

# Léargas Inclusion and Diversity Strategy

## Aims of the Strategy

This strategy aims to provide an inclusion and diversity framework for Léargas. The strategy is for use internally and through our work as the National Agency for the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps and other European and national programmes. The strategy outlines how Léargas works towards creating equal opportunities to access these programmes. Inclusion and Diversity is an organisational priority for Léargas as highlighted in our Strategic Statement 2021-2023.

The strategy aims to promote inclusion and diversity of all kinds as a valuable source of learning. We intend to equip programme stakeholders, in particular project organisers and participants, to interact positively with diverse people from different backgrounds in all types of projects. We seek to address the barriers that different target groups may face in accessing opportunities within our programmes. We are committed to engaging and supporting people who have previously experienced barriers to accessing our programmes.

Our goal is that this will lead to more and better projects that directly involve people with fewer opportunities, focus on inclusion and diversity issues and support our organisational policy. All projects fostering inclusion and diversity should trigger positive change for people with fewer opportunities and for society, ultimately contributing to reducing inequality.

## Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity in the context of this strategy refers to differences of all kinds. Some types of diversity are more obvious than others, such as ethnicity, religion, culture, and language. But diversity expands beyond just these aspects. It also refers to different disabilities, educational levels, social backgrounds, economic situations, health statuses, or places of origin. Léargas sets out to be inclusive by celebrating diversity so that differences become a positive source of learning rather than a cause of negative competition and prejudice. Participants and organisations involved in our programmes should be equipped with the necessary competences to work with diversity and make the most of what diversity has to offer to enrich the programmes. This will encourage positive interactions between people of all walks of life, promote inclusion, and ultimately improve the situation of people with fewer opportunities.

## Barriers

Several barriers are identified that could prevent people from engaging with Léargas or in our programmes. Referencing the [EU Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021](#) and the [Irish Employment Equal Status Act](#) these include, but are not limited to, barriers relating to;

- gender and sexual orientation
- disability
- health problems
- civil, social and family status
- education and training systems
- cultural differences
- religion
- race
- membership of the Travelling community

- economic barriers
- discrimination
- geographical location
- accessibility of information

## **Current**

Léargas has committed to providing training on inclusion and diversity in the workplace for all staff and to promote awareness of how to support diversity and inclusion through workshops on related themes.

We have a full-time dedicated Inclusion and Diversity Officer on our staff to plan and co-ordinate our operational and strategic approaches at both organisational and programme levels.

We actively promote the programmes through targeted outreach to potential participants and offer a highly supportive approach. We encourage collaboration by offering regular networking opportunities for participants and potential participants to share best practice ideas. We are dedicated to strategic action on inclusion and diversity – see Léargas Strategic Statement 2021 – implemented by our Inclusion and Diversity Officer.

Léargas has an updated and more accessible website with easier to access and clearer programme information using diverse images that promote visible diversity. We use Plain English in published communication materials and will continue to make programme information more accessible.

We provide focused training for organisations, Léargas staff and expert evaluators on inclusion and diversity. We actively monitor and report on inclusion and diversity throughout our programmes. We promote and encourage horizontal cooperation throughout Léargas and focus on more inclusive internal processes with inter-team working.

## **Action plan**

We are committed to keep working with organisations and representative bodies who are active in advocacy for diverse and hard-to-reach communities and will continue to build new working relationships. We will use focused promotion relevant to specific diverse communities and those we have not yet engaged. We will continue our supportive approach and increase our visibility by using more inclusion-orientated communication in our promotion activities. We will increase our use of Plain English in everyday communication such as in email and event descriptions. We aim to provide as much flexibility as possible to facilitate the involvement of groups with fewer opportunities and develop new and accessible information tools to support this. We will develop a reflective cycle of practice to ensure that we ask, listen and respond to the challenges experienced in diverse communities in society. Our outreach activities aim to equip project stakeholders with the necessary competences and skills to successfully manage and support diversity throughout projects. We will continue to challenge existing barriers to participation and promote programmes as accessible to all.

## **Future**

We will see greater diversity and quality of participation in programmes. Léargas will aim to have more visibility in communities experiencing fewer opportunities and increase the range and scope of

organisations accessing funding. We are committed to participants continuing to feel supported by Léargas throughout the project process, and Léargas inclusion and diversity practices will be embedded further into the behaviour and work of all people in the organisation.

### **Supports**

Inclusion and diversity are strategic priorities throughout our work. In relation to the programmes this includes but is not limited to: support in the assessment process; accessibility and user-friendliness of the programmes; mentorship; dedicated financial support; and smaller and easier-to-access actions. Our approach is highly supportive, and we have formed step-by-step capacity-building pathways to access programmes and other opportunities. Specific Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategies reinforce our commitment.

### **Informed by**

National and EU policies including:

EU Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015

Léargas Strategic Statement 2021-2023

EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027