



ID BEYOND 2020

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY IN THE EU YOUTH PROGRAMMES BEYOND 2020

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1. Background

“European programmes need to be equally accessible to all European citizens, regardless of their socio-economic background. My first goal is to make Erasmus+ the Number One programme of inclusiveness. We made the programme much more fair and inclusive.”

MEP Milan Zver (EPP, SI) – rapporteur
Meeting of the Culture and Education Committee (20 February 2019)

The year of 2018 was a period with several policy and programming developments in the EU youth field: a fully operational European Solidarity Corps programme (Solidarity Corps), a new DiscoverEU initiative, a 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy and news on a future Erasmus programme. The European Commission has proposed a new legal framework for the next generation of its two youth programmes (Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps); the Council finalised its discussions, the proposal has been discussed in early 2019 in the European Parliament. Parallel to the negotiations on the legal framework, the Commission planned to use 2019 to further define the framework of actions, funding mechanisms and procedures for the future Erasmus programme (for the Solidarity Corps nearly no changes are foreseen) and to make them more inclusive; in the process, it foresees some stakeholder consultations.

To contribute to this process, SALTO Inclusion & Diversity (SALTO I&D) has elaborated this vision on Inclusion & Diversity beyond 2020. This vision highlights:

- Our understanding of Inclusion & Diversity in EU youth programmes;
- Who are the young people with fewer opportunities?
- What has been achieved in the framework of Erasmus+ (and predecessors' programmes)? - in terms of inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, new organisations and capacity building of youth workers in managing diversity;
- What could we aim at with the next generation of EU youth programmes 2021-2027?

This paper gathers inputs from different sources such as outcomes of Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA – in the framework of Erasmus+) focused on inclusion¹, reflections from the [Inclusion and Diversity Colleague Support Group](#) and from the [Steering Group of the Erasmus+ Inclusion Strategy - in the field of youth](#) - that took place in March 2019.

In addition, this paper gathers findings of a desk research and a survey addressed to Youth National Agencies and programmes' beneficiaries (284 respondents consulted in May 2019) conducted by SALTO I&D.

The aim was to identify, through these different sources, lessons learnt and collect concrete proposals on how to make EU youth programmes beyond 2020 more inclusive.

The initiative to develop this paper was based on a renewed mandate of the thematic SALTO-YOUTH resource centres that highlights our contribution to strengthen the links between youth policy and programming. SALTO I&D is participating in the horizontal working group on inclusion, established by the Commission with the aim to contribute to the development of an overarching inclusion and diversity strategy (covering education, training, youth and

¹ E.g. European Expert Seminar on more inclusive future European youth programme organised by the German national Agency for the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme – Mainz, Germany 24-24 April 2019

sports) for the next Erasmus programme and European Solidarity Corps. In this context, it is relevant to identify and highlight good practices already in place in the youth field.

2. Inclusion & Diversity in EU youth policy and programming

“[Solidarity Corps] aims to ensure that particular efforts are made to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities, in particular for the participation of young people with fewer opportunities through a range of special measures such as appropriate formats of solidarity activities and personalised support.”

European Solidarity Corps Guide 2019

In a Europe that is better and stronger when united in its diversity, youth work has a role in actively including into their projects young people with fewer opportunities² that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because of a number of exclusion factors (e.g. cultural, social, economic, geographical, educational obstacles, disability and health problems). Youth work needs to be equipped to deal positively with this diversity. Intercultural (interpersonal) dialogue and solidarity creates bridges between people with different backgrounds and needs. International learning and mobility projects stimulate dialogue, acceptance and friendship without feeling threatened in one’s own identity. **Youth work and international projects are a perfect tool to promote solidarity and social inclusion.**

Social inclusion is a priority at the European level and in the youth field. According to the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), “in the current programme, greater emphasis was placed on action that contributes to social inclusion following the Paris Declaration, the new priority areas under ET 2020 and the Youth Strategy or the New Skills Agenda for Europe”.³ Inclusion has been a horizontal priority in current programmes and specific calls have been launched (such as the one on Key Action 3 – Initiatives for policy innovation – Social inclusion through education, training and youth). It is also important to learn from these projects and assess their results and impact, to think on how to strengthen the inclusion dimension of the programme.

Overall, the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of Youth, by offering a conceptual understanding and an operational framework (e.g. inclusion officers in all National Agencies, the role of SALTO I&D) to achieve its aims, has been a key element to improve inclusion in the youth work field and a framework to facilitate further development of a common approach, activities and tools.

² As defined in the Inclusion & Diversity Strategy. For more information: European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture (2014), *Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the youth field*, p. 7 (in: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.pdf - access 05/09/2018)

³ COM(2018) 50 final, *Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)*, , p. 4 (in: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-50-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF> - access 05/09/2018)



Whilst progress has been made on the inclusiveness of Erasmus+: Youth in Action (E+:YiA) and recent results have been praised – young people with fewer opportunities make up over 36% of E+ programme beneficiaries, the new EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) states that there is still work to be done. EU cooperation will focus on “increasing participation in cross-border learning mobility and solidarity under Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps with an emphasis on those with fewer opportunities.”⁴

Inclusion is a long-term process and increasing participation in cross-border learning mobility implies joint action. Strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation would help to find more holistic solutions (for example in what relates to inclusion of young people in NEET situation and with migrant/ refugee background). Participation of young people with fewer opportunities is still low, especially in projects related to policy dialogue. The EU Youth Strategy states that one of its main actions will be to “launch a new and more inclusive EU Youth Dialogue, with a focus on youth with fewer opportunities”. Engagement of these young people implies rethinking how policy dialogue takes place, how to reach them and what is needed as a learning path and step-by-step approach to engage them in policy dialogue initiatives.

The 2018 European Solidarity Corps Guide identifies social inclusion as an important feature and the programme promotes it by facilitating the access of young people with fewer opportunities. “To ensure that particular efforts are made to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities, in particular for the participation of young people with fewer opportunities through a range of special measures such as appropriate formats of solidarity activities and personalised support.”⁵ Short-term volunteering, volunteering teams, in-country opportunities, additional funding that will allow participating organisations to better accommodate and cater for the needs of young people with fewer opportunities, are some of the special elements available in Solidarity Corps that aim to remove obstacles to participation.

Looking towards post-2020, it is worth mentioning that the Commission proposed a stronger “youth” focus in the next multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027. More than double of the funds are to be allocated to the future Erasmus programme. The focus of the new Programme “will be on inclusiveness, and to reach more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This will allow more young people to move to another country to learn or work.”⁶ Small scale partnerships would be designed to make the Programme accessible to organisations with little or no experience or with smaller operational capacity, in particular for grassroots organisations and those organisations that work with people with fewer opportunities.⁷ DiscoverEU, an initiative which offers young people the opportunity to

⁴ COM(2018) 269 final, *Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy*, p. 6 (in: https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_com_269_1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf - access 05/09/2018)

⁵ European Commission, *2018 European Solidarity Corps Guide*, p. 6 (in: <https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/library/documents/2018-european-solidarity-corps-guide.pdf> - access 05/09/2018)

⁶ COM(2018) 321 final, *A Modern Budget for a Union that Protects, Empowers and Defends The Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027* p. 12 (in: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:c2bc7dbd-4fc3-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF – access 05/09/2018)

⁷ 2018/0191 (COD), *Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing 'Erasmus': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation*



discover (either individually or in a group of maximum 5 persons) other EU countries by providing a train travel pass, is currently operational and it is expected to be incorporated in the future Erasmus programme. Now it is also the time to further develop this initiative from an inclusion perspective, to be able to remove obstacles to the participation of young people with fewer opportunities and to strengthen its learning dimension.

An Inclusion & Diversity vision beyond 2020 should be based on lessons learnt from predecessors' programmes, especially an assessment of what has been achieved and what can be further improved in the framework of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

3. Young people with fewer opportunities and obstacles to participation

“The new Erasmus+ must be truly open to everyone and encourage everyone in society to participate. We want non-discriminatory and barrier-free access.”

MEP Petra Kammerevert (S&D, DE) – Chair
Meeting of the Culture and Education Committee (20 February 2019)

Inclusion and diversity projects should have a positive impact on the situation of young people with fewer opportunities, especially the ones that, for different reasons are not reached out by other sectors of, for example, the Erasmus+ programme. Youth work has a key role in reaching out and assure that they do not fall in an irreversible risk of exclusion. These are young people who are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the **exclusion factors and obstacles** below. The following situations often prevent young people from taking part in employment, formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility, democratic process and society at large:

- **Disability** (i.e. participants with special needs): young people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities etc.
- **Health problems**: young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions etc.
- **Educational difficulties**: young people with learning difficulties, early schoolleavers, lower qualified persons, young people with poor school performance etc.
- **Cultural differences**: immigrants, refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties etc.
- **Economic obstacles**: young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system, young people in long-term unemployment or poverty, young people who are homeless, in debt or with financial problems etc.

(EU) No 1288/2013 p. 3 (in: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:147de752-63eb-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.03/DOC_1&format=PDF – access 05/09/2018)



- **Social obstacles:** young people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc., young people with limited social skills or anti-social or high-risk behaviours, young people in a precarious situation, (ex-offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers, young and/or single parents, orphans, in social care, etc.
- **Geographical obstacles:** young people from remote or rural areas, young people living on small islands or in peripheral regions, young people from urban problem zones, young people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) etc.

This definition deliberately focuses on the situation young people are in, to avoid stigmatisation and blame. This list is not exhaustive, but gives an indication of the type of exclusion situations we are talking about. Some target groups might find themselves in several of the situations listed above at the same time – these are usually the ones that are under-represented in the programme and for whom reach out efforts should focus on. The causes of disadvantage can be manifold, and the solutions similarly so. The risk of exclusion because of specific factors and obstacles varies according to country and context.

The future Erasmus programme, in its legal basis, follows the same understanding and states that “people with fewer opportunities” means people facing obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties.⁸

Apart from the exclusion factors mentioned above, young people face several other obstacles to access international mobility and learning opportunities, more related to programme management and implementation and more systemic, connected to their context. Therefore, to be able to reach out and engage them, it is important to be aware that the root causes of non-participation are in most cases probably not directly related to the young person itself but rather to the context she/he lives in and the way the programmes are implemented. Communication strategies do not reach them; they might feel that there is nothing for them in the programmes or lack self-confidence to try out; actions, formats and support measures are not adapted to their needs; amongst others. In addition, the organisations that might be working directly with these young people also have limited access to the programmes either because they are small-scale/grassroots’ organisations with few experience in international mobility, or their staff has limited capacities to engage in such project cycle (mainly volunteers, no project design/grant management experience). They may also find obstacles in accessing information, finding partners and the necessary support to clarify questions they might have and take the step to apply for funding.

The **common understanding in the youth field** on who to reach out to and on the obstacles these young people and organisations have been facing has been key to deliver results. The concept mentioned above of young people with fewer opportunities, as defined in the

⁸ COM(2018) 367 final, Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing 'Erasmus': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013, p. 29. In: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf (access 04/04/2019)



Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (and in the Erasmus+ programme guide⁹) has allowed to focus on the context – the obstacles that need to be removed and the support that should be offered – rather than on stigmatising the young person. It has been broad enough to cover all young people’s needs and specificities and, at the same time, has given the possibility to narrow the focus according to national realities and priorities (that can be identified through the development of national inclusion strategies in the framework of the programme and possibly, in the near future, in combination with the national activities planners).

Whilst the concept is broad, throughout Erasmus+: Youth in Action and its predecessors programmes, SALTO I&D and the NAs network have been focusing on specific target groups that can be in a situation of disadvantaged when compared to their peers, concretely on:

- Working on the empowerment of women, and more specifically of **young ethnic minority women**
www.salto-youth.net/rc/empowerbooklet/
- Setting up meaningful international youth projects with **young people in disadvantaged (sub)urban areas**
www.salto-youth.net/rc/youthandthecity/
- Researching social challenges faced by **young people in (sub)urban areas** and analysing a variety of urban interventions to extract criteria for success
www.salto-youth.net/rc/urbansolutions/
- Providing guidance on how to set up international youth projects, for and with **rural youngsters**, in geographically remote and disadvantaged areas
www.salto-youth.net/rc/villageinternational/
- Exploring how to work with **young offenders**, ex-offenders and young people at risk of offending or currently in prison
www.salto-youth.net/rc/nooffence/
- Discovering how to work with **LesBiGay** youth in a respectful and helpful way and how to set up international youth projects
www.salto-youth.net/rc/overtherainbow/
- Stimulating the participation of young people with a **disability** in international youth projects - promoting mixed-ability projects
www.salto-youth.net/rc/nobarriers/
- Exploring the links between **youth employment and social exclusion**
www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusionthroughemployability/
- Keeping track of different approaches to **young people in NEET situation**
www.salto-youth.net/rc/workingonwork/
www.salto-youth.net/rc/ontrack/

⁹ 2019 Erasmus+ Programme Guide, p 10. In: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf (access 04/05/2019)



4. Inclusion & Diversity achievements within Youth in Action/Erasmus+

“We have great ambitions: an Erasmus programme that works for all, irrespective of socio-economic conditions, background or disability.”

Themis Christophidou, DG EAC Director General
Meeting of the Erasmus+ Committee (4 July 2018)

European research shows that participants in international mobility projects report a clear positive impact of their participation on their competences, their behaviour and their values. Such projects that specifically address inclusion themes have also a beneficial effect on participants’ values, learning and commitment regarding inclusion – and even on their organisations. The data of the RAY research project indicates that the Youth in Action programme (currently Erasmus+ Youth) is a good tool to reach its ‘equity and inclusion’ aims.

The RAY research essentially asks participants about the effects of participating in international youth projects. These effects were compared (in a 2015 research) between participants in inclusion projects and non-inclusion projects. For most of the parameters, the generally positive results are not so different between the two subgroups. However, inclusion projects do give young people an added benefit in some domains.

Projects addressing inclusion topics do effectively generate more sensitivity to social justice and equality, compared to non-inclusion projects. Inclusion projects raise the awareness of social disadvantage in society. The participants in inclusion projects have more the intention to act to reduce these social problems, than their peers who participated in non-inclusion projects. But the inclusion effect goes beyond the participants: inclusion projects also generate more commitment to inclusion within their organisations.¹⁰

In addition, research also shows that these **international projects have a significantly higher effect on young people with fewer opportunities** - compared to ‘well-off’ young people with most opportunities. This means that including more young people with fewer opportunities in European mobility projects, would not only increase the impact of the programme, it would also contribute to the inclusion and development of these young people.¹¹

Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ programme highlights that its achievement to reach out to disadvantaged young people (11.5% of the total number of participants with fewer opportunities in the programme and representing above 30% of the beneficiaries in the field of youth), more than its predecessors or comparable national schemes. Yet the evaluation points to the need to **do more to reach out to the more vulnerable in society and to facilitate the participation of smaller-size organisations**.¹²

¹⁰ SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre (2015) GEUDENS Tony, HAGLEITNER Wolfgang, LABADIE Francine and STEVENS, Frank “International inclusion projects effectively generate more inclusiveness”, in www.salto-youth.net/InclusionResearch/ (access 08/03/2019)

¹¹ SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre (2015) GEUDENS Tony, HAGLEITNER Wolfgang and LABADIE Francine “International youth projects benefit most those with fewer opportunities”, in www.salto-youth.net/InclusionResearch/ (access 21/02/2019)

¹² Mid-term evaluation report, p.2



The evaluation showed that Erasmus+ is better aligned with EU policies than its predecessors and is flexible enough to adapt to emerging EU-level needs such as increasing social inclusion and preventing violent radicalisation. To maximise the programme's impact, the evaluation recommends that priorities be reduced in number and better focused.

The current Inclusion Strategy allowed, amongst other achievements¹³, to set-up a **network of inclusion & diversity officers** (identified one per National Agency), to foster the development of national strategies, to strengthen peer learning in the framework of Colleague Support Groups.

In the framework of transnational cooperation activities, since 2016, an enlarged group of National Agencies, coordinated by SALTO Inclusion & Diversity have established the **Strategic Partnership on Inclusion** to foster participation of young people with fewer opportunities and inclusion organisations in E+YiA (and since 2018 also in Solidarity Corps). This partnership, that consists in a more systematised and strategic use of TCA, have been focusing on three target groups, which are underrepresented and that have been identified as a priority: young people with health issues and diverse abilities, young people in NEET situation and young people from disadvantage areas. Thanks to this partnership, by August 2019, 68 inclusion projects were approved and 745 young people with fewer opportunities had the possibility to participate in the programme.¹⁴ The main approach has been mapping new organisations & needs analysis; motivation, information & capacity building; partnership building & networking; support for international mobility as part of their inclusion work; mapping existing resources & tools, or creating new ones; and monitoring impact & documenting the tested approaches.¹⁵

In addition, and beyond SPI, SALTO I&D has developed resources to support the development of competences of youth workers to promote inclusion projects and manage diversity:

- Compiling working methods in international inclusion projects with **young people with fewer opportunities**: practical hints, tools and methods that can contribute to the quality of the inclusion project
www.salto-youth.net/rc/goinginternational/
- Building a **positive image and narratives** about young people with fewer opportunities
www.salto-youth.net/rc/imagesinaction/
- Promoting social inclusion through **faith and interfaith dialogue** in youth projects
www.salto-youth.net/rc/theskyisthelimit/
- Encouraging young people and creating a safe atmosphere for **non-formal learning in conflict areas**
www.salto-youth.net/rc/building-bridges/

¹³ For more information check the 2018 update on "Improving Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+ youth projects" In: www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3729/ID%20Steering%20Group%20update_2018.pdf (access 04/03/2019)

¹⁴ For more information on SPI achievements: www.salto-youth.net/spinclusion/

¹⁵ Check "Cookbook for Inclusion – recipes for National Agencies who want to reach more young people with fewer opportunities" In: <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3810/Cookbook%20on%20Inclusion.pdf>? (access 04/03/2019)



- Growing inclusion and participation by learning how to **set up true participative projects** for and with young people who usually fall out of the boat
www.salto-youth.net/rc/growinginclusionparticipation/
- Valuing the Difference by providing information and tools to engage young people across many topics relating to **cultural diversity**
www.salto-youth.net/rc/valuethedifference/
- Sharing approaches to tackle **violent extremism** of young people
www.salto-youth.net/rc/youngpeopleandextremism/
- Compiling relevant **resources on international inclusion projects**
www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusionatoz/

5. Future Erasmus and European Solidarity Corps – towards more inclusive programmes

“After 2020, the Commission will consider how to further boost the inclusion dimension of any future programme, through increased integration of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in education and training, youth and sport activities.”

Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) – Report

2019 has been a key year to collect concrete proposals and coming years will be important to strengthen inclusion & diversity in the youth field. From our perspective, this could be done at three levels: **rethinking the strategic approach** to inclusion of the programmes, **strengthening programme accessibility** (e.g. activity formats, administration, recognition of impact and follow-up) and **promoting inclusion** (e.g. outreach, training and capacity building, supportive approach). The first relates to the overall framework and how different stakeholders promote and make use of the programmes to foster inclusion; the second falls mainly under the responsibility of the European Commission and the third dimension at the implementation level of National Agencies, SALTO and European Solidarity Corps resource centres and programme(s) beneficiaries.

Below, concrete proposals are listed. They are grouped together, not divided by programme as most are relevant to both Erasmus and Solidarity Corps. If needed, it is clearly mentioned that is related to only one specific programme.

The proposals have been collected from different sources such as inputs from Inclusion & Diversity officers, members of the Steering Group of the Erasmus+ Inclusion & Diversity Strategy in the field of youth and participants of different initiatives promoted by European Commission, National Agencies, SALTO and European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre and beneficiary organisations such as the seminar in Mainz mentioned above (April 2019) and the survey conducted by SALTO I&D.

a. Rethinking the strategic approach

Some suggestions at a more strategic level were collected and the following actions can be considered:



- Create a **common understanding**, taking into account different realities across Europe, of those who may be considered as young people with fewer opportunities and a coherent framework of support for the EU youth programmes (e.g. Inclusion and Diversity Strategy). Take intersectionality into consideration.
- Increase the **commitment to inclusion and diversity** from different actors in Erasmus and Solidarity Corps.
- Promote the **EU youth programmes as inclusion tools** to work with young people with fewer opportunities, particularly the ones at risk of exclusion, and actively reach out to them.
- **Raise awareness on inclusion and diversity** in society through improved dissemination of existing opportunities within the programmes and resources elaborated.
- **Develop knowledge** on target groups, obstacles, methods and processes to be able to improve programmes to fulfil needs.
- Ensure that the focus on **inclusion and diversity is present in all stages** of EU youth programmes management, including promotion/communication, support for applicants, selection of projects and evaluation and dissemination of project outcomes.
- Create **synergies between different programme sectors**.
- Where relevant, **link to other youth policy and programming initiatives** that benefit young people with fewer opportunities, at local, national and international levels.
- Improve **joint action and learning between different actors** of the programmes (National agencies, beneficiary organisations, youth workers, young people), bringing together knowledge and experiences on inclusion and youth.
- **Support network of Youth National Agencies** in developing quality inclusion projects that involve or benefit young people with fewer opportunities.
- Contribute to ongoing **programmes' upgrade** by identifying obstacles and **propose concrete recommendations** on how to improve (at programming and policy level).
- **Develop personal and organisational capacities** (e.g. provide training, tools, funding, coaching etc.) of: a) **newcomers** to get familiar with the programmes b) **organisations already experienced** with the programmes and equip them with the necessary skills to develop inclusion projects.
- **Develop new tools and working methods**, that better respond to the young people or youth worker's needs, situation and way of communicating (e.g. fostering digital youth work, MOOCs- massive open online courses, social networks usage).
- **Reach out and engage new participants and organisations** (including grassroots and others relevant to develop inclusion projects). **Working with municipalities**, linking European and local youth work.



- **Reduce obstacles** for young people with fewer opportunities to participate in the programmes and provide tailor-made support to them (e.g. mentorship/coaching, language support, peer-to-peer).
- Support quality of learning and increase the **recognition of the experience and skills** gained by young people with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+ and by the youth workers working with them.

As lessons learnt from current programme, inclusion should be present in all phases of programmes' management, including in training NA staff, assessors, youth workers and assessment, implementation and monitoring/reporting.

In addition, the **appointment of inclusion & diversity officers** in each National Agency (and their capacity building) has been important to have clearly identified who can support beneficiaries (and colleagues) in making the programmes more inclusive. It would be important to keep such approach and further explore its potential (and their tasks) – keeping in mind that necessary human and financial resources need to be properly allocated to.

b. Strengthening programme accessibility

- The programme(s) call for a **wider definition of the inclusion project** (when compared to Erasmus+). A project can promote change and social inclusion due to its target group (as beneficiary of the actions and volunteering placement) and not only by having participants with fewer opportunities. This is a general understanding of many NAs and projects' promoters. This could be clarified in the application form (especially for solidarity and volunteering projects) by having a **question about the target group and its impact on young people with fewer opportunities** - and the option to choose if it is considered inclusion due to the profile of participant(s) or target group (make it perhaps similar as in Youth in Action Programme identifying it as A or B projects). This would allow better and more accurate data on inclusion statistics/reporting. An enlarged understanding of what an inclusion project is will create the need to further reflect and decide on exact financial support that would be made available for each of the type of inclusion project. This could be streamlined in the programme guide, NA Guide, Guide for Experts, and other related documents, application form and future Strategy.
- There is a significant number of projects that tick the inclusion boxes but from the application they are clearly not an inclusion project. **Identification of applications as inclusion projects could be done based on the assessment** rather than only on the information submitted by applicant in the application form. This assessment information could be linked to E+ Link in order to enable reporting. IT could work as a double check system and it would provide more accurate statistics and data on inclusion on national level.
- To be able to reach out to more young people with fewer opportunities and new organisations, there is the need to **simplify** and make accessible (language wise) the **guide and application forms**. Consider possibility to have one guide per sector. Pay



attention to accessibility of the forms and information in formats for visually impaired people.

- Opportunities can have a key impact on personal and professional development of young people, especially for the ones in higher risk of exclusion such as school dropouts and young people in NEET situation. It is important to fill this gap in between drop-outs with volunteering opportunities before going into the labour market or further education. It is an opportunity for this young people to stay connected and develop skills and future careers. Therefore, it is important **to lower the age limit to 16 years - at least as exceptional and justified case, in order to enable inclusion projects** (as it was in Youth in Action 2007-2013). Even if in some countries, this option will not be applicable due to national regulations, this should be in the programme as a possibility.
- **Flexible or rolling deadlines for applications** for funding could also be an option for certain actions. It could be given the opportunity to experienced organisations to apply for a large framework agreement for a certain period (e.g. 3-5 years) and have flexible funding requests for activities.
- **Solutions that allow more long-term planning, strategic approach and flexible distribution of funds** (such as partnership agreement for 3 years) should be made available. It allows experienced inclusion organisations to be more strategic in the way they approach inclusion and to develop long-term projects.
- **Facilitate procedures for solidarity projects** to allow more young people to benefit from this opportunity. For example, PRN code can be a significant administrative burden to them and, therefore, these data could be much simpler collected in the application form (at the moment, the registration is a burden and does not bring a clear benefit for the grant management). Either it should be easier/more user friendly, or it could be linked to other tools they need later on (mobility tool, alumni options). Consider the **possibility to have alternatives to the written process of application and reporting** (e.g. face-to-face presentation/video).
- Consider the possibility that some actions formats, **such as small-scale partnerships** can be managed at decentralised level, as this could foster participation of newcomers and grassroots organisations.
- There could be more **flexibility on available formats of actions** to allow their adjustment to the specific needs of each young person. For example, short-term experiences could work better for some profiles than longer-term. A blended approach, a mix between online (at the beginning) and offline at a later stage on the project (that would imply, for example, international mobility) could be an option to foster self-confidence and trust between the young person and the team managing the project. More virtual and online opportunities for participation and volunteering could also be further explored. In addition, more possibilities to participate as part of a group (as a first step or in general) could be promoted as it might be easier to get involved with other peers that the young person knows, rather than to embark on her/his own in an international mobility adventure.



- **Assessment and monitoring** of the solidarity projects is challenging, as there is no need to submit action plan and budget. Proposal to add **question to the application form about monthly activity timetable** (something simple, not necessarily detailed but to have a reference). If not possible, proposal for NAs to request for it after approval (as it is the practice of the Lithuanian NA).
- More flexible opportunities would allow the participation of more young people. **Part-time/flexible working hours could be an option in case you have a special condition and/or special needs**. At the same time, it can motivate new organisations to try out the programme. Above all it is important to adopt working hours to the needs and abilities of the participants.
- Due to the diversity of projects that is possible to submit under solidarity projects, it would be beneficial to have **more flexibility around the duration and funding of the events** – long-term and short-term:
 - **Make solidarity projects longer than a year, 18 months**. This is especially important for projects focused on process (and for some target groups, as they need more time to get in), not necessarily for ones focused on “project/event” (like festival, pop up restaurant).
 - More flexibility in **accessing funds to organise larger events in a shorter amount of time**. It would be good to get money for the activity not as a monthly amount, but rather allow the payment of the full grant in one payment.
- The creation of a **specific sub action for inclusion jobs & traineeships** could be considered. As suggested also for volunteering projects, a flexible format regarding working hours (part-time) could foster participation. Differentiate funding lump sums for organisational support between highly qualified jobs and for inclusion jobs: for inclusion jobs the funding could be the same level as volunteering.
- To facilitate the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, it would be important to be flexible regarding the **possibility to accept jobs & traineeships that are part of the formal curricula**.
- **Transfer between volunteering and jobs/traineeships could be facilitated**. This could be done through an approach similar to a volunteering partnership (e.g. enable quick take-over of volunteers).
- Possibility to held **extended advance planning visits** (e.g. 4 days) is important for the young people also to experience the conditions of future placement/mobility opportunity.
- **Evaluation meetings** held shortly after return are important tools to follow-up and further support young people with fewer opportunities after a mobility/volunteering experience.
- Developing more **youth-friendly tools** could also improve the quality of support provided. It is important to improve what already exists and also to strengthen the digital dimension of the available offer (for example, strengthening the inclusion and

diversity dimension of tools such as the QualityApp developed by SALTO Inclusion & Diversity RC, in the framework of the European Platform for Learning Mobility). Online support could be available to guide them through the process (such as a chat bot). Information and application possibilities could be possible via mobile phones/apps. Consider the possibilities of Eurodesk in this tailored information work and that the Youth portal could include an “opportunity-check”/ “what is there for me?” section.

- **Provide in online tools and general communication (updated) contact information** to be used by participants in case of clarifications in issues such as insurance (e.g. CIGNA rather than directing young people to National Agencies). If not possible to provide such information to National Agencies, applicants and participants should be directed to the ones that can support them and clarify their questions.
- The Portal has a great potential and could work as **one landing page** from which organisations go to other tools. The approach to its use can be more inclusive to facilitate registration of young people with fewer opportunities (that for now it is mostly done with the support of organisations). Matching is not really happening through this tool yet. **Implement the youth portal (volunteering opportunity database) into European Solidarity Corps portal so that young people can search for the organisations.** In addition, it is important to make available on the portal also the tasks expected to be done by the volunteer - to be sure they are barrier-free.
- On the **quality label** process of European Solidarity Corps, there is the need to clearly describe the capacity to host young people with fewer opportunities and that to make this information would be linked to application form and also available in the portal - as to have a distinguished reasoning why the project is inclusive or not.
- Better explanation (including examples) in the Guide of what an **exceptional cost** is would be recommended, as often organisations do not know what can be included and, therefore, do not ask for it. At the same time, the list shouldn't be exhaustive and there should be flexibility regarding different needs if volunteers are not identified at the application stage.
- There is the need to have **some flexibility with rules after the application**, so that some exceptional costs could still be included at the agreement stage (as it is not possible to identify volunteer and specific needs in advance, it is difficult to foresee all exact costs). Proposal to **have a certain percentage (such as 10%) of the budget which could be “flexibly spent” for all the formats.** This would allow to save and use funds more efficiently as there wouldn't be the need to ask maximum amounts during application (same with inclusion lump sums as funds returned back can't be used any more). Then it **could be enough to justify it with an amendment** and should not affect NAs' performance rate. Alternatively: similar procedures as in the volunteering partnerships could be used; a top up system (similar to Erasmus + on travel expenses) could be introduced for this type of flexible 10 % costs; or the KA2 model in Erasmus+ that allows changes in budget headings up to 20% to substitute this cost (although in the last case it wouldn't represent an additional amount, only reallocation, which is not the ideal support to inclusion needs.

- There is the need to acknowledge and compensate for the additional work and efforts of organisations and their staff to manage inclusion projects. **Costs for the salary of the project manager** could be eligible and included in overall Project Management costs (cover a certain percentage of the **salary or it could be paid based on a daily fee**). Usually inclusive organisations are mainly voluntary based, understaffed or with lack of funds and in this way it will be enhanced professionalisation of organisations within the field and attract more beneficiaries to the Programme.
- Hosting costs that allow volunteers to be accommodated properly in dignity, safety and comfort are quite high, especially in the urban areas such as capitals and large cities. Therefore, **higher amounts for hosting costs and review of national rates approach** are needed (in certain countries) to balance the gap between rural and urban areas. Explore the possibility to link to other purchasing power index-scales, e.g. in order to differentiate between capital and rural area.
- **Accessible working venues and accommodation are usually more expensive** than others, this easily raises the costs of activities and overcome budgets foreseen. The high costs are not only applicable to young people with special needs, as all other participants also are accommodated in the same place. It is important to be flexible and consider support for the overall extra costs.
- Young people with fewer opportunities might have specific language needs. OLS might not be the most adequate tool to support such learning. **There could be the possibility to let the applicant choose for OLS or an amount (such as 150€)** to allow the participant(s) to learn the language through a (non-formal) approach. Linguistic support should be provided to short-term activities.
- Appropriate support for team volunteering is key to assure a successful experience for volunteers and impact in the community, especially in the cases where young people with fewer opportunities are participating as volunteers. In inclusion projects, to have **a supporting organisation for the team preparation and follow-up should be mandatory**. It is important to clarify in the application the **role and profile of supporting organisation in volunteers' home country**.
- The coach has a key role in solidarity projects and in linking organisation with participant. As in programme guide 2018, it is important to give **possibility to identify a coach that is engaged in the organisation applying for the grant**. Especially when working with inclusion groups, it is important for the organisation to have as coach a person they trust (the same way young people apply because they trust the organisation).
- **A successful volunteering project should pay attention to facilitation of reintegration and post placement** by ensuring a successful transition between the end of a project and the return of the volunteer. There is the need for better guidelines on this issue and special financial support for the opportunities after the volunteering project (such as provision of organisational and/or inclusion support after the volunteering placement).



- More attention to **follow-up activities** could also be given to assure stronger impact and support the process of change (at personal and community levels).
 - Jobs and traineeships are a relevant opportunity to promote inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. To be able to make use of it, is important to **simplify procedures for a quicker process and more funds are needed - including for salaries of the participants**. If not funded from the programme, there could be the possibility to combine it easily with other funds including national programmes. Guidelines on how to combine with other funds are needed, otherwise it is difficult for NAs to motivate organisations to apply.
 - **Adequate financial rates are needed** in European Solidarity Corps. The existing ones are low even for non-inclusion projects. These and other conditions are currently not fitting for the (inclusion) users.
 - It is important to keep the possibility for **NAs and assessors to highlight the inclusion dimension of a project**. In the Solidarity Corps, the explicit inclusion question in assessment of relevance has been deleted in 2019 (compared to 2018).
- c. **Promoting inclusion**
- The **programmes and National Agencies should highlight that inclusion is priority** and clearly communicate it to applicants. National inclusion strategies can narrow focus and further develop their understanding of priorities and target groups, adapted to their national contexts and priorities. This should be also clearly communicated to assessors and valued in the project assessments. National Agencies could be invited to define targets in such strategies and report such achievements (to contribute to monitoring in the framework of the overarching Inclusion Strategy).
 - Develop a **supportive approach** per National Agency. Example: Dutch NA organises a kick-off meeting with young people leading solidarity projects as a risk check and assurance that project will be on track.
 - **TCA and NET activities can be used more strategically**, as it is being done in the framework of the Strategic Partnership on Inclusion. Allowing to reach out to more young people and new organisations, sharing about the existing opportunities, offering possibilities to participate and supporting the ones interested in running their own projects (with training and coaching, for example). TCA and NET can also be an opportunity to link national priorities with European youth work, allowing exchange of practices and development of tools and approaches that are useful to different National Agencies within the network. It is important to go beyond single international activities that, although relevant, have limited impact and potential to follow-up and have an impact on inclusion of young people in the programme but also in their communities. A process and needs based approach to both TCA and NET activities, rather than a project approach and to facilitate its use at national level (still missing especially for TCA) could be considered for the future programme generation. Collaboration with inclusion and diversity actors in the youth field (beyond Erasmus

and Solidarity Corps constellation) could also be considered. TCA and NET offer could also be more diverse in terms of working languages.

- Closer **collaboration with inclusion and diversity organisations** can be strengthened not only in TCA/NET activities (as mentioned above) but also in the development, implementation and monitoring of national strategies. Regular communication of programmes' opportunities, collaboration in reaching out to priority groups and support to develop inclusion projects are other possible actions.
- **On NET activities: closer exchange and partnering with inclusion organisations is needed.** Consider using NET for contact making between these organisations and NA staff. Programme inclusiveness related activities can be promoted such as inclusion tasters and study-visits.
- NAs to **get to know the employment sector** better and to establish contacts with the organisations in order also to ensure the quality of the placements (based on the values of the programme).
- **Networks of former participants** (such as EuroPeers and the future alumni network of Solidarity Corps) could have a key role in outreaching and promoting inclusion and diversity within the programmes. These networks, that can also be initiatives such as inclusion ambassadors/champions, would allow community building and peer-to-peer support for individuals and organisations at national/European levels. Adequate training should be provided to members of these networks.
- **Outreach and access to information** can be improved to target young people with fewer opportunities. Info sessions and materials could be adapted to different needs (each National Agency could do it according to which group they wish to target). The Cookbook for Inclusion, developed in the framework of the Strategic partnership on Inclusion offers some practical tips on how to develop such materials and to reach out (e.g. mapping of organisations, organising info session, national youth campaigns, working more with youth ambassadors and intercultural mediators).
- As there is a common need to **better communicate to potential beneficiaries** this opportunity, NAs are invited to cooperate between them in creating a Plain English Guide. Example: Irish NA has a draft proposal that can be used in the future by the network.
- **Map organisations working with target groups** that you would like to see participating in the programme and that could be easily shared between NAs to facilitate networking and partnership building (pay attention to GDPR limitations). Example: such mappings are being done in the framework of the Strategic Partnership on Inclusion. Check the Cookbook on Inclusion (available in SALTO-YOUTH website) for some tips on how to do it.
- Develop an **approach to reach out** to youth who are not linked to any structures, organisations, etc. but are falling under inclusive groups. Consider these groups, as solidarity projects could be particularly well used for/by them: in prison, probation, ex-offenders, children in foster/institutional care, refugees, geographically disadvantaged. Examples: NAs experiences in reaching out in music festivals, climate

demonstrations or any other protests and in cross promoting different opportunities through email communication, newsletter...

- Young people that are challenged to engage in their first (international) mobility experience need extra support. Especially if they never had the chance to travel or go abroad. To get engaged in international activities in their **home country can be a first step to experience an international and intercultural setting**, to get familiar with the youth work context and methodology. The **added value of the different formats** should be clearly identified and communicated to young people. If they ask “what is in it for me?” – it could be highlight, for example, the contribution to support finding a job, having an impact on the community, developing intercultural and language skills while travelling and visiting other EU countries.
- **Offer tailor-made support to youth workers and organisations which are motivated to get involved in the programme.** Examples: in the framework of the Strategic Partnership on Inclusion some NAs are providing coaching and mentoring to application and implementation of projects and involving new organisations in a cycle of national activity (preparation) and international activity – to allow also to get to know potential partners and develop projects together. Writing cafes and other initiatives are possible.
- **Assure quality of pre-departure training and that inclusion is tackled in such training.** The pre-departure training is delivered by organisations and, in some countries, by NAs. Examples: Irish NA is now incorporating it in the TEC - good practice training. In order to have pre-departure training tailor made, Finish NA trains organisations on how to do it, to make sure that certain elements are there. On TEC cycle, reintegration and post placement of the volunteer could be tackled and promoted.
- To explore the **possibility to use exceptional costs to cover expenses related to support and mentoring** of employee with fewer opportunities.

6. The role of SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre

SALTO Inclusion & Diversity has been strongly engaged in promoting inclusion in EU youth programmes. It is important to continue strengthening the work with other resource centres such as the European Solidarity Corps.

SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre provides resources (training tools, publications, information, and more) **to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and facilitate access of organisations** working with them to Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps. SALTO I&D also **develops the personal and organisational capacities** of youth workers and organisations to be equipped to develop more inclusive projects and deal with the diversity of profiles and abilities that comes with working with young people with fewer opportunities.

SALTO I&D will continue working together with the European Commission, National Agencies, programmes’ beneficiaries and other relevant actors in the youth and inclusion & diversity fields. By providing training opportunities and tools, gathering learning points, good practices and expertise from the field and sharing knowledge and achievements, we will be



contributing to remove obstacles to the participation and **make Solidarity Corps and Erasmus more inclusive.**

Concrete actions to be considered:

- **Promoting awareness on the importance of inclusion** in EU youth programmes to engage more NAs in inclusion and diversity efforts
- **Knowledge gathering/production** on target groups, supportive approaches and inclusion issues, within the framework of the programmes and international mobility (through publications, tools)
- **Support to policy development** on youth, inclusion & diversity
- Support NAs in further **developing the competences of their inclusion officers**
- Support NAs in **using TCA/NET more strategically**, through coordination of the Strategic Partnership on Inclusion
- Support other **TCA in the field of Inclusion & Diversity** (sharing tools, knowledge, experts...) and **offering training** addressed to youth workers and inclusion organisations to improve their skills in running inclusion projects and assuring more inclusive organisations
- Create opportunities for NAs, beneficiaries and other **inclusion actors to share experiences and tools** on inclusion and learn from each other
- On **EU youth dialogue**, contribute with proposals on how to reach out to young people with fewer opportunities and training offer related (e.g. addressed to national working groups)
- **Support SALTO-YOUTH website development** to facilitate access to knowledge, information about inclusion organisations and activities.
- ...

For more information:

SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre: inclusion@salto-youth.net