

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

The Programme seeks to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across all its actions. Organisations and participants with fewer opportunities themselves are at the heart of these objectives. With this in mind, the programme puts mechanisms and resources at their disposal. When designing their projects and activities, organisations should have an inclusive approach, making them accessible to a diverse range of participants.

National Agencies are also vital in supporting projects with a view to be as inclusive and diverse as possible. Based on the overall principles and mechanisms at the European level, National Agencies will draw up inclusion and diversity plans to best address the needs of participants with fewer opportunities and to support the organisations working with these target groups in their national context. At the same time, the SALTO Resource Centres supporting the implementation of the Programme are also key players in promoting and rolling out inclusion and diversity measures, in particular in regard to gathering knowledge and conceiving and running capacity-building activities for National Agency staff and programme beneficiaries. Likewise, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) plays an equally important role for the programme strands that are managed in direct management. In third countries not associated to the Programme, EU Delegations and, where they exist, the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) and Erasmus+ Focal Points are key in bringing the programme closer to the relevant target groups.

In order to implement these principles, the **Framework on inclusion measures**¹ as well as the **Inclusion and Diversity Strategy**² covering all programme fields have been developed to support easier access to funding for a wider range of organisations, and to better reach out to more participants with fewer opportunities. They also set up the space and mechanisms for projects which intend to work on inclusion and diversity-related issues. The Strategy aims to help address the barriers different target groups may face in accessing such opportunities within Europe and beyond.

The list of such potential barriers, spelt out below, is not exhaustive and is meant to provide a reference in taking action with a view to increasing accessibility and outreach to people with fewer opportunities. These barriers can hinder their participation, both as stand-alone factors and in combination:

- **Disabilities:**

This includes physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder someone's full and effective participation in society on the same footing as others³.

- **Health problems:**

Barriers may result from health issues including severe illnesses, chronic diseases, or any other physical or mental health-related situation that prevents someone from participating in the programme.

¹ Commission Implementing Decision - framework of inclusion measures of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps 2021-27: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-decision-framework-inclusion-2021-27>

² Implementation guidelines - Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity_en

³ For more information on this topic, please see the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

- **Barriers linked to education and training systems:**

Individuals struggling to perform in education and training systems for various reasons, early school-leavers, NEETs (people not in education, employment or training) and low-skilled adults may face barriers. Although other factors may play a role, these educational difficulties, while possibly linked to personal circumstances, mostly result from educational systems which create structural limitations and/or do not fully take into account the individual's particular needs. Individuals can also face barriers to participation when the structure of curricula makes it difficult to undertake a learning or training mobility abroad as part of their studies. Cultural differences: While cultural differences may be perceived as barriers by people from any background, they can particularly affect people with fewer opportunities. Such differences may represent significant barriers to learning in general, all the more for people with a migrant or refugee background – including but not limited to newly-arrived migrants, people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, sign language users, or people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties. Being exposed to foreign languages and cultural differences some individuals off and in a way limit the benefits from their participation. Such cultural differences may even prevent potential participants from applying for support through the programme, thereby representing an entry barrier altogether.

- **Social barriers:**

Social adjustment difficulties, such as limited social competences, anti-social or high-risk behaviours; (former) offenders, (former) drug or alcohol abusers, or social marginalisation may represent a barrier. Other social barriers can stem from family circumstances - for instance, being the first in the family to access higher education or being a parent (especially a single parent), a caregiver, a breadwinner or an orphan, or having lived or currently living in institutional care.

- **Economic barriers:**

Economic disadvantage, for instance a low living standard, low income, learners who need to work to support themselves, dependence on the social welfare system, long-term unemployment, precarious situations or poverty, being homeless, in debt or with financial problems, may represent a barrier. Other difficulties may derive from the limited transferability of services (in particular support to people with fewer opportunities) that need to be "mobile" together with the participant when participating in activities away from their place of residence or, all the more, abroad.

- **Barriers linked to discrimination:**

Barriers can occur as a result of discrimination linked to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, or intersectional factors (a combination of two or several of the mentioned kinds of discrimination).

- **Geographical barriers:**

Living in, for example, remote or rural areas, on small islands or in peripheral/outmost regions⁴, in urban suburbs, in less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) or less developed areas in third countries may constitute a barrier.

⁴ The European Union counts nine outermost regions. These are French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Reunion Island and Saint-Martin (France), Azores and Madeira (Portugal), and the Canary Islands (Spain).