

Feedback to the Erasmus+ 2021-27 interim evaluation & Erasmus+ 2014-20 final evaluation

September 2022

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) would like to present nine key recommendations for the Erasmus+ programme.

Our recommendations build on our statements (links at the end of the document) on the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation 2014-2020, strengthening European Adult Learning through the Erasmus+ programme from December 2019, on a green and socially inclusive Erasmus+ programme from April 2020, adequate funding and support for inclusion in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027 from December 2021, and the inclusion of adult learners in Erasmus+ mobility actions from April 2022.

Increase the funding for ALE in Erasmus+ to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning

Adults are, by far, the largest group of (potential) learners: around 85 percent of the European population are 15 years and older. However, the share of the Erasmus+ budget allocated to non-formal adult learning and education (ALE) remains relatively low, at 5.8 percent in the Erasmus+ programme until 2027. While this is an improvement compared to the previous programme, it still falls far short of what is needed.

EU benchmarks [1] say that by 2025, at least 47 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, and, by 2030, at least 60 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months.

In order to reach the diverse target groups of ALE and to achieve the EU goals, an increase in financial resources is needed at all levels, and this also concerns the EU level with Erasmus+. For ALE, which in many European countries is largely organised by civil society and experiences precarious funding situations, Erasmus+ is the key programme to create innovation, build transnational partnerships for exchange of good practices and knowledge, and stimulate European integration of the ALE sector.



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Make third countries, including from Regions 1 and 2, eligible for participation in actions on ALE

Third countries associated with the programme, including those from Regions 1 and 2, should be eligible to participate in actions on ALE. In societies marked by a demographic change, in which adults represent a vast majority of the population, transnational cooperation and capacity-building in education and training cannot be focused exclusively on youth, higher education and VET, as is currently the case under the Erasmus+ programme for Neighbourhood East and Western Balkans. Eligibility for mobility of adult education staff (under KA1) and cooperation among organisations and institutions (under KA2), including forward-looking projects, would be of particular benefit to ALE organisations in Neighbourhood East and Western Balkan countries, improving participation in learning, professionalisation of ALE staff, and ALE policy.

Capacity-building actions in the Erasmus+ programme should also be open to ALE. Currently, only organisations representing youth, higher education and VET can participate in capacity-building actions under Erasmus+. ALE providers would greatly benefit from such an opportunity, as the sector lacks political recognition and remains underfunded, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe. This reduces opportunities for professional development among ALE staff and consequently the quality of ALE provision.

Put life skills and values for transformative learning at the centre of calls in the adult education sector

Adult learning and education (ALE) is very broad and encompasses, as also defined in the Erasmus+ regulation [1], the whole spectrum of adult learning that takes place non-vocationally and after initial education. Therefore, besides upskilling for the labour market and learning for employability, this includes learning for active citizenship, sustainability, social inclusion, creativity, critical thinking, and much more. ALE conveys values and is transformative - for everyone, regardless of the target group.

However, the new central calls in the programme since 2021 have a strong focus on labour market-oriented learning. From the decentralised projects in Erasmus+, evidence collected from EAEA's members shows that few projects on life skills and values such as sustainability, active citizenship and democracy are approved and that lists of approved projects show a preference for labour market-oriented projects. We believe that a **broader and more holistic approach to ALE would be important to create more space for innovation and to better respond to learners' needs.**



Introduce Adult Learning Alliances for stronger ALE structures and policies

Stronger structures in ALE require large-scale projects that bring together all stakeholders, including ALE practitioners and researchers. European alliances already exist in the field of vocational education and training and higher education and they show very successful results.

We, therefore, call for **Adult Learning Alliances to be included in Erasmus+**. These could bring together ALE providers, researchers and public institutions to jointly find answers to European challenges such as democratic deficits, digitalisation and the changing world of work, and have an impact at policy level.

Introduce Jean Monnet activities for ALE to promote European Union learning

Jean Monnet activities aimed at promoting innovation, mutual enrichment and the dissemination of information about the European Union are, in our view, relevant to all areas of education and should therefore also be **opened up to ALE**. Non-formal education and low-threshold learning activities in ALE are of enormous importance for the **dissemination of knowledge and skills about the European Union, as well as for teaching and research** on the study of topics such as democratic developments and citizenship.

Make Erasmus+ more sustainable

The climate crisis clearly shows that a shift in thinking toward sustainability must be a top priority: this also includes the Erasmus+ programme. The **programme should especially subsidize projects that promote sustainability through learning programmes, but also through project management**, for instance through ecological travel to transnational partner meetings, green multiplier events etc. This requires funding to cover additional costs and to ensure that these costs are not passed on to learners or beneficiary organisations.

At the same time, **social inclusion must remain a the centre**: more environmentally sustainable projects must also be socially sustainable, with the aim of achieving the best possible quality of project results.



Put special emphasis on the accessibility of the programme to all

Accessibility of the programme to all citizens must be a guiding principle in all actions and calls for proposals financed by EU funds. As a sector working also with very vulnerable groups of learners, **we want an Erasmus+ programme that is truly inclusive and accessible to all, also those with disabilities, impairments and fewer opportunities. This requires financial and structural support:** support for inclusion should not be limited to supporting learner or staff mobility but should also consider the whole learning environment to be effective.

To ensure quality learning activities and projects that meet inclusion standards, organisations need to invest in staff development, the adaptation of teaching materials and aids, provision of sign language interpreters for the deaf and audio aids for the blind, as well as infrastructure and building adaptations. Supporting organisations to promote inclusion in their learning programmes and providing guidance on how to do this should be a central part of National Agencies' inclusion action plans.

Make Erasmus+ KA1 mobility actions truly inclusive for adult learners

Participation in Erasmus+ mobility actions must be a right for adults from all backgrounds. Workers need to be given the right to devote a number of days per year to self-determined and self-oriented learning, thus creating an enabling and stimulating environment for professional development.

For a successful implementation of Erasmus+ mobility actions for adult learners, **sending and receiving organisations need to be provided with sufficient funding. Daily rate for adult learners who go on a KA1 training course should be increased so that they cover all costs, including adequate accommodation, subsistence and local transport.**

We strongly recommend a focus on learning objectives rather than specific target groups, to make learning inclusive. This would increase the participation of people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special needs in Erasmus+ mobilities. Additional support needs to be provided for learners with lower educational attainments, special learning needs, disabilities, parenting and caregiving responsibilities. People with lower educational attainments, special learning needs, disabilities and/or parenting and caregiving responsibilities should be given the chance to participate in mobilities, but must be prepared and supported accordingly, also from a financial point of view. Guidance plays a central role in this process: to promote awareness of the benefits of lifelong learning; to foster resilience to discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices; and to develop self-confidence for oneself and one's learning potential.



Collect qualitative and quantitative data on the impact of ALE

Data collection on the systemic impacts of ALE is complex, as the main impacts on individuals, communities and society are more likely to be long-term. The BeLL study [3], conducted between 2011 and 2014, highlighted short- and medium-term benefits of adult learning on individuals and their participation in communities and society.

We strongly recommend that the Erasmus+ programme be accompanied by systematic data collection with the support of research institutes and stakeholders in order to better understand the impact of Erasmus+ in adult learning on individuals, communities and society.

The impact of the programme on adult education providers also needs to be systematically explored. Previous evaluations and reports from large countries such as Germany have clearly shown that the Erasmus+ programme has had a political impact and a huge organisational impact, which then expands into a systemic impact. Quantitative methods could be used to explore the return on investment; however, for the systemic impact of Erasmus+, the use of qualitative methods is pivotal.

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[1] Council of the European Union (2021): Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021- 2030. 14485/21. Published 29 November 2021. Online: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14485-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

[2] European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2021): Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013. Online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0817&qid=1662660357335&from=en>

[3] BeLL - Benefits of Lifelong Learning (2014): Benefits of Lifelong Learning in Europe: Main Results of the BeLL- Project. Research Report. Online: <http://www.bell-project.eu/cms/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/BeLL-Research-Report.pdf>

EAEA statements on Erasmus+

ERASMUS+ IMPACTS ADULT EDUCATION FAR BEYOND THE MEASURED. Reaction to the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation. February 2018. Online: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018_Reaction-to-the-Erasmus-midterm-evaluation_final-2.pdf

ALL WE WANT IS... A NEW ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME THAT STRENGTHENS EUROPEAN ADULT EDUCATION. December 2019. Online: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EAEA_statement_All-we-want-is-E.pdf

FOR A GREEN AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME. April 2020. Online: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EAEA_statement_Greening-E_updated-April-2020_final.pdf

MORE INCLUSION REQUIRES ADEQUATE FUNDING AND SUPPORT. Reaction to the Commission Implementing Decision on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027. December 2021. Online: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Reaction-Inclusion-in-E_December-2021_final.pdf

INCLUDE ADULT LEARNERS IN ERASMUS+ MOBILITY ACTIONS - BUT DO IT RIGHT! April 2022. Online: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EAEA-statement_Erasmus-mobility-for-adult-learners_April-2022.pdf

