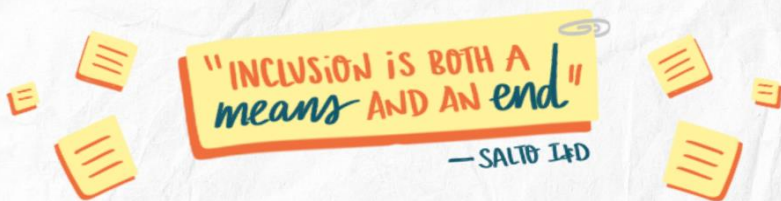




Research Report

Making Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps **MORE INCLUSIVE**

Inclusiveness of the programmes
and contribution of the Inclusion and
Diversity Strategy in enhancing
inclusion in the youth field.



January 2024
Gisele Evrard for SALTO Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
Purpose and scope of the research report.....	4
SALTO Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre	4
Inclusion and Diversity: concepts and definitions	5
METHODOLOGY.....	7
INCLUSION & DIVERSITY IN THE PROGRAMMES.....	8
Relevance in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps	8
Inclusion and Diversity data.....	9
Overview of the inclusion projects since 2021	9
MAIN INSIGHTS & FINDINGS: NATIONAL AGENCIES & STAKEHOLDERS PERSPECTIVES ..	15
Overview of focus groups, interviews, and additional contributions.....	15
National Agencies	16
Introduction.....	16
Key areas that emerged	16
Main findings and insights	18
SALTO Resource Centres.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Key areas that emerged	20
Main findings and insights	21
Trainers, experts, and beneficiary organisations.....	23
Key areas that emerged	23
Main findings and insights	24
Newcomers	25
Introduction.....	25
Key areas that emerged	26
Additional key dimensions from the participants of the Harvesting Conference ...	27
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.....	28
General observations: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance	28
Main and general recommendations.....	29
Additional recommendations for Erasmus+ Youth	30
Additional recommendations for the European Solidarity Corps	31
The 'Discover EU Inclusion Challenge'	31
A focus on neighbouring partner countries.....	32

POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR SUCCESS.....	34
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	37
ANNEXES	38
ANNEX 1: Visual summary of the research report	38
ANNEX 2: Overview of inclusion support in Erasmus+: Q&As developed for beneficiaries	40
ANNEX 3: Charts' corresponding list of inclusion topics for both programmes.....	44
Erasmus+	44
European Solidarity Corps.....	45
ANNEX 4: Executive summary of the desk research	46
INTRODUCTION	46
Purpose and methodology	46
HISTORICAL INSIGHTS AND EVOLVING STRATEGIES	47
MAIN INSIGHTS.....	47
Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020 and 2021-2027)	47
Key findings	47
Challenges	48
Successes	48
Areas for improvement and innovation.....	48
Main conclusions.....	49
European Solidarity Corps Programme (2021-2027)	49
Key findings	49
Challenges	49
Successes	50
Examples of innovative projects and tools	50
Areas for improvement and innovation.....	50
Main Conclusions	50
Other collaborative efforts and synergies	51
SALTO Resource Centres	51
Eurodesk and ERYICA contributions.....	51
FIRST CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	51

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and scope of the research report

This document is a contribution to the interim evaluation of the [Erasmus+](#) and [European Solidarity Corps](#) programmes (2021-2027). This evaluation is a requirement for the European Commission to submit a report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions by 31 December 2024.

This research report focuses on one of the programmes' priorities: Inclusion and Diversity (in this case, in the youth sector). In particular, it explores the contribution of the [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#) in making the programmes more inclusive and aims to provide an overview of the efforts in inclusion and diversity since the start of the current Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes in 2021. Additionally, the report identifies the strengths and areas for improvement that can potentially serve in the mid-term evaluation of the European youth programmes.

It is important to note that the resources used for this report and the overall process are based on the materials developed, received, or validated by [SALTO Inclusion & Diversity](#) (SALTO I&D). The research therefore does not claim to be a comprehensive and detailed analysis of all inclusion and diversity-related processes since 2021.

SALTO Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre

SALTO Youth Resource Centres are additional functions entrusted to designated National Agencies (NAs) of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes. They consist of small teams that support all NAs, the Commission and stakeholders involved in the development and quality implementation of activities and projects in the (youth) field. SALTO Resource Centres work on behalf of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sports, and Culture.

SALTO I&D provides resources (training tools, publications, information, and more) for persons and agencies supporting young people with fewer opportunities (Inclusion workers, youth workers, social workers, NAs, and coordinators). By offering opportunities for training, exchange and reflection on inclusion practice and diversity management, SALTO I&D works towards the visibility, accessibility and transparency of its inclusion & diversity work and resources, and towards making 'inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities' and 'positive diversity management' a widely supported priority¹.

¹ Extract from SALTO Inclusion and Diversity Mission Statement

Inclusion and Diversity: concepts and definitions

To simplify the reader's comprehension, preserve the importance of the topic, and limit the number of interpretations and definitions, there are a few key meanings that form the foundation of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and underpin the efforts of SALTO I&D, such as:

- **Diversity:** defined as the various characteristics in which individuals and groups differ from each other. Diversity emphasises the multi-faceted nature of identity, encompassing multiple parts that define who we are. Diversity is not just a characteristic of a particular group but is seen as inherent in society as a whole.
- **Inclusion:** described as both a means and an end, referring to the active removal of barriers to promote participation of diverse groups and individuals. It is a multidimensional process taking place in various social fields.
- **Exclusion:** the active denial of participation for individuals or groups in societal (and more) processes.
- **Marginalisation:** the process of placing individuals or groups in a powerless position within a society or community, often mentioned in context with social exclusion.
- **Personal and social identities:** personal identity describes individual characteristics that make us unique, such as talents, qualifications, lifestyle preferences, personality, beliefs, etc. while social identity defines who someone is based on the social groups they belong to, like gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and age.
- **Social cohesion:** the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, limit inequality, and avoid polarization. It is about how well a society sticks together or maintains unity.
- **Young people with fewer opportunities** refers to young people who face barriers due to various factors such as economic, social, race, cultural, geographical, health reasons, etc., limiting their access to opportunities under the programmes.

However, the focus groups and interviews that informed this research report encountered sometimes a wider range of understandings and conceptual approaches to inclusion and diversity. These perspectives varied from subtle nuances to more contrasting (though not antagonist) viewpoints that are summarised below. The purpose of highlighting these two points is to underline the ongoing reflection that exists in the field of youth work when approaching inclusion and diversity.

- **Definition of inclusion vs. integration:** most of the interviewees agreed that there is a significant difference between inclusion and integration but do not understand inclusion in the same way. For about 50% of them, inclusion is not an aim but a way to reach inclusive societies with more social justice, diversity, and equity mechanisms. For the other half (which is not antagonist) inclusion is viewed as a structure-oriented approach that acknowledges diversity and facilitates equal

participation for everyone. Integration is seen as incorporating minorities or disadvantaged groups into existing norms or structures. This illustrates SALTO Inclusion and Diversity's viewpoint that sees, as listed above, inclusion "as both a means and an end".

- **Inclusive society:** connected to the point above, an inclusive society is described as one where everyone is included. This perspective challenges the idea of 'inclusion groups', emphasising that it is the structure that needs to be inclusive to allow participation from all individuals, and not just those from specific groups.

METHODOLOGY

This research constitutes a **qualitative exploration** of the developments in inclusion and diversity within the programmes since 2021. It is *per se* not based on numbers, statistics, and data analysis, though it does incorporate overviews from the European Commission and preliminary (draft) data. Instead, the research report presents **findings and insights gathered through various methods including open-ended questionnaires, meetings, reports, interviews, focus groups, and literature review**. Therefore, the report predominantly focuses on contributors' experiences as opposed to strictly evidence-based content. Nonetheless, the report attempts to provide balanced and as impartial responses as possible to key questions concerning inclusion and diversity in the European youth programmes. Because of this approach, readers might occasionally come across areas of tension or even contradictions, varying depending on the contributors' perspectives and narration.

It should be noted that although a variety of events, studies, and research documents have played a significant role in collecting insights for enhancing inclusivity and diversity in the European youth programmes, this research process steered by SALTO I&D is a distinctive effort that builds on similar initiatives carried in the past, and to be continued in the future.

The report will document the outcomes derived from a series of processes, such as:

- **Desk research** (July – October 2023): this phase involved a thorough compilation of materials including meeting notes, reports of activities and projects, position papers, policy briefs, and other strategic documents related to the horizontal priorities of inclusion and diversity. Three principal reference documents supported the desk research and the overall report: the [Framework of Inclusion Measures for the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes for 2021-2027](#), the [Inclusion and Diversity RoadMap](#), and the [European Commission's Implementation Guidelines for the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#).
- **Focus groups and interviews** with NAs (26 NAs staff representing 18 NAs), SALTO I&D and European Solidarity Corps staff (5), trainers, experts, beneficiary organisations' representatives (12), and newcomers (3).
- **Written contributions** of SALTO EuroMed, SALTO Participation and Information and the Info Centres from Georgia (SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus).
- **Outcomes of events and meetings** such as the Harvesting conference of the Strategic Partnership on Inclusion (09/2023), the I&D Steering Group (10/2023), the ID Kitchen TC (10/2023), and the Discover EU Inclusion Round Table (11/2023).
- **Data, research findings and reading material** from the European Commission.

It is worth mentioning that at the time of this research report, the national mid-term reports, and the final analysis of [RAY](#) data are not yet complete, hence not integrated in this report.

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY IN THE PROGRAMMES

Relevance in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps

Both programmes look upon four horizontal priorities encompassing the different actions of the programmes:

- **inclusion and diversity.**
- digital transformation.
- environment and fight against climate change.
- participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement.

Though formulated in a slightly different manner in their respective Programmes Guide, both programmes *seek to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across all its actions. Organisations and the participants with fewer opportunities themselves are at the heart of these objectives and with these 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.*

To achieve this, National Agencies are also vital to support projects with a view for these to being as inclusive and diverse as possible. Based on the overall principles and mechanisms at 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 as regards to gather knowledge and to conceive and run 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 also key in bringing the programme closer to the target groups addressed by this Strategy².

To implement those principles, the European Commission created a [Framework of Inclusion Measures](#). It complements the [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#) and seeks to facilitate access to the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes for young people with fewer opportunities, remove obstacles preventing access, and provide a basis for implementation guidance. The barriers, listed in the Framework are as follows:

- Disabilities
- Health problems

² Extract from the Erasmus+ Programme Guide

- Barriers linked to education and training systems
- Cultural differences
- Social barriers
- Economic barriers
- Barriers linked to discrimination and geographical ones

Inclusion and Diversity data

The analysis of Erasmus+ (2014-2020), the European Solidarity Corps (2018-2020) and the current programmes generation (2021-2027) shows that **Erasmus+ Youth** and the **European Solidarity Corps represent between 27% and 34% of all approved projects** in both programmes. Moreover, these activities represent **between 22% and 25% of all programmes' participants**, with **more than 40% of them being YPWFOs**³. This is to be seen considering that Erasmus+ (Youth) and the European Solidarity Corps receive 13,83 % of the total budget combined.

Overview of the inclusion projects since 2021⁴

The period 2021-2023 shows 6.245 projects under the European Solidarity Corps and 16.151 under Erasmus+ Youth. From these projects, those **addressing I&D** are:

- European Solidarity Corps: 3.528 **(56,49%)**
- Erasmus+ Youth: 3.885 **(24,05%)**
- Total: 7.413⁵ **(33,1%)**

The charts below provide more detailed information concerning inclusion per county, programme and action, and topic⁶.

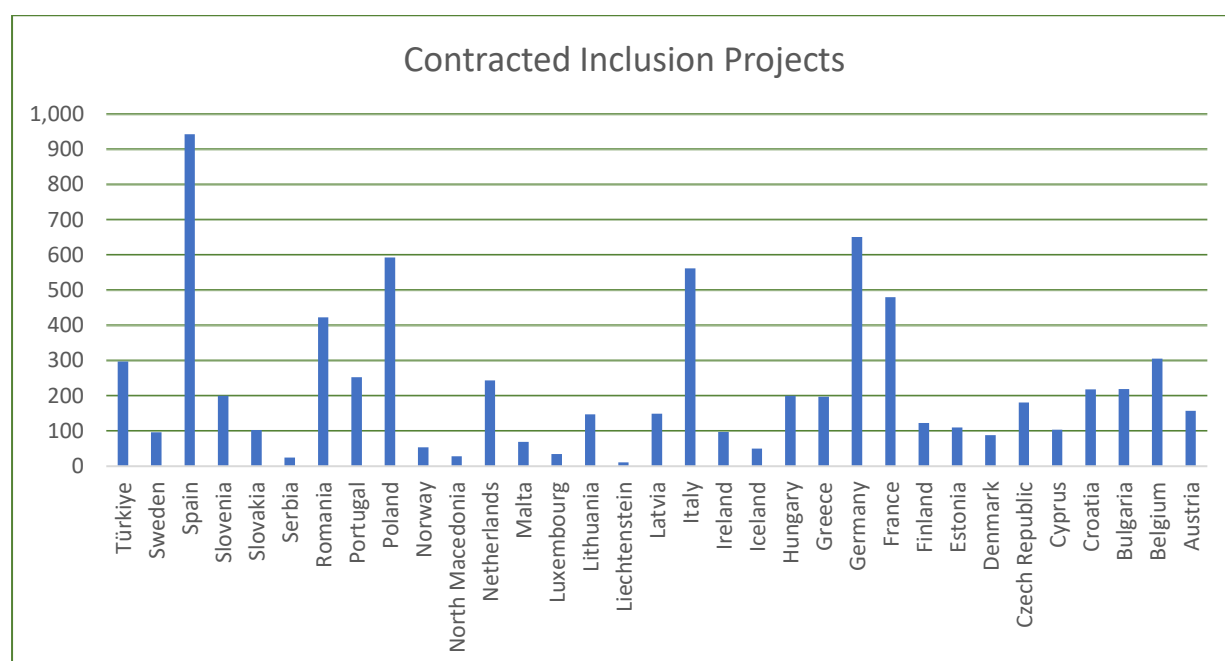
³ Source: EC Dashboards, Annexes 1 and 1a, extracted in autumn 2023.

⁴ Until November 2023

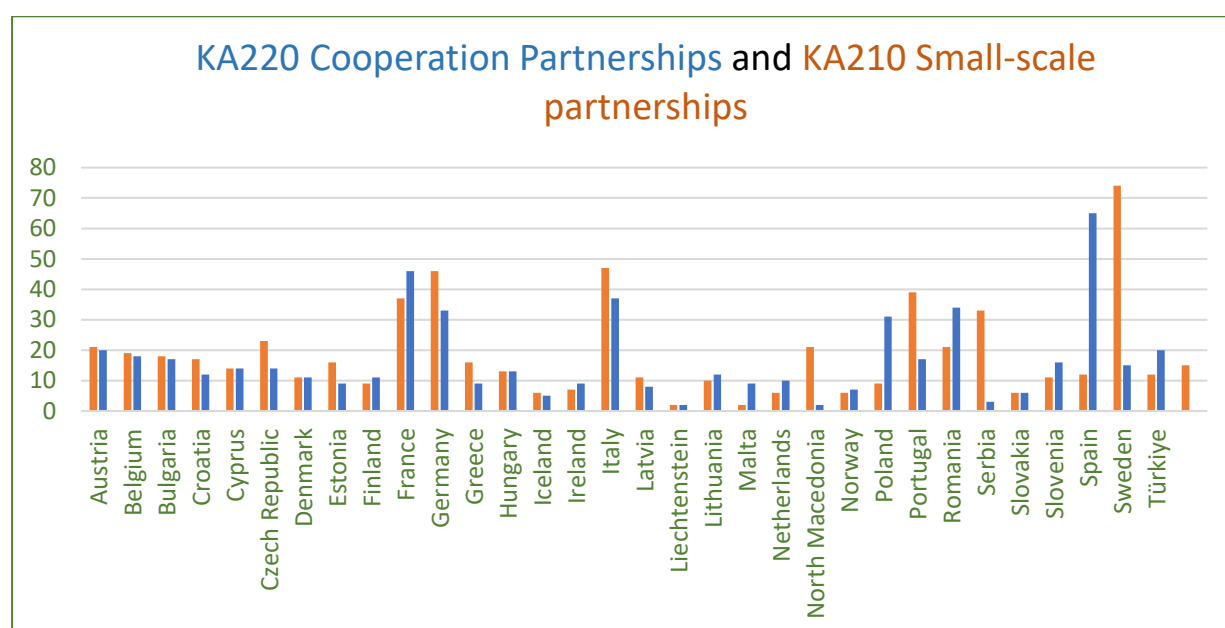
⁵ Source: European Commission

⁶ Source: European Commission

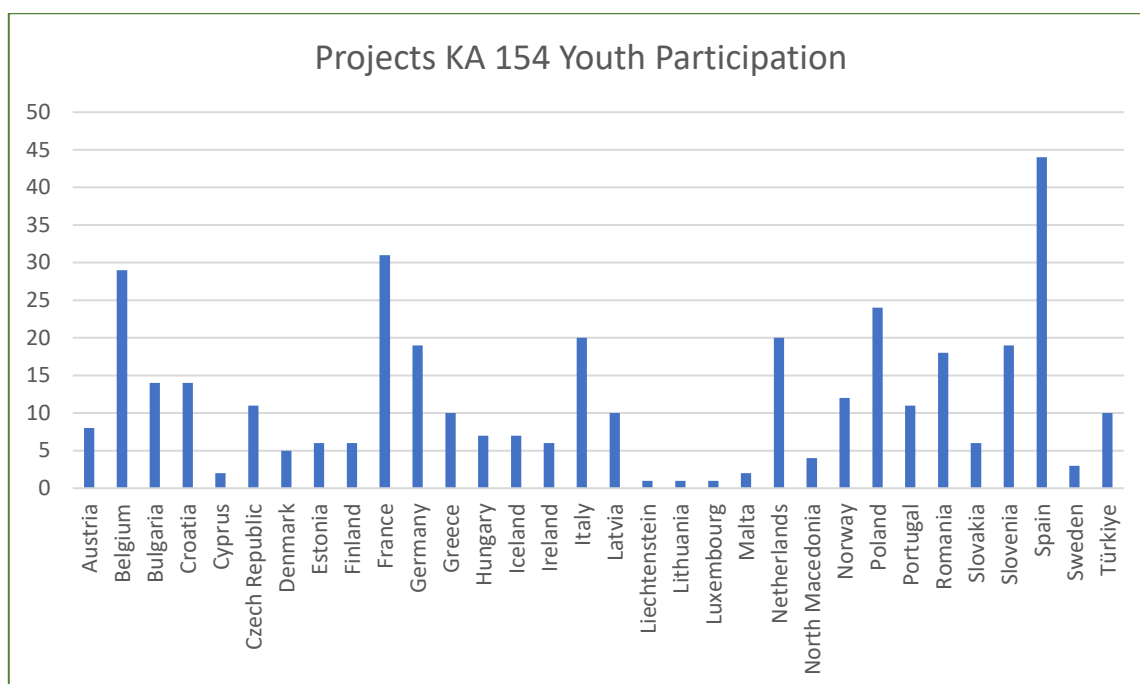
Contracted inclusion projects (total)



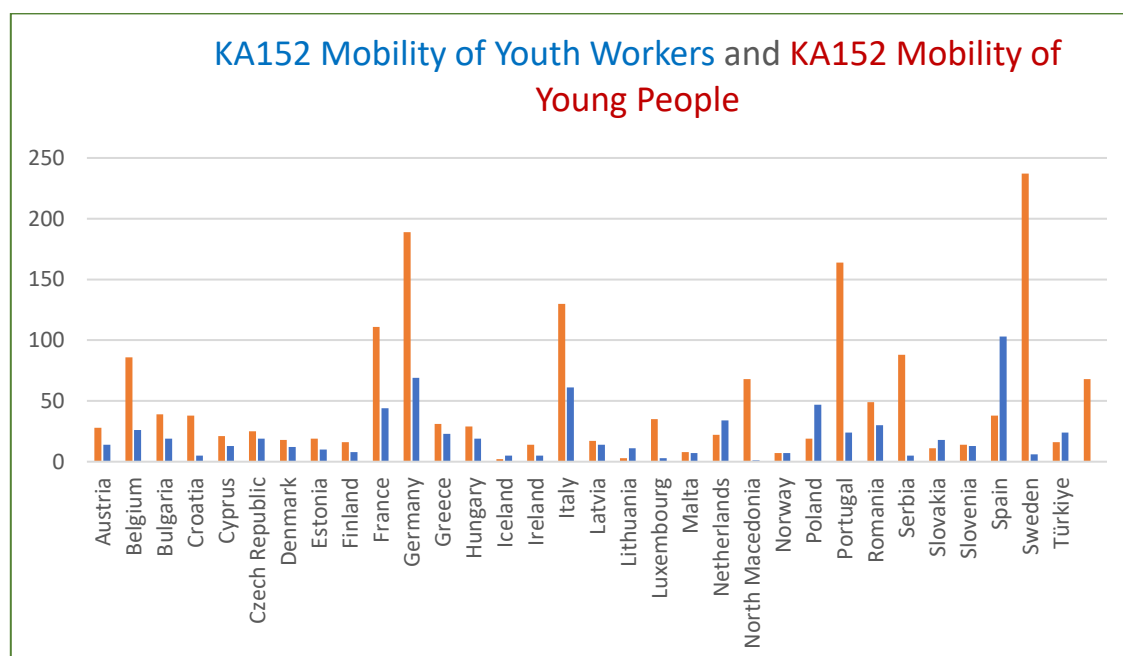
Inclusion per programme, country, and action: E+ - KA2 - Cooperation and Small-scale Partnerships



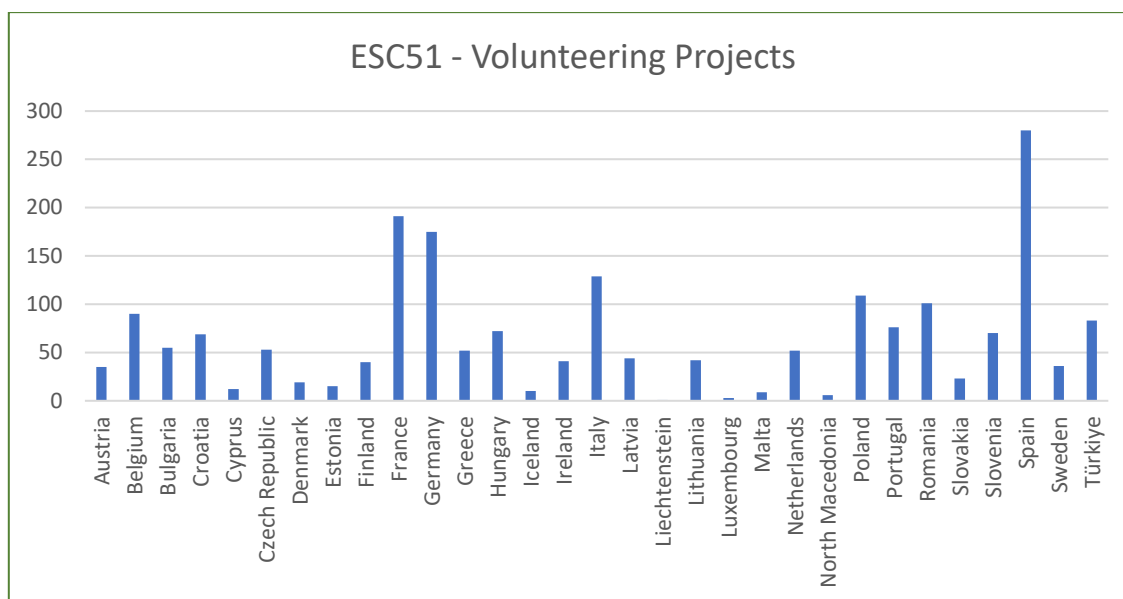
Inclusion per programme, country, and action: E+ - KA1 – Youth Participation



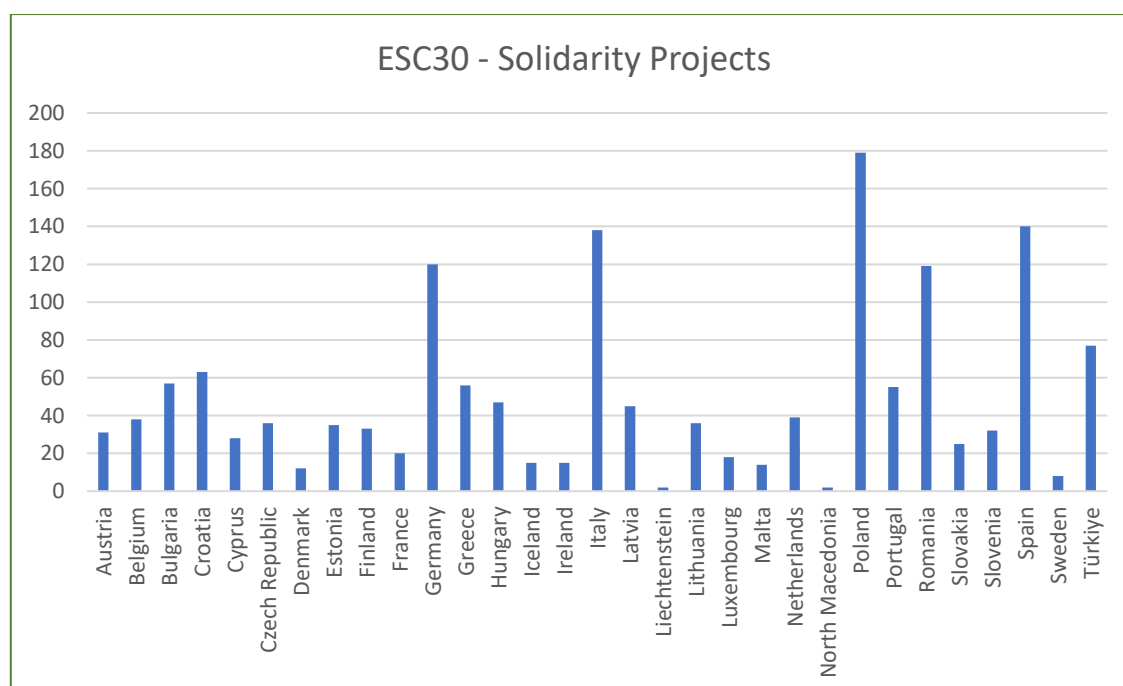
Inclusion per programme, country, and action: E+ - KA1 – Mobility of Youth Workers and Young People

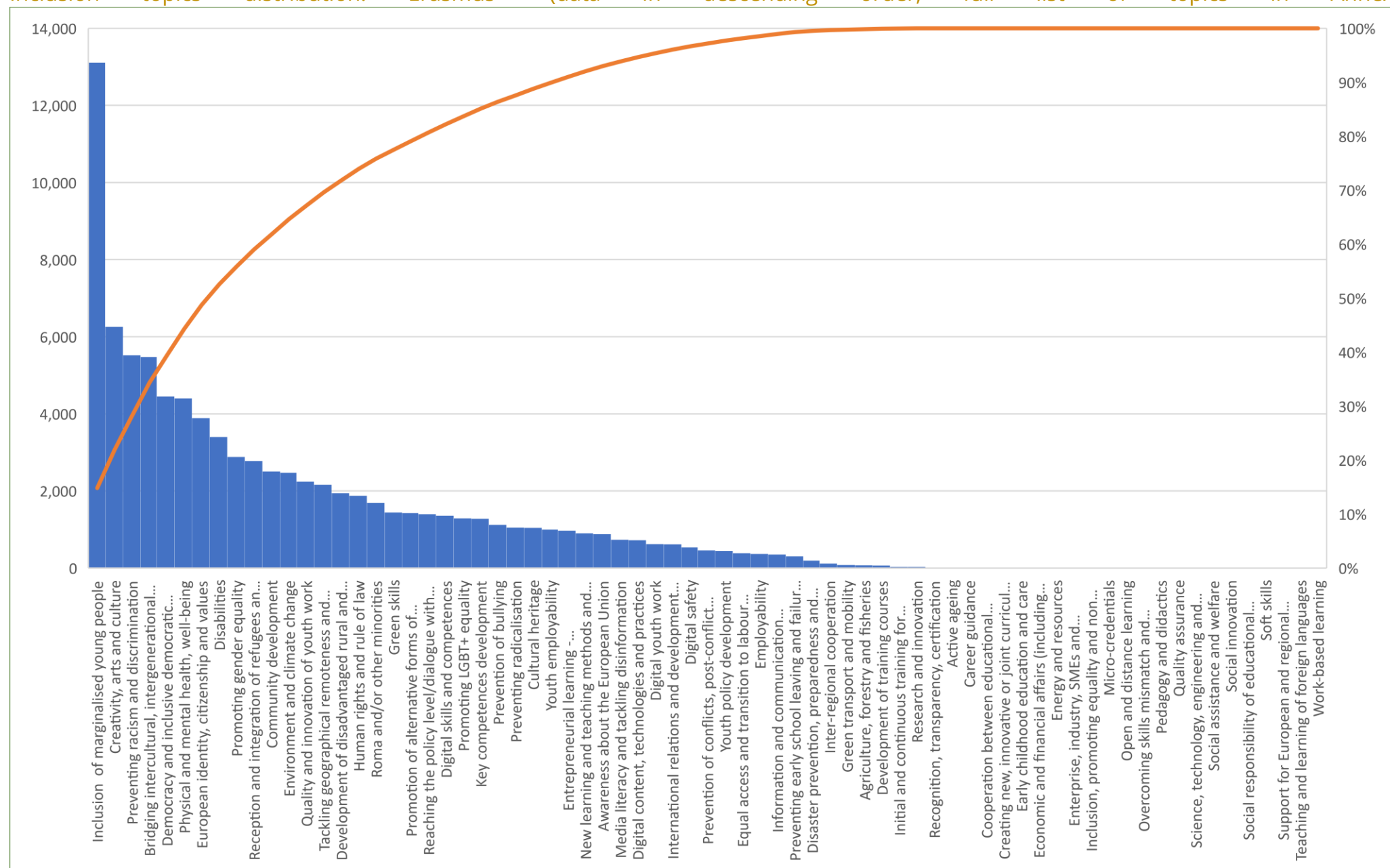


Inclusion per programme, country, and action: ESC – Volunteering projects

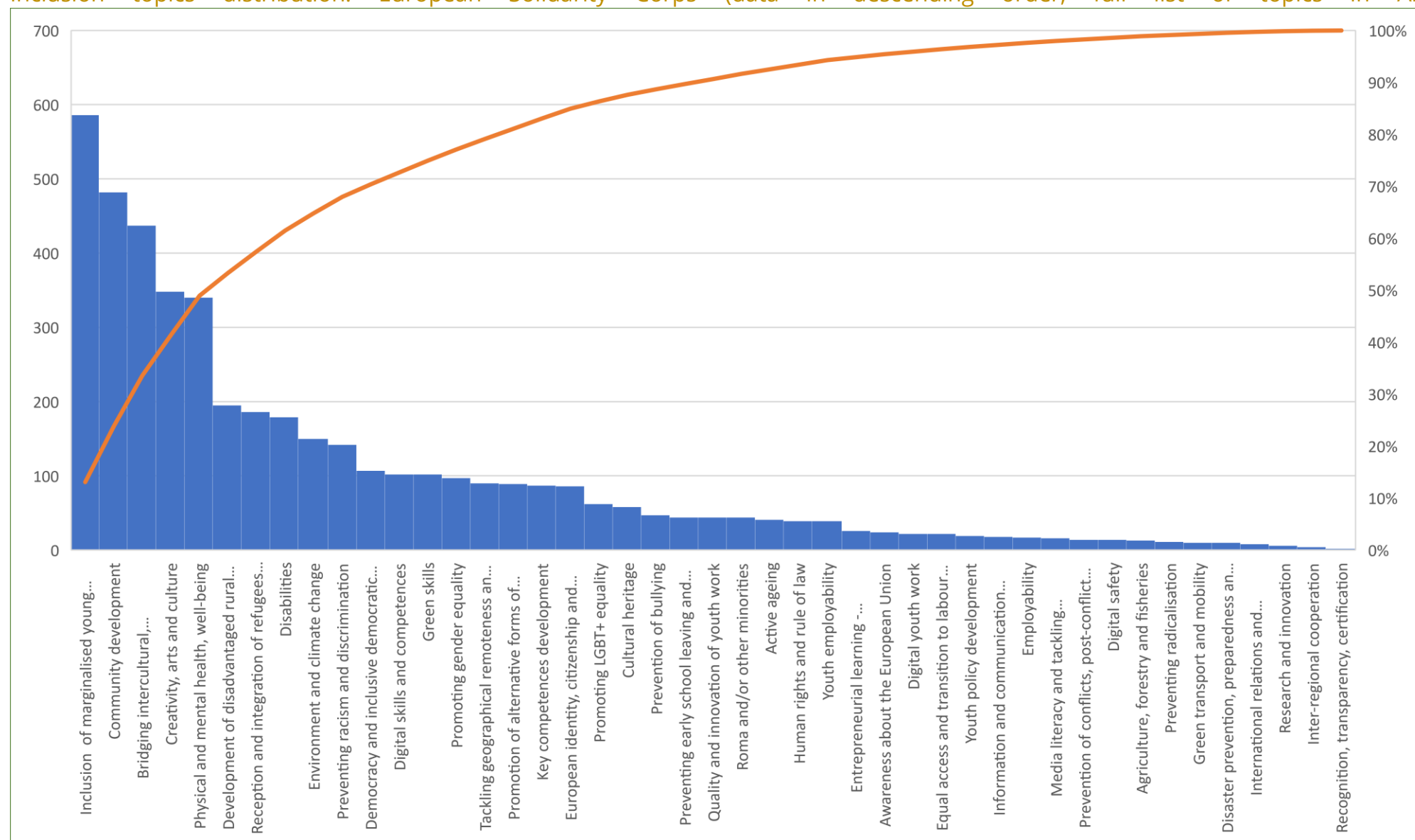


Inclusion per programme, country and action: ESC – Solidarity projects





Inclusion topics distribution: European Solidarity Corps (data in descending order, full list of topics in Annex)



MAIN INSIGHTS & FINDINGS: NATIONAL AGENCIES & STAKEHOLDERS PERSPECTIVES

Overview of focus groups, interviews, and additional contributions

In this report, one of the key elements includes the contributions of a series of focus groups and interviews, conducted between September and November 2023. The primary aim of these sessions was to gather diverse perspectives, experiences, insights, and feedback concerning the inclusiveness of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, particularly since 2021, even though some contributors compared with the predecessor of the European Solidarity Corps, the European Voluntary Service (EVS).

In-person and online focus groups and interviews gathered people from a variety of stakeholders, organised as follows:

- **National Agencies:** 26 NAs staff from Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Türkiye, and Movetia, Switzerland⁷.
- **SALTO Resource Centres (RCs):** contributions from SALTO Inclusion and Diversity, and the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre. Furthermore, written exchanges took place with SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus, and SALTO Euromed to gather insights from these regions.
- About 12 **trainers, experts** in quality labels, and representatives from **beneficiary organisations** in Armenia, Czech Republic, Georgia (via written contribution), Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom. This includes a specific focus on neighbouring countries.
- 3 **newcomers** to the programmes from France, Latvia, and Romania.

Additionally, consultations and material collection were conducted during the Harvesting Conference held from 19-22 September 2023, as part of the Strategic Planning on Inclusion. This conference brought together 26 staff from National Agencies, about 60 representatives of beneficiary organisations, youth workers, and young people, including newcomers to the programmes.

The topics tackled during the focus groups and interviews groups encompassed the following areas:

- The scope of inclusion and diversity activities.
- The significance of European and national ID Strategies (for NAs especially).

⁷ Not a National Agency but nevertheless cooperating with NAs of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

- Observations of changes and initiatives.
- Challenges and approaches.
- The need for specific resources or support.
- General suggestions and recommendations.

National Agencies

Introduction

Between September and November 2023, five focus groups involving a total of 26 NAs staff, primarily Inclusion Officers but not exclusively, from 18 National NAs were organised. Additional side meetings, such as an ID Kitchen (10/2023) and a round table discussion on Discover EU Inclusion (11/2023), contributed to enriching the insights and findings gathered from the focus groups and interviews. What follows also gathers insights and suggestions that emerged during the online Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group (10/2023).

Key areas that emerged

Most of the NAs contacted for this research report either already have a **national Inclusion and Diversity strategy** in place or are in the process of developing one. For the latter, these NAs are organising consultations, forming working groups, or conducting surveys to gather inputs on specific needs and areas of focus. In many cases, joint NAs (education, VET, and youth sectors) have collaboratively defined one single I&D strategy. These strategies generally have a broader scope, which is why each sector creates a more tailored strategic document that often focuses on internal processes, sector-specific action plans, and addressing practical application challenges.

The **improvements** noted include increased participation thanks to additional support for organisations, the introduction of **lump sum systems, top-ups, the introduction of small-scale partnerships, Quality Labels, and accreditations**. There is unanimity in stating that these initiatives have made the programmes more accessible.

At the same time, it is important to underline that these improvements also **create a budget constraint for NAs: the support for inclusion projects requires a bigger financial investment**, which often leads smaller **NAs to have to decide between more 'general' projects or fewer ones but with a bigger inclusion focus**. That contradicts the intentions of the horizontal priority and would benefit from the revision of the budget allocated to the actions that particularly support inclusion and diversity.

New and remaining common **challenges** in the implementation of the programmes include difficulties in **reaching out to new organisations**, the **emergence of new profiles of applicants** such as social workers, and the necessity for **simplified and**

tailored application procedures, complemented by more extensive coaching offers. A bigger investment in inclusion and diversity projects also implies dedicating more time and human resources, which is a challenge, particularly for smaller NAs. This **support often requires going beyond providing general information and asks for comprehensive guidance from the beginning to the end**, even prior application deadlines through consultations and feedback. Moreover, it requires clarifying the primary concepts of inclusion and diversity, which are often not well understood by newcomers (the same applies to the principles of non-formal education). Although all NAs very much celebrate having new organisations active in the programmes, they underline the additional workload and complexity it entails. I&D officers would benefit from training offers as well.

There is an existing perception that the **European Commission prioritises quantity over quality**. Achieving quantity in inclusion and diversity requires time, necessitates a more thoughtful approach, and involves providing consistent support to organisations every step of the way.

Like beneficiary organisations, NAs face challenges related to **bureaucratic complexities**, including IT tools like NAM, budget constraints, and a 'one size fits all' approach in application forms and activity formats. These forms often do not allow NAs to adequately evaluate the inclusion aspects or the project's overall 'inclusion and diversity weight', leading to the need for post-grant justifications or when requests for additional funds are presented⁸. There should be a **stronger focus on project formats, and actions that favour smaller organisations**, accompanied by an **increased budget allocation and simplified procedures**. This is especially relevant for projects related to youth participation, small-scale partnerships within Erasmus+, and young people participating in volunteering projects within the European Solidarity Corps.

There is a **call for more flexibility, simplification, and coherence in the programmes' implementation**. Enhanced inclusion and diversity require age flexibility (especially for Discover EU Inclusion), easier formats and forms, and increased funding for inclusion projects. NAs also acknowledge that they need to put more focus on qualitative assessment of project applications.

Regarding the budget, NAs have particularly underlined the continuous and long-term effort required for the supporting and accompanying roles of organisations in planning and implementing inclusion projects within both programmes. For organisations, the **lump sums do not adequately support the investment required for this support and guidance**, and coordination costs (such as salaries) should be covered, as is the case in KA2 Strategic Partnerships where costs for experts can be included. Furthermore, **current budget allocations are insufficient, especially given the rising prices**. Additional costs for inclusion projects tend to be high, and for instance, providing sign language support for one participant means higher costs that nevertheless benefit the entire group.

⁸ It is also worth underlining the fact that some organisations do not highlight the inclusion dimension, consciously rejecting the use of the label of YPWFOs for their participants.

Several NAs **cooperate with former participants or multiplier organisations to reach out to new organisations and target groups**, or to support newcomers entering the programmes. This includes networks of inclusion organisations, as well as peer-to-peer support, including Europeers. In general, this approach contributes to recognising and valuing their expertise.

The **role and the quality of TEC training** were some of the other issues that emerged. The exchanges highlighted the importance of TEC trainers to address emerging needs, including mental health support, and to therefore be equipped and trained to do so. **TEC trainings were also approached from a budgetary perspective** since the ceiling per NA is too low to adequately support YPWFOs⁹ and have more inclusive TEC training.

Main findings and insights

The key areas summarised above are in fact and in most cases, applicable to both programmes with a few exceptions. What follows is therefore a series of reiterated observations and recommendations that can be applied to both or single programme(s). This part also considers points raised by the members of the I&D Steering group.

Erasmus+ related

- Erasmus+ faces **challenges in balancing the broad participation of young people with targeted efforts on and for inclusion projects**. This dilemma often requires making choices that involve supporting a priority that requires extra funding, or numbers, and a larger participation of young people.
- **Engagement and outreach**: besides the additional work the needed support represents for NAs, and the need for a bigger understating of inclusion and diversity concepts, new organisations are often frightened by the complexity of the application processes. They also lack inclusion strategic plans or do not know how to initiate them.
- **Simplification of formats and processes**: repeatedly asked for, there is a need for more straightforward, and flexible application procedures and forms for youth-led projects, whether they are general or inclusion-oriented. The micro-grant approach, created for the European Year of Youth, has gained the success and appreciation of NAs, and could serve to simplify the process of awarding grants to inclusion projects, particularly for small organisations.
- **Youth participation projects**: those are usually popular and seen as a real success, especially for smaller organisations. When they are not, the NAs underline that it is often connected to complex procedures, once again. NAs suggest putting more emphasis on understanding why some young people do not participate in these programmes. Building on the success of the EYY micro-grants might be a good way to ease the procedure for all and open to more organisations and participants.

⁹ Young people with fewer opportunities

- **Discover EU Inclusion Action:** NAs express the number of complications in the design, application, and implementation processes, which include practical aspects such as the difficulty of booking tickets for groups and the challenge of handling last-minute changes. See more under the 'conclusion and suggestions' chapter¹⁰.

European Solidarity Corps-related

- **Focus on inclusion:** despite the recurrent challenges of procedures and budget allocations, the European Solidarity Corps is often seen as accessible and promoting the participation of YPWFOs. There is a feeling that there is an increase in inclusion projects and participation of YPWFOs, even though the threshold remains low (as the general budget of the programme is smaller and, as many underline, too low for what it pretends to reach).
- **Budget-related challenges:** the lump sum in the European Solidarity Corps should not be reduced to reinforced mentorships only and would benefit from supporting organisations' extra work too. The coordination fee for lead organisations is lower than before and the flat rate completely disregards the number of volunteers.
- **Simpler and inclusive volunteering project formats:** the formats (and the promotion) need to be adjusted to YPWFOs. In their current form, they rather generate easier access to already empowered and informed young people.
- **Profiles of applicants:** the range of profiles of applicants is wider than Erasmus+ (youth), and concerns are raised about forgetting that organisations not (primarily) active in the youth field were not part of the European Voluntary Service (EVS). While the programme is designed for a wider range of applicants, this can generate more uncertainty about quality and how the grants are spent. The role of the Quality Label and the assessment of QL applicants is therefore extremely important.

General ones

- **Budget and inclusion:** the high inclusion costs of projects create challenges and dilemmas for NAs, who need additional budgets to support projects with high inclusion costs without having to compromise on the number of projects funded.
- **Programmes implementation:** there is a need for a more comprehensive overview of TCA and NET¹¹ activities and their participants, suggesting a need for broader insights.
- **High costs for inclusion projects:** the lump sums and the maximum grants create a disadvantage for projects with high inclusion costs.

¹⁰ More detailed information under the conclusions and suggestions and the 'Discover EU Inclusion challenge'.

¹¹ Training and Cooperation Activities (under Erasmus+) and Networking activities (under the European Solidarity Corps).

- **A more tailored approach to information:** there is a need for NAs to conduct barrier-free information sessions and provide necessary resources like sign language interpretation. In the same idea, promotional material needs to be more representative of the inclusion and diversity target group.
- **General report considerations:** the reporting process would benefit from being open to other formats, such as basic fact sheets, and videos in sign language, for instance. The same applies to promotional material.
- **The concept of inclusion and labelling:** the diverse interpretations of the concept of inclusion and diversity, the need for more diversity sensitivity, and a focus on structural barriers are discussed. The IDSG¹² suggests forming a focus group on these topics.
- **Possible merger of the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ Programmes:** opinions vary regarding a possible merger of these programmes. Some believe that merging them is a practical solution, but it may dilute its uniqueness. Others argue that the European Solidarity Corps needs more budget and to be strengthened as a stand-alone programme, with its specificity, its value-based approach, and its broader target groups. Concerns also include losing the continuity of experiences and history. Moreover, the merge would also contribute to decrease even more the presence of the 'youth chapter' in Erasmus+. The solution might rather be to have adequate budgets and formats for the European Solidarity Corps, rather than merging it with Erasmus+.

SALTO Resource Centres

Introduction

Members of SALTO Inclusion and Solidarity and the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre were also interviewed. It is essential to emphasise that, in their case, they are not responsible for granting projects and do not handle the day-to-day management and implementation of the programmes. As Resource Centres, their role is to provide support to NAs and other stakeholders by offering their expertise, tools, resources, information, and training activities in their respective specialised areas. Each Resource Centre operates with its budget and does not follow the same operational procedures as NAs. However, the findings listed below illustrate regular exchanges, consultations, and support activities specifically designed for NAs and beneficiaries.

Key areas that emerged

The areas or topics that emerged in the focus groups and interviews are the **evolution of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes**, particularly since 2021. While challenges previously identified remain, new ones, new contexts and new realities

¹² Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group

have emerged, requiring continuous efforts and innovation. While this is particularly true for NAs, it also **influences the nature of the work of the Resource Centres**, and to a certain extent, their workload with relatively limited budgets to achieve their purpose. Emerging topics also connect with the **strategies aimed at increasing inclusion and diversity** within both programmes.

The exchanges also shed light on **ongoing challenges**, such as **budgetary constraints and difficulties in engaging certain beneficiary (target) groups**, particularly within the context of the European Solidarity Corps. Ongoing challenges concerning regulations and procedures (for NAs to implement and manage them) for beneficiary organisations were also repeated, especially regarding their complexity. Despite these challenges, the **potential of the programmes** to foster community building and promote inclusion and diversity was recognised, although there is a notable **lack of concrete data** to demonstrate this potential.

The **impact of external factors**, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and various socio-economic issues, was also a subject of discussion. These factors have particularly **influenced the way inclusion is perceived and practised within the programmes**, highlighting the dynamic (though challenging and often not enough supported) nature of inclusive youth-related initiatives in response to global challenges.

A **significant concern** raised was the **disparity of funding between Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps**. The European Solidarity Corps has faced budget cuts, generating a real dilemma for NAs between funding more participants and 'mainstream projects' or supporting more inclusive projects and YPWFOs.

As for NAs, **the role and the quality of TEC training** were also mentioned. The exchanges highlighted the importance of TEC trainers to address emerging needs, including mental health support, and to therefore be equipped and trained to perform adequately. Indeed, the necessity to regularly update their competences was emphasised, as well as the need to have more trainers who are representatives of the target groups of inclusion and diversity.

Finally, reflections on the **management and strategic directions of the programmes** underlined the influence of the European Commission and the need for greater focus on the technical and operational aspects of both programmes' management. The exchanges also highlighted the complex relationship between policy, strategy, and practical implementation in shaping the future direction of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

Main findings and insights

Erasmus+ related

- **Inclusion and diversity initiatives:** the strategy for inclusion and diversity within Erasmus+ has been discussed in terms of its development and application. There

is a focus on how the new strategy has changed the way inclusion and diversity are approached, emphasising the need for strategic and effective implementation

- **Budget and resource allocation:** the increase in the Erasmus+ budget due to COVID-19 measures, while seen as necessary and appreciated, also highlighted disparities in resource distribution, as well as in their distribution per key and sub-actions.
- **Mental health concerns:** connected to the previous point about resource allocation, rising mental health-related issues among young people were noted as significant challenges that need more attention in the future, recognising its growing importance within the programme.
- **Responsive to feedback:** Erasmus+ adaptability and responsiveness to feedback were seen as positive developments. The openness of the European Commission to feedback and the efforts to adequately cater for changes and adjustments annually and where possible is appreciated.

European Solidarity Corps-related

- **Programme overview:** The transformation of the European Solidarity Corps into a strong volunteer engagement programme naturally emerged as one of the key topics, partially because of the intrinsic connection between solidarity and inclusion. This transformation, seen as a positive one, includes a bigger focus on individual and team volunteering, solidarity projects, and humanitarian aid volunteering, marking a significant shift in its operational approach, especially compared to EVS. The European Solidarity Corps, with its focus on volunteering, solidarity projects, and humanitarian aid volunteering, requires changes in the programme compared to 2021, including shifts in volunteer engagement and funding.
- **Inclusion efforts and community building:** the potential of the European Solidarity Corps for community building and its impact on inclusion have increased. However, there is a need for more data to support this perception.
- **Budgetary constraints and impacts:** a significant concern for the European Solidarity Corps is the budget cut it faced – or rather, the fact that it still operates with the same budget as two and a half years ago, but with more needs, meaning for NAs to often have the difficult choices between funding more placements of volunteers or more inclusive projects, which is a paradoxical choice. This also connects with how organisations use the programme and the exceptional costs they have access to, even though it is acknowledged that “it is a lot more difficult to find hosting places for young people with fewer opportunities”. Moreover, the programme is not as such or by default more or less inclusive than Erasmus+, but it has a different scope and project formats, which underline the need to have a separate programme with an adequate budget, which also reflects today’s reality (for instance regarding unit costs and travel distance calculation).

Based on the outcomes of the interviews, focus groups, and prior collection of material, it is worth emphasising that the efforts of SALTO Inclusion and Diversity (as well as the SALTO network in general) are highly valued. Their support tools, collegial support and training offers appear to meet the needs, although they could benefit from better organisation, classification, and promotion. It has also been noted that the work of SALTO I&D cannot cover all the required areas of support and advocacy, and the responsibility extends beyond the Resource Centres' general capacity.

Trainers, experts, and beneficiary organisations

Trainers, experts, and representatives of beneficiary organisations who accepted to take part in focus groups or interviews are professionals with extensive experience in inclusion and diversity, working as trainers for various training offers and TEC training, providing support as coaches and consultants, experts in Quality labels, and implementing inclusion and diversity projects within the framework of the programmes.

Key areas that emerged

The interviews shed light on the **sensitive relationship between diversity and inclusion**, handling them as distinct yet interconnected concepts. Interviewees celebrate the inherent beauty and value of diversity, though differentiating from inclusion, which they link to the active effort of overcoming exclusion and barriers. This nuanced understanding highlights the practical implications of these terms in the context of the programmes.

The interviews also underlined the **unique characteristics of the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes**. While Erasmus+ is seen as adopting a more 'traditional viewpoint' towards youth mobility and youth exchanges, the European Solidarity Corps stands out for offering more local and accessible opportunities. This distinction is particularly relevant for YPWFOs, marking a clear differentiation in experiences within and between the two programmes.

Not surprisingly, one of the main major points of discussion turned around the **challenges encountered in implementing projects within the programmes**. Issues such as bureaucratic difficulties, visa barriers and complexities, remaining budget limitations, and the need for enhanced support, especially for smaller organisations, were highlighted, suggesting a gap between the programmes' inclusive intentions and their implementation. These challenges point towards an urgent and necessary need for flexibility and adaptability in how the programmes are implemented and executed by beneficiary organisations.

Political and societal contexts have been underlined as **factors that influence the implementation and effectiveness of these programmes**. The interviews tackled how external pressures and societal attitudes towards diversity and inclusion shape the experiences and outcomes of the programmes.

Strong opinions emerged, **advocating for inclusion to be a normative part of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps**, rather than an 'optional dimension', as it is sometimes perceived. This perspective calls for a significant paradigm shift, integrating inclusion at the very core of all initiatives, still respecting the openness and accessibility of the programmes to all types and profiles of participants.

However, there seems to be a **gap between theory and practice**, particularly in the European Solidarity Corps. While the programme theoretically also targets YPWFOs to foster societal inclusion, not all projects align with this objective, and participants in 'inclusion projects' do not always come from vulnerable or minority backgrounds.

An interesting **shift has been observed in the profiles of participants** in recent years. There is indeed a noticeable increase in the participation of YPWFOs, reflecting the programmes' widening scope and a rising emphasis on inclusivity.

The **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** was also mentioned, especially in terms of its effects on the programmes' implementation and the participants' experiences. Once again, this situation highlights the programmes' adaptability but also illustrates the increased need for mental health and well-being support and resources.

The need for **more tailored training and learning opportunities** to effectively plan, prepare, and implement inclusion projects increases. Although an ideal situation would involve beneficiaries competent in managing inclusion projects, the reality often shows a range of 'learning by doing' processes and gaining knowledge from experiences, which can sometimes be challenging and even risky.

Main findings and insights

Erasmus+ related

- **Participants' demographics:** the programme attracts more and more university students and 'young adults' with different profiles, but who are also facing challenging situations and a lack of opportunities.
- **Implementation challenges:** heavy bureaucratic processes, language barriers, and financial constraints remain significant obstacles. Despite those challenges, Erasmus+ is seen as a programme supporting broadening perspectives and providing international experiences to groups who would otherwise not have access to any form of mobility.
- **Accreditations:** beneficiary organisations unanimously celebrate the accreditation process, which contributed to a significant improvement in planning and implementing their projects. They nevertheless call for a bigger care regarding the rights and responsibilities of lead and partner organisations, sharing several cases of mismanagement (on both sides).
- **Lumpsums and exceptional costs:** as for accreditations, the introduction of lump sums is highly appreciated. However, for some organisations, the level of

justification and demands exceeds what they can ethically and morally accept. Some NAs, due to their national regulations, require data and personal information to label participants as YPWFOs and to provide organisations with exceptional costs or lump sums¹³. Moreover, while lumpsum and exceptional costs are welcome, the unit costs and travel distance calculation do not reflect today's reality. This also applies to the European Solidarity Corps.

European Solidarity Corps-related

- **Local engagement and accessibility:** because volunteering projects are mostly local initiatives, the current format of the programme, compared to EVS, supports making participation accessible to a broader range of young people, including those unable to travel for several reasons.
- **Implementation challenges:** as for Erasmus+, challenges include navigating in a complex bureaucracy and dealing with financial limitations, which influence efforts to cater for the need for safety and support for participants from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds. This means a significant gap between the programme's focus on inclusion and the practical execution of that objective in projects.
- **Lack of specific inclusion strategies:** many organisations often struggle with defining or implementing concrete strategies for including, reaching out, and supporting YPWFOs, or do not have any strategy at all. More tailored support and coaching by NAs could support improving that situation. Some NAs would benefit from defining clear(er) inclusion priorities and offering targeted support to organisations in aligning with these priorities.
- **QL for organisations:** connected to the point above, many organisations seeking the QL for volunteering projects declare a commitment to include marginalised groups and YPWFOs, but often lack specific outreach and engagement strategies. For many, the definition of 'YPWFOs' tends to be broad and vague, highlighting a gap in organisational strategies for inclusion.
- **Training for Quality Label (QL) assessors:** QL assessors need more specialised training or information sessions on specific inclusion topics.

Newcomers

Introduction

The interviews and exchanges with newcomers, meaning youth organisations, young people or youth workers who have not yet taken part in any of the programmes, resulted in providing an insightful glimpse into newcomers' viewpoints concerning participation in

¹³ Expressed in the case of 2 NAs only.

Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects, which can differ and exemplify dimensions that are not necessarily mentioned by stakeholders active for a longer time.

Key areas that emerged

The interviews highlighted the **appreciation of newcomers for the personal growth and intercultural engagement opportunities** the programmes offer. Potential participants are often initially motivated by the desire to travel, meet new people, and experience new things, and their motivation often evolves to include learning more about volunteering, inclusion, and understanding others.

However, **significant challenges** have been underlined, particularly for participants with disabilities¹⁴. The exchanges underlined the need for proactive and tailored measures to ensure inclusion and accessibility to mobility initiatives. While many exist, they seem to be unknown to potential newcomers who do not know 'where to start'. Interviewees also stressed the **hesitations due to lack of experience and concerns** about 'fitting in' and managing logistics, which can easily hinder motivation.

A significant challenge mentioned was the **complexity and overwhelming nature of finding suitable projects**. There is a need for more accessible and simplified information, especially for those new to programme-related experiences. Besides NAs and consultants, the role of returnees, peer support and networking were mentioned as a possibility to provide more and better support.

Information about the programmes and the projects needs to be **precise and designed in a format that can address those facing impairment** (e.g. visual impairment). Visual information and **promotion material also need to reflect more diversity** than it is nowadays, also efforts are acknowledged. During activities and where necessary, sign language, touch and hearing-based activities need to be made available, as well as suitable venues. As an example, the use of 'silent rooms' for those with social anxiety or a need for a quiet space is seen as an approach that can benefit from mainstreaming.

Financial barriers also emerged as a fear. The upfront costs associated with travel could, for instance, hinder potential participants, indicating a need for more thoughtful financial support mechanisms.

¹⁴ Specifically underlined during the interviews.

Additional key dimensions from the participants of the Harvesting Conference

While the list below also concerns organisations that are already active in implementing inclusion projects, it underlines many possible responses that connect with concerns and questions that emerged during the interviews and exchanges with newcomers.

- **Balancing inclusion with other tasks:** managing other projects or job-related tasks can be challenging and inclusion projects do take time. They cannot be rushed. This balance is crucial and often complex.
- **Adapting activities for diverse groups:** it is important to adapt activities that cater to the needs of diverse groups, acknowledging that their situations can be more complicated than assumed.
- **Reaching YPWFOs:** the difficulty of consistently including everyone, particularly those with fewer opportunities, has not decreased. When communicating about inclusion projects, it is important to emphasise experience, participation flexibility, and support systems to encourage participation from YPWFO.
- **Dealing with assumptions and misunderstandings:** misconceptions and the need to directly ask participants about their needs and desires are crucial. It also connects with a psychological and physical sense of safety.
- **The importance of listening and implementing strategic needs:** inclusion requires listening to and strategically implementing the needs of people involved in the project. To be genuinely inclusive, constant evaluation, open-mindedness, and organising activities based on the target group's needs are necessary. This also connects with the need for strategies for managing failures and unexpected situations in projects.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

General observations: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance

Since their launch in 2021, **Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps have made significant steps in promoting and integrating inclusion and diversity in the youth field.** Numbers show a concrete increase of inclusion projects in both programmes (though less in the European Solidarity Corps) and demonstrate a significant weight in the implementation of the programmes, all sectors included. **Concrete measures have been put in place to ease the accessibility** to the programmes, new actions and project formats have been created to target YPWFOs, and budgetary measures have been implemented to facilitate the management of projects with room for additional financial support for inclusion projects.

Nevertheless, there is **still a significant potential for improvement.** **Strategic developments** in programmes' design, budget allocation, application processes, outreach, and engagement with and of organisations, combined with **effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**, would reinforce their efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance in inclusion and diversity. Despite NAs and stakeholders' appreciation and acknowledgement of the support mechanisms in place, the programmes are not yet designed to fully realise their inclusion and diversity objectives.

Key challenges identified include:

- The **application forms**, the language used, and their similar formats for all actions, still favour more experienced organisations. Newcomers and smaller, less experienced organisations feel the overall process as overwhelming, often becoming a reason for demotivation, though recognising the potential added value of the programmes.
- The **budgets** fail to reflect the current inflation, real costs of inclusion projects, and necessary human resources, especially for organisations. While other actions and project formats provide rather high support for experts and staff costs, it is not the case for the actions that do see the biggest amount of inclusion projects: mobility of young people, small-scale partnerships, and volunteering projects. This suggests a need for a potential legal framework revision for the future programmes' generation and more flexible budgeting and programmes adjustments.
- **National Agencies as well as SALTO Resource Centres**, and in particular SALTO Inclusion and Diversity and the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, have significantly contributed to supporting inclusion and diversity. The creation of national I&D strategies has stimulated an increase in inclusion projects and engagement with and of new profiles of organisations, and those national strategies need to be sustained and further developed. However, NAs' and RCs'

efforts risk being hindered due to current financial and human resource limitations.

- Despite these challenges, the **quality of inclusion projects** has improved. However, efforts are still needed to support organisations in developing their inclusion strategies (including exploring the concepts and definitions). Improving quality also covers the need for more effective assessment of inclusion projects, and for TEC training and other learning offers to be more representative of and adapted to diverse inclusion situations.

The ongoing evolution and adjustment of the programmes are positive signs, and underline the need to support their continuity, value, and uniqueness/distinctiveness as crucial for their purpose and particularly, in fostering inclusion and diversity in the field of European youth work (and beyond). As they stand, these programmes are necessary for promoting these values, and any future developments should emphasise their unique contributions, potential, and impact.

Main and general recommendations

The following recommendations and suggestions apply to both programmes. Along with the general observations, they form the core of the issues identified and highlighted by all contributors to this research report. More specific recommendations and suggestions for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps are detailed further below. These specifically address additional elements not covered under the general recommendations.

- **Programme approach and evaluation:** there is a need for a shift in approaching the programmes, emphasising the development of and support of inclusive initiatives and projects, rather than focusing on the number of YPWFOs included. Support to inclusion support should facilitate the implementation of mechanisms, going from accessing information to implementing inclusion projects.
- **Evaluation and monitoring:** programmes' achievements in addressing inclusion and diversity and in reaching out to marginalised target groups are acknowledged and demonstrated. However, there is a need for further evaluation and analysis of their effectiveness and efficiency. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should go beyond the European Commission's dashboard and data collection. Adjustments of the existing M&E measures as well as the creation of proper monitoring and evaluation tools for NAs and RCs that do not have any yet are essential.
- **Structural change vs. individual integration:** connected to the above, there is a tension between addressing individual needs and fostering structural changes. While focusing on individual needs is necessary, a more significant focus should be on developing inclusive, diversity-sensitive structures that eliminate barriers from the beginning.

- **Understanding and addressing barriers to inclusion:** recognising and effectively addressing barriers to inclusion, diversity, and accessibility to the programmes is crucial. Although these barriers are nowadays better known and understood, there is a need for better addressing them with effective support mechanisms, which require significant efforts and resources.
- **A more sensitive approach to labels:** parallel to reflections on inclusion, integration, equality, equity, and diversity, among other topics, another area of tension has emerged concerning the use of 'inclusion labels' or 'young people with fewer opportunities'. While this reflection is ongoing and answers vary without 'right or wrong' ones, there is a call for a deeper understanding of organisations that refuse to use these labels for ethical and moral reasons, even though they implement inclusion projects. Additionally, a few NAs, constrained by their national regulations, dive into the personal details and backgrounds of potential 'YPWFO' participants to justify the label and the possible extra funding. Those NAs should strive to minimise or reduce the impact of these inquiries.
- **Inclusion budgets:** managing the high costs of inclusion projects generates challenges for NAs who face the pressure to address the needed additional budgets for inclusion projects without compromising on the number of projects funded in general. This needs to be addressed at the source, meaning the budgets allocated to NAs per programme and actions. Budget also means addressing the still limited lump sums and maximum grants for organisations, to better correspond to high-cost inclusion projects, including the human resources needed to manage them.

Additional recommendations for Erasmus+ Youth

- **Youth Exchanges, Youth Participation and Small-scale Partnerships:** there is a need to increase the lump sums and the additional financial support to inclusion projects, and to consider the need to better support organisations' human resources when managing those projects. Successful examples such as the European Year of Youth (EYY) micro-grants model have been shared, highlighting the positive impact of simplified procedures in increasing the number of projects, particularly for small organisations. Additionally, it is also important to explore and understand why some YPWFOs do not participate in these actions
- **Discover EU Inclusion Action (DEUI)**¹⁵: while recognised as well-intentioned, DEUI is not yet 'fit' to reach its objectives due to issues with its format, budget, age restrictions, and – paradoxically at first but logically - exclusivity for YPWFOs, limiting interactions and learning from and with other groups. It is therefore vital to address the complexity and inadequacy of the design, application, and implementation processes, including practical aspects such as group ticket booking and handling last-minute changes.

¹⁵ More detailed information about Discover EU Inclusion under 'The Discover EU Inclusion challenge'.

- **Accreditations:** there is a unanimous opinion that they have significantly facilitated the work of organisations and contributed to the overall quality of projects. However, since they are relatively new, it is essential to monitor the accreditation process, especially in understanding whether, despite their added value, it can also demotivate organisations from participating in the programmes.

Additional recommendations for the European Solidarity Corps

- **Profiles of applicants:** there is a need to address the wider range of applicants and the implications for quality control and the allocation of grants, highlighting the importance of the role of the Quality Label and the need for more emphasis on the assessments of applications.
- **Budget:** the programme is seen as accessible and effective in promoting participation among YPWFOs. However, the overall budget is considered too low for the programme to fully reach its objectives and especially the inclusion and diversity ones. There is therefore a need to increase its budget, prioritise budget allocation for inclusion-focused projects, and monitor the use of grants to ensure impactful project results.
- **Lumpsums:** the lump sums should cover more than just reinforced mentorships, and the flat rate for the coordination fee should not disregard the number of volunteers.

The 'Discover EU Inclusion Challenge'

The launch of the Discover EU Inclusion action (DEUI) has been seen (and is still) both by NAs and beneficiaries as a great idea with noble intention. However, the focus groups and interviews were often punctuated with statements indicating a rather high level of frustration and discontent.

The discussions about the current implementation of DEUI have shed light on three primary challenges:

- The need to **expand the age limit:** it is a challenge to send young people under the age of 18 or those who turn 18 at the start of the project for cross-border mobility. For many young people and especially YPWFOs, this age limit is too restrictive and does not fit the profile of the inclusion target groups.
- **Procedures related to DEUI do not align with its intended purpose.** The process is considered complex and time-consuming, generating an additional load on NAs and organisations. They have all highlighted complications in the design, application, and implementation processes. These challenges encompass practical and technical aspects, such as limitations of the Rail pass, including the app, difficulties in booking group tickets and managing last-minute changes, which hinder the overall process.

- The title **"Discover EU Inclusion Action"** is viewed as stigmatising and inconsistent with KA1 project types. This suggests a need to reconsider the name of the action, in addition to its format and procedures. Moreover, such a title and focus on inclusion groups can hinder diversity within the overall group and hinder opportunities for mutual learning.

NAs and organisations support the idea of having such an action but call for greater diversity and, particularly, easier access for a wider and older range of young people.

A focus on neighbouring partner countries

Youth work (and the world) currently witnesses an era of rapid global challenges, including wars, conflicts, and environmental crises. While this is probably and unfortunately there to last a while, the relevance, significance, and necessity to foster inclusive and diverse societies is crucial. Programmes such as Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps can play a key role in supporting this. This also calls for an increased collaboration with neighbouring partner countries and regions, highlighting the important role these cooperation activities play in promoting the values inherent in European youth programmes.

The challenges listed above go beyond national borders, necessitating collaborative and transnational responses. Cooperation with neighbouring regions fosters a broader cultural exchange, nurturing mutual understanding and respect, and inclusion and diversity are at the core of progressive societies. The principles of solidarity, democracy, and human rights are deeply embedded in European youth programmes. Strengthening connections with neighbouring partner countries strengthens these values, allowing young people to actively contribute, even if modestly, to peace and understanding, and to the concept of 'living together in diverse societies'.

Through their work¹⁶, the three regional Resource Centres contribute to those endeavours and have embarked recently on focusing more on inclusion and diversity. However, realising these objectives requires increased funding for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps. Enhanced financial support would increase the efficiency of the programmes, deepening an engagement with neighbouring regions. This would lead to stronger intercultural exchanges and collaborative projects, addressing critical issues that impact the youth field and in particular vulnerable communities.

Moreover, considering the current contexts and realities and the general climate that affects youth work today, enhancing cooperation with neighbouring partner countries

¹⁶ SALTO Euromed carried out a study on inclusion and diversity within the region, and the draft report from this study has contributed to the research report. Meanwhile, SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus is actively involved in promoting inclusion and diversity in the Eastern Partnership area (with the Russian Federation temporarily on hold due to the ongoing war). Additionally, SALTO South-East Europe has begun addressing inclusion and diversity, including hosting the 'Volunteering Conference' in autumn 2023 in collaboration with SALTO European Solidarity Corps and the conference's position paper on volunteering. Furthermore, all three regional Resource Centres are steering a Strategic NA Cooperation project titled 'Beyond Borders.'

through Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes is not only a strategic investment in the future of European youth, but also an important step towards building a more inclusive, diverse, resilient, and united Europe. Increasing the budget, project formats, and opportunities for cooperation with neighbouring partner countries and fostering a culture of inclusion and diversity can significantly contribute to addressing the societal and global challenges that youth work, and our societies, must handle today.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR SUCCESS

When developing indicators for success to measure the effectiveness of inclusion and diversity initiatives in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, it is important to consider both quantitative and qualitative systems of measurement. The proposed indicators – that do not claim to replace those defined in the [Inclusion and Diversity Road Map](#) (partially labelled as results) or in the Commissions' inclusion and diversity guidelines – could support reflecting in the future and more systematically the extent to which the programmes are accessible to diverse groups, foster inclusive environments and contribute to the personal and professional development of participants from diverse backgrounds and with diverse profiles. RAY would be, in this case, a natural and valuable source of information. The proposed list is to be seen as 'food for thought' and is not meant to be exhaustive.

Diversity of participants

- The percentage of participants from underrepresented groups (based on the definition of YPWFOs, etc.).
- The emergence of new profiles.

Accessibility

- The types and percentage of programmes and project materials and communications available in accessible formats.
- The number of projects offering specific accommodations for participants with disabilities.
- The number of participants using additional financial support aimed at reducing barriers to participation.

Participant satisfaction and experience

- Results from surveys measuring participants' perceptions of inclusion and diversity within the programmes.
- The number of reported incidents related to barriers, discrimination, or exclusion.
- Participants' sense of belonging and perceived values in and of the programmes, were assessed through post-programme evaluations.

Long-term participant engagement

- The rate of repeat participation or continued engagement.
- The number of participants from inclusion groups who move on to 'leadership' or mentorship roles within the programmes.
- Learning journeys of participants.
- Success stories or case studies showcasing the long-term impact of the programmes on YPWFOs and their organisations.

Shift in stance and attitudes

- Increased awareness and understanding of the importance of inclusion and diversity.
- The level of integration of inclusion and diversity into policies, practices, and programmes is part of the core values of the programmes.
- Proactive engagement and moves from passive acceptance to proactive engagement in promoting diversity and inclusion.
- Changes in personal and collective attitudes towards inclusion and diversity.
- The level of empowerment, representation, and participation of underrepresented or marginalised groups.
- Normalisation of diversity in the programmes (key actions, actions and areas' focus, design, and formats).

Institutional and organisational capacity and awareness

- The number of youth workers, youth leaders, trainers and volunteers trained in diversity and inclusion practices.
- The existence and effectiveness of policies and guidelines supporting inclusion and diversity within the programmes.
- The degree of inclusion in promotional and informational materials.

Partnership and diversity networks

- Diversity in the composition of partner organisations and networks involved in the programmes and inclusion projects.
- Collaborations with organisations specialised in diversity and inclusion.
- The number of projects specifically designed to promote inclusion and diversity.

Impact on local communities and community building

- Contributions of the programmes to promoting diversity and inclusion within local communities.
- Community feedback on the presence and impact of YPWFOs/diverse participants in local projects.
- The number of community-based inclusion projects supported by the programmes.

Innovation and best practices

- The development and implementation of innovative practices to enhance inclusion and diversity.

- The number of publications or resources developed on inclusion and diversity best practices.
- Recognition or awards (such as SALTO Awards) received for inclusion and diversity efforts.

Taken collectively, these indicators could provide a comprehensive view of the programmes' effectiveness in promoting and efficiently addressing inclusion and diversity. They could support identifying areas for improvement and guide future policy and practice developments. Regular monitoring and evaluation based on defined indicators are crucial for understanding progress and making informed and evidence-based decisions to enhance inclusivity and diversity within the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

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A wholehearted thank you to all of them for their time, dedication, and efforts in making inclusion and diversity possible.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Visual summary of the research report

Making Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps **MORE INCLUSIVE**

Inclusiveness of the programmes and contribution of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in enhancing inclusion in the youth field.

Inclusion and Diversity data (period 2021-2023)

PROJECTS ADDRESSING
INCLUSION

3885 [24.05%]

Erasmus+ Youth

3528 [56.49%]

European Solidarity Corps

These activities represent **22%-25%** of all programmes' participants, with **more than 40%** of them being young people with fewer opportunities.

"INCLUSION IS BOTH A MEANS AND AN END"

— SALTO I&D



Main insights and findings

Perspectives, experiences, insights, and feedback concerning the inclusiveness of the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes since 2021.

NATIONAL AGENCIES

National I&D strategies

– positive development

Budget allocation difficulties

Need to reach out to **new organisations & target groups**

Simplification of **application procedures**

Support dimensions require **effort and time**

QUANTITY OVER QUALITY?

TRAINERS, EXPERTS, AND BENEFICIARY ORGANISATIONS

Nuanced perspectives influence how organisations apply I&D in the programmes

Bureaucratic complexities – inclusive intentions vs. practical implementation

Project formats do not align with the programme's objectives

SALTO RCs

Unequal budget allocation between Erasmus+ and the ESC

TEC training: mental health support and diversity in trainers' teams

Relationship between **policy, strategy, and implementation**

TOOLS, EXPERTISE, RESOURCES, & TRAINING EVENTS



NEWCOMERS

Valued opportunities for personal development and intercultural engagement

Inclusion and **accessibility measures** for participants with disabilities

Complex procedures can lead to discouragement. More **accessible and simplified information is needed**

Conclusions and suggestions



Since 2021, **Erasmus+ Youth and the ESC have significantly enhanced I&D** within the youth sector, but **improvements are still needed:**

MAIN AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Changes in the approach and evaluation of the programmes
2. Understanding and addressing barriers to inclusion
3. Structural change over individual 'integration'
4. New monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
5. A more sensitive approach to labels
6. Revision of inclusion budgets



programmes' design
budget allocation
application processes
outreach mechanisms
evaluation measures

GREATER DIVERSITY and EASIER ACCESS FOR A BROADER RANGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

NEIGHBOURING PARTNER COUNTRIES

Need for enhanced cooperation with neighbouring countries and regions, promoting values such as solidarity, democracy, and human rights.

Increased funding for E+ Youth and ESC will lead to stronger intercultural exchanges and collaborative projects benefiting vulnerable communities.

A possibly stigmatising title

Restrictive age limits

Complex and time consuming procedures

Visual notes based on the research report "Making Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps more inclusive" (January, 2024)

SALTO

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

ANNEX 2: Overview of inclusion support in Erasmus+: Q&As developed for beneficiaries

1. What is the objective of the 'inclusion support' budget categories in Erasmus+?

Erasmus+ promotes equal opportunities, access, inclusion, diversity, and fairness across all its actions. In line with the [Inclusion Measures](#) and the [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#), the programme offers mechanisms and funding to remove barriers to the participation of people with fewer opportunities in mobility activities.

2. Who are participants with fewer opportunities?

Participants with fewer opportunities are participants who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the programme. Participants of any age can be considered as participants with fewer opportunities.

3. What types of inclusion support are offered through the Erasmus+ programme?

There are two types of the inclusion support:

- a) Inclusion support for organisations – unit contribution (fixed amount per participant) to cover costs related to the organisation of mobility activities for people with fewer opportunities.
- b) Inclusion support for participants – reimbursement of real costs to cover 100% of the eligible additional costs directly linked to participants with fewer opportunities and their accompanying persons (including costs related to travel and subsistence when grant available through standard budget categories 'Travel' and 'Individual support' is not sufficient).

4. What costs can be covered under the inclusion support for organisations?

It is entirely up to the organisations to make the most of the available support to ensure the quality of planned mobility activities. It should be noted that the inclusion support for organisations and organisational support are not meant to cover the operational expenses aimed at the daily running of the organisations. The organisations facing financial problems in their daily operations might be guided towards other EU or national financial support programmes (see also the Synergy section at the NAconnECT). The inclusion support for organisations might cover for example: costs of preparation of mobility activities (learning programme, cultural and linguistic preparation, additional training for staff, upgrade of IT equipment, etc.).

5. What costs can be covered under the inclusion support for participants?

The Inclusion support for participants can cover the purchase of essential services or goods to facilitate access to or participation in the mobility activity. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of eligible expenses because the eligibility is decided based on the specific needs of each participant.

Some illustrative examples of eligible costs are:

- care for children in the absence of a single parent during the mobility activity
- additional health insurance
- sign language interpreters
- counsellors for persons with mental disabilities or developmental delays, or persons experiences post-traumatic behavioural difficulties,
- specialised accompanying persons (personal assistants) for participants with serious health or medical conditions, impaired vision, or other needs,
- priority seats and travel assistance for persons with disabilities,
- dedicated counselling for persons with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds,
- service dogs or other animals (including necessary travelling arrangements),
- purchasing the necessary goods to benefit from mobility activities for people at risk of poverty (suitcases, toiletries, clothes, etc.)

6. How does the NA assess the beneficiaries' requests for inclusion support for participants?

- The assessment of the requests is made on a case-by-case basis. The National Agency analyses whether additional support is necessary for participants' access to the mobility activities. Necessity is understood in an inclusive sense, so any barriers that would create a significant lowering of the quality of mobility experience for the participant should be considered relevant.
- Over time, the National Agencies build a set of precedents to reduce the level of analysis needed in each case. Exchanges of practices between National Agencies take place at the European level to further improve implementation of the programme's inclusion mechanisms.

7. What supporting documents are needed to determine the eligibility of the inclusion support?

- In line with the grant agreement, it is up to the NA to define the supporting documents needed for a beneficiary. In general, the NA may ask for a “declaration of honour” from the organisations (that benefitted from the inclusion support for organisations) and proof of learning period abroad of participants with fewer opportunities (for example a learning certificate, presence list, etc.). In the case of the inclusion support for participants, typical supporting documents might be justification of the need of the inclusion support for participants, invoices, receipts, source documents, as well as proof of learning period abroad of a participant).
- The administrative burden on beneficiaries should be limited and the NA should ask for the necessary documents only to determine the eligibility and to ensure the coherency of checks and controls.

8. Are there any specific rules as regards the profile of participants in a mobility project to be entitled to inclusion support both for organisations and individuals?

- No, there is no such rule. An organisation is entitled to inclusion support for organisations irrespective of the roles of participants in the mobility activity: staff, learner, accompanying person, invited expert, hosted teacher and staff. Any participant considered as a participant with fewer opportunities is entitled to inclusion support for participants.

9. Is it compulsory for beneficiaries to declare both inclusion support for organisations and inclusion support for participants in a single project?

- No, it is not compulsory. The beneficiaries can receive inclusion support for organisations without requesting inclusion support for participants.
- Inclusion support for organisations is assigned automatically for each participant with fewer opportunities. Beneficiaries may choose to refuse this grant, however, there is very rarely any reason to do so, considering that there are no special conditions defined for its eligibility (the only condition is that the participant with fewer opportunities has indeed participated in the mobility activity).

10. How is the inclusion support calculated for the accompanying persons longer than 60 days?

According to Article II.2 Calculation of actual cost, Annex III, Financial and contractual rules:

“Funding for accompanying persons for the first 60 days is based on the unit costs for staff mobility (travel support, individual support). If the stay abroad is longer than 60 days, the grant item “inclusion support for participants” will be calculated based on real costs for subsistence beyond the 60th day.”

It means that for the first 60 days of the accompanying person's stay, there is no need to provide receipts, only the proof of duration of stay (mobility certificate) is required. The eligible amount for these stays is calculated based on standardised unit costs, not on actual costs. The standard costs cover travel and individual support. If other expenses are incurred (e.g. the compensation of professional assistants), these should be declared separately under inclusion support for participants.

For all costs of accompanying persons incurred after 60 days of stay, the funding is provided through inclusion support for participants which requires invoices as proof of expenses."

ANNEX 3: Charts' corresponding list of inclusion topics for both programmes

Erasmus+

In yellow, the first six are most addressed.

Inclusion of marginalised young people	Preventing radicalisation	Recognition, transparency, certification
Creativity, arts and culture	Cultural heritage	Active ageing
Preventing racism and discrimination	Youth employability	Career guidance
Bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide	Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship education	Cooperation between educational institutions and business
Democracy and inclusive democratic participation	New learning and teaching methods and approaches	Creating new, innovative or joint curricula or courses
Physical and mental health, well-being	Awareness about the European Union	Early childhood education and care
European identity, citizenship and values	Media literacy and tackling disinformation	Economic and financial affairs (including funding issues)
Disabilities	Digital content, technologies and practices	Energy and resources
Promoting gender equality	Digital youth work	Enterprise, industry, SMEs and entrepreneurship
Reception and integration of refugees and migrants	International relations and development cooperation	Inclusion, promoting equality and non-discrimination
Community development	Digital safety	Micro-credentials
Environment and climate change	Prevention of conflicts, post-conflict rehabilitation	Open and distance learning
Quality and innovation of youth work	Youth policy development	Overcoming skills mismatch and addressing the needs of the labour market
Tackling geographical remoteness and involving rural areas	Equal access and transition to labour market	Pedagogy and didactics
Development of disadvantaged rural and urban areas	Employability	Quality assurance
Human rights and rule of law	Information and communication technologies (ICT)	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)
Roma and/or other minorities	Preventing early school leaving and failure in education	Social assistance and welfare
Green skills	Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery	Social innovation
Promotion of alternative forms of participation	Inter-regional cooperation	Social responsibility of educational institutions

Reaching the policy level/dialogue with decision makers	Green transport and mobility	Soft skills
Digital skills and competences	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Support for European and regional innovation and smart specialisation strategies
Promoting LGBT+ equality	Development of training courses	Teaching and learning of foreign languages
Key competences development	Initial and continuous training for teachers, trainers and other education staff	Work-based learning

European Solidarity Corps

In yellow, the first six are most addressed.

Active ageing	Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship education	Preventing racism and discrimination
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Environment and climate change	Preventing radicalisation
Awareness about the European Union	Equal access and transition to labour market	Prevention of bullying
Bridging intercultural, intergenerational and social divide	European identity, citizenship and values	Prevention of conflicts, post-conflict rehabilitation
Community development	Green skills	Promoting gender equality
Creativity, arts and culture	Green transport and mobility	Promoting LGBT+ equality
Cultural heritage	Human rights and rule of law	Promotion of alternative forms of participation
Democracy and inclusive democratic participation	Inclusion of marginalised young people	Quality and innovation of youth work
Development of disadvantaged rural and urban areas	Information and communication technologies (ICT)	Reception and integration of refugees and migrants
Digital safety	Inter-regional cooperation	Recognition, transparency, certification
Digital skills and competences	International relations and development cooperation	Research and innovation
Digital youth work	Key competences development	Roma and/or other minorities
Disabilities	Media literacy and tackling disinformation	Tackling geographical remoteness and involving rural areas
Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery	Physical and mental health, well-being	Youth employability
Employability	Preventing early school leaving and failure in education	Youth policy development

ANNEX 4: Executive summary of the desk research

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and methodology

This desk research, steered by [SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre](#) (SALTO I&D), aims to contribute to enhancing inclusion and diversity in the European youth programmes, namely [Erasmus+ \(youth\)](#) and [European Solidarity Corps](#). This process includes analysing past successes and ongoing challenges based on collected materials from the current generation of programmes (2021-2027), the interim evaluation of Erasmus+ (2014-2020), as well as the first years of the European Solidarity Corps (2018-2020). The desk research supports identifying their strengths and weaknesses and compiling lessons learnt and successes to enhance inclusion and diversity in future European youth programmes, beyond 2027.

The analysis is based on three key documents:

- [The Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#), emphasises equitable access to the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes for all individuals, with a specific focus on addressing barriers faced by those with fewer opportunities. It also focuses on the promotion of diversity as a valuable source of learning.
- [The European Commission Framework of Inclusion Measures](#) is aimed at facilitating access to the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes for young people with fewer opportunities, removing obstacles preventing access and providing a basis for implementation guidance.
- [The Inclusion and Diversity Roadmap](#) details the steps and areas of intervention needed to implement the Inclusion & Diversity Strategy for the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

In addition to these documents, the desk research also looked at other materials, including support documents from National Agencies (NAs) and beneficiary organisations, reports of activities, position papers, analysis of synergies with other strategies, and diverse multimedia resources, which have informed the preliminary findings and further contribute to focus groups, interviews, and surveys for a final research report.

It is important to note, however, that the desk research does not claim to be a comprehensive analysis of all inclusion and diversity projects and initiatives launched since 2021.

HISTORICAL INSIGHTS AND EVOLVING STRATEGIES

An overview of the past, particularly the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), shed light on structural, operational, and financial barriers to inclusion such as linguistic challenges, financial and budgetary difficulties, and complex application processes, primarily affecting young people with fewer opportunities (YPWFOs). With 30% of learners from 2014 to 2016 being YPWFOs or facing complex situations and despite a significant progress in reaching disadvantaged groups, a considerable gap remained, requiring a much more tailored and targeted support as well as flexible funding measures and mechanisms, which all led to an increased emphasis on inclusion and diversity today.

In terms of processes and strategic documents, it is worth underlining the vision document "ID Beyond: Inclusion & Diversity in the EU youth programmes beyond 2020" and the report "How to make the European youth programmes more inclusive", which have been important in shaping future strategic steps. These documents highlight the need for a holistic approach to inclusion, enhanced IT tools, targeted support for YPWFOs, and the development of comprehensive guidelines and resources for inclusion. In parallel, a position paper by CARITAS and other Civil Society Organisations further underlined the importance of involving YPWFOs in the programme planning, implementation, and evaluation, providing structured information and using accessible programme documents to enhance inclusion transversely, in various areas of youth work and education.

MAIN INSIGHTS

Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020 and 2021-2027)

Key findings

An increased focus on inclusion: the mid-term evaluation (2014-2020) identified significant barriers to inclusion, such as financial difficulties, complex application processes, and limited support for small-scale initiatives. The programme, although effective in reaching a wider audience, showed gaps in adequately addressing disadvantaged groups. Nonetheless, since the introduction of the new Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, a noticeable increase in efforts to prioritise inclusion has been observed across various agendas of the Erasmus+ programme.

The effectiveness of SALTO Inclusion & Diversity (I&D): the 2022 assessment by ECORYS highlighted the overall effectiveness of SALTO I&D in promoting inclusion and diversity within Erasmus+, though highlighting remaining areas for improvements.

Challenges

A continuous call for adjustments: despite the progress made, there are ongoing needs for enhanced outreach efforts, efficient and simpler application procedures, tailored support mechanisms, flexibility in budget allocation, improved access to information, and caution when handling or creating labels such as 'young people with fewer opportunities' (YPWFOs). New actions such as Discover EU Inclusion also call for rapid and significant adjustments to reach their objectives.

Interconnection of inclusion and diversity, and other priorities: new programmes' and (policy-)related priorities such as digital transformation and green transition require innovative approaches to address social inclusion, underlining the need for more cohesive, systemic, and holistic approaches to these dimensions.

Successes

Collaboration among the SALTO Resource Centres: collaborative efforts among various Resource Centres, such as SALTO Participation and Information and SALTO European Solidarity Corps, demonstrate a joined approach to inclusion and diversity, with overlapping areas of emphasis linked to the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

Support to National Agencies and organisations and practical examples and training initiatives: tools like the ID Temperature Check, the development of Inclusion and Diversity Officer roles, and strategic resources such as the Cookbook for Inclusion, aimed at enhancing the capacity of National Agencies (NAs) and organisations in promoting inclusion. Initiatives like ID Talks, the Inclusion toolkit, and Inclusion Training for Trainers (among many others) have provided organisations with practical examples of inclusive projects, reinforcing the relevance of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy. As another example, the "Mentoring and Coaching within the European Solidarity Corps" focuses on enhancing quality mentoring practices and promotes an inclusive community of mentors (and coaches).

Areas for improvement and innovation

Greater participation of YPWFOs: there is (still) an urgent need for increased collaboration with [grassroots] organisations and for an in-depth exploration of additional dimensions of inclusion and diversity to ensure greater participation of YPWFOs in the programmes.

Responding to new and evolving challenges: the emergence of new challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the refugee crisis, mental health issues, and climate-change-related anxiety stresses the need for a rapid adaptation of the European youth programmes to address these evolving challenges, especially affecting YPWFOs and disadvantaged communities.

Main conclusions

The Erasmus+ programme has made **significant progress** in integrating and prioritising inclusion and diversity. However, it keeps on **facing ongoing challenges** in fully meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups, requiring continuous innovation and adaptation, flexibility, easier and smoother applications, and project management procedures. New initiatives or actions such as Discover EU Inclusion ought to match the needs and the reality of the target groups they aim to focus on.

The **interconnection of inclusion with other societal and global issues** requires a broader and multi-dimensional approach, integrating perspectives from various fields to effectively address the nature and purpose of inclusion and diversity.

Collaborative efforts among various SALTO Resource Centres and other stakeholders are crucial for sustaining and enhancing the impact of inclusion and diversity initiatives within the programme. Those already existing need to be sustained and space for more innovative collaboration needs to be created.

Future strategies should focus on addressing new and emerging challenges while ensuring the participation and support of all stakeholders, particularly young people with fewer opportunities.

European Solidarity Corps Programme (2021-2027)

Key findings

The SALTO European Solidarity Corps developed a **strategy** with a focus on quality implementation of the programme, and on building a community of practice. One of the key objectives is to contribute to the priority of inclusion.

Initiatives such as the **Quality Standards in the European Solidarity Corps** highlight the importance of diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities in activities, regardless of cultural, religious, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or socio-economic status.

Guidelines for 'Labelling in the Beneficiary Model' were developed to focus on labels and terms, ensuring they are used effectively to support structural barriers rather than generalise groups, simplifying administration for beneficiaries.

Challenges

Continuous calls for programme adjustments: ss for Erasmus+, there are needs for an enhanced outreach, efficient application procedures, tailored support mechanisms, flexibility in budget allocation, improved access to information, and caution with handling labels such as "young people with fewer opportunities". All the above seems to be

significantly stronger and more urgently needed in the European Solidarity Corps, compared to adjustments already made within and for Erasmus+.

The programme, as it stands now, **struggles to reach its objectives of inclusion and diversity**, and Erasmus+, calls for efficient and simpler application procedures, tailored support mechanisms, flexibility in budget allocation, and improved access to information.

Successes

Collaborative strategies: the integration of new strategies and policies since 2021, with joined efforts among several SALTO Resource Centres to establish common approaches and joined support resources, has fostered a more unified and interconnected approach to inclusion and diversity.

Effectiveness of SALTO I&D: the 2022 assessment by ECORYS highlighted the effectiveness of SALTO I&D in promoting inclusion and diversity within the European Solidarity Corps, reinforcing the relevance of the Inclusion & Diversity Strategy.

Examples of innovative projects and tools

Initiatives such as the **Europe Talks Solidarity**, and its support publications, address issues related to inclusion, like systemic discrimination and sustainable solidarity.

The **NET Matrix**, developed by the SALTO European Solidarity Corps for National Agencies and other SALTO Resource Centres, analyses the programme 'coverage', identifying gaps or missing areas, with a special focus on inclusion.

Areas for improvement and innovation

Increase the participation of YPWFOs: as for Erasmus+, there is a remaining need for more collaboration with [grassroots] organisations and for the exploration of additional dimensions of inclusion to enhance the participation of YPWFOs.

Responding to new and evolving challenges: similar to Erasmus+, the programme needs to adapt and more rapidly adjust to challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, global conflicts, refugee crises, and mental health issues, which particularly affect disadvantaged communities.

Main Conclusions

The European Solidarity Corps has made **significant steps in embedding inclusion and diversity** within its strategic framework. However, **continuous changes are needed** to address persistent and emerging challenges, those changes being the need for efficient and simpler application procedures, tailored support mechanisms, flexibility in budget allocation, and improved access to user-friendly [and representative] information. The programme in its current format can hardly reach its inclusion and diversity objective.

The **interrelation of inclusion with broader societal issues** requires innovative and multi-dimensional approaches. The integration of these approaches across the SALTO Resource Centres and National Agencies demonstrates the programme's commitment to a holistic view of inclusion and diversity.

Future strategies should focus on **improving participation opportunities for YPWFOs and adapting to rapidly changing global contexts**. This includes addressing digital transformation, mental health, and environmental challenges while maintaining a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion.

Other collaborative efforts and synergies

SALTO Resource Centres

- SALTO Resource Centres, such as SALTO Participation and Information (PI) and SALTO European Solidarity Corps, have developed strategies that complement the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy. These centres collaborate to establish common approaches and support resources, addressing challenges like digital transformation and its impact on social inclusion.
- The Youthpass Strategy, coordinated by SALTO Training and Cooperation, focuses on enhancing the visibility of learning in the youth field, with special attention to supporting YPWFOs.

Eurodesk and ERYICA contributions

- Eurodesk's position paper and guide for inclusive digital communication play a crucial role in ensuring inclusive access to youth information and EU (youth) programmes.
- ERYICA's European Youth Information Charter and the Quality Label assess structures based on principles of inclusion and accessibility, addressing the information needs of young refugees.

FIRST Conclusions AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Can do better”!

The desk research underlines significant progress in addressing and fostering inclusion within the Erasmus+ (youth) and European Solidarity Corps programmes, though challenges seem to persist while new ones emerge. Continuous efforts are required to address those ongoing challenges, which include the need for better outreach, simplified application processes, tailored support measures and mechanisms, and much-improved access to information, among others.

The emergence of new programmes and policy-related priorities requires innovative and adjusted approaches, as well as bigger institutional accountability to align their inclusion and diversity policies with the expected goals. The ongoing challenging evolution of political, environmental, and socio-economic contexts creates significant obstacles to inclusion, requiring continuous systemic efforts and creativity from all stakeholders, to cater for the diverse needs of young people across Europe, especially those with fewer opportunities or at risk of exclusion and marginalisation.