

Study Visits knowledge sharing seminar  
Thessaloniki, Greece 22-23 September 2011

**Graham Parkin**  
**Linkage Community Trust (UK)**  
**Organiser of Study visits 38, 399 (2008), 229 (2010)**

**ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN 'B'!**

It was decided that Plan B might be avoided if the preparation was excellent and fully complete, BUT... things happen – like Icelandic volcanoes and their ash!

Preparation and communication are the keys to a good start and if the visit starts well it is likely to continue that way!

The participants may well be out of their country for the first time and are likely to be nervous and be worried about what will happen.

*'Will I be met at the airport?'*  
*'If I catch a train, how do I buy a ticket?'*  
*'How much will a taxi cost me?'*  
*'Will I find the Hotel?'*

All of these, and more, will be questions that run through the minds of your visitors. You must answer these questions before they are asked and this will fill your participants with confidence. If this happens, then they are much more likely to enjoy their visit and take a full part.

As the organiser, you must instil confidence in the visitors by showing a lot of confidence yourself. Keep a checklist and use Cedefop's website OLIVE. This holds a lot of information that you should use.

When you are with your visitors, always smile as this should show how happy you are – and if you are happy (or pretending to be!) then your visitors will be as well. If they are happy, then things will go more smoothly during your visit. Make the participants feel that they are the most important people in the world during the time spent with you.

If things do not go the way that you hoped, be open and explain what the problems are and as you are being honest with them they will understand and they will probably try to help you. They may be able to help form Plan 'B' if they are involved.

Three points then:

- 1) preparation,
- 2) preparation,
- 3) enjoyment.

YOU must enjoy your time during the study visit since if you don't enjoy it then it is unlikely that your visitors will.