presentation phase of the collected items to the group is followed by a group discussion - how do we perceive spaces and items that at first glance are not meant for play?

Trainer notes

Depending on the size of the group, organise a presentation of the collected items and an exchange of reflections in groups of three or four people or in the whole group.

Activity 3: Assessing current provision

Time: 50 minutes

Resources required: preprepared cards with methods written on them, cameras (on phones is fine), pens, paper, access to a photocopier (not essential), metre stick or large tape measure (not essential), voice recorder (on phones is fine) (not essential).



Manual: 5.2

Introduction

Before introducing loose parts for play, and at intervals after introducing them, it's helpful to assess things like what is available, what's working, what needs improvement. Involving children in these types of activities helps to make the link with environmental awareness, sustainability and circularity.

Different users of the play space (adults, children) may have different perspectives of what's on offer. Children are well placed to gather as well as provide information, creating opportunities to develop their research skills. Remember, these kinds of activities are about the space and resources, and can be fun and engaging, but they aren't play.

Ask the groups to think about what information would be useful to collect and understand. Write them up on a flipchart or similar.

Here are some of the kinds of things that could be suggested. If no-one comes up with them, you could add these in or prompt suggestions.

- The play features and affordances of the physical environment.
- Resources available for play
- What happens to resources – are they used, destroyed, recycled, composted?
- Any obstacles to play and underused space.
- The routines and rules in the school or setting and how they impact on play.
- The roles and expectations of children and adults in relation to play.

The rest of the activity is best delivered outdoors in a play space if possible.

Lay out the cards with methods (one method per card). Ask participants to browse through them and choose one or two they would like to try out.

Participants can work alone or in small groups as they choose. You could make duplicates of cards if you wish.

Ask them to take the card they will work on and go out and assess the play space using that method.

Offer about 20 minutes for this activity then bring everyone back for discussion. If there is a suitable place to sit together in the play space that would be ideal so that people can easily point things out.

How can information be captured?
<p>Take photos or videos of features of the place space and use them to prompt discussion, or make comparisons between what happens in different places.</p> <p>Work as a small group. Each goes out to take some photos and then come back together to discuss what you have photographed and why.</p>
<p>Draw a simple plan or map of the play space. Make plenty of photocopies then ask everyone to mark them up from their point of view. They could be asked to draw, write, scribble or use stickers to mark them up.</p> <p>Go outside to make a simple plan of the space on a large sheet of paper. If there is a photocopier accessible, make spare copies. Try to make the scale reasonably realistic by measuring spaces quickly with a metre stick. Once you have done this you can start to mark on features such as trees, dens, children's favourite places. Discuss in your group how you could use this method in your school.</p>
<p>Make an inventory of play resources. You can do this with visual methods such as photos, lists and wall charts.</p> <p>Go out and look for all the types of play resources and categorise them. Think about interesting visual methods you could use to do this in a school setting. If you have time draw or write out inventory formats.</p>
<p>Create a simple chart for monitoring things like first aid in the playground, playground incidents, absences from play time or other data that can be routinely collected. This should help you describe the impact of introducing loose parts and can be an interesting data handling challenge for children.</p> <p>Think about interesting visual methods you could use to do this in a school setting. If you have time draw or write out inventory formats. Discuss in your group what could be easily monitored, how it would be monitored and how it could be presented in an interesting way.</p>
<p>Organise for children to interview each other and adults. Preparing questions, asking them, listening and recording answers are great exercises in communication. Interviews can be recorded on paper, with audio or video.</p> <p>Come up with a few interview questions and quickly record interviews in play space. You can interview each other or if there are children or school staff in the play space, quickly interview them. As a group, think about the kinds of questions that would give you interesting information.</p>

Ask each group to quickly feedback what they did, what they discussed and learned in the exercise.

Ask the group: How can we involve children?

Here are some of the kinds of things that could be suggested. If no-one comes up with them, you could add these in or prompt suggestions.

- Be brave! Find out what the children really think about how adults are supporting or hindering play through their actions.
- Discuss why information is being collected and how it will be used.
- Involve everyone in deciding what information should be collected and how.
- Establish a sense of trust and respect for each other's opinions.
- Use a variety of methods for collecting information that will appeal to children's varied strengths and interests, for example visual, creative, factual, data-driven, analytical methods.
- Carry out activities in the spaces you are gathering information about. For example, interview the playground supervisor in the area he or she usually covers, mark up site plans outdoors in the play space.

Ask the group: How can we organise these activities?

Here are some of the kinds of things that could be suggested. If no-one comes up with them, you could add these in or prompt suggestions.

- One class or group could take the lead in planning activities
- The lead class or group could allocate activities to other children, classes, adults or groups to carry out.
- A number of classes or groups could each take one aspect of the assessment and report back.
- The same activities or focus could be given to children of different ages and stages to reveal different points of view and what they have in common.
- Some activities may be more appropriate for adults or staff such as reviewing policies but even these could usefully involve children.
- Some play organisations offer help to run or support assessment activities.
- Some organisations (play and others) can offer help in including the views of very young children or children and teenagers with additional support needs.

Sum up: share some thoughts about what you might do with the information gathered.

For example,

- Gather the information together and look for themes, priorities, opportunities.
- Use the information to answer questions such as: How could we make better use of the space we have? Are there areas valued by children that we hadn't realised before? Are there sufficient resources? Are we disposing of resources appropriately? Are there groups of children for whom we should be doing more to make sure they have fair opportunities to play outdoors? Do adults need to do things differently?

Trainer notes

When you prepare the methods on cards, they can be enhanced if you have photos or drawings to include on them to make the method clearer.

Activity 4: What can we play with?

Time: 60 minutes

Resources required: Country specific content summary; an item easily available at the training venue, e.g. broom handle, dustbin.



Manual: 5.2, Country specific content summary



Tools: 7, 7.1, 15, 17

Introduction

In this session we introduce the participants to the substantial part, organised outside the training room, in the open air. The exercises will be largely free-flowing in nature, close to the practice of free play. Participants' reflection during these exercises will be important, hence it is necessary for the trainer to direct their attention to selected aspects.

The trainer indicates that this session will attempt to capture the perspective of the children and the participants themselves on the question of what children play with and what they can play with in a given country - what is allowed, what are the formal restrictions? Participants will consider how they perceive risk in play. This session will develop confidence in providing free play for children, as well as a willingness and inner readiness to introduce free play in school.

What can we play with in our country?

This part focuses on issues related to country-specific requirements concerning the safety of play equipment and the storage and disposal of objects. When analysing the Loose Parts - Country Specific Content summary with the group, pay special attention to the list of loose parts in terms of both the classification into different types and origins (natural and man-made) and the classification into acceptable, unacceptable and acceptable when conditions are met. Stimulate reflection and discussion on whether and what are the regulations and legal restrictions in a country. Ask participants to indicate if they see any dangerous items that they would not want to share with children. Point out that common sense is advisable with regard to the use of all loose parts, including consideration of the current stage of free play practice at school by the particular group of pupils. Also discuss guidelines for disposing of used loose parts once they have been removed from the free play area.

Trainer notes

Work on the document can take place outdoors with the group sitting on blankets or a mat. It is also possible to return to the training room. If you will be conducting the training in a multinational group, make sure that there is adequate division and organise the work in national groups. If time allows, you can ask each group to present the loose parts that are not acceptable in their country, stimulating a short discussion.

Note that the Country Specific Content summary is one of the essential elements in introducing the concept of free play into schools. It is a very practical tool that is often asked for by teachers who want to start introducing free play in their school.

Presentation of the toolbox tools

In this part, there is a brief introduction to the practical issue of handling loose parts. The trainer refers the participants to the relevant sections of the manual and toolbox for tips on lifting and carrying, daily maintenance - regular inspections, proper maintenance, etc.

Summing up activity: The pessimist-optimist

Choose a simple item that can be used for free play, such as a small dustbin. Divide the participants into two groups, giving the groups opposite names - pessimists and optimists. Asks the pessimists to look for the difficulties and dangers of playing with the item. The optimists look for the positives of its use for play for example, for the child's development of competences.

Ask the groups to present their arguments. If time allows, the trainer introduces the second point by swapping the groups over.

This can be a really fun and energising activity and you can really encourage the groups to think of lots of sides of the arguments.

Trainer notes

If possible, conduct Exercises 4 and 5 outdoors, which can bring better energy in the group and more strongly evoke associations with their own play. After the exercises, point out the issue of individual perception and risk estimation, as well as the possibility to take into account other people's points of view, and the possibility to change one's own approach over time. Point out the invaluable benefit of free play with an element of risk, referring to Tool 17 Benefits of risk, adventure and challenge in play.

Activity 5: Action plan - key areas

Presentation of the key points of the action plan and the basic elements for its implementation in the school.

Time: 60 minutes

Resources required: printed bullet points for an action plan, LPP manual, photos, slide presentation, printed tools from toolbox (from previous session), large sheets of paper (minimum A3), marker pens, crayons, sticky notes.



Manual: 5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.1, 6.2



Tools: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24

In this exercise, participants will be introduced to the creation of an action plan - a tool that will allow them to plan the implementation of LPP in their school. The role of the facilitator here is to present the key points of the plan, possible solutions and to inspire action. The points to be addressed are summarised below.

Participants create an action plan taking into account:

- **each target group** and possible activities targeting this group, e.g. parents - organising workshops, sending letters; children - guidelines in play, safety, trial play session, etc. Participants refer to the target groups developed earlier.
- **plan for collection of loose parts** (in school, out of school, if possible) and using appropriate communication tools.
- **choosing a time for play** - identifying the most appropriate time for them and possible mixing of groups of children of different ages.
- **all-weather play** - how can we prepare for this? (Tool 5 and FAQ).
- **cleaning up after play** - using tools (Tool 21a).
- **choosing a play area** and **how to store loose parts** (pages from instructions) and checking and disposing of them according to the rules.
- **difficulties** on the way to play and how to deal with them.
- **presenting a plan of action to the school community** - applying safety procedures.

Trainer notes

Try to make sure that in addition to discussing bullet points, participants will also see something more visual. A Power Point presentation with pictures, clear hints, advice and guidance can light the lamp and inspire action more than just words. If you decide to make a

presentation, be sure to include the bullet points mentioned above. It is important that the slide with these bullet points is visible to participants at all times during the next exercise.

In addition, print out the above bullet points and have them ready for participants as a guide. It will be easier for them to look at the sheet of paper than to ask you each time what the next point is.

Developing a creative action plan

Divide participants into groups (four to five people per group). Each group should be given a large sheet of paper and they should be shown where all the available creative resources are - sticky notes, crayons, marker pens, etc.

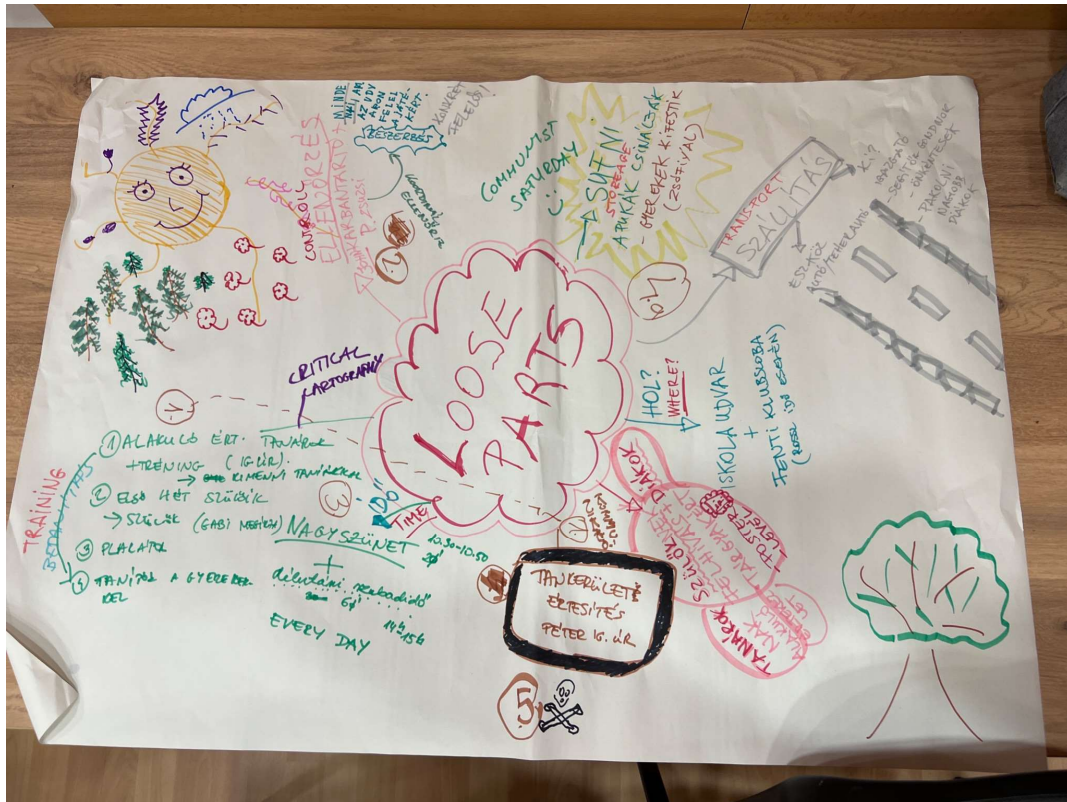
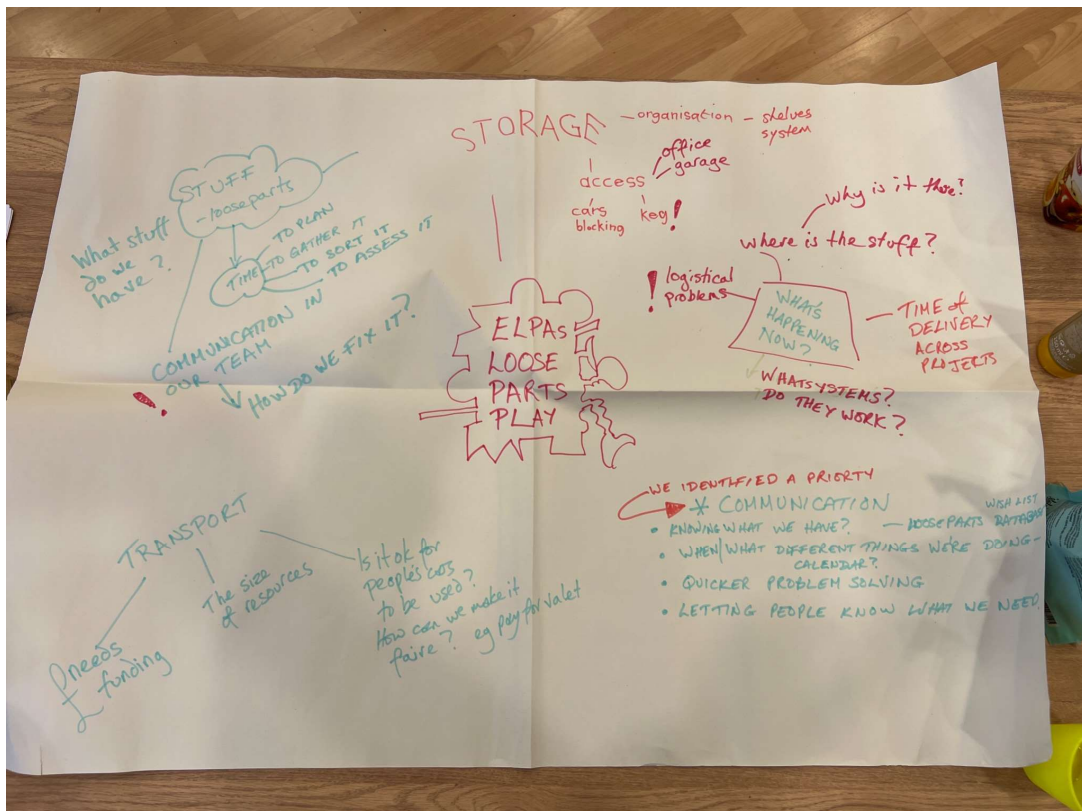
Inform participants that they are now moving on to creating an action plan, referring to the target groups and the bullet points made in the previous task.

Trainer notes

Send a clear message to participants to look for solutions that are reasonably simple and feasible to implement. Implementing play is a complex process - it requires time and commitment on many levels. The action plan that participants will create in a moment is a starting point for thinking through specific steps and taking action as soon as possible.

Let participants know to be creative when creating an action plan on the sheets of paper. Let's create something that captures their spirit of action - encourage them to be free and creative in their thought process and presentation.

At the same time, remind them that they need to find ways to implement all the bullet points and should keep a dose of reality. Remind participants of the aim of module 4 - we are looking for solutions that are simple and implementable so that the play can happen.



Pictured above - sample action plans created by teams from Hungary and Scotland during the LPP Project pilot training.

Presentation of action plans

The groups present their action plans in turn.

Trainer notes

During the presentation there may be comments from other groups. Let this also be a moment to share good practice and experiences. Often the perspective of those gathered in one group may be different from another group. The exchange of experiences in the forum, can be a valuable sharing of ideas enabling the 'aha moment' that we are keen to see.

Closing

- Thank everyone for their participation.
- Return to the learning outcomes you introduced at the beginning of the module to check with participants if they have been achieved.
- Ensure participants know arrangements for any other modules they can participate in.
- Create an opportunity for participants to set their own personal goal or task to carry out as a result of the session.
- Plan a short evaluation exercise to check satisfaction with the training content, the training style, the venue and arrangements.
- Provide contact details as appropriate.



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