

INDIRE | Erasmus+ Italian National Agency

INCLUSION STRATEGY

2021-2027

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1. THE HOLISTIC APPROACH, AN INNOVATIVE VIEW OF INCLUSION

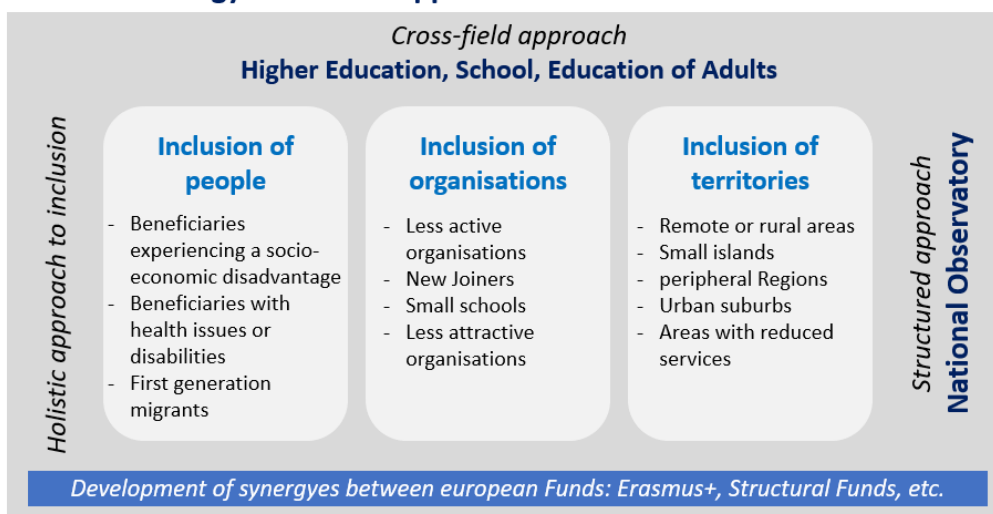
The Italian National Agency is proposing and will implement an **innovative holistic approach to inclusion**, intended as “**inclusion of people, organizations and territories**”.

This innovative approach comes from the awareness that, in order to significantly improve inclusion, it is necessary to develop an integrated and synergic approach, looking beyond individuals - who will continue to be at the centre of our approach - and considering also beneficiary organisations (focusing on those characterised by lower participation rates) and territories (especially those characterised by socio-economic disadvantages).

In addition, the proposed approach can be defined as holistic since it will focus on different targets (people, organisation, and territories), while also being **implemented across all sectors, namely: Higher Education, School, and Adult Education**.

In particular, the multi-annual framework will pay specific attention to the Adult Education Sector, as this sector is characterised by different and numerous typologies of disadvantaged categories and because of the limited focus given to this area by inclusion strategies until now.

Inclusion strategy: an holistic approach



The multi-annual inclusion framework will also innovate the funding mechanisms seeking **synergies between Erasmus+ funds and additional Structural Funds** focused on inclusion, employment and development (such as ESF funds).

The Italian National Agency believes strongly in this strategic approach and is already moving in this direction also in organisational terms. An **Observatory** is being set up in the Agency, composed of a transversal working group. It foresees - among the priority themes – a specific focus on inclusion and diversity, analysing and monitoring the main areas of weaknesses to implement projects and initiatives. The Observatory will work in synergy with the numerous stakeholders of the system. In addition, the Agency has appointed an Inclusion Officer, as requested by the European Commission.

2. STRATEGIC GOALS FOR INCLUSION

The ultimate goal of the inclusion strategy is to facilitate access to the Programme for the different targets with fewer opportunities (people, organizations, territories), planning and implementing actions to remove barriers and obstacles to their participation.

In particular, the focus will be on two main goals:

- a) **Increase the attention towards the horizontal priority “Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education”**, in order to increase numbers of participants with fewer opportunities in the Programme;
- b) **further increase the project quality** on the matter, helping organisations to submit better qualified applications.
- a) **Increase the attention towards the horizontal priority “Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education”**

The strategy aims to transform inclusion into one of the main drivers of the new Programme projects. It will raise awareness on the matter, supporting a stronger focus on inclusion, and therefore aiming to increase the number of applications submitted by participants with fewer opportunities (whether they are people, organisations or territories).

In particular, the National Agency aims to increase the submission of applications (which is already significant, as displayed in Table 1, reporting data on the number of KA2 partnerships focused on inclusion in Italy) and the participation of actors with fewer opportunities in mobility programmes. Particular attention will be given to those subjects (people, organisations and territories) that until now have been less involved, because they were reached only partially by communication efforts, rather than due to a lack of the necessary competencies.

Table 1: KA2 partnerships focused on inclusion

| Fields | N. of KA2 applications - Call 2018 | N. of KA2 applications - Call 2021 |
|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| School | 137 | 105 |
| Adult Education | 73 | 118 |
| Higher Education | 10 | 17 |
| Total | 220 | 240 |

Number of applications focused on inclusion submitted to Indire for the 2018 Call and the 2021 Call – Source: Qlik Sense Data

b) Increase the project quality

The strategy aims to extend the support provided to organisations, in order to increase the applications quality and their consequent approval.

In particular, for KA2 partnerships (Table 2), the Italian NA intends to maintain and increase the percentage of approved projects in relation to the submitted applications.

Strategic partnerships - Call 2018 submitted/approved – Topic: social inclusion

| Field | Submitted applications | Approved projects | Success rate |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| School (KA229 - KA201) | 137 | 71 | 45% |
| Adult Education (KA204) | 73 | 27 | |
| Higher Education (KA203) | 10 | 3 | |
| Total | 220 | 101 | |

Number of strategic partnerships applications submitted, and projects approved on the social inclusion topic - Source Qlik Sense Data

In addition, the NA aims to maintain and increase the number of good practices reached during the previous Programme on this specific topic.

| Erasmus+ 2014-2020- KA2 Good practices | | | |
|---|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| Key Action | Tot | Focus | Tot |
| Strategic Partnerships for school education | 30 | Inclusion and equity | 13 |
| Strategic Partnerships for Schools Only | 6 | Access for disadvantaged | 4 |
| Strategic Partnerships for adult education | 12 | Disabilities - special needs | 3 |
| Strategic Partnerships for higher education | 2 | Gender equality | 1 |
| Total | 50 | Migrants' issue | 8 |
| | | Integration of refugee | 2 |
| | | Early school leaving | 19 |
| | | Total | 50 |

*Number of good practices among the projects focused on inclusion –
Source: Erasmus+ Project Results Platform*

3. TARGET GROUPS

The strategy focuses on three target groups:

- **Inclusion of people;**
- **Inclusion of organisations;**
- **Inclusion of territories.**

3.1. INCLUSION OF PEOPLE

3.1.1. Socio-economic disadvantaged people

This first group is formed by people experiencing a socio-economic disadvantage, namely low living standards and/or low-income people, working students, people leaning on the social security system, long-term unemployed, people living under the poverty threshold, etc.

3.1.2. People suffering health issues

The second group includes people with physical, mental and intellectual disabilities, who may experience obstacles that prevent their full and effective participation into society. Obstacles may also be connected to health conditions, including chronic and serious diseases, that prevent individuals' regular participation in the Programme projects.

3.1.3. First generation migrants

Among the people's target group, the third identified category is the so called "first-generation migrants". Cultural differences can represent a relevant obstacle to a diffused participation in Erasmus+ projects and, more generally, to learning activities. In particular, this applies to people from a migrant background, refugees, national and linguistic minorities, etc. Facing foreign languages and different cultures can be an entry barrier to participation in Italian projects.

3.2. INCLUSION OF ORGANISATIONS

In our holistic approach, the second target group is composed by the beneficiary organisations involved in the Programme, in sectors of Higher Education, School and Adult Education.

The strategy aims to include the organisations less favoured by the funding reward mechanisms (the selection process tends to favour organisations with positive past-performances, limiting entering

opportunities for new joiners and less competitive organisations) and less active organisations (due to a lack of initiative, management difficulties or being located in disadvantaged territories).

Such circumstances can also influence the problem of student's early school leaving. Even if mostly influenced by personal situations, the school dropout phenomenon can be linked to an educational system which presents structural limitations and/or does not fully take into account the particular needs of individuals. They may also encounter obstacles to participation, if the structure of study programmes makes mobility for training abroad difficult during the school years.

3.3. INCLUSION OF TERRITORIES

The last target group focuses on the inclusion of territories. The territories identified in the target group are the ones geographically less favoured such as remote or rural areas, small islands or peripheral/outmost regions, urban suburbs, areas with reduced services (limited public transport, poor infrastructure), and less developed areas.

The strategy aims to go beyond the actors directly involved, connecting the inclusion-related activities with the needs of the communities. In this regard, the Agency encourages participants to take part in the life of local communities and civic engagement activities in the course of their projects.

4. THE FORESEEN VERTICAL ACTIVITIES

The following table assigns, to each different target group, the main activities that will be implemented under the multi-annual framework.

| Target | Activity |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Inclusion of people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility and friendliness of the Programme - Reinforced mentorship and coaching - Specific financial support - Project format and mobility duration (gradual development of participants) |
| Inclusion of organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion and diversity as priorities in the selection process - Easier access (gradual development of organisations' competences) - Preparatory visits - On-line actions and activities |
| Inclusion of territories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valorisation of European initiatives at the local level - Gradual paths for capacity building - Support for language learning |

In addition to targets and activities, the Italian Agency will identify a set of indicators, which will allow monitoring and evaluation of the proposed activities.

The table below shows, for each target the strategic goals, a set of indicators and the sources of measurement.

| Target | Strategic goals | Measuring indicators | Tools for measurement |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| Inclusion of people | Participants with fewer opportunities within the three fields: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School: students at risk of early leaving - Adult Education: less integrated migrants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - N. of participants with fewer opportunities to KA1 mobility projects - N. of projects focused on Inclusion and diversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qlik Sense Dashboard - PMM Dashboard - Surveys - Interviews |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|
| | - Higher Education: Socio-economic disadvantaged students and people with disabilities | - Average rating score of KA2 projects focused on inclusion and diversity | |
| Inclusion of organisations | - Increase the number of new joiners and the competitiveness of less active organisations | - School and Adult Education: N. of new joiners between the KA122 applicants (short term mobility projects) – KA210 (small scale partnerships) - Higher Education: N. of less active organisations which have submitted KA131 projects - Annual increase of projects on the eTwinning/EPALE platforms | - Qlik Sense Dashboard - PMM Dashboard - EPAL – eTwinning platforms - Surveys - Interviews/focus group |
| Inclusion of territories | - Increase the knowledge and pervasiveness of the Programme in disadvantaged areas | - Mapping of European events in disadvantaged areas - N. of institutions hosting a teacher or inviting a KA1 expert (language learning)) | - On line surveys - Focused webinars - Information and training seminars |

5. THE FORESEEN TRANSVERSAL ACTIVITIES

5.1. COMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT-RAISING ACTIVITIES

The Agency will play an important role in raising awareness and information at the national level. It will adapt the information strategy to the specific target groups, and it will publicly communicate the action plans for inclusion and diversity, ensuring the highest standards of transparency in the allocation of grants to projects for inclusion and diversity.

The Agency will develop appropriate and accessible information materials and will use different dissemination and information channels. It will proactively contact organisations in the territories relevant to inclusion and diversity. It will develop and provide information materials in accessible languages and in appropriate formats.

Dissemination activities are considered fundamental to ensure knowledge of all opportunities and they need to be usable for all the target groups who have difficulty accessing the programmes. People with fewer opportunities will be reached in their personal environments, adapting the approach to their specific information needs.

Specific measures and approaches to reach less favoured subjects include:

- face-to-face meetings or events with specific groups with fewer opportunities (for example, ad hoc informative events);
- cooperation with subjects active in areas relevant to the inclusion of persons with fewer opportunities, that can become intermediaries in order to reach specific target groups;
- promotional material and targeted publications in relevant languages and in appropriate formats, such as large print, braille and easy-to-read versions, with information on how additional funding could be available to support people with fewer opportunities;
- testimonials, Ambassadors and role models. Former participants with fewer opportunities, networks and organizations of former students can help promote the programme among people with fewer opportunities, sharing their experiences with friends, fellow students or staff in their organization.

5.2. SUPPORT TO ORGANISATIONS DURING PROJECTS MANAGEMENT

At all stages of the project cycle, the Italian Agency will provide systematic, fair and specific support to organisations managing projects focused on inclusion and diversity. This support is considered to be particularly important for new joiners, involving people with fewer opportunities in order to remove obstacles to their full participation.

The Agency will provide support during all phases (before, during and after the project) in terms of mentoring, preparatory visits or telephone support, through social media or e-mail. Specific measures will be taken to support inclusion such as, for example, ensuring the assistance of guides and assistants during mobility, administrative support for institutions and territories in difficulty, linguistic support, etc.

6. SYNERGIES WITH DIFFERENT PROGRAMMES AND FUNDS

The Agency, through the strategy, aims to foster a close synergy in the identification and enhancement of funding sources. Alongside the Erasmus Programme, relevant funds - which could be leveraged - might include the European Social Fund, Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, etc.

The Agency will promote existing synergies between different programmes among the beneficiaries, in order to support them in the identification of different opportunities, that could be accessed by people with fewer opportunities.

Good practices concerning synergies with other programmes will be documented and disseminated in order to increase their use and exploit their full potential.

7. SHORT TERM ACTIVITIES (ANNUAL FRAMEWORK 2022)

▪ Information and communication activities to raise awareness of the new strategy

Communication activities will be launched (e.g.: organisation of a dedicated national event, participation in local events), to promote this new holistic approach to inclusion. The objective will be to raise awareness among students and beneficiaries on how inclusion can serve as a strategic vehicle for close interrelation between people, institutions, territories. Awareness-raising initiatives will be widespread throughout the territory, including through the development of a network of Erasmus+ ambassadors in all Italian regions.

▪ Stakeholders' involvement and fund synergies

The engagement of beneficiaries will be reinforced in order to understand their specific needs and to build projects dedicated to overcoming specific limits of the territory and/or of the organisations. The support to develop the synergy between complementary funds will be a key issue.

▪ Creation of a National Observatory

The NA, during the first year of the Plan, will complete the constitution of a National Observatory that will be committed to monitoring the strategic theme of inclusion and to organising specific initiatives aimed at promoting the inclusion of people, organisations and

territories. The Observatory will be the organizational structure through which the NA will consolidate the strategic and structural value of inclusion.