EUROPEAN UNION



Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes: Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (2023 - 2027)

AGENCY FOR MOBILITY AND EU PROGRAMMES

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes: Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (2023 - 2027)

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Photos: Shutterstock
Design and graphic design: KO:KE kreativna farma

Zagreb, 2023

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

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Foreword

For the past 15 years, the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMEUP) has been helping turn good ideas into great projects that change our society for the better.

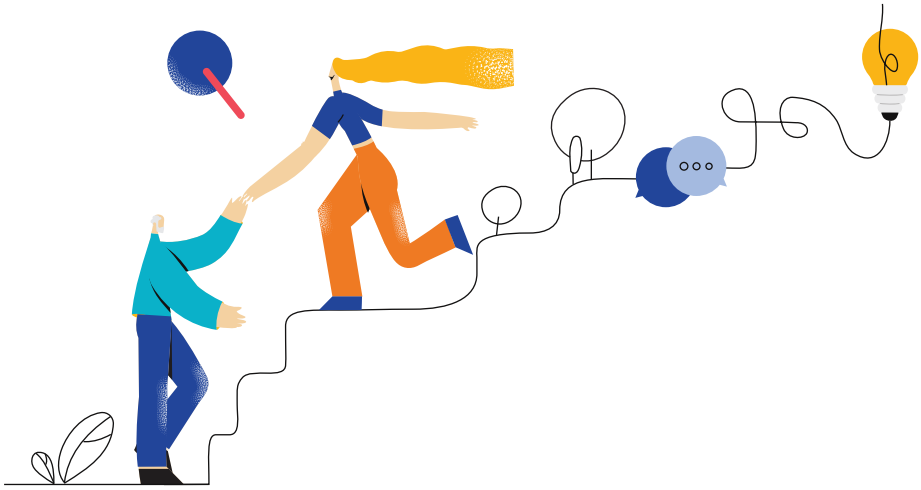
As the body responsible for the implementation of the **Erasmus+** and **European Solidarity Corps** programmes (as well as their predecessors – the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action), **AMEUP** has been supporting learning mobility and internationalisation in the fields of science, education and training and youth since 2007.



In that period, AMEUP oversaw implementation of **around 4 500 projects** worth **more than 200 million euros**, with **over 115 000 Croatian citizens** benefitting from participation in the programmes.



The benefits of participation, however, go well beyond the number of projects, participants and contracted funds. The opportunities offered by the programmes improved the quality of educational provision and youth work, fostered innovation and excellence, strengthened institutional capacities of organisations, promoted policy debate and facilitated exchange of practices. Furthermore, testimonies reveal that participants of both programmes are more ready to take on new challenges, have better career prospects and are more aware of the benefits that the EU brings to their daily lives. In line with its motto, the **Erasmus+** programme continues to enrich lives and open minds, whereas the **European Solidarity Corps** programme restores faith in the power of togetherness and doing good for the benefit of the society.



Keeping that in mind, AMEUP has been taking steps and investing efforts to ensure that these opportunities remain accessible to a wide range of individuals and organisations, regardless of their background or the barriers they are facing. Some of the measures implemented thus far include provision of continuous support to beneficiaries during all stages of the project cycle, establishment of an internal inclusion and diversity working group, organisation of regular thematic meetings and workshops dealing with the topic of inclusion and diversity, design and launch of awareness-raising campaigns and outreach activities, setting up of a national network of inclusion and diversity ambassadors etc. With a view to further strengthen the inclusive dimension and contribute to the achievement of Europe-wide impact, AMEUP has also submitted a successful bid to host the **SALTO Resource Centre for Inclusion and Diversity in the field of education and training** and is now committed to helping make the Erasmus+ programme more inclusive and diverse at a systemic level by providing support to National Agencies and organisations across Europe.

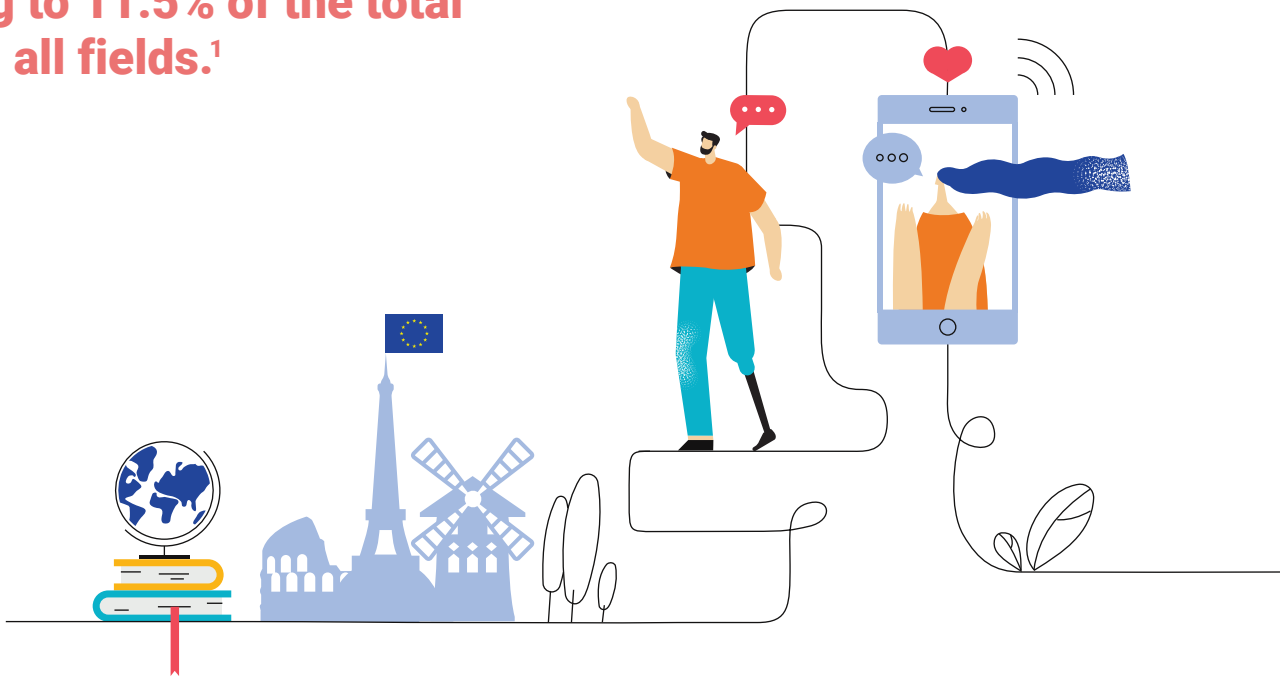
As part of its common strategic approach towards inclusion and diversity at EU level, the European Commission has additionally encouraged National Agencies to take strategic action and develop plans or strategies based on the local realities in their respective countries. Following up on the objectives and activities identified in the two-year action plan (2021 – 2022) and the multiannual work programme (2021 – 2027), **AMEUP has now also developed its inclusion and diversity strategy for the period from 2023 to 2027**, accompanied by an updated action plan (2023 – 2025). The strategy takes into account both the European and the national context and identifies long-term goals that seek to be ambitious, but above all attentive to the needs of beneficiaries, who were actively involved in the process of drafting. National Agencies play a vital role in the process of bringing opportunities offered by both programmes closer to persons with fewer opportunities and we see this document as our contribution to the **creation of more inclusive and diverse programmes that remove barriers and offer equal opportunities for everyone**.



Introduction

Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps are EU's flagship programmes and well-known brands even outside European borders. More than 10 million participants have benefited from EU programmes in the field of education, training, youth and sport between 1987 and 2020, with the proportion of participants with fewer opportunities in the period between 2014 and 2017 amounting to 11.5% of the total number in all fields.[1]

With a view to further widen the access and provide opportunities that are accessible for all, the European Commission has established a dedicated framework and identified main areas of intervention in the context of inclusion and diversity. Inclusive efforts and novelties in the new generation of both programmes (2021 – 2027) are summed up in the *Implementation Guidelines: Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy*, a document published by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture in 2021. The aim of the guidelines is twofold: (i) to help create equitable opportunities of programme access for everyone and (ii) to provide framework for inclusion and diversity projects supported through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

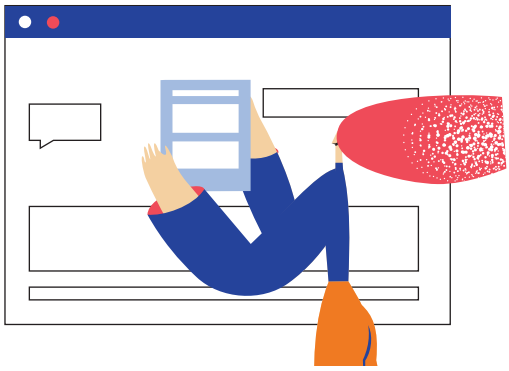


1_*Implementation Guidelines: Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy,* European Commission, 2021, p. 8.



Taking into account the policy context and aiming to build on the experience from the previous programme periods, the document proposes shared definitions of key terms and provides a **list of main barriers preventing participants with fewer opportunities from participating in the programmes**.

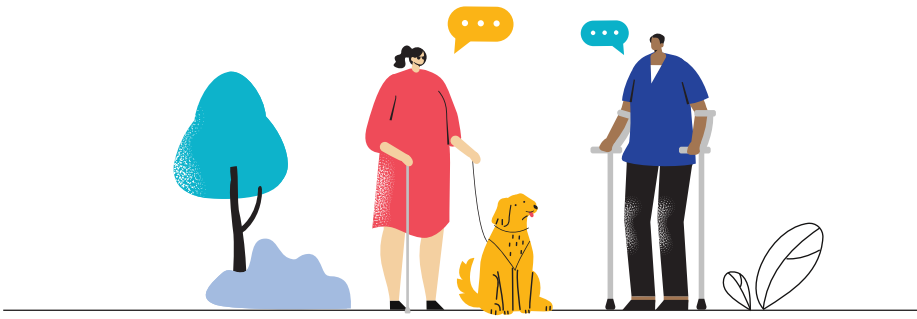
- Disabilities
- Health problems
- Barriers linked to education and training systems
- Cultural differences
- Social barriers
- Economic barriers
- Barriers linked to discrimination
- Geographical barriers



It also gives an overview of programmes' features and mechanisms that support inclusion and diversity and encourage involvement of participants with fewer opportunities.

- Inclusion and diversity as priorities in the assessment process, meaning that they are equally relevant, irrespective of the sector and format;
- Accessibility and user-friendliness of the programmes, with tools, platforms, documents and forms designed in a way that makes involvement of persons with fewer opportunities easier;
- Preparatory visits, primarily intended for inclusion-related matters;
- Reinforced mentorship as a means of supporting participation of young people with fewer opportunities;
- Dedicated financial support, in form of lump sum or real cost;
- Smaller and easier-to-access actions and formats, such as short-term mobilities, small-scale partnerships, online and local-level exchanges etc.

The aim of AMEUP's inclusion and diversity strategy is to support, at a national level, the achievement of goals from the Commission's Guidelines and bring programme opportunities closer to relevant target groups – persons with fewer opportunities, organisations working with persons with fewer opportunities, marginalised groups, newcomers, grassroot organisations, smaller organisations with little or no prior experience etc. To this end, AMEUP has, in response to the needs and challenges faced by its beneficiaries (see Chapter 3), identified six long-term objectives (see Chapter 4), which it aims to achieve through implementation of the multiannual action plan (see Appendix 1).



Sector-specific challenges

With the aim of ensuring that the strategy reflects different sectorial realities and that the support measures are tailored to the needs of the beneficiaries, AMEUP created a survey concerning key needs and challenges that they face when implementing projects that deal with the topic of inclusion and diversity, involve participants with fewer opportunities or both. Results collected from the survey are summarised below and have been taken into account in the process of defining both long-term objectives and specific actions to be implemented as part of the action plans.

School education

In the field of **school education**, the feedback primarily pointed to the need for an improved understanding of the definition of persons with fewer opportunities. The term is still primarily associated with involvement of persons with disabilities and many organisations are unaware of other categories encompassed by the definition. Beneficiaries also find it challenging to find reliable partners and adapt their mobility programmes to specific needs of persons with fewer opportunities.





Vocational education and training

Among challenges in the field of **vocational education and training**, beneficiaries highlighted insufficient capacity to successfully address the topic, in particular lack of know-how with regard to ways in which persons with fewer opportunities could be involved in project activities. Also, some of the organisations in this field, though interested in sending persons with fewer opportunities to mobility periods abroad, are not well-acquainted with the support mechanisms offered by the programme and therefore opt not to involve them.

Higher education

Key challenges identified by stakeholders from the field of **higher education** are institutional barriers, limited awareness of existing opportunities, fear of stepping outside of the comfort zone and insufficient language proficiency. Some of the desired changes at the institutional level (e.g., establishment of inclusion offices) are often outside the sphere of influence of project coordinators, meaning that actions in this regard need to be extended to decision makers as well.





Adult education

Beneficiaries from the field of **adult education** cited lack of motivation and reluctance of learners to engage in physical mobility, while limited resources leave staff with insufficient time to deal with and explore the topics of inclusion and diversity. Another key challenge in this field is general interest of learners for adult education provision as they amount to just 3 % of learners' total in Croatia, while beneficiaries also pointed out to potential stigmatisation as an obstacle that deters some groups from participation.



Youth and European Solidarity Corps

Key challenges identified in the field of youth refer to lack of awareness related to opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme, fear of being stigmatised and absence of adequate support in different phases of project implementation. Organisations actively involved in implementation of projects as part of the **European Solidarity Corps** programme additionally highlighted lack of financial resources, outreach work, administrative barriers and increased workload as some of the key challenges preventing a more significant involvement of underrepresented target groups.

Objectives

In line with the instructions provided in the Commission's Guidelines and taking into account the needs and challenges of the beneficiaries, AMEUP's strategy identifies a total of six long-term objectives.



Objective 1

Raising awareness about the importance of inclusion and diversity as one of the programme priorities

Objective 2

Capacity building of applicants, beneficiaries and NA staff

Objective 3

Creation of intersectoral and interinstitutional synergy

Objective 4

Fostering active engagement of beneficiaries

Objective 5

More effective communication and outreach

Objective 6

Establishment of monitoring and reporting mechanisms

To achieve the identified objectives, AMEUP has developed multiannual action plans that contain a detailed list of topics, actions, time and implementation indicators and target groups.

Appendix 1 - Action Plan for the Implementation of Horizontal Priorities of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2026 – 2027





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