



MORE INCLUSION REQUIRES ADEQUATE FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Reaction to the Commission Implementing Decision on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027

EAEA Statement

December 2021

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) welcomes the European Commission's initiative to promote inclusion through its [Implementing Decision on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes](#).

EAEA and its members have been advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities, impairments and fewer opportunities in adult learning and education programmes and funding instruments for a number of years, including through the [AEMA network](#) which aims to increase the participation rate of people with disabilities in Adult Education. We, therefore, highly welcome that the Commission document states that “Based on the principle that programmes must be accessible to all, regardless of the barriers people face, the aim is to leave no one behind and to contribute to more inclusive societies”.

[Inclusion measures require adequate and additional funding](#)

However, EAEA would like to emphasise that this requires adequate - and additional – funding, not only for the projects as such, but also for the adult learning organisations. Support for inclusion should not be limited to supporting learner or staff mobility but should also consider the whole learning environment to be sustainable and effective. To ensure quality learning activities and projects that meet inclusion standards, organisations need to invest in staff development, adaptation of teaching materials and aids, provision of sign language interpreters for the deaf and audio aids for the blind, as well as infrastructure and building adaptations. Supporting organisations to promote inclusion in their learning programmes and providing guidance on how to do this should be a central part of National Agencies' inclusion action plans.

[Increase the visibility and accessibility of inclusive learning offers](#)

To enable more adult learners with disabilities to participate in KA1 learning mobility, more centralised management of learning mobility, e.g., through national online catalogues, is needed. Currently, it is difficult for adult learners to find information about what learning opportunities they could take up in other countries. This is also true for organisations that are involved in learning activities for people with special needs. Active outreach work by National Agencies is needed to make these organisations and their learners aware of opportunities to participate in Erasmus+.



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Stronger coordination, e.g., through the National Agencies, as well as stronger networking among the National Agencies could help here.

Catalogues or information websites need to be designed according to the criteria of accessibility and barrier-free, i.e., in simple language, easy to navigate and controllable by voice or other input tools. Although EPAL displays learning opportunities, reports from organisations show that there is a need for more easily designed catalogues or websites that allow for targeted searches for learning opportunities according to country, subject and accessibility for people with disabilities.

[Involve all stakeholders and provide support to the National agencies](#)

We do welcome the creation of inclusion action plans by the National agencies. Involvement of all stakeholders in the design of the action plans, including civil society in the field of inclusion, disabilities and working with other disadvantaged groups as well as with all sectors of lifelong learning, including non-formal ALE, is key to the targeting and feasibility of the plans. Active consultation and involvement of civil society can also, for instance, help with mapping activities on the needs of learners with disabilities, impairments, and fewer opportunities to be able to participate in Erasmus+ projects. This should be at the start of the national process to design action plans.

Against this background we are asking how the National Agencies are advised to implement the mentioned efforts? Additional resources will be needed as the required data collection, the implementation of monitoring visits and especially the development of action plans for inclusion require capacities beyond the existing resources. It would be instructive to know where these additional funds come from and whether they are sufficient to achieve the goals set.

[Flexibility and support for all learners](#)

The specific financial support given to learners not only with special needs should be very flexible as needs of learners can be vastly different from one to another. For instance, some learners may need an assistant or a support person to accompany them, or even two assistants if the learner requires around-the-clock support. Furthermore, the National Agencies' action plans should be embedded in broader policy objectives for inclusion in education at national level. Here, the action plans could even lead the design of new inclusion strategies at national level.

In this respect, EAEA fully agrees with the call therein for *programmes to offer flexible and accessible learning formats*. This flexibility is crucial not only for learners with disabilities or fewer opportunities, but for all adult learners. However, we would also like to draw attention to the fact that a great potential of this flexibility and accessibility has been lost through the transformation of the former Lifelong Learning Programme into the well-known Erasmus+ programme, especially in view of the discontinuation of the former Grundtvig branch. We urge the Commission to examine the impact of these structural changes on reaching specific target groups, such as people with fewer opportunities in education, training, youth, sport and solidarity, and to reconsider the level of flexibility granted under the Erasmus+ application procedure.



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We recommend:

1. **More funding for learning activities and national agencies:** Within the budget framework of individual projects, more resources need to be allocated to allow for the additional support and flexibility of learning programmes for learners with disabilities or fewer opportunities. National agencies also need adequate funding to recruit experts and design national action plans that meet the real needs of learners as well as to actively reach out to organisations that promote the learning of adults with disabilities and fewer opportunities.
2. **More support for organisations:** Staff development, infrastructural support and guidance for organisations and learning providers are needed to ensure high quality projects that meet inclusion standards.
3. **Easier accessible information:** Information on learning opportunities should be provided through national or European catalogues or information websites. These need to be designed according to the criteria of accessibility and barrier-free, i.e., in simple language, easy to navigate and controllable by voice or other input tools.
4. **Involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the design of inclusion action plans:** This is crucial to ensure that the voice of learners with disabilities or fewer opportunities are taken into account.
5. **Revision of the structural parameters in Erasmus+:** The current parameters lead to an institutionalisation of projects and administration, and can only insufficiently include the desired target groups due to the low flexibility in the project structures.

[More information](#)

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The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 120 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.