



THE VALE

# Safety & Security at The VALE 2025

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THE VALE

# 1 Introduction

The VALE (Value Driven Advanced Leadership) Course is a leadership training and education programme aimed to empower volunteer youth workers across Europe to become more aware, skilled and value-driven leaders. It consists of two in-person modules - one lasting five days and one lasting six - (excluding venue preparation and travel arrivals), as well as distance learning assignments prior to, in between, and after the modules. Approximately 24 participants, between the ages of 18 and 35, are taking part in the course from all over Europe. The VALE Team is responsible for the administration and planning of the course and consists of five core team members as well as one intern. The VALE Team is responsible for creating and facilitating the educational content of the course in combination with additional external trainers.

The first module of the course will take place at a private venue close to Lyon, France and the second at a private venue outside of Tallinn, Estonia.

In this document, we will lay out possible risks and dangers in the execution of this course as well as the steps we take to mitigate them and how we respond to incidents. The scope of this document shall be limited to threats to the health of participants, and excludes events that impact the educational goals or are minor nuisances.

Furthermore the scope of this document will exclude the controls that the venues are responsible for. We will require their assurance that the safety and security measures that lay within their responsibility have been dutifully executed. For example, we will not list regular checks of fire extinguishers.



## 2 Risk assessment

### 2.1 Bodily harm

#### 2.1.1 Injuries through accidents – **Probability: Low**

Participants might fall, stumble or otherwise injure themselves on the sites. The sites include some old buildings, uneven stairs and nature, which increases the risk of environmental injuries.

#### 2.1.2 Alcohol poisoning and substance abuse – **Probability: Low**

As a general rule, there will be no alcohol available for sale at the venue and no active encouragement of drinking from the part of the organisers. Participants may bring and buy their own beverages, however, but while there is always the risk of consuming more than one can handle, that risk is deemed quite low as overall excessive drinking is not in line with the more reflective atmosphere of the course.

#### 2.1.3 Emotional distress and suicidal thoughts – **Probability: Medium**

Deeply reflecting on one's leadership, behaviours, thought patterns and values, can cause deep thoughts, fears, regrets or negative emotions to arise. This might cause depression, reckless or self-harming behavior or suicidal thoughts to appear or resurface.

### 2.2 Hostile parties

#### 2.2.1 Hostile participants – **Probability: Low**

Participants might dislike the leadership style of the organizing team and/or not abide by the rules and schedule set out. Given the fact that participants have been selected due to their exemplary leadership and strong motivation for personal growth through this course, any such disagreements are not expected to create any lasting negative effects or risks.

#### 2.2.2 Rogue third parties – **Probability: Low**

The venue is located at a site accessible for outsiders. However, the venue is private property and not generally open to third parties. Thus, as a rule there should be no unknown persons at the property. The participants and trainers are advised to keep their eyes open and report any unknown persons on the property to the Head of Security. The same goes for other unknown elements such as broken windows, wide-open doors or items left behind.



## 2.3 Mass events

### 2.3.1 Incidents during sessions – **Probability: Low**

The venue has all safety measures in accordance with the law, therefore fire escape exits as well as fire extinguishers can be found on both of the venues.

### 2.3.2 Loss of utilities, food supply and workers – **Probability: Low**

External events might lead to interruptions in electricity, freshwater and internet supply. If this happens, we will consult the venue owners and/or staff for instructions. In course budget we have reserved a sum for unexpected costs, that can be used to cover the purchase of necessary supplies.

### 2.3.3 Epidemics – **Probability: Medium**

Contagious diseases and viruses can spread quickly at gatherings. Participants come from all over and beyond Europe, which means that participants' immune systems are exposed to new germs as well as new variants of the COVID-19. This makes the event a potential hub for diseases to spread, if the proper precautions are not taken.

### 2.3.4 Natural disasters – **Probability: Low**

Lightning strikes, storms, snow storms and heavy rain can impact any event, if they happen at the same time. Most sessions are or can be adapted to an in-door setting, so only the most extreme weather conditions would jeopardize the safety and integrity of the course.

## 2.4 Other

### 2.4.1 Unsafe means of transportation – **Probability: Low**

Participants may be required to travel to and from the venue using public means of transportation, some of which might expose the participants to higher risks of transmissible diseases such as COVID-19. However, the security measures of the French/Swiss/Estonian public transport systems and international flights are not providing concerns.

### 2.4.2 Known unknowns

While we have compiled these possible dangers based on common sense, our combined experience on similar events and existing disaster recovery plans, we cannot possibly imagine and assess all threats. We, therefore, remain alert to emerging dangers during the modules, exhibiting a mindset of preparedness, and at all times we will take the relevant practical measures needed to ensure the safety of all the people involved. In course budget we have reserved a sum for unexpected costs, that can be used to cover the purchase of necessary supplies.



## 3 Controls & Mitigation

In this section, we will identify controls we use to monitor and mitigate threats and issues that arise. The next section will detail how we act on specific threats that we could not mitigate or that arose suddenly. For example, fire prevention and fire extinguisher checks would be part of this chapter, while the escalating plan of action in the event of a fire would be part of the next chapter.

### *3.1 Cooperation with the venues*

As mentioned in the introduction, we have inquired about the venue safety measures upon booking, and the organizing team will verify ample security measures upon arrival.

In addition to this, we are in contact with their facility and security managers during the modules. We keep each other informed of issues that arise and plans for the next day. This way, we can relay important information to the participants and ask the venue staff for repairs and advice.

### *3.2 Participant identification*

Through the selection process, each and every participant is known to the core team.

There are approx. 24 participants at the VALE (excluding the team behind the VALE), and each of them are assigned to smaller groups, consisting of 4-5 participants, with a group leader from The VALE Team. The group leader is informed on and familiar with their own group members. This allows us to recognize and be aware of all participants in case anyone is missing, and if necessary, tell them apart from outsiders.

### *3.3 Core Team Preparedness*

The core team has prepared by discussing these issues at length.

In course budget we have reserved a sum for unexpected costs, that can be used to cover the purchase of necessary supplies in unforeseen situations.

### *3.4 Medical services*

We ensure that there will be a first-aid kit at the venue, ready to be used, in case necessary. Country specific emergency services details will be distributed to participants, and core team members have access to phone lines for emergency dials.

At least two members of the core team will also be in possession of a first aid certificate, should any situation during the physical modules require the skills to act accordingly.

All the participants and team members are instructed to bring their EHIC card or an insurance certificate with them so they are able to use the local health services immediately if a need arises.

### *3.5 Counseling training*

The VALE Trainers and group leaders are prepared and trained to support the



participants in case of emotional trouble and to assist them to tackle the issues at hand. The trainers and group leaders however, are not mental health professionals, and are prepared to function only within the limits of their own knowledge and capabilities.

Consequently, in severe cases of mental health issues arising, the trainers and group leaders will assess the needs of the participant within the situation and forward them to a mental health professional in case deemed necessary.

### *3.6 Fire Prevention*

We will check all our own and rented equipment on site for signs of damage, and make sure everything is functioning as it should.

We will moreover go through the information on emergency exits and fire procedures with all of the participants and the team members in the beginning of each physical module.

The Head of Security will walk around the venue to verify the exits and to make sure none of them are covered by furniture or other hindrances.

### *3.7 Venue security staff*

The venue in France is a lodge where only we will be present. However, it's residing in the middle of a small town. In Estonia, we will be at a more remote conference facility, where staff also will be present. The trainers and participants are encouraged to be vigilant (see for example 2.2.2.). If security staff is needed, we will dial the local emergency number.

### *3.8 Head of Security*

The Head of Security will be Erik Sundberg, who in France is familiar with the local culture and language.

The Head of Security's responsibility is to keep an open eye to possible dangers, to ensure that the inspections and measures outlined in this document are applied and extended as necessary, and to delegate to and instruct other team members as needed. See more in chapter 4.

### *3.9 Venue Safety & Security Meeting*

In the beginning of the course, we will organise a safety and security meeting. It will cover the venue's plan of action in case of security hazards and give the team and participants information on who to contact in which case, and how to get a hold of those people.

## **4 Incident response**

This chapter describes how we will handle an emergency, i.e. a realized risk that arose suddenly or that we failed to recognize and control for. If e.g. a participant suffers a severe injury, we still have to care for all the other participants until their departure, and if the fire alarm sounds, we need to know how and where to evacuate.



#### *4.1 Crisis management team and chain of command*

To act quickly in an emergency, the Head of Security and the rest of the core team have regular and frequent meetings even in normal circumstances.

During and after an emergency, they, led by the Head of Security:

- Decide on the further course of action
- Keep participants and trainers informed
  - Line of communication by phone in accordance with a pre-defined contact list. Should lines of communication be interrupted, meeting points have been selected and pointed out to all group leaders and venue staff.
- Deal with or delegate contact to external agencies, such as rescue workers, venue staff, press inquiries, partner organizations.

#### *4.2 Assisting rescue workers*

If we need support from the fire brigade, police or ambulance, we will need to guide them to the area of the incident. We will select a team member to guide them to any place within our area, and a few additional team members to keep participants from the incident site.

#### *4.3 Mental health*

If an incident causes mental and emotional trouble to the participants, we adapt the existing sessions to make room for them to talk. The VALE trainers and group leaders have undergone training and instruction to support them with information and counseling so that they feel comfortable enough to address the issue at hand. If (some) group leaders do not feel competent enough to continue giving sessions, we combine groups or find replacement leaders.

In the case of severe emotional distress, the relevant persons will be supported and observed and medical or mental health professionals will be contacted.

#### *4.4 Venue evacuation*

In case of evacuation from the venue due to fire, all participants gather at the designated emergency location and the crisis management team will make sure that all group members are accounted for and that the correct information is spread to the group.