Implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020

2021/2009(INI) - 23/06/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 471 votes to 55, with 66 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020.

The resolution noted that providing equal and inclusive opportunities for all is, and must continue to be, inherent to the fundamental values of the European Union. People from all backgrounds and walks of life must be able to benefit fully and equally from Erasmus+.

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. The current Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027) also goes hand in hand with the green and digital transitions.

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.

Parliament noted that 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.

Against this background, the resolution noted with satisfaction the overall positive perception of how inclusion measures have developed over the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programming period. However, Parliament stressed 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+.

The Commission is called on to:

- further develop Erasmus+ financing tools and establish synergies with other programmes;

- increase in the 2023 budget for the full implementation of inclusion measures in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps;

- 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;

- establish synergies between the EU anti-racism action plan and Erasmus+ in order to address specific needs and combat racism in all its forms.

Members praised 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. Without them, most participants, especially those with fewer opportunities, would not be able to take part.

The Commission, the Member States and national agencies are called on 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.

Parliament also encouraged 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.

All national agencies should appoint **dedicated inclusion and diversity officers** in order to reach out directly to learners with special needs and/or fewer opportunities.

The resolution also supports all EU initiatives aimed at facilitating student mobility, such as the **Erasmus+ mobile application**, **'paperless Erasmus' and the European Student Card**. The Commission should 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.

Lastly, Members welcomed 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 called on the Commission to closely monitor the future national implementation of this framework and to keep Parliament informed on an annual basis. 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.