

**INCLUSION STRATEGY
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ERASMUS+ AND ESC PROGRAMMES
IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

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1 Description

1 Introduction

1.1 Why the Inclusion Strategy?

European cooperation programmes in the fields of education and training, youth and sport – Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (hereinafter 'the Programme', used for the two programmes together) – should, by their nature, be accessible to all citizens. Nevertheless, certain groups of citizens may face obstacles in benefiting from mobility and training opportunities offered by the Programme. The Foundation Tempus, as the organisation responsible for the implementation of these programmes in the Republic of Serbia, has assigned itself a task to define a set of activities aimed at ensuring a more inclusive approach to the implementation of these programmes. Based on the principles of equal treatment and equal access for all target groups, regardless of the social group to which they belong, this Strategy aims to define objectives and specific activities that will ensure the accessibility to the opportunities offered by the Programme.

1.2 What does the Strategy refer to?

The Strategy refers to all the activities undertaken by the Foundation Tempus in its capacity as an organisation responsible for the European cooperation programmes in the fields of education and training, youth and sport – Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (hereinafter 'the Programme'). The strategy will be applicable until the end of the new programme cycle, i.e., until 2027.

1.2.1 Erasmus+ Programme

Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme which supports cooperation projects in three fields – education and training, youth and sport. In the broadest sense, the priorities of the Erasmus+ education component are as follows: promotion of and support for all education levels; strengthening the links between formal, non-formal and informal learning; strengthening the links between education and the world of work; creating added value for the European Education Area; and enabling cooperation among member states with a view to defining education policies. The Erasmus+ Programme focuses on developing young people's potentials for active citizenship, acquisition of leadership skills, solidarity and intercultural understanding. Priorities in the field of sport include cooperation and networking of sports organisations and support for the projects that may indirectly contribute to mitigating socio-economic aspects of physical inactivity. Erasmus+ promotes recognition and validation of qualifications in education, open access to educational materials, documents and media content created through funded projects and beyond that, as well as the international dimension of activities, multilingualism, emancipation and inclusive education. The new programme will run from 2021 to 2027.

1.2.2 European Solidarity Corps Programme

European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is a European Union programme which creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work on projects from which communities around Europe can benefit. Although the Republic of Serbia is currently not a full member of this programme, it is expected to become one in the forthcoming period, so the Strategy also defines measures for inclusive implementation of this programme. The Strategy will apply to the implementation of the ESC programme once the Republic of Serbia becomes a member of the programme, i.e. when the Foundation Tempus assumes responsibility for its implementation in our country.

1.2.3 Foundation Tempus

The Foundation Tempus (FT) was founded in 2002 by the state universities. Since its beginnings, the Foundation Tempus has been contributing to the development of education, human resources and society in general through strengthening the capacity of youth and other organisations, by establishing cooperation with all social partners, through international cooperation and work with individuals and institutions.

Through its activities, the Foundation Tempus participates in the promotion and implementation of the EU and other education programmes, as well as of various cooperation programmes targeting all education levels and youth in the Republic of Serbia through development, design and implementation of projects aimed at improvement of the quality of formal and non-formal education and development of human resources.

Achieving a more inclusive approach characterizes all the Foundation Tempus' activities, and this Strategy specifically defines objectives and activities related to the implementation of the Erasmus+ and ESC European cooperation projects.

1.3 Key stakeholders in Programme implementation

The key stakeholders in the implementation of the Programme and this Strategy are as follows:

1.3.1 Project beneficiaries (organisations, educational institutions)

Project beneficiaries are institutions and organisations (educational, youth or sports) whose projects have been selected for funding through the calls for proposals. The FT directly cooperates with contact persons responsible for project implementation who are representatives of these institutions/organisations, while they implement a project and may take on the task of implementing inclusion measures. In the context of the Strategy, this group is important since raising their awareness of the significance of inclusion and providing them with specific tools, materials and training for involving people from vulnerable groups ensures greater participation of such people in activities financed through the Programme. In other words, this group plays an active role in increasing the number of participants from vulnerable groups, while the Foundation Tempus' role is to support them in

undertaking activities leading to the participation of end beneficiaries from vulnerable groups, to provide them with guidelines and/or tools, etc.

1.3.2 (Potential) applicants

This group includes all institutions/organisations (and their representatives) who can apply for project funding under the Programme. In the context of the Strategy, this target group is important because raising their awareness of the significance of inclusion and providing them with information on the opportunities and specific tools, materials and training for involving people from vulnerable groups, lead to an increased number of inclusive projects, i.e., an inclusive approach is already ensured at the stage of defining project activities. Furthermore, a subset of this target group includes institutions/organisations organizations which gather people from vulnerable groups and provide them with services, so motivating them and/or removing potential obstacles regarding their participation in the Programme also contributes to an increase in the number of inclusive projects.

1.3.3 (Potential) end beneficiaries (pupils, students, young people, teachers, youth workers etc.)

All potential end beneficiaries who can participate in project activities funded under the Programme are the largest target group. In the context of the Strategy, it is essential to inform these beneficiaries about available opportunities because it generates interest, encourages initiative and potentially leads to greater participation of people from vulnerable groups in project activities. The existing provision of information has to be complemented by the activities aimed at removing obstacles that end beneficiaries from vulnerable groups may face in obtaining information on and participating in approved project activities.

1.3.4 Partners

In the context of the Programme implementation, the FT works with partner institutions and organisations, state authorities and other partners. In cooperation with these partners, the FT promotes an inclusive approach to the Programme implementation and may also help remove systemic obstacles to the participation of people from vulnerable groups in certain activities. This group primarily includes the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, other ministries, agencies, national agencies from other countries, the SALTO resource centres, provincial authorities and local self-governments, and may also include organisations representative of persons with disabilities, professionals and associates who deal with inclusion issues and work with persons with disabilities.

1.3.5 Evaluators and trainers

In the context of the Programme implementation, the FT hires external associates – project proposal evaluators and trainers who deliver professional development activities on behalf of the Foundation. When working with these external associates, the FT develops their awareness of the importance of inclusion (through training, a selection process of associates, continuous communication and the like), not only promoting an inclusive approach and the importance of inclusion in the Programme implementation but also contributing to an increased number of project

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applications (resulting from the trainers' awareness of the importance of inclusion which they impart to the participants through their training programmes) and approved inclusive projects (resulting from the evaluators' awareness of the importance of an inclusive approach to project evaluation). Additionally, the FT's trainers commit themselves to compliance with the Code of Ethics, which in terms of inclusion specifies that 'trainers should respect participants in non-formal activities, without prejudice against them, their character, background, orientation (gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, political beliefs etc.), they should be politically correct in communication with them throughout the activities (during the training, breaks and in free time)'.

1.3.6 Foundation Tempus employees

The Foundation Tempus employees are the most significant resource in the implementation of the Inclusion Strategy. They should be aware of the importance of inclusion, use appropriate language in everyday communication with the Programme beneficiaries and other key partners, ensure that preparation, design and implementation of the activities acknowledge the needs of people from vulnerable groups, and create an inclusive environment which fosters equity, equal rights and respect of differences. At the same time, the FT employees continuously learn about principles, current policies and practices with regard to inclusive education and non-formal education and training on national and European levels.

2 Strategy objectives

The objective of the Strategy is to increase inclusion in the Programme implementation in the Republic of Serbia through achieving the following specific goals:

1. An increase in the number of participants from vulnerable groups¹ in line with the commitments specified in the Work Programme;
2. An increase in the number of projects involving people from vulnerable groups and the projects dealing with inclusion and reducing inequality;

3 Priority target groups covered by the Strategy

3.1 Persons at risk of poverty

This target group includes people facing obstacles to equal access to opportunities offered by the Programme due to socio-economic factors such as low living standards, low family income, welfare dependency, long-term unemployment, financial problems and debts. Economic factors are closely linked to social and cultural ones as

¹ Throughout this document, the term 'vulnerable groups' is used to refer to 'people/groups with fewer opportunities', as defined in the Erasmus+ Programme (Future Erasmus and European Solidarity Corps inclusion and Diversity Strategy).

there is a strong correlation between economic status and education, which affects access to various opportunities. Therefore, researchers always measure socio-economic status using a set of variables not only referring to a family's financial status but also to the parents' education level, access to books, computers, toys, etc. (e.g. PISA research).

3.2 Persons with disabilities

This target group includes people facing obstacles to equal access to opportunities offered by the Programme due to disabilities or learning difficulties. From a medical perspective, people with disabilities are those who have some physical impairments – sensory, motor or neurological (OECD, 2007). These people are considered to be in need of additional support primarily due to the problems attributable to such disabilities (ibid.). Obstacles to participation in the Programme may be physical in case of physical barriers to obtaining information on available opportunities or in the process of applying for, going on and participating in mobilities. People with learning difficulties may have behavioural or emotional difficulties, or specific learning difficulties (OECD, 2007) such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc. These people are considered to be in need of additional support primarily due to misunderstandings in interaction with others (OECD, 2007).

3.3 Persons from rural or remote areas

This target group includes people who live in remote, less accessible areas and consequently have limited opportunities for equal access to events and activities due to infrequent public transport and limited access to local cultural and educational content in the town/village where they live.

3.4 Other vulnerable groups

In addition to the above-mentioned target groups identified as a priority in the process of designing the Strategy, the activities specified in this document also aim to ensure greater access to opportunities offered by the Programme to other groups with fewer opportunities such as people with limited access to education, people facing difficulties due to discrimination, cultural differences, social circumstances, medical conditions or other similar reasons.

4 Activities

4.1 Information and promotion

Information and promotion activities are important for the following reasons:

- They provide access to information on available opportunities to institutions/organisations which gather people from vulnerable groups and work with them, which is a prerequisite for these institutions'/organisations' participation in the Programme;

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- They provide information to individuals on opportunities for participation in projects funded under the Programme, which is necessary for motivating people from vulnerable groups to apply to participate in the activities carried out in the framework of the Programme;
- They offer possibilities for promoting inclusion within the promotion of all Programme aspects;
- They adapt communication to different target groups among the vulnerable population.

With a view to achieving the objectives specified in the Strategy, the FT will undertake the following activities:

- improve access to the new Programme websites so that the target group of visually impaired people is able to use them;
- improve access to information on the Programme in printed publications so that the target group of visually impaired people is able to use them;
- improve access to information for the above-mentioned target groups by sending out invitations to information and promotion events to institutions/organisations that deal with inclusion and/or gather a large number of people from these target groups, while ensuring access to the locations for people with disabilities and those coming from remote areas, and providing adequate translation/interpretation and materials, etc;
- produce information materials on inclusion and make them available to project coordinators at Info Days, on the website, etc.;
- promote an inclusive approach to the Programme implementation through existing communication channels by periodically sending information and news on the topic of inclusion (e.g., a FT monthly newsletter, etc.).

4.2 Support and counselling

Support to applicants – beneficiaries and coordinators of approved projects – in the form of training, individual counselling, provision of instruction materials, etc. is significant given that such activities:

- directly contribute to improving the quality of project applications;
- empower institutions/organisations that gather people from vulnerable groups and work with them, who often lack highly developed capacities to apply for and manage projects, to participate in the Programme. In addition, such activities enable the identification of obstacles such institutions/organisations may encounter with a view to removing them in a timely manner and enabling participation in the Programme;
- may also target those institutions/organisations which do not primarily deal with inclusion or the aforementioned target groups, raising their awareness of inclusion and developing project coordinators' knowledge on involving people from vulnerable groups.

With a view to achieving the objectives specified in the Strategy, the FT will undertake the following activities:

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- produce a guide to or instructions on inclusion in projects intended for potential applicants at the stage of writing project proposals, and for project coordinators at the project implementation stage;
- promote, in direct contact with project coordinators, inclusion possibilities offered by the Programme and ways to increase the participation of people from the afore-mentioned target groups;
- improve the accessibility of key Programme tools by translating instructions into Serbian or writing them in this language;
- improve the accessibility of video tutorials so that they are adapted to the target group of people with a hearing impairment;
- when selecting candidates who have applied for training, prioritise the representatives of organisations gathering people from vulnerable groups or organise additional events for institutions/organisations gathering people from vulnerable groups;
- provide adapted versions of key instruction materials as specified for information and promotional materials;
- in case representatives of the defined targeted vulnerable groups attend a training programme/an event, consider additional support measures if necessary.

4.3 Strategy implementation and Inclusion Officer

With a view to achieving the objectives specified in the Strategy, the FT will undertake the following activities:

- consult the representatives of the identified target groups based on which it will define an action plan for the Strategy implementation with accompanying indicators;
- form an Inclusion working group comprising FT employees with a consultative role in defining processes and administrative procedures in the Programme implementation, and give recommendations on how to improve inclusive implementation of the Programme;
- delegate an Inclusion Officer who serve as head of the working group and contact person for other national agencies and resource centres for inclusion issues. They will also perform other activities as specified in the European strategy, as described therein (Future Erasmus and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy);
- if necessary, consult experts and representatives of the institutions/organisations active in the field of inclusion as part of the working group activities, so as to base the FT's activities related to the Programme implementation on the needs of relevant target groups and expert knowledge in this field;
- as part of the working group activities, map stakeholders, including organisations, networks, associations, etc. which gather or represent people from vulnerable groups;
- when planning activities, take into consideration the involvement of and accessibility to the identified target groups (geographical distribution/availability of activities, means of promotion, available premises, time of events, etc.);
- when implementing projects with a clear inclusion component, consider the provision of additional support by the FT during the project implementation or simplification of administrative requirements if such requirements clearly impede successful implementation of inclusive projects, without reducing the quality of the FT's work or derogating from the Programme procedures (e.g. organisation of preventive monitoring);

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- promote the use of inclusive and non-discriminatory language and, if necessary, produce glossaries or language guidelines that may be distributed to the Programme beneficiaries.

4.4 Training and networking

With a view to achieving the objectives specified in the Strategy, the FT will undertake the following activities:

- organise training or info sessions for the FT employees on inclusion in the Programme implementation;
- organise or participate in international training activities (TCA) on inclusion;
- promote networking with other stakeholders on national and European levels and establishing contacts with organisations/institutions/networks dealing with inclusion issues;
- provide information on inclusion during training sessions for evaluators of project proposals.

4.5 Reporting

With a view to achieving the objectives specified in the Strategy, the FT will undertake the following activities:

- monitor statistics on marginalised target groups and keep up-to-date with the state of play on the national level through existing sources;
- regularly input the Programme implementation data into IT tools, with a special focus on the information about projects dealing with inclusion or involving participants from the afore-mentioned target groups;
- monitor the Strategy implementation using indicators that will be developed as part of the action plan for the Strategy implementation;
- collect examples of successful projects in this field.

4.6 Synergy with other programmes

With a view to achieving the objectives specified in the Strategy, the FT will undertake the following activities:

- provide information – through the Information Centre, by telephone and email – about additional or alternative opportunities and programmes (e.g., Europe for Citizens Programme, RYCO, sponsor funds), and about networks and projects that may help potential beneficiaries develop their capacities (e.g., advising schools to implement eTwinning projects in order to develop their capacities so that they can apply for and implement Erasmus+ projects and the like later);
- inform end beneficiaries about supplementary or additional funding opportunities or about benefiting from other programmes on national and European levels (such as supplementary ministry grants for costs not covered by the Programme, etc.);
- provide information on and promote opportunities for individuals and organisations/institutions offered by networks and centres financed under the Programme, such as Euroguidance, Europass, EPALE, eTwinning, Eurydice, which may be used in project preparation, its implementation, dissemination of results, with a special focus on inclusion.

5 Annexes and references

Future Erasmus and European Solidarity Corps inclusion and Diversity Strategy (draft)

https://fondacijatempus.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/koordinatoriimenadment/Shared%20Documents/RG%20Strategija%20inkluzije/Draft%20Inclusion%20Strategy_NA%20Dir%20Meeting%2026.11.19.pdf?csf=1&e=9LwErB

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