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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P9\_TA(2022)0265**

#### **Inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020 (2021/2009(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 6, 10, 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing ‘Erasmus+’: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission report of 31 January 2018 entitled ‘Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)’ (COM(2018)0050),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 November 2017 entitled ‘Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture – The European Commission’s contribution to the Leaders’ meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017’ (COM(2017)0673),
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 November 2020 entitled ‘Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0698), which builds on the Council conclusions of 16 June 2016 on LGBTI equality,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 September 2020 entitled ‘A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0565), which

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 347, 20.2.2013, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10.

seeks to update Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin<sup>1</sup> (the Racial Equality Directive),

- having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2020 on effective measures to ‘green’ Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Petitions,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A9-0158/2022),
- A. whereas mobility is a hugely important part of digital and in-person learning; whereas providing equal and inclusive opportunities for all is, and must continue to be, inherent to the fundamental values of the European Union, and whereas people from all backgrounds and walks of life must be able to benefit fully and equally from Erasmus+; highlights that Erasmus+ benefits not only its participants but entire communities and societies and fulfils the ambitions of UN Sustainable Development Goal 4; notes that this leads to more democratic, stronger and more cohesive and resilient societies;
- B. whereas the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 Regulation puts emphasis on promoting social inclusion and on the participation of people with special needs or with fewer opportunities, as defined in the ‘Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy’, encompassing persons with disabilities, health problems, educational difficulties, cultural differences, and economical, geographical and social obstacles; underlines that the current Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027) also goes hand in hand with the green and digital transitions;
- C. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the education sector as a whole, further exacerbating existing inequalities in access to education and highlighting the need to maintain inclusion measures in Erasmus+ and to make any necessary improvements;
- D. whereas no harmonised and mandatory inclusion strategy was established at European level for the Erasmus+ programme for 2014-2020, a shortcoming that limited the impact of inclusion measures within the programme;
- E. whereas physical mobility enables immersion in and optimum interaction with other cultures, and whereas virtual exchanges and learning are a valuable complement to physical mobility, but do not provide the same quality of experience and benefits;
- F. whereas the pandemic accelerated the digital transition and highlighted the importance of having good digital skills; underlines the fact that Erasmus+ can contribute significantly to digital upskilling and reskilling;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 2.

- G. whereas the experience of mobility offered by Erasmus+ can be transformative for participants, and can positively influence their communication skills, self-confidence, openness, critical thinking, personal and professional development, employability, well-being and understanding of the benefits of a united Europe by providing inclusive learning opportunities that enrich their lives and allow them to experience Europe's linguistic and cultural heritage while gaining lifelong knowledge;
- H. whereas the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 published by the Commission in 2018 underlined the necessity of reaching more people with fewer opportunities and smaller organisations in all regions;
1. Notes with satisfaction the overall positive perception of how inclusion measures have developed over the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programming period;
  2. Highlights that Erasmus+ should support stakeholders' and programme participants' internationalisation plans that contribute to the removal of the physical, psychological, social, socio-economic, linguistic, digital and other barriers to learning mobility and European projects, offering clear and detailed information and qualitative support for participants from under-represented groups and those with specific needs;
  3. Stresses the crucial need for tailored funding and grants such as pre-financing, top-up grants, upfront payments and lump sums to increase the participation of people with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds, as financial barriers continue to constitute one of the biggest obstacles in Erasmus+; stresses the need, in this regard, to apply flexible rules to provide a sufficient financial amount to cover their needs, especially their living costs;
  4. Calls on the Commission to further develop Erasmus+ financing tools and establish synergies with other programmes;
  5. Stresses that the amount of money disbursed through mobility grants is still insufficient in some cases, and can constitute a reason for social exclusion for those students and families who cannot afford mobility; calls for an increase in the 2023 budget for the full implementation of inclusion measures in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps;
  6. Urges the Commission to ensure that existing digital tools are working properly and to their full extent, and to tackle without delay the serious persistent issues related to Erasmus+ IT tools, which are significantly hindering not only the participation of smaller organisations, people with fewer opportunities, older participants and staff helping with the administrative paperwork, but also the participation of all kinds of beneficiaries; calls on the Commission to make the process for the newly introduced IT tools easier and accessible for all groups and to test them on a sufficiently large scale before their implementation;
  7. Notes that administrative barriers prevent many potential learners from taking part in the programme; urges the Commission to reduce bureaucracy and simplify the procedures to access funding with a view to streamlining the process and making it easier to understand and more accessible; underlines that the administrative burden constitutes a barrier to access for all and most affects those with fewer opportunities or with special needs; stresses the importance of providing application procedures in all European languages;

8. Praises the role of teachers, youth and social workers, civil society organisations, associations and educational staff as the driving forces behind participating institutions in raising awareness of the programme, by informing and supporting future learners and identifying people with fewer opportunities; notes that without them, most participants, especially those with fewer opportunities, would not be able to take part; calls on the Commission, the Member States and national agencies to value and acknowledge their often voluntary work, to support them by facilitating their own mobility and to provide them with adequate funding and support, while accompanying participants with fewer opportunities and offering them specific training adapted to their needs; notes the importance of updating various tools that they use in identifying possible participants and to better customise the Erasmus+ experience in order to address the needs of every individual participant;
9. Stresses the importance of providing appropriate training and support to educators on effectively navigating the challenges and opportunities and to foster the exchange of good practices in the field;
10. Encourages the Member States and national agencies to facilitate more educational seminars for Erasmus+ staff to carry out projects, develop inclusive methods and explore new ways to reach future beneficiaries of the programme;
11. Stresses the need for the Commission, the Member States and the national agencies to provide better support for grassroots organisations in all areas, including community-led and smaller organisations, particularly in the outermost regions, islands and remote, mountainous, rural and less accessible areas, and to ensure that resources and projects are distributed fairly in each Member State;
12. Stresses the importance of providing adequate financial and material support to staff, in addition to further training and additional expertise, so that they can engage with participants, their families and beneficiaries, improving access and boosting the success and impact of the projects, while ensuring that mobility and projects run smoothly; notes that national agencies in the Member States can provide significant help by identifying the needs of organisations and institutions in this matter and providing the necessary support;
13. Notes the positive effect of short-term mobility of schoolchildren in overcoming mental and psycho-social barriers, and asks the Commission and national agencies to foster mobility projects aimed at children and teenagers;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to organise targeted information campaigns, both online and offline, to increase awareness and outreach among citizens on the benefits of Erasmus+ through cooperation with media and social media outlets in public learning facilities such as libraries, schools and universities;
15. Asks all national agencies to appoint dedicated inclusion and diversity officers in order to reach out directly to learners with special needs and/or fewer opportunities; calls, in this regard, on those organisations that were selected to implement Erasmus+ actions to designate dedicated contact persons for people with fewer opportunities, and recalls that information on support services for people with special needs must be clear, up-to-date, complete and easy to access;

16. Calls on the Commission to improve guidelines for national policies that will enable better participation of learners facing health problems, cultural differences and economic, geographical and social obstacles, and to scrutinise and report on their implementation;
17. Supports all EU initiatives aimed at facilitating student mobility, such as the Erasmus+ mobile application, 'paperless Erasmus' and the European Student Card; calls on the Commission to explore the possibility of linking Erasmus+ more closely with other programmes and to foster cross-sectoral cooperation, including Interrail, in order to foster greater inclusion and equality that will improve access to better and greener mobility options, particularly for those with fewer opportunities; calls on the Commission to also make the DiscoverEU initiative more inclusive, allowing more people to participate;
18. Stresses that special focus should be given to linguistic competences, especially for participants with fewer opportunities; calls, therefore, for targeted and group-specific support for language learning in preparation for mobility and insists that this support should not be limited to online courses;
19. Recognises the important role of Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities (SALTO) Inclusion & Diversity for the implementation of inclusion measures for the Erasmus+ Youth strand, and notes that the extension of inclusion strategies to the Education & Training strand in the current programming period will have to be followed closely, as the target groups are different; stresses the need for national agencies to work more closely with employment agencies and other adult education stakeholders to facilitate the integration of adult learners into the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme;
20. Regrets the lack of reliable data – both quantitative and qualitative – on the participation of people with fewer opportunities in the Erasmus+ programme, as such data could be used to identify at which groups inclusion measures should be targeted; underlines the need to develop evaluation schemes to produce clear statistics and appropriately assess further problematic issues in order to create a management and steering tool for inclusion measures, using methods which fully respect privacy and data protection regulations and do not add undue administrative burdens for organisations and participants; reaffirms the need for more capacity-building for staff with regard to indicators and monitoring systems for inclusion;
21. Stresses the importance of funding more EU-wide research and studies on inclusion in the current programming period in order to assess the impact of the measures undertaken by national agencies and stakeholders in engaging organisations and people with fewer opportunities; highlights the importance of keeping records and statistics that should serve as a basis for consultations on future programmes;
22. Asks for the specific needs of persons with disabilities to be taken into account in order to facilitate their participation in the programme by offering them hybrid mobility by way of preparation for the mobility period, giving them the opportunity to be accompanied, and providing them with suitable and accessible accommodation and specialised support services based on their needs; stresses the need to collect their feedback after the period of mobility in order to improve the participation of future beneficiaries; underlines the need for specific support, guidance and tools allowing

persons with disabilities to register and participate in the Erasmus+ programme; recalls that accompanying persons should also have access to funds and grants in order to participate in the mobility programme;

23. Stresses the importance of the Erasmus+ programme in promoting the values of tolerance and diversity; calls on the Commission to establish synergies between the EU anti-racism action plan and Erasmus+ in order to address specific needs and combat racism in all its forms;
24. Welcomes the development of Erasmus+ projects related to and focused on improving gender equality and the inclusion of women in all sectors of education, especially in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM), and calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to give visibility to gender equality in their policies and actions;
25. Welcomes the projects that promote and raise awareness of sexual diversity and encourage respect for LGBTIQ+ people, and calls on the Commission to create genuine links between the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and the Erasmus+ programme;
26. Highlights the need for targeted solutions and a needs-based approach to learning-related mobility opportunities for people from marginalised groups in order to enhance their participation in the programme and ensure that they get adequate support, bearing in mind that financial and institutional barriers remain one of the biggest obstacles to their participation;
27. Requests that the Commission and the Member States ensure that all the relevant information regarding Erasmus+ is accessible to persons with disabilities, in particular through adapted and barrier-free online tools in all European languages; recalls that planning and evaluation processes should be barrier-free; welcomes the establishment of 'Erasmus Days' and stresses the importance of the role of former Erasmus+ participants and alumni networks in promoting the programme widely and serving as a potential one-stop shop for all future learners;
28. Asks the Member States to evaluate their existing policies and adopt targeted programmes and actions for learners with fewer opportunities and special needs, from all age groups and all backgrounds, in order to increase participation in Erasmus+, especially in terms of mobility, and to foster exchanges of good practices in this field; notes the key role of national agencies and voluntary organisations in facilitating this process;
29. Underlines the positive impact of the Erasmus+ programme in third countries as a factor in the European integration process and in strengthening the visibility of the EU; stresses the need for better partnerships and increased inclusivity of Erasmus+ projects in associated countries and other eligible countries, notably in the Western Balkans and the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods; calls on the Commission to facilitate international consultation – both digital and in-person – between national agencies in the Member States and participating countries with a view to exchanging good practices; notes that this will further strengthen their cooperation and allow them to implement new solutions, ideas and lessons learnt on the ground that will increase the number of participants in the Erasmus+ programme;

30. Stresses the need to give more flexibility to the Erasmus+ programme in the event of a crisis, as witnessed since the beginning of the war in Ukraine; welcomes the measures announced by the Commission allowing Ukrainian students and education staff affected by the war to continue with their education and professional activities in Ukraine and any of the Member States; calls for Ukrainian students to be given more assistance and for additional support to be provided to sustain Ukraine's higher education institutions and academic community;
31. Regrets the decision of the Government of the United Kingdom not to take part in Erasmus+ for the current programming period in the wake of its exit from the European Union, which constitutes a loss of opportunities for young people in both the EU and the UK;
32. Stresses the importance of fostering mobility for vocational education and training (VET) students in order to reach young people from all backgrounds, and notes with satisfaction the increased opportunities for their long-term mobility created during the 2014-2020 programming period;
33. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to use the European Year of Youth and related events to effectively promote the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme, particularly for those with fewer opportunities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a view to ensuring that the European Year of Youth has an effective impact, especially for the living conditions, education opportunities and democratic participation of young people; regrets the fact that the budget allocated to the European Year of Youth is insufficient to meet the needs of the initiative;
34. Recalls the paramount importance of ensuring automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods in the context of the European Education Area as a complementary tool to make inclusion measures within Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps fully effective;
35. Welcomes the Commission's recent adoption of the 2021-2027 framework of measures aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion in the current Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, and calls on the Commission to closely monitor the future national implementation of this framework and to keep Parliament informed on an annual basis; highlights that the full implementation of a dedicated framework of inclusion measures can serve as a useful experience and reference for other EU programmes that have a direct impact on citizens' lives such as Creative Europe and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme;
36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.