

# Inclusion strategy 2021-2027

## National Agency Erasmus+

### Education & Training (NL01)

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## Introduction

The National Agency Erasmus+ Education & Training (NA) is the executive organisation in the Netherlands for the European programme Erasmus+ for primary and secondary education, vocational education & training, higher education, and adult education.

The NA employs a Theory of Change (ToC) for this programme. This ToC is in line with the European and national programme goals and visualises Erasmus+'s development towards impact<sup>1</sup>. An important priority of the Erasmus+ programme is the promotion of inclusion. The NA's vision and mission regarding inclusion, as described below, follow this ToC.

The main target groups of the Erasmus+ inclusion strategy are people with fewer opportunities in life, which puts them at a disadvantage compared to their peers. Because of this they may experience barriers to their participation in education and training systems in general and, more specifically, in the Erasmus+ programme. The NA complies with the definitions for *Target groups* and *Barriers in accessibility and outreach*, as laid down in the *Implementation guidelines Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy* (European Commission, 29-04-2021)<sup>2</sup>.

Target groups and barriers may vary among the different educational sectors. In adult education, the programmes of Erasmus+ are 100% targeted at adults who are vulnerable and/or have fewer opportunities and their supporting organisations.

## Vision/Impact statement

At the impact level, the NA wants to contribute to an inclusive society. In such a society, all young people and adults, including those from underrepresented or vulnerable groups, get the chance to develop themselves through education, training, and forms of non-formal learning. They feel part of an inclusive Dutch and European society and possess the national and international competences to actively participate and contribute. In order to facilitate this, they need to be socially and economically resilient and possess the self-confidence and abilities that allow them to deal with changing circumstances. They develop themselves through participation in accessible and relevant education and forms of non-formal learning. This enables them to better participate in society, become generally and professionally competent, and find a suitable job or volunteer work.

## Mission

From its role and mandate, the NA contributes to its vision through the *final outcomes* of the E+ programme. This means specifically that the NA:

- Supports education and training institutions to have more participants from underrepresented or vulnerable target groups participate in international mobilities. This is possible by providing more and better information and inspiration to participants from these target groups, removing obstacles in their path, and creating the specific conditions they need.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A: Theory of Change Erasmus+ Education & Training.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B: Barriers in accessibility and outreach.

- Supports education and training institutions in designing and executing international cooperation projects and in the professionalisation of staff, targeted at developing and improving inclusive, high quality, and relevant education and training as well as forms of non-formal learning for young people and adults from underrepresented or vulnerable target groups. This means that this education is accessible, and its content tailored to the specific contexts and characteristics of these target groups. Such education enables them to shape their future as independently as possible.
- Supports and stimulates initiatives for collaboration and dialogue among institutions, umbrella organisations, councils, and national and European networks and policy makers in order to improve the inclusive character of education and training in all sectors and for all target groups.

## Strategy

In order to contribute to the outcomes of our mission, the NA works on activities starting from the following three pillars:

### *1. Information and inspiration*

In its general communication (website, newsletters), the NA works on an inclusive appearance in images and texts. In addition, there will be much attention for inspirational stories by participants and projects as examples of acting in an inclusive manner. To this end, the NA seeks inspiration from a Role Models Network to hear the voices of individuals from underrepresented target groups and be able to use them critically. Their personal accounts are authentic, credible, and will lead to a transformation in thinking about the other.

Part of our communication strategy is the mutual alignment with education and training institutions in order to achieve actual alignment with underrepresented target groups, so as to create a focus on an inclusive message and practice.

The NA organises national peer-learning meetings in order to make institutions share good practices and learn from each other. At the European level, the NA organises several TCAs on inclusion and takes part in TCAs and LTAs by other NAs.

### *2. Development and sharing of knowledge and tools*

To better gain insight in the various ways and stages of the development towards an inclusive Erasmus+ programme, the NA shares knowledge, especially with other NAs and during TCAs. The NA has a research programme of its own which also comprises the monitoring of and research into inclusion. The NA conducts its research activities in line with the Theory of Change (ToC) and the impact strategy in three different ways and at three levels by means of:

- An inclusion scan: this tool allows education and training institutions to perform a base-line measurement (a 'state of affairs' measurement) of their inclusion policy in relation to their Erasmus+ activities. The outcomes of such a scan offer leads for a discussion about desired improvements or policy changes. The NA will ask institutions to fill in this scan and share the outcomes with us and each other.

- **Monitoring:** the NA intends to conduct a yearly assessment of the state of affairs on inclusion in the different projects (KA1, KA2 and the charters) of the four sectors. This will take place on the basis of previously set performance indicators.
- **Research:** the NA conducts dedicated research into the impact of specific inclusion measures on the Erasmus+ experience of participants. The research is to provide the NA with insights into the beneficial and counterproductive outcomes of these measures.

The NA will ensure that the design and execution of its research programme is inclusive for all participants

### *3. Consultation on project subsidies*

Inclusion is going to feature prominently in the primary process of providing information, advice, and counselling. The information provided by the European Commission and the outcomes of our monitoring and research will deliver the necessary input.

An important element in the above will be the policy support to institutions that wish to develop an inclusion strategy for Erasmus+. As their strategic goals vary, this support will take different forms for the various education and training sectors.

#### **Primary and secondary education**

In primary and secondary education, the NA aims at reaching more schools and their teachers and students who have never before made use of the Erasmus+ programme. These are often schools that face obstacles such as geographical distance (like for example in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands), cultural and economic obstacles (deprived districts in major cities or rural areas), or obstacles related to disabilities or health problems of learners (for instance, special needs schools).

#### **Vocational education and training**

In VET, the NA strives for more students with fewer opportunities making use of the programme of Erasmus+. As in VET the focus has been on students at levels 3 and 4, the NA aims at motivating VET institutions to involve more students at levels 1 and 2 and students with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+. As far as the cooperation projects are concerned, the NA strives for them to be more inclusive both in terms of participants and thematic content.

#### **Higher education**

In higher education, we strive for a larger number of disadvantaged students taking part in Erasmus+ mobilities despite their obstacles. We also want the Erasmus+ cooperation projects to be more inclusive in terms of both participants and thematic content. The programme offers various forms of mobility and cooperation that may be either more or less suitable for disadvantaged participants.

A top-up (an extra grant on top of the regular grant) of mobilities can be granted to those students who face one or more obstacles and need an additional grant to remove them. Institutions for higher education are obliged to implement this top-up for students with fewer opportunities. The frameworks for the implementation are provided by the NA and have been coordinated with the National Authority (the Ministry of Culture, Education, and Science). In addition, institutions for

higher education are stimulated to offer other, more tailored forms of support before, during or after the mobility to those disadvantaged students to whom extra funding does not offer a solution.

### **Adult education**

For the adult education sector, our vision on inclusion parallels the NA's vision on the role that Erasmus+ can and wants to play in this sector: contributing to the professional development of adult education and the social inclusion of vulnerable adults in our society, among other things through integration in the job market. Our activities are by and large targeted at a growth in the number and increase in the quality of the project proposals for mobility and cooperation.

The adult education sector has no umbrella organisation, and the field is characterized by a multitude of themes and organisations, often small in size with no or limited financial or professional capacity to submit or execute projects. The NA strives to reach out to these organisations as well.

### **Internal organisation**

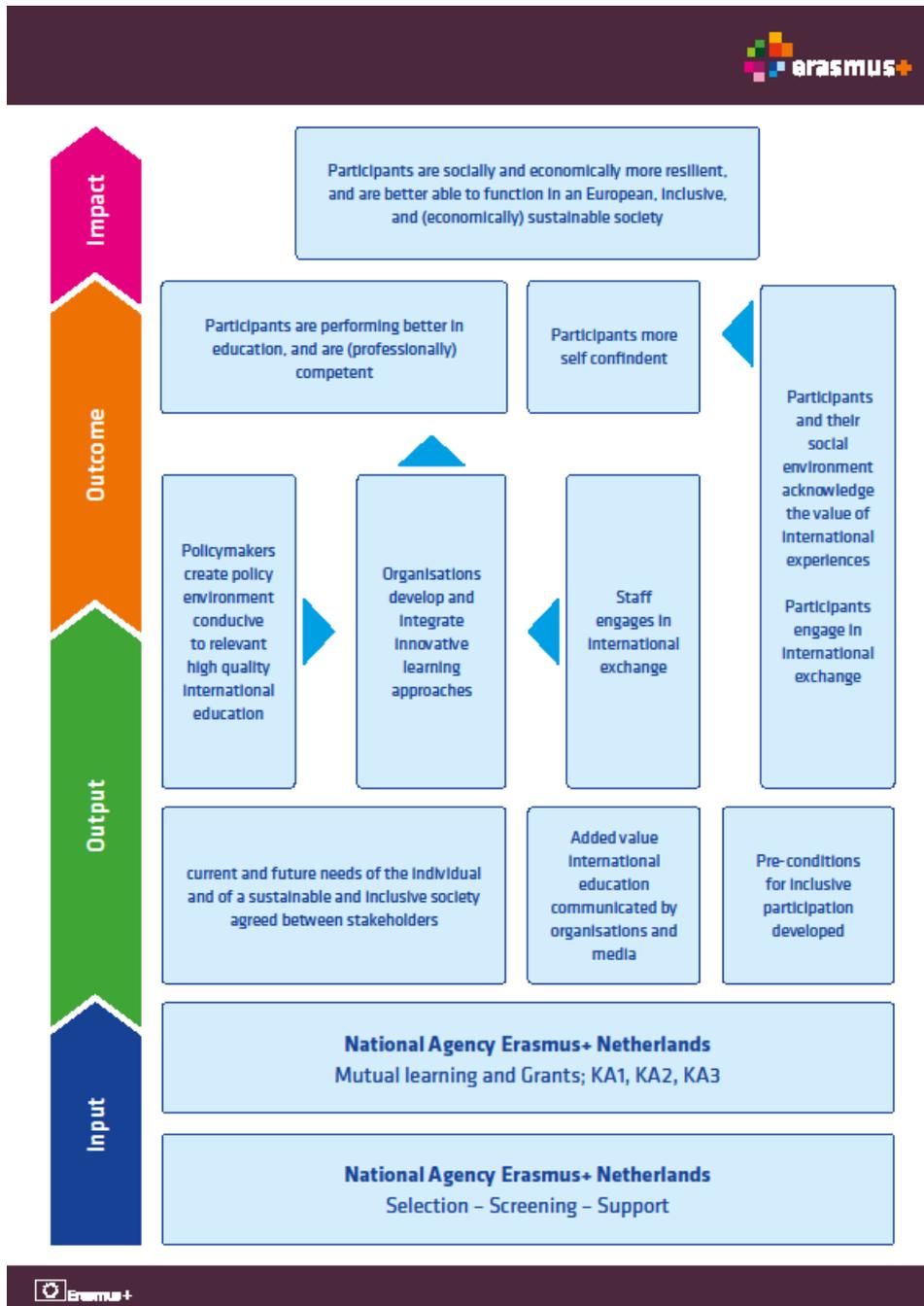
Each sector has delegated a programme manager to the Inclusion working group chaired by the NA-appointed *inclusion officer*. The programme managers are the linking pin to the team of the sector in question. Each year, the working group drafts an annual plan, which is subsequently approved and monitored by the Management Team. The annual plan is harmonised with the impact officer because the NA wants to link inclusion to impact measurements.

The *inclusion officer* is also in contact with the National Authority (the Ministry of Culture, Education, and Science) and takes part in the European meeting of inclusion officers of all NAs. At the national level, there is consultation with various organisations in the fields of diversity and inclusion, such as Nuffic (Inclusion working group), ECHO, ECIO and the umbrella organisations of the education sectors.

The NA believes it is important that diversity and inclusion should be endorsed and supported by the organisation as a whole and ensures the professionalisation of all staff regarding this theme.

In addition, the NA is advised by an Inclusion focus group comprising implementers and thinkers (both persons and organisations) in the field who have experience with themes that form part of the broader theme of inclusion (accessibility, equal opportunities, support, etc.). We share this information within the NA and the field. The members of the focus group provide support in disseminating our vision and mission.

## Appendix A: Theory of Change Erasmus+ Education & Training



## Appendix B: Barriers in accessibility and outreach

Previous experience helps to identify the main barriers which may prevent people with fewer opportunities from participating more in the programmes as participants. The list of such potential barriers, spelt out below, is not exhaustive and is meant to provide a reference in taking action with a view to increasing accessibility and outreach to people with fewer opportunities. These barriers can hinder their participation both as a standalone factor and in combination among them.

### Disabilities

This includes physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder someone's full and effective participation in society on the same footing as others.<sup>3</sup>

### Health problems

Barriers may result from health issues including severe illnesses, chronic diseases, or any other physical or mental health-related situation that prevents from participating in the programmes.

### Barriers linked to education and training systems

Individuals struggling to perform in education and training systems for various reasons, early leavers from education and training, NEETs (people not in education, employment, or training) and low-skilled adults may face barriers. Although other factors may play a role, these educational difficulties, while they may also be linked to personal circumstances, mostly result from an educational system which creates structural limitations and/or does not fully take into account the individual's particular needs. Individuals can also face barriers to participation when the structure of curricula makes it difficult to undertake a learning or training mobility abroad as part of their studies.

### Cultural differences

While cultural differences may be perceived as barriers by people from any backgrounds, they can particularly affect people with fewer opportunities. Such differences may represent significant barriers to learning in general, all the more for people with a migrant or refugee background – especially newly-arrived migrants –, people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, sign language users, people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties, etc. Being exposed to foreign languages and cultural differences when taking part in any kind of programme activities may put off individuals and somehow limit the benefits from their participation. Such cultural differences may even prevent potential participants from applying for support through the programmes, thereby representing an entry barrier altogether.

### Social barriers

Social adjustment difficulties such as limited social competences, anti-social or high-risk behaviours, (former) offenders, (former) drug or alcohol abusers, or social marginalisation may represent a barrier. Other social barriers can stem from family circumstances, for instance being the first in the family to access higher education or being a parent (especially a single parent), a caregiver, a breadwinner, or an orphan, or having lived or currently living in institutional care.

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:  
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

### Economic barriers

Economic disadvantage like a low standard of living, low income, learners who need to work to support themselves, dependence on the social welfare system, in long-term unemployment, precarious situations or poverty, being homeless, in debt or with financial problems, etc., may represent a barrier.

Other difficulties may derive from the limited transferability of services (in particular support to people with fewer opportunities) that needs to be "mobile" together with the participants when going to a far place or, all the more, abroad.

### Barriers linked to discrimination

Barriers can occur as a result of discriminations linked to gender (gender identity, gender expression, etc.), age, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, or intersectional factors (a combination of one or several of the mentioned discrimination barriers).

### Geographical barriers

Living in remote or rural areas, on small islands or in peripheral/outermost regions, in urban suburbs, in less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) or less developed areas in third countries, etc., may constitute a barrier.