



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Contact

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR THE EDUCATION OF
ADULTS (EAEA)

Transparency register no.
3334854676-12

Regina Ebner
Secretary General
gina.ebner@eaea.org

Raffaella Kihrer
Deputy Secretary General
and Head of Policy
raffaella.kihrer@eaea.org

Davide Muraro
Policy and Projects
Coordinator
davide.muraro@eaea.org

Erasmus+: What's in it for adult learning and education?

EAEA's feedback to the Open Public Consultation

December 2023

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) welcomes the opportunity to give feedback on the current and former Erasmus+ programme in the open public consultation launched by the European Commission.

EAEA represents adult learning and education (ALE) at the European level and regularly consults its 122 members in 42 European countries – many of which are part of the European Union – on key policy issues. In 2022 and 2023, we asked our members for feedback on their experience with the Erasmus+ programmes.

General comments and positive developments:

- EAEA members welcome the fact that the **2021-2027 programme enables mobility of adult learners** - this did not exist in the previous Erasmus+ programme from 2014 to 2020, which was perceived as a major gap by many adult learners, but also by educational institutions;
- The **increase in the total budget for Erasmus+** and the specific budget for ALE in the KA1 and KA2 programmes is very welcome: it improves the opportunities to work transnationally and create innovation in our sector.

Challenges and issues

Design of the calls:

- The **objectives of the programme, especially in adult learning and education (ALE), are not aligned with the calls** in the actions implemented under direct management: the objectives include, among others, the promotion of skills for life, taking action for the green transition and climate change; however, the calls focus strongly on employment-related aspects of ALE and do not leave space for aspects of ALE focusing on life skills such as citizenship and green skills;
- ALE organisations call for the creation of a specific budget line for **ALE Alliances within Erasmus+**: this would give the possibility to work on larger projects with bigger networks, involving also research partners such as universities, and the private sector, on issues central to ALE such as democracy learning, sustainability and climate action learning, etc.;
- **Follow-up projects of very successful Erasmus+ projects** should be made possible within Erasmus+, also as KA2 projects as follow-ups of a previous KA2 project: this is needed to reach wider audiences, strengthen sustainability of the actions etc. Currently, national agencies generally do not approve any follow-up projects;
- ALE organisations also call for **greater coherence between Erasmus+ and other EU funding instruments such as ESF+, CERV, Horizon, DEAR, AMIF, etc.** to simplify and standardise the application and reporting processes and forms across all programmes, and to ensure greater accessibility of all relevant funding programmes.

Budget:

- The **budget available for actions in ALE is becoming increasingly unpredictable**:
 - whereas the overall budget has increased, organisations applying to national agencies in the decentralised calls feel an increased competition for a share of the budget;
 - furthermore, ALE organisations note that national agencies tend to approve projects with a clear VET orientation under the adult education strand of the call, therefore creating additional competition for the comparatively small budget share for ALE;
 - the centrally managed calls in Erasmus+ are not in line with the objectives for ALE and focus on employment-related learning, making it more difficult for ALE organisations to find possibilities to apply for funding;
- The current total amount of the budget and the **budget share 5.8% of the total budget for education and training for ALE are not sufficient to achieve a participation of 60% of adults in ALE by 2030**, especially due to the lack of structural funding for ALE at the national and regional levels in Europe and the high degree of dependence on EU project funding;



- **Operating grants in the Erasmus+ programme are not sufficient to ensure strong support of lifelong learning** at the European level: they require the same or very similar obligations in terms of application and reporting procedures than operating grants in other Directorate Generals of the European Commission, yet the amounts of grants in Erasmus+ are considerably lower: the maximum grant that European associations and networks in education and youth can apply for is 175.000 EUR (as compared, for instance, to operating grants managed by DG EMPL or DG INTPA that can be up to 1 million EUR for European associations in the social and development sectors) – this suggests a lower value of education and youth for the European Union compared to other sectors.

Access to funding:

- Despite the efforts to simplify the application and reporting procedures for Erasmus+ grants, EAEA members note that the **application and reporting requirements remain very high** and discourage organisations from engaging in Erasmus+ projects;
- KA1 projects for staff and learner mobility requires high administrative efforts, such as preparing a detailed learning programme, monitoring, evaluating the learning outcomes etc., but the **budget for organisational support of the sending and hosting organisations is very limited** (100 EUR per participant, which is recommended by the EC to be shared between the sending and hosting organisations); this is discouraging organisations in countries with higher staff costs from applying for KA1 projects as this would mean a financial loss for the organisation beyond the usual co-funding obligations of applicants and project partners;
- **Individual support, i.e. support for subsistence and accommodation, is considerably lower for adult learners than for adult learning staff**, and is too low to cover costs of a normal (budget) hotel room and food in most countries – this requires sending organisations and/or learners to subsidise the mobility costs, which, in turn, has a negative impact on the participation of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- ALE organisations strongly demand the **participation of third countries**, including Switzerland and the United Kingdom, as well as countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood and Western Balkans: participation and exchange would be extremely beneficial for professionalisation of staff, developing joint learning programmes etc.



Management of centralised and decentralised calls:

- In the centralised calls, there is a strong wish for **more direct support through EACEA desk officers** (this was decreased with the introduction of SYGMA and communication exclusively through the Funding and Tenders portal);
- EAEA members are sending a strong recommendation for **clearer, harmonised rules for national agencies on documentation and evaluation guidelines** (there are currently large differences between evaluation results, evaluation methods and allocation of points, documentation needs and support to/communication with the beneficiaries).

Diversity and inclusion:

- Target groups for mobility actions are currently **focusing on “low-skilled” adults**; however, this is **contributing to stigmatisation and discrimination of learners** and discourages learners who don't want to be labelled as “low-skilled” to apply for mobility actions – this requires a widening up of target groups through, for instance, thematic mobility actions;
- Financial support measures available in the current Erasmus+ framework do not include any **targeted instrument to address the loss of income incurred by adult learners participating to a learning mobility**; this affects disproportionately low paid workers with limited bargaining power when asking their employer for time off to participate in training – it is, therefore, necessary to introduce a European Paid Training Leave, compensating workers that take time off work to participate in Erasmus+ mobility projects.



Key recommendations

- Clear **alignment between programme objectives (including green change and sustainability education, life skills, etc.) and the objectives of adult education calls**, especially centrally managed calls;
- Introduction of **Adult Learning Alliances** to build broader thematic networks, also supported by research partners;
- Stronger **inclusion of third countries in Europe** in the programme to allow for the exchange of good practices and professionalisation of adult learning and education staff;
- Introduction of **follow-up projects for very successful initiatives in KA2** partnerships for cooperation;
- **Bigger budget for adult learning and education** and better predictability of calls and related budgets;
- **Bigger operating grants in Erasmus+** that reflect the importance of education and youth in and for the European Union;
- **Better financial support of host organisations in KA1** projects and the same amounts for individual support of adult learners and staff;
- **Wider target groups for mobility actions** to move away from stigmatisation of learners as “low-skilled” and stronger focus on thematic mobility actions to make the programme more inclusive;
- **Easier application and reporting procedures** for more accessibility of the programme, and an integrated approach to EU funding instruments;
- **Clearer guidelines for National Agencies on documentation requirements and evaluation procedures** to enable better comparability of results across the programme countries.

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 122 member organisations in 42 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.



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