



2021/2009(INI)

8.2.2022

OPINION

of the Committee on Petitions

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020
(2021/2009(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Jordi Cañas

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Petitions calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Underlines the need to ensure that inclusion, diversity, equal opportunity and accessibility are at the core of the implementation of Erasmus+, one of the EU's most successful programmes; highlights that offering equal opportunities to all is and must continue to be inherent to the EU's fundamental values; highlights the need to further specify and broaden the definition and interpretation of 'learners with special needs and/or fewer opportunities'¹ across Member States to include older people, among others; stresses the difficulties in accessing and monitoring reliable data on the profiles of the programme's beneficiaries; believes, therefore, that an instrument should be developed to monitor whether and how participants from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are being reached by the programme, so as to leave no one behind²;
2. Points out that some petitions submitted to Parliament raise the issue of the administrative obstacles that Erasmus+ students face on their arrival to their host countries³; highlights that Erasmus+ should support stakeholders' and programme participants' internationalisation plans that remove physical, psychological, social, socioeconomic, linguistic and other types of barriers to learning mobility and that offer clear and detailed information and qualitative support, including improved mentorship, for participants from underrepresented groups and/or with specific needs before, during and after a period abroad; supports EU initiatives aimed at facilitating student mobility, such as the Erasmus + mobile application, 'paperless Erasmus' and the European Student Card, which make managing administrative processes more flexible and enable each student to benefit from the same services; stresses the importance of the role of former Erasmus+ participants and alumni networks in promoting the programme among the wider public;
3. Draws attention to the under-resourcing and understaffing of Erasmus+ national agencies and the insufficient efforts to remove administrative barriers to mobility under the 2014-2020 programme; underlines that national agencies have a crucial role in ensuring that projects are as inclusive and diverse as possible; believes, therefore, that all national agencies should organise targeted information campaigns and appoint an inclusion and diversity officer to reach out to learners with special needs and/or fewer opportunities in order to increase their access to information and their awareness of the opportunities in place and how to access them, as well as to provide these learners with advice regarding possible difficulties they may experience during their Erasmus+ programme, such as delayed reimbursements⁴ or any obstacles caused by external or unexpected factors such as the COVID-19 crisis⁵; stresses that a supportive approach to beneficiaries with special needs and/or fewer opportunities is key to removing barriers

¹ Term used in Article 23(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 on Erasmus+.

² European Commission, Erasmus+ inclusion and diversity strategy in the field of youth, 2014.

³ As seen from petition 1106/2018.

⁴ As seen from Petition 2466/13.

⁵ As seen from Petition 0125/21.

that prevent their full participation in the programme;

4. Believes that Erasmus+ should encourage stakeholders to share their expertise at an institutional level, learn from and connect with each other, build administrative capacity and create innovative educational tools that foster diversity and the integration of participants with special needs and/or fewer opportunities; welcomes, in this sense, specific efforts to support cooperation between different stakeholders and to develop and implement inclusive policies that seek to integrate people into education who have had fewer opportunities as a result of economic, social, cultural, health, disability or geographic factors; stresses the driving role of teachers and institutions in raising awareness of the programme and informing and supporting future learners;
5. Regrets that the COVID-19 pandemic has had several negative effects⁶ on education and the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme; underlines, in this context, that, despite the 2014-2020 programme's evaluation as more coherent, effective and aligned with emerging needs, it is still necessary to make the current programme more inclusive with the ability to reach out to more vulnerable and disadvantaged people and further facilitate the participation of smaller organisations; calls, therefore, on the Commission to continue its work on making the Erasmus+ programme more inclusive in its geographical deployment and targeted financial support;
6. Believes that the risk of stigmatisation in the participants' country of residence may discourage them from self-identifying as disadvantaged, which may hamper their mobility, the collection of reliable data by authorities and the monitoring of their participation in Erasmus+⁷; calls for EU-wide recognition of disability status and encourages host institutions to guarantee Erasmus+ participants the same reasonable accommodations and facilities as home institutions; considers that the specific needs of people with disabilities must be taken into account in order to facilitate their participation in the programme by providing them with suitable and accessible accommodation and specialised support services based on their needs prior to departure and during their period abroad;
7. Reminds Member States of the Bologna Process principles and the principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the European Higher Education Area, both of which call on them to draft national strategies and plans to enhance inclusion;
8. Underlines the importance of and looks forward to an integrated and coherent approach to inclusion within the different EU programmes for youth and education, including the European Solidarity Corps and the European Social Fund Plus; welcomes the Commission's proposal for 2022 to be the European Year of Youth and considers the proposal an opportunity to develop this integrated approach; calls on the Commission to look closely at the possibility of combining the Erasmus+ and Interrail programmes⁸,

⁶ Di Pietro, G. et al., *The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020.

⁷ Bunesco, L., Davies, H. and Gaebel, M., *ERASMUS+ International Credit Mobility – a study of the mobility of disadvantaged students from Partner Countries*, Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts (SPHERE), January 2020.

⁸ As called for in Petition 0681/2021.

and thus support students, especially in higher education, in order to foster more equality and inclusion, taking the beneficiaries' current income into account; calls on the Commission to develop connections between the Erasmus+ programme and relevant international policies that concern learners with special needs and/or fewer opportunities; highlights that possible alignments can be sought with the Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO's priorities and policies;

9. Stresses that national policymaking regarding learners with special needs and/or fewer opportunities should be further stimulated; calls on the Member States to support Erasmus+ projects to attract participants with disabilities and learners from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to their countries; calls on the Member States to promote and showcase individual mobility projects and the experiences of people with disabilities;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase their efforts through Erasmus+ to support women's access to and advancement in mathematics, information and natural sciences and technology;
11. Welcomes the establishment of 'Erasmus Days', which make it possible to communicate better with a broader public, connect people who are leaving for the same destination, share experiences informally and thus, enhance the benefits of mobility; believes that, in order to make the programme more inclusive, it is necessary to provide appropriate and accessible information, and to use a wide range of communication methods, such as social networks or local events, in partnership with local structures and specialised organisations; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that all relevant information regarding Erasmus+ is accessible to people with disabilities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to enhance the visibility of participants with special needs and/or fewer opportunities so as to promote diversity and inclusion;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to properly address the lack of familiarity with the Erasmus+ programme, information barriers, obstacles to the application process, accommodation problems, adequate support services abroad and the challenges relating to the portability of grants faced by people with disabilities and their caregivers, as well as by other participants from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; calls on the Commission and the Member States to monitor whether learners from these groups are being reached;
13. Welcomes, in this regard, the Commission's recent adoption of the 2021-2027 framework of measures, which aims to increase diversity and inclusion in the current Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes; calls on the Commission to closely monitor the future national implementations of this framework.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	27.1.2022
Result of final vote	+: 28 -: 5 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Alex Agius Saliba, Andris Ameriks, Marc Angel, Margrete Auken, Alexander Bernhuber, Markus Buchheit, Ryszard Czarnecki, Tamás Deutsch, Francesca Donato, Eleonora Evi, Agnès Evren, Gheorghe Falcă, Emmanouil Fragkos, Malte Gallée, Gianna Gancia, Alexis Georgoulis, Peter Jahr, Radan Kanev, Stelios Kympouropoulos, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Dolors Montserrat, Ulrike Müller, Emil Radev, Sira Rego, Alfred Sant, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Yana Toom, Loránt Vincze, Michal Wiezik, Tatjana Ždanoka, Kosma Złotowski
Substitutes present for the final vote	Demetris Papadakis, Ramona Strugariu, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

28	+
NI	Francesca Donato
PPE	Alexander Bernhuber, Agnès Evren, Gheorghe Falcă, Peter Jahr, Radan Kanev, Stelios Kypourouopoulos, Dolors Montserrat, Emil Radev, Loránt Vincze
Renew	Ulrike Müller, Ramona Strugariu, Yana Toom, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, Michal Wiezik
S&D	Alex Agius Saliba, Andris Ameriks, Marc Angel, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Demetris Papadakis, Alfred Sant, Massimiliano Smeriglio
The Left	Alexis Georgoulis, Sira Rego
Verts/ALE	Margrete Auken, Eleonora Evi, Malte Gallée, Tatjana Ždanoka

5	-
ECR	Ryszard Czarnecki, Emmanouil Fragkos, Kosma Złotowski
ID	Markus Buchheit, Gianna Gancia

1	0
NI	Tamás Deutsch

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention