

Improving Inclusion & Diversity in Erasmus+ youth projects

Inclusion and equity are important features of the Erasmus+ programme. Also young people with fewer opportunities should get a chance to participate in European mobility projects. Especially because these young people benefit more than other youth from international projects.¹

The **European Inclusion & Diversity Strategy for Erasmus+ youth projects** (ID Strategy in short, www.salto-youth.net/inclusionstrategy/) outlines the measures put in place that make it easier for diverse target groups to take advantage of the Erasmus+ programme. The 'Steering Group for the Inclusion & Diversity Strategy' (ID Steering Group) – with the European Commission, National Agencies and SALTO Inclusion & Diversity – makes sure the strategy is implemented and tackles a variety of structural inclusion challenges.

- ✓ **This article gives you an overview of the achievements of the Inclusion & Diversity Steering Group over the last 2 years.**



Making Erasmus+ more inclusion-friendly

A funding programme such as Erasmus+ needs a system of **transparent fraud-deterrent procedures**, to make sure that your (tax payers') money is spent well on great projects. All applicants should have **fair and equal access** to the available funds. The application (and reporting) process serves these purposes.

¹ Geudens, Hagleitner, Labadie & Stevens, "International youth projects benefit most those with fewer opportunities", SALTO Inclusion research, www.salto-youth.net/mobilityeffects/

Applicants often complain about the cumbersome procedures. We can indeed not give money without the proper checks and balances, but Erasmus+ National Agencies for youth organise many **information and training sessions** to demystify the different project steps. Inclusion organisations are even entitled to a **supportive approach** and some NAs **coach the preparation of their inclusion project** closely.

- ✓ **Extra support is available specifically for inclusion projects**
- ✓ **Overview of all the specific inclusion training in the Training Calendar**

We can do better for inclusion

Because Erasmus+ wants to reach more young people with fewer opportunities, the **selection committees (independent experts)** can give extra points for inclusion and diversity in their assessment of the projects. However, the question about inclusion in the application form was not clear to many applicants. The ID Steering Group rephrased it so that it becomes very clear what is meant with this inclusion question. Now, the experts can more easily **give more points to true inclusion projects**.

- ✓ **Clearer question about inclusion in the application form**

The independent experts who assess all the project applications are key to grant more inclusion projects. The Steering Group therefore also **reworked the 'guide for external experts'** (assessing Erasmus+ projects) to raise the importance of inclusion in the programme. More information is given so that assessors can distinguish better between true inclusion projects and those projects that just tick the inclusion box in the hope to be granted more easily.

- ✓ **Inclusion highlighted in the assessment guide for external experts**

The **proportionality principle** highlights that the assessors should see the potential impact of an (inclusion) project in the light of the experience and size of the organisation. To explain with an example: an ant carrying a leaf 'proportionally' has more impact than an elephant carrying one tree trunk, even though a tree is bigger than a leaf. This creates possibilities to grant beginner & inclusion organisations with a less professional application, next to very experienced application writers.

- ✓ Guidelines about the proportionality principle for selection committees (soon)

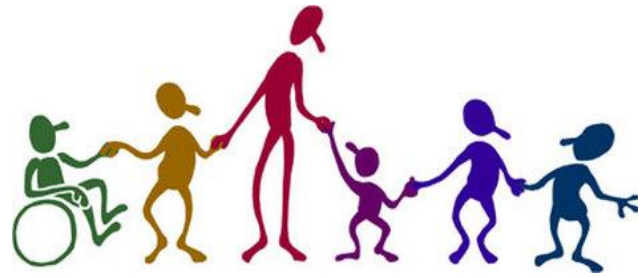
Specific project formats for inclusion

Transnational youth initiatives (Key Action 2) are an exciting project format in which a group of young people can run their own initiative over a period of time, in parallel with partner groups abroad. These self-organised projects were often used for groups of young people with fewer opportunities (with the help of a coach) to empower them. However, they were assessed together with the large Strategic Partnerships (also Key Action 2). The ID Steering Group promoted to **assess the youth initiatives separately** to avoid unbalanced competition for KA2 funds between youth groups/small organisations and huge professional projects.

- ✓ Possibility to assess Transnational Youth Initiatives separate from Strategic Partnerships

A **European Voluntary Service** (short or long term) has a huge impact on young people with fewer opportunities. The only challenge is to find trustworthy hosting places that can provide the support needed by specific target groups (e.g. disability, mental health, offenders,...). The ID Steering Group reached out to existing hosting places for inclusion volunteering and to social enterprises to **enlarge the offer of hosting places for young people with fewer opportunities**.

- ✓ Reaching out to new organisations to offer hosting places for young people with fewer opportunities
- ✓ Check-list to promote hosting for short-term volunteering to social enterprises



All volunteers go through a **training cycle** (pre-departure, mid-term and evaluation), also volunteers with fewer opportunities. Depending on the profile of the inclusion volunteer, this might be ok, but often not. The ID Steering Group collected a list of arguments to have an **adapted separate training cycle for volunteers with fewer opportunities**.

- ✓ Arguments to have a separate tailor-made training cycle for short-term EVS

Strategic European Voluntary Service experimented with some inclusion-friendly elements. It allowed for example to apply for a package of hosting places without knowing the volunteer beforehand. This allowed a more flexible and tailor-made support for young people with fewer opportunities.

This idea has now been taken up the **European Solidarity Corps** programme for young people, that will also be implemented by staff in the Erasmus+ youth agencies. The ID Steering Group analysed the potential of this new programme for inclusion and diversity and made some practical proposals.

- ✓ A continuous critical eye on the inclusiveness of the European Solidarity Corps
- ✓ More inclusion-friendly questions in the Solidarity Corps application form

Support for National Agencies to make ID happen

The ID Steering Group can make many decisions and proposals on European level, but in the end, it's the National Agencies in contact with the inclusion organisations that need to make Inclusion and Diversity happen. That's why **SALTO Inclusion supports the**

dedicated inclusion & diversity officers in the National Agencies all over Europe.

SALTO Inclusion trained and coached the inclusion officers to develop their own **national strategy (or plan of action)** to reach out to inclusion groups and to raise their inclusion impact. They are connected on an online platform where they can ask questions and share inclusion practices. A **library with national Inclusion & Diversity strategies** inspires colleagues from other NAs to develop their own ID Strategy as well.

- ✓ Support for national ID Strategies, concrete actions in the different countries
- ✓ ID communication platform and library of national ID strategies



From January 2018, SALTO Inclusion expands its activities to **Inclusion & Diversity** to provide National Agencies support in these interlinked topics. Because we don't only need to make sure that diverse inclusion groups find their way into the programme, we also need to equip youth workers and young people with the skills to deal positively with the diversity they encounter.

Refugees and Erasmus+

With the arrival of more than a **million of refugees and migrants** in Europe in 2015, the Erasmus+ programme could not just stand by and watch it happen. E+ youth projects could also be used to help out, and many organisations did.

Different National Agencies organised **training courses and seminars specifically for organisations working with refugees** and SALTO Inclusion & Diversity brought together Inclusion officers to take strategic E+ action towards this 'new' target group.

- ✓ Overview of E+ youth refugee initiatives: www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3494/ (pdf)
- ✓ An update is foreseen in Spring 2018

Getting the Inclusion & Diversity Strategy known

The basis of the work of the ID Steering Group is the **Inclusion & Diversity Strategy for Erasmus+ youth**. This policy document (translated into 24 languages) gives us and the National Agencies the green light and the obligation to work on these two interlinked topics. The current composition of the ID Steering Group is as follows: European Commission, National Agencies of FR, CZ, PT, UK, LV, AT, FI, IT and SALTO Inclusion & Diversity.

We also want to promote the ID Strategy for Erasmus+ Youth projects to the outside world. Therefore we turned the policy document into a **short and to-the-point leaflet and animated video** (available at www.salto-youth.net/inclusionstrategy/). We also promote the inclusion & diversity work that we do in the youth sector to the Erasmus+ colleagues from the other sectors (vocational training, adult education,...).

- ✓ Inclusion & Diversity Strategy for Erasmus+ youth approved by Programme Committee.
- ✓ Promotion leaflet and video of the Inclusion & Diversity Strategy.

Besides promoting the E+ ID Strategy and all the inclusion measures in it, the ID Steering Group also makes an **inventory of the results of the Erasmus+ youth programme** on inclusion and diversity. SALTO Inclusion & Diversity analysed the effect of mobility projects on young people with fewer opportunities and it turns out the impact on them is bigger than on regular youth.

Last but not least, the ID Steering Group also keeps an eye on the **number of young people with fewer opportunities in E+ youth projects**.

- ✓ Inclusion analysis of effects of mobility projects www.salto-youth.net/mobilityeffects/
- ✓ Statistics about young people with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+ youth projects www.salto-youth.net/inclusionanderasmusplus/

For more information, feel free to contact inclusion@salto-youth.net