



INCLUSION EDUCATION



HOW TO CONDUCT A FAIR, TRANSPARENT AND
INCLUSIVE SELECTION PROCESS OF PARTICIPANTS
FOR MOBILITIES?



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Table of Contents

	Foreword	04
	Inclusion and Diversity in the Erasmus+ Programme	05
	Defining People with Fewer Opportunities	05
	Step 1: Reaching Out to People with Fewer Opportunities	07
	The Outreach Cycle	07
	Preparation	08
	Communication	08
	Safety	10
	Empowerment	11
	Step 2: Selecting Participants for Mobilities	12
	Publishing the Call	12
	Handling the Process	15
	Tips for Application Design and Selection Criteria	16
	Step 3: What Comes After the Selection Process	19
	1. Communicating Provisional Results	19
	2. Opening the Complaint Window	20
	3. Acknowledging Receipt	21
	4. Forming the Review Body	21
	5. Conducting the Review	21
	6. Deciding the Outcome and Communicating It	22
	7. Using Complaints as a Learning Tool	23
	8. Finalising the Results	23
	9. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement	24
	Key Idea to Hold Onto	25
	Final Thoughts	25

Foreword

Across the Erasmus+ National Agency network, staff have increasingly encountered the same question from beneficiaries: How do we run a selection process for mobility participants that is fair, transparent, and genuinely inclusive? Recognising this as a shared and recurring need, the SALTO Resource Centre for Inclusion and Diversity in Education and Training decided to develop practical guidelines to help address this issue, and the document in front of you is the result of these endeavours.

It builds on two publications produced under the long-term activity (LTA) titled **Embrace Inclusion and Diversity in Your Erasmus+ Projects!**, coordinated by the **Croatian National Agency**: the **Roadmap Towards Active Engagement: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+** and **Outreach Recipes: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+**, which provided much of the conceptual and practical groundwork. We are grateful to the authors, trainers Petar Dukić and Sunčana Kusturin, for their work, and to all the participants in the seminars and activities that contributed to those publications.

Thanks are also due to the many colleagues across the National Agencies network who contributed to shaping this document. A particular acknowledgement goes to Linda Jakobi, our colleague from the **Latvian National Agency**, who has been committed to this topic and whose foundational work provided the starting point for these guidelines, as well as to our colleagues in the Croatian National Agency for providing support and feedback from the first rough idea to the final version of this document.

We hope these guidelines prove useful to the beneficiaries and National Agency staff navigating these questions in their day-to-day work.





Inclusion and Diversity in the Erasmus+ Programme

According to the [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#) (hereinafter: the Guide), “the general objective of the Programme is to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship.” Beyond this general objective, the Programme’s specific objectives place considerable emphasis on promoting inclusion and equity across all the fields it encompasses – education, training, youth, and sport. Inclusion and diversity have, in fact, been elevated to one of the four horizontal priorities of the Programme, applicable across all formats and key actions.

So what exactly does that mean for applicants and beneficiaries?

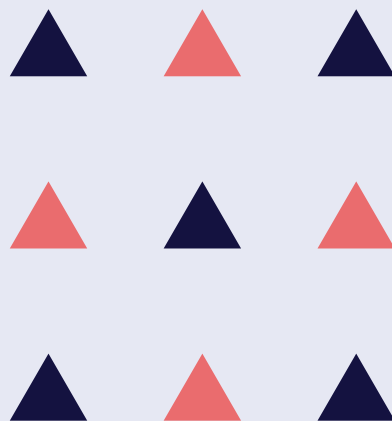
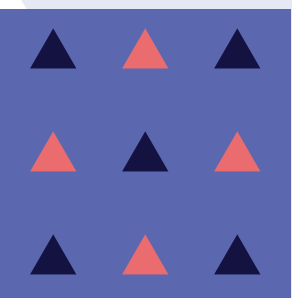
This approach places organisations and participants with fewer opportunities at the heart of the Programme’s objectives: from designing inclusive projects and activities and making them accessible to a diverse range of participants, to addressing topics and issues that directly affect the inclusion dimension of the Programme and its beneficiaries.



Defining People with Fewer Opportunities

People with fewer opportunities are defined as those who face barriers preventing them from having effective access to opportunities under the Erasmus+ programme. These barriers, as listed in the Programme Guide, include:

- ▲ disabilities
- ▲ cultural differences
- ▲ health problems
- ▲ social barriers
- ▲ economic barriers
- ▲ barriers linked to discrimination
- ▲ geographical barriers
- ▲ barriers linked to education and training systems.



It is important to note that this list is **not exhaustive** and is meant as a **reference point** for increasing accessibility for people with fewer opportunities. Detailed explanations and all potential aspects of each barrier that should be considered can be found in the Guide.

For the Programme to fulfil its purpose – bringing Erasmus+ opportunities within everyone’s reach – it must create genuine space for different voices to be heard. That means everyone should have a say, and those who face greater obstacles to participation should be brought to the fore, with their perspectives taken into account at all stages of the project. To support this, we recommend consulting the [Roadmap Towards Active Engagement: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+](#), a guide for the active involvement of people with fewer opportunities in all Erasmus+ project stages.

However, these guidelines focus on the selection process for the mobility activities and the stages that precede it.



Step 1: Reaching Out to People with Fewer Opportunities

Before discussing a fair, transparent, and inclusive selection process, we need to ask a more fundamental question: How do we encourage people with fewer opportunities to apply for mobilities in the first place – or, for that matter, to become involved in any stage of the project? Outreach is not merely a preliminary step – it is the foundation on which the entire selection process rests.

Beyond the **Roadmap** mentioned above, another output of the [Embrace Inclusion and Diversity in Your Erasmus+ Projects!](#) LTA focuses specifically on this challenge: [Outreach Recipes: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+](#) (hereinafter: Outreach Recipes). This guide offers concrete advice on how to strengthen the outreach dimension of your Erasmus+ projects, helping to ensure that the pool of applicants for mobilities reflects the composition of your organisation, or actively favours those who face various obstacles on the path to participation.

These guidelines draw from **Outreach Recipes** as a practical resource grounded in the experience of beneficiaries. For a more comprehensive treatment of the topic, we encourage you to consult the original guide.

The Outreach Cycle

A key insight that emerged from beneficiaries involved in creating **Outreach Recipes** is that “outreach is not a single act, but a continuous process.” With that in mind, there are three core questions to ask at the outset:

-  **WHAT** do we want to communicate?
-  **HOW** do we want to communicate it?
-  **WHERE** do we want to communicate it?

These questions signal that, when reaching groups who face a range of difficulties accessing the Programme, a specific plan must be developed and adapted to each group’s – or individual’s – needs. This plan can be broken down into four stages forming the outreach cycle: preparation, communication, safety, and empowerment.



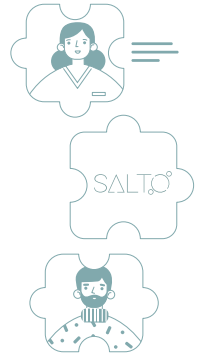
Preparation

In this phase of the outreach cycle, the emphasis is on “understanding learners’ fears and obstacles, the social networks that influence their decisions, and their motivations.” This understanding, in turn, shapes your communication strategy. Being well-informed is crucial:

- **To understand the barriers** your target groups face, **ask them directly** about their needs, fears, doubts, and obstacles – and **consult** those who know them best, such as **teachers/educators, colleagues, family members, and friends**.
- Try to **anticipate potential obstacles** and **proactively offer solutions** before participants even have to ask. This might include addressing concerns about hosting arrangements, covering the costs of visas or passports, arranging substitutes for staff on mobilities, organising preparatory visits, etc.
- **Engage with those who have the greatest influence on the individuals** you’d like to reach, such as families, especially in cases where the potential participant is someone others depend on, and offer them support and guidance.
- **Train and connect staff** so they can **identify hidden barriers** and recognise the challenges potential participants might face.

Communication

When defining your communication strategy, several elements need to be considered: approach, method, platform, timing, language, and message length, among others. All of these should be suited to both the content being delivered and the target audience. Beyond the information itself, it is important to bear in mind that our messages also communicate our values, emotions, and attitudes. With that in mind, communication can be organised according to three main target groups:



Communicating with potential participants:

- **Develop a personalised outreach approach** that engages learners in a more focused way, such as in smaller groups.
- **Create engaging materials** containing clear, transparent information and practical advice – for example, by organising information sessions, using social media, or inviting former participants to share their experiences.
- **Develop a peer-to-peer support system**, such as a buddy system that connects former mobility participants with potential ones.

Communicating with teachers/educators (with the aim of empowering those who will accompany participants with fewer opportunities on mobilities):

- **Organise face-to-face sessions** with teachers/educators who have already had this experience, so that they can share their insights.
- **Develop a mentorship support system** through which teachers/educators can learn how to support their learners best.
- **Develop practical, user-friendly materials** containing the most important information on supporting learners effectively.

Communicating with families:

- **Conduct an anonymous survey** for parents and guardians to explore their fears, concerns, and expectations.
- **Prepare informational handouts** covering the most important details about the project, mobilities, available support, contact information, and the benefits participants stand to gain.
- **Host information sessions for parents**, also inviting former participants and their families to share their experiences.
- **Organise open house days** to showcase the value and impact of Erasmus+ mobilities and projects, both at an individual and organisational level.



Safety

For people – including those with fewer opportunities – to feel comfortable enough even to consider participating in an international mobility, they need to know that their needs will be addressed and their questions answered. Creating a genuine sense of safety is therefore essential. If any aspect of it, whether emotional, physical, legal, or otherwise, is overlooked, it can become a barrier in itself, preventing someone from applying altogether. To create an open and welcoming atmosphere, several aspects should be taken into account:

-  As noted in the preparation phase, **consult teachers/educators** on what obstacles might arise for those with fewer opportunities and try to **find solutions** before the selection process even begins.
-  Where obstacles might also affect the **hosting organisation** (for example, issues around hosting arrangements or specific requirements for conducting internships), **address them together** and **develop a general solution** that can be adapted on a case-by-case basis.
-  **Develop a general risk management plan** to address foreseeable challenges, such as homesickness or physical illness, that can be adapted to individual circumstances.
-  **Communicate these solutions** to potential participants, while keeping the door open for them to **suggest further modifications**, and always ensure they have a way to do so in confidence and in private if preferred.
-  **Organise sessions** where potential mobility participants can **get to know the team members** who will be involved in the mobilities (ideally in an informal setting) so they can build rapport and feel safe, knowing these people genuinely understand their needs and are prepared to help.
-  **Offer personalised guidance and practical support** throughout the entire process, so that potential participants feel secure and supported at every step.

When people feel truly heard and safe, the likelihood of their actually completing the application process increases significantly, because they know the effort will not be in vain and that their needs have been taken seriously.



Empowerment

Empowerment is an individual process, and every person goes through it differently. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal is for everyone to feel comfortable seeking support when needed, “while remaining confident in their ability to take charge of their own growth.” This means emphasising each person’s strengths rather than focusing on their vulnerabilities.

This stage of the outreach cycle is particularly important **after the selection process** has been completed and **before mobilities begin**. However, there are steps you can take even before selecting participants to encourage them to take the leap into international mobility:

-  **Provide teachers/educators with tools and training** to help them create **empowering environments** for participants.
-  **Consult** teachers/educators, parents, and potential participants themselves on what other **challenges** they might encounter **during their mobilities**, and **organise workshops to address them** practically (for example, on cooking, time management, or budgeting).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that some learners may ultimately decide not to participate in mobilities. Encouragement can only go so far, and if that is their decision, it must be respected.

This section has offered a summary of the key takeaways from **Outreach Recipes: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+** most relevant to the project phases preceding the selection process, along with some additional comments and guidelines. The guide itself covers a much wider scope – one that extends through all project phases – and we encourage you to explore it in full.

Now that you have done everything you can to encourage and empower those with fewer opportunities to take the first step and apply for a mobility activity within their organisation, it is time to move on to the selection process itself.

Step 2: Selecting Participants for Mobilities

The first mistake to avoid when designing the selection process is assuming that equal treatment automatically equals fair treatment. Applying the same rules to everyone does not necessarily produce a fair outcome. The guiding principle here should instead be equity: actively taking into account and seeking to address the existing inequalities between mobility applicants.

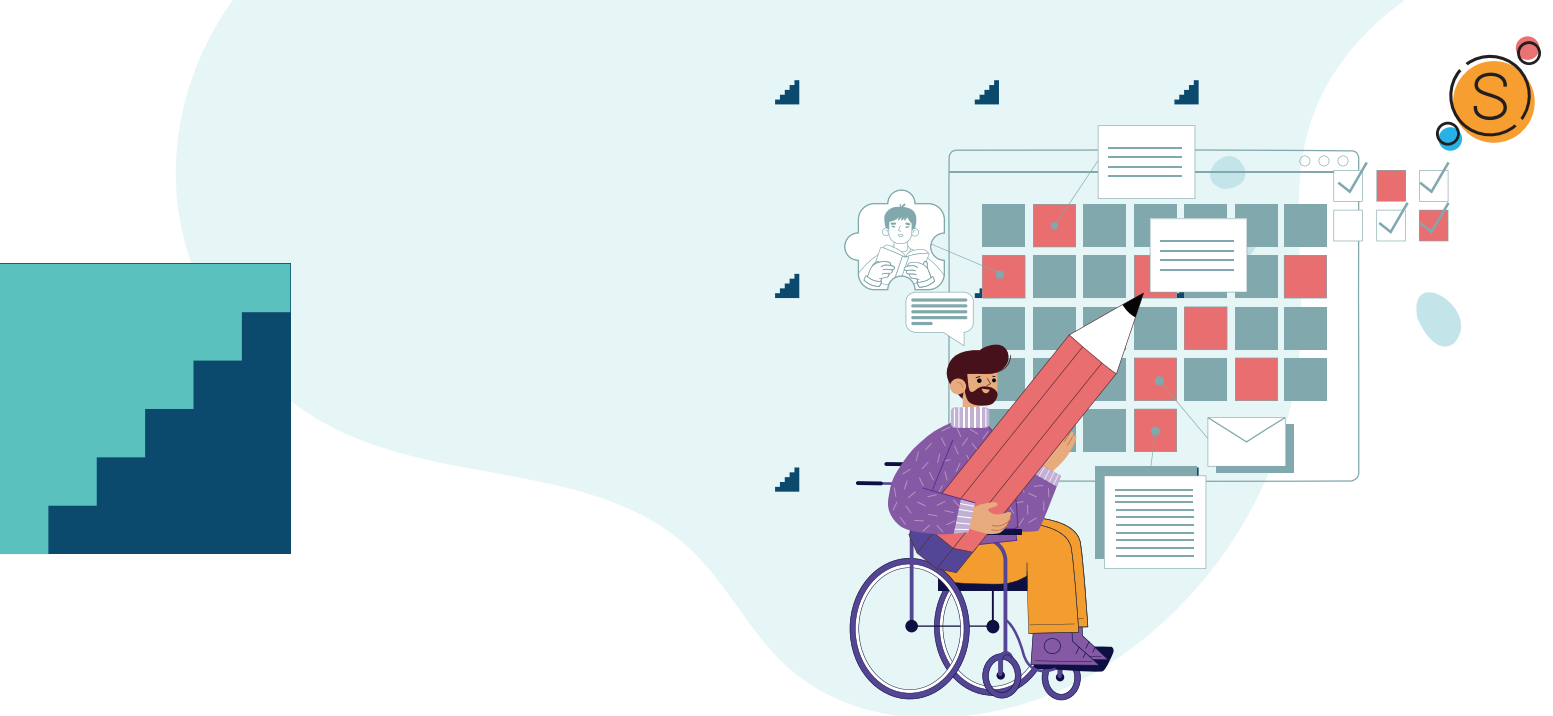
The **guidelines** that follow are **general** in nature and **should be adapted as needed** depending on the educational sector, the project itself, the type of mobility, and any other specificities that might affect how they are applied.



Publishing the Call

-  **Publicise widely and early.** Post clear calls on your organisation's website, social media, and in relevant spaces on your premises; send them by email; and include them in information leaflets. Consider also posting them in other spaces that might be relevant to your target groups, such as local community centres or libraries. Ensure sufficient time between publishing the call and the application deadline so that applicants can prepare their submissions without unnecessary pressure¹.
-  **Think about accessibility.** Your call should be reachable by everyone. To that end, be mindful of potential barriers and take steps to remove them: use plain language; adapt the call for those who are visually or hearing-impaired or who have learning difficulties (screen-reader friendly, large text, captions); and translate the call where necessary. For instance, translating calls into the native languages of migrants in your organisation or community can make them feel personally included and increase the likelihood of their applying.
-  **Use varied formats.** Adapt your messages to the formats most likely to reach and resonate with your target groups: flyers, short videos, radio, in-person meetings, digital content, and so on.

¹ You can include a note in the call indicating that applicants who need additional time may contact the person responsible for the call no later than, for example, one week before the deadline, provided they can give a brief explanation for the extension request and agree on an alternative date. It is also worth preparing for unforeseen circumstances, for instance, an applicant dealing with a family emergency (emotionally, timewise or in any other way) that prevented them from submitting their application on time.



- Target underrepresented groups.** Even if you covered this in the outreach phase, there is always room to increase your efforts. Organising information sessions in a specific class, school, or university – on “home turf”, so to speak – can help create a sense of safety and removes the obstacle of having to seek information elsewhere, which many people are reluctant to do. Make sure also to include information on available support mechanisms, **particularly financial ones**².
- Offer application support.** Designate a person to help candidates complete their application forms through drop-in hours and/or phone or video support. This person should ideally not be a member of the selection committee, in order to avoid unconscious bias entering the evaluation process.
- Be transparent from the outset.** When publishing the call, alongside the most important practical information (such as the deadline), include clearly defined selection criteria so that all applicants know what to expect from the process.
- Reframe barriers as fairness, not advantage.** If you want your selection process to be inclusive, you must acknowledge applicants’ diverse experiences³ and personal circumstances, and you must be transparent about it. How inclusion is communicated matters enormously: the goal is transparency without singling people out. Two elements in particular deserve careful attention when framing your call (and later when designing your application form):

 - ▶ **Language:** Avoid language that implies special treatment. Rather than writing: “Priority will be given to participants with fewer opportunities,” consider instead: “The selection process takes into account different personal circumstances to ensure fair and equitable access for all applicants.” This shifts the narrative from “some people get extra points” to “everyone is evaluated in context”, and helps normalise diversity.
 - ▶ **Broad and neutral categories of barriers:** Avoid forcing anyone to label themselves as “disadvantaged” or “with fewer opportunities.” Instead, offer an open invitation and reassure applicants that disclosure is entirely voluntary: “Applicants may, if they wish, indicate any circumstances that could affect their access to international mobility (e.g. financial, health-related, family responsibilities, limited prior opportunities, etc.). This information will be treated confidentially.” Include as many examples as possible, including those that might not immediately come to mind, so that no one feels singled out or excluded. Normalise it as a standard part of the process.

² More information on available financial support mechanisms for inclusion (such as inclusion support for organisations, inclusion support for participants, exceptional costs, preparatory visit, linguistic support and top-ups in higher education) can be found in the Guide.

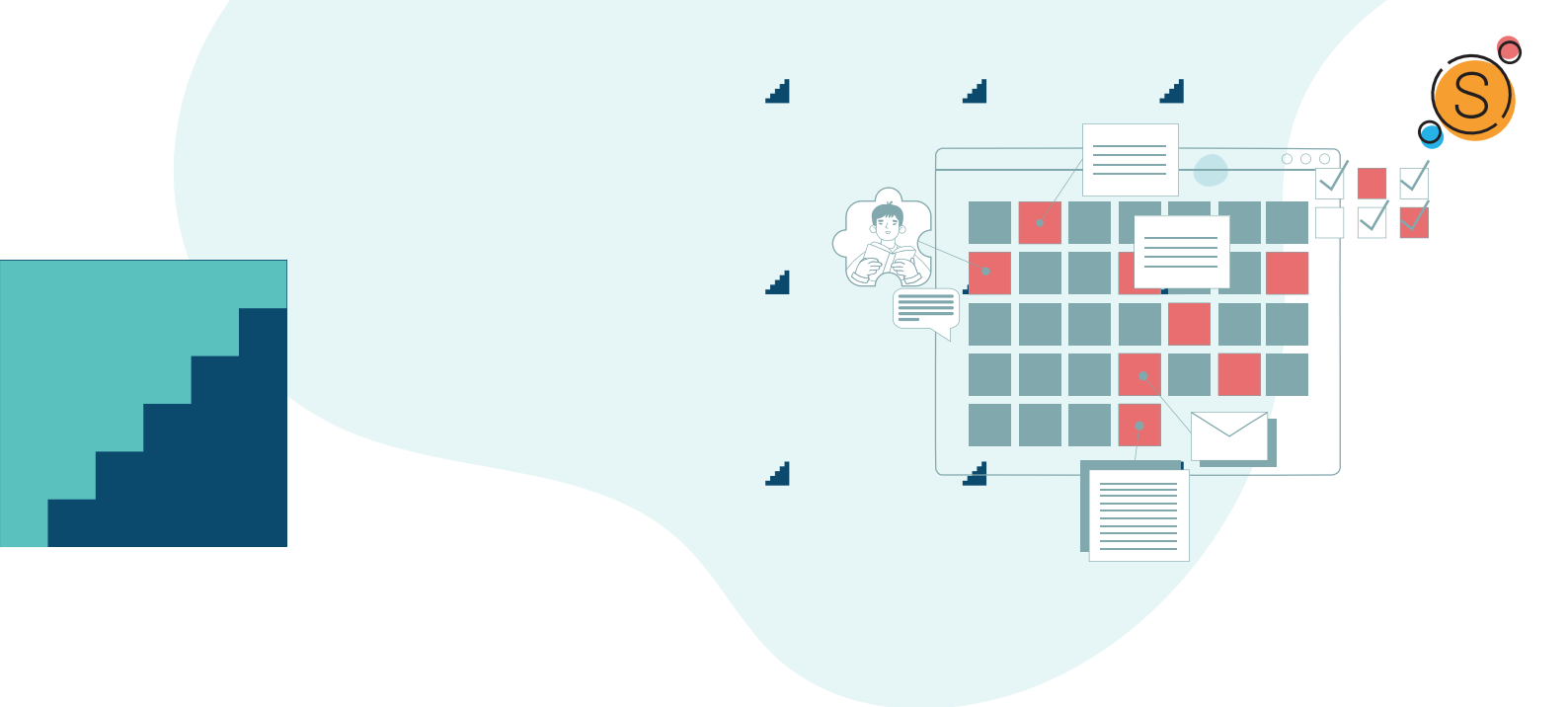
³ “Diverse experiences” is offered here as an alternative to “fewer opportunities” — a phrase that, while widely used in the Programme context, can carry a stigmatising undertone, particularly when it appears directly in a call or application form.



● **Introduce a confidentiality officer.** Designate a person – ideally someone from the professional support staff and with relevant qualifications, such as a school psychologist, pedagogue, or anyone with the skills and/or training required for this role – to act as a confidentiality officer. Their responsibilities would include being available to potential applicants with questions about mobility-related matters; how sensitive data about their personal circumstances will be handled and why it is needed; what concrete forms of support might be available given those circumstances; and so on. The confidentiality officer should be the sole person handling sensitive data collected through application forms, and can complement this through organised meetings with candidates, their families, and teachers/educators where necessary. They can also gather and review such information as part of the application process through private meetings with candidates who are hesitant to submit it in writing. Throughout this process, the confidentiality officer is also assessing the candidate's readiness and support needs. Based on their findings, they provide counsel to the selection committee on this dimension of the process.

● **Establish a complaints process before the selection begins.** An inclusive selection process must also be contestable. A complaints mechanism should be established in advance and clearly communicated in the call for applications within the organisation. Consider including something along these lines: "Applicants have the right to request a review of the selection decision. Complaints must be submitted within X days of receiving results and will be reviewed by an independent panel." The call should clarify the following in order to prevent vague or purely emotional complaints later:

- ▶ **Deadline** (e.g. 5–10 working days from the communication of results)
- ▶ **Submission process** (e.g. via email, using a simple structured form that includes the applicant's name or ID; the reason for the complaint, guided by pre-defined categories; a short explanation; and any supporting evidence, if available)
- ▶ **Valid grounds for complaint:** procedural error (criteria not applied correctly); missing or incorrectly recorded information; conflict of interest or bias; lack of transparency
- ▶ **Invalid grounds for complaint:** disagreement with evaluators' subjective judgement alone
- ▶ **A clear reassurance that submitting a complaint will have no negative effect on future applications:** this is especially important for applicants from underrepresented groups, who may be particularly concerned about potential repercussions.



Handling the Process

- **Document every step.** The selection process should be thoroughly documented, from application receipt and evaluation to ranking and final decisions, to ensure transparency and fairness throughout.
- **Form an independent selection committee.** Decisions should ideally be made by an independent committee, with possible involvement of colleagues from partner organisations.
- **Prevent conflicts of interest.** Individuals with close personal ties to any of the candidates must not participate in their evaluation under any circumstances.
- **Ensure objectivity.** Selection must not be influenced by family ties, personal relationships, or any other subjective advantage. While conflicts of interest are the more obvious source of bias, unconscious bias can be equally problematic, for instance, including a class head teacher in a process that involves their own students. Be mindful of such risks when forming the committee.
- **Ensure diversity within the selection committee.** A diverse committee (in terms of roles, expertise, and experience) brings multiple perspectives to the evaluation process and to the question of candidates' suitability for mobility. For example, involving teachers of subjects relevant to the mobility, or people with lived experience of fewer opportunities, can enrich the process considerably. Diversity within the committee also provides a practical safeguard in smaller organisations. If a committee member has a conflict of interest with a particular candidate, they can be excluded from that evaluation while the remaining members still reach a well-rounded consensus.



Tips for Application Design and Selection Criteria



Designing the Application

- 
Allow for multiple submission formats. Rather than requiring a single format for all applicants, consider allowing written essays, face-to-face interviews, short videos, and so on. This enables applicants to showcase their strengths in the way that suits them best, and can naturally increase diversity and inclusion among selected participants. Equally, avoid judging the format chosen; what matters is whether the applicant has addressed all the questions.
- 
Keep it simple. The application form should be short and clear, with straightforward questions adapted to your target groups, sector, and rules of the Erasmus+ programme. Avoid unnecessary administrative burden, and be cautious about requiring additional documentation **unless it is strictly necessary**. Bear in mind that asking applicants to provide proof of “disadvantage” can be off-putting and may deter people from applying. The role of the confidentiality officer is specifically designed to address this issue.
- 
Use a separate section to collect sensitive information. To reduce bias and stigma, try to collect information about barriers in a separate section of the application, simplified, where possible (for instance by offering general checkboxes rather than requiring detailed explanations). Limit access to this data (for example, making it visible only to the confidentiality officer) and use it as a contextual factor in evaluation, not as a label. This protects candidates’ privacy while still allowing their circumstances to be fairly considered. For those who remain uncomfortable sharing sensitive details in writing, offer the option of a private conversation with the confidentiality officer, with the understanding that the information shared will be factored into the evaluation of their application.
- 
Use anonymised identifiers. To maximise objectivity, consider substituting candidates’ names with unique identifiers throughout the review process. Candidates’ identities would then only be revealed to the selection committee after the ranking has been completed. This approach can be helpful, but it may not always be feasible.



Defining Criteria: DOs and DON'Ts

- 
Use both general and specific criteria. Combine general and project-specific criteria as appropriate. A two-stage selection process (an initial screening followed by a more detailed evaluation) may also be a useful approach. Depending on the criteria, numerical scoring or yes/no assessments can both be applied. Criteria should not simply be carried over from one project to the next but actively adapted to the goals and target groups of each.
- 
Ensure balance. Criteria should be weighted in a balanced way, with no single factor dominating; in particular, criteria should not be skewed towards excellence in areas such as high academic performance, extracurricular achievements, or language proficiency, as these tend to favour those who have already had greater access to opportunities.
- 
Be transparent about how decisions are made. Make clear not just who is prioritised, but how decisions are reached. For example, the following statement could be included in both the call for applications and the application form itself: “Candidates will be assessed based on motivation, potential for development, and their individual context. Academic performance will not be the sole determining factor.” This signals inclusion without explicitly ranking people by disadvantage.
- 
Embed inclusion quietly into your scoring. Rather than awarding explicit “bonus points for disadvantage,” use criteria that naturally favour those with fewer opportunities without labelling them. The aim is to prioritise impact, not identity. Some examples of such criteria are described below:
 - 
Engagement in context: If possible, focus on what candidates have done with what they have had access to: their active participation in school, work, or community life; initiative within available opportunities; and informal or non-formal learning experiences such as volunteering, helping with a family business, or peer support. This avoids bias towards those who have had access to “prestigious” extracurricular activities.
 - 
Potential for growth: Assess the candidate’s capacity to learn, adapt, and develop – this is future-oriented and internal to the person. Relevant indicators include curiosity, resilience, learning attitude, and adaptability.
 - 
Expected benefit (individual and wider impact): While it might seem similar to the previous criterion, this one looks at what will actually change, for the candidate and for others, as a result of this specific mobility. It is contextual and situational: a candidate may not have the highest raw potential, but the impact gap may be large. Relevant factors include the candidate’s starting point (have they had similar opportunities



before?); access to alternatives (is this rare for them?); the relevance of the mobility to their situation; and the likelihood of them applying the experience or sharing it with others.

- ▶ **Learning attitude and resilience:** This criterion rewards progress and persistence rather than static results. Look for demonstrated effort over time (improvement, consistency, overcoming setbacks); openness to feedback; and resilience in the face of challenges or disruptions. This is particularly relevant for candidates with fewer opportunities, who often have non-linear paths.
- ▶ **Level of prior opportunity:** To widen access without stigma, give priority to candidates with little or no prior international mobility experience.
- ▶ **Contribution to group diversity:** The aim here is to enrich the group and foster a balanced group dynamic, but bear in mind that this criterion needs to be framed carefully to avoid any sense of tokenism. Consider the perspective the participant brings to the group; their potential to contribute to intercultural learning; and the diversity of experiences and backgrounds within the group as a whole.
- ▶ **Readiness and commitment:** This criterion signals that you value the candidate's capacity to engage and their sense of responsibility. Relevant indicators include willingness to step outside their comfort zone; adaptability to new environments; realistic expectations about the experience; and commitment to completing the full process, including participation in other project activities.



Avoid arrangements that could deter participation. Do not put applicants in a position where they are asked to contribute something that might discourage them from applying, such as participation fees, co-financing requirements, or hosting obligations. If any such arrangements are unavoidable, communicate clearly and explicitly that an inability to contribute in this way will have no negative effect on the evaluation of their application.

Step 3: What Comes After the Selection Process

Now that the selection process has been completed and the committee has reached a decision on which applicants will have the opportunity to go on an international mobility, it is time to address what is perhaps the most delicate part of the process: informing both selected and non-selected candidates of the outcome and guiding everyone through the next steps.

Before approaching candidates individually, the following should be done:

- ▶ Communicate decisions promptly and respectfully.
- ▶ Reiterate the principles that guided the selection (fairness, multiple criteria, limited places).
- ▶ Include a clear message to reduce immediate self-doubt and comparison: “Not being selected does not reflect a lack of quality or potential.”
- ▶ Communicate a clear timeline to all applicants: provisional results, the complaint window, and final results.

1. Communicating Provisional Results

After a decision has been reached, all applicants must be informed of the outcome. A clearly defined ranking list works well for this purpose. For example, indicating that the first ten candidates are selected for the mobility, while the remainder are placed on a waiting list⁴. A third category (rejected applications) may be used if necessary, but have in mind that this framing can have a negative effect on applicants’ self-esteem and confidence; where possible, try to resolve issues with invalid applications through other means.

Detailed, personalised feedback is valuable, but it is also time-consuming, and prolonging the communication of results creates uncertainty and anxiety among candidates. It is therefore advisable to keep the initial communication fast and clear, including light constructive feedback for each candidate, and to reserve more detailed explanations for after the complaint window has closed, or upon individual request.

⁴ You may be tempted to leave one or two places provisionally open before finalising the results, as a precaution in case the complaints process leads to a change in the ranking. This is, however, not advisable. It tends to create more problems than it solves, introducing delays into the preparation process, generating uncertainty for selected participants, and signalling a lack of confidence in the process itself. It is preferable to use a full ranking list from the outset and make adjustments if and when necessary, for instance, if a selected candidate withdraws or a complaint results in a change to the ranking.



- **For selected candidates:** Send a brief, positive message acknowledging their selection and explaining, in general terms, why they were chosen. Include a reminder that final confirmation follows after the review period and frame the review period as a standard procedure (so as not to cause alarm) while still being transparent about the possibility of changes to the final decision.
- **For non-selected candidates:** Include one or two strengths observed in their application, and one general reason why they were not selected (e.g. high competition, lower alignment with a particular criterion). Remind them of the selection criteria and include clear information about the complaint and review process, including the deadline.

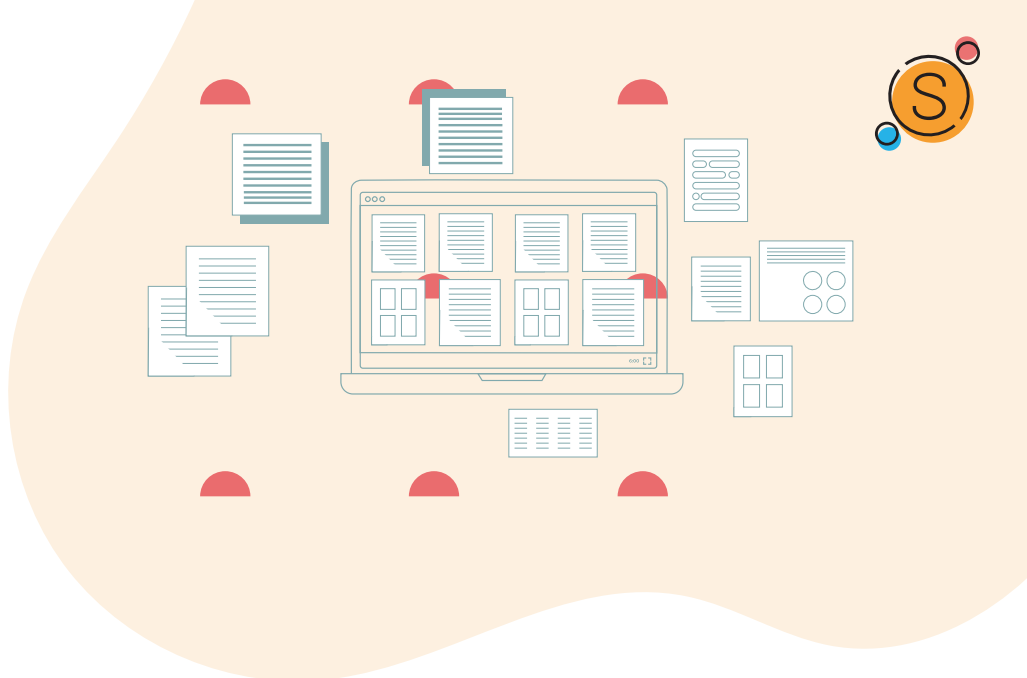
Use the word “**provisional**” throughout this communication: it protects the integrity of the process if the ranking shifts following a review. Including brief explanations of your reasoning also tends to reduce the number of complaints from the outset.

2. Opening the Complaint Window

Following the communication of provisional results, a complaint window must be opened. The structure of the complaints process, including the deadline, submission format, and valid and invalid grounds, should already have been clearly defined and communicated in the call for applications. The window for the review process itself should also be clearly defined (for example, 10-15 working days from the complaint deadline). The entire process, from the opening of the complaint window to the communication of final results, should not exceed three to four weeks. This timeframe demonstrates that the process is being taken seriously while avoiding unnecessary delays that could frustrate candidates.

In order to keep the complaints process as inclusive as the selection process itself, bear in mind the following:

- **Do not require formal or legalistic writing**, focus rather on the substance of the complaint.
- **Offer support in submitting complaints**, just as you did during the application stage.
- Be aware that some applicants may be hesitant to challenge decisions or may struggle to articulate their concerns clearly.



3. Acknowledging Receipt

Acknowledge receipt of all complaints **as promptly as possible**, ideally within one to two working days.

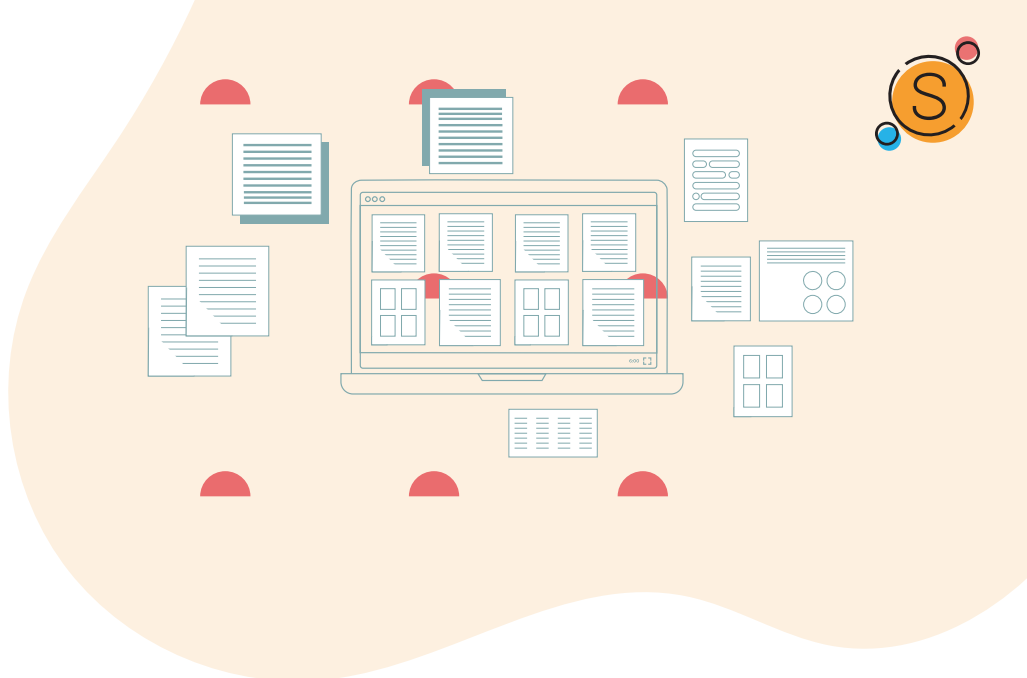
4. Forming the Review Body

The review process should be managed by an **independent panel** consisting of at least two to three individuals who meet the criteria established for the selection committee, but who were **not** themselves **members of the committee** that made the original decision. Where possible, consider including someone external, such as a colleague from a partner organisation or a different department.

5. Conducting the Review

Each complaint should be assessed against the same criteria and in the same sequence:

- ▶ **Check admissibility:** Was the complaint submitted on time? Does it meet valid grounds? If not, respond with a clear explanation, but avoid a dismissive tone.
- ▶ **Re-examine the application:** Re-score or re-review the application against the original criteria; check whether the criteria were applied consistently; and verify whether any information was overlooked.
- ▶ **Compare with other candidates (if relevant):** Was the scoring consistent with other applicants? Would correcting the identified issue change the outcome?
- ▶ **Document findings:** Write a brief internal note recording what was checked, what was found, and the conclusion reached. This protects the integrity of the process and ensures consistency.



6. Deciding the Outcome and Communicating It

After the review is complete, communicate the outcome clearly and respectfully. The possible outcomes are:

- ▶ **No change:** The original decision is upheld, and the provisional results become final.
- ▶ **Score adjustment, but no change to selection:** The review body has identified inconsistencies and (partly) adopted the arguments in the complaint; the ranking on the waiting list may have shifted, but the candidate has not been selected for the mobility.
- ▶ **Selection decision revised:** Changes have been made among the selected participants.
- ▶ **Process improvement identified:** Any inconsistencies or weaknesses in the selection process identified during the review should be clearly communicated as areas for improvement in future rounds.

Bear in mind that **changes** to decisions should be **possible**, but **not frequent or arbitrary**. A **resilient and well-designed process** will rarely be overturned. In most well-run processes, changes are the exception rather than the rule.

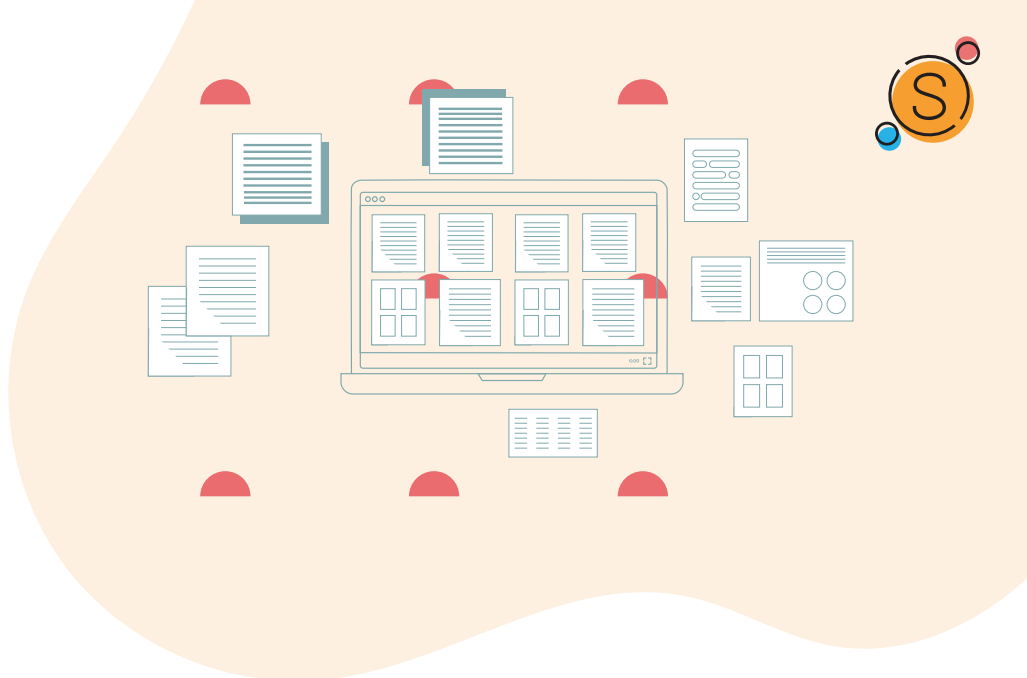
The response to a complaint can be structured as follows:

- ▶ acknowledge the request.
- ▶ briefly explain what was reviewed.
- ▶ present the outcome.
- ▶ provide reasoning (clear but not overly detailed, and never revealing other candidates' data).
- ▶ close respectfully.

Avoid defensive language or vague responses that carry no weight. The goal is clarity and respect throughout.

If a complaint does result in a **change to the ranking**, there are two options:

- ▶ **Adjust within the same cohort size:** Replace the lowest-ranked selected candidate if necessary and move them to the waiting list. This is fair but sensitive, and requires careful, respectful communication with the affected candidate.
- ▶ **Slightly expand the cohort (if feasible):** Add one additional participant, but only if budget and logistics allow it. This is often the least disruptive solution. It may be worth researching this possibility in advance so that, if a ranking change does occur, the process is not prolonged unnecessarily.



7. Using Complaints as a Learning Tool

As you will have communicated to applicants, the complaints process is not just a procedural requirement – it is an **opportunity to learn and improve**. Use it to:

- ▶ **Identify patterns and weak spots**, such as unclear criteria or inconsistent scoring, and make the necessary adjustments for future calls;
- ▶ **Consider organising training and workshops for staff** (project coordinators, evaluators, and others) on how to implement the principles of inclusive selection;
- ▶ **Reflect on how your messages are being communicated** and whether they are reaching the people for which they are intended.

One final note to the project coordinator and their team: Do not be afraid of complaints. A good complaints process is not about defending your decisions; it is about demonstrating that they can withstand scrutiny. Your job is not to eliminate complaints entirely, but to ensure that all complaints are well-founded rather than purely emotional, that your decisions are defensible and adjustable where necessary, and that all applicants feel respected regardless of the outcome.

8. Finalising the Results

Once all complaints have been resolved and the results reviewed and communicated, it is time to finalise the selection.

- ▶ Use a **ranked list** of all candidates.
- ▶ **Confirm the selected participants and ask for their formal confirmation** of participation (in case someone has had to withdraw for reasons that were not foreseen at the time of application).
- ▶ **Try to provide detailed, personalised feedback to all applicants**, particularly those who were not selected. This step may have been kept brief when communicating provisional results to avoid delays. Still, more in-depth feedback at this stage can be genuinely valuable for non-selected candidates in future calls. You may choose to deliver this in writing or through one-to-one conversations; whichever format you choose, make sure the feedback is clear and specific, includes suggestions for development, and is delivered in a way that makes the applicant feel safe, respected, and heard.



- ▶ **Offer optional follow-up conversations**, particularly if detailed feedback was provided in writing, as these can help resolve any remaining questions or doubts.
- ▶ **Begin preparations with the selected candidates:** The selection process was only the beginning. Many of the approaches used in the outreach phase, such as conversations with peers who have already been on mobilities or with accompanying teachers/educators, can be just as valuable in the preparation phase. For more information, refer to **Outreach Recipes: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+** (particularly the section on Empowerment) and the **Roadmap Towards Active Engagement**.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

The entire selection process is an opportunity to learn and improve – not just the complaints review, but every stage. With future rounds in mind, here are a few key things to bear in mind:

- ▶ **Collect diversity and outcomes data** (voluntary and anonymised): Track who applied, who participated, and what learning outcomes were achieved, in order to identify gaps. If you know your target audience well, it is also worth noting who did not apply or who withdrew and why. Was it a matter of insufficient outreach, lack of support or financial means, or something else?
- ▶ **Review the impact of your selection periodically:** Adjust your outreach strategy, criteria, and support measures based on what the evidence tells you.
- ▶ **Gather participant feedback:** The people who went through the process are your most valuable source of information. Include both selected and non-selected candidates, and make particular efforts to reach those whose personal circumstances acted as a barrier, in order to improve both accessibility and the process itself.
- ▶ **Organise training for staff:** Build a better understanding among your colleagues of inclusive recruitment, unconscious bias, data protection, and reasonable adjustments. Help them develop the skills to interpret context fairly, and foster a mindset where inclusion is treated as a matter of quality, not charity.
- ▶ **Develop simple internal standard procedures:** While each selection process should be tailored to the specific project, target group, and type of mobility, having a standardised checklist of elements that must always be addressed, however broadly, can be particularly useful when the project coordinator or team changes.



Key Idea to Hold Onto

By designing a selection process that values context and individual circumstances, and focuses on potential rather than achievement, you are not “favouring” certain people – you are correcting unequal starting points.

If that philosophy is clear in your process and in your communication, you will be able to preserve transparency, reduce stigma, and make inclusion credible rather than performative.

Final Thoughts

A **clear, fair, transparent**, and **inclusive selection process** should apply to all participants in Erasmus+ projects (including **learners, teachers/educators**, and **other staff members**), ensuring equal access to mobility and professional development opportunities regardless of barriers or individual circumstances. Even in projects where mobility is not a component, inclusion can still be actively strengthened by involving people with diverse experiences in activities such as working groups, seminars, or expert roles.

Such a process is more than an administrative requirement. It reflects an organisation’s commitment to equity, respect, and equal opportunities. By ensuring clarity and consistency at every stage, from outreach and communication to selection and feedback, organisations create participation opportunities that are both accessible and meaningful.

An inclusive approach recognises that participants come from different backgrounds and starting points. For this reason, participation should be considered **holistically**, taking into account its potential impact on personal, academic, emotional, and social development. For some individuals, Erasmus+ may represent an important step in their broader learning journey; for others, it may be a truly transformative experience.

Ultimately, the aim is not only to select participants fairly, but also to **build trust, empower individuals**, and **strengthen the credibility, inclusiveness, and long-term impact of the Erasmus+ programme** as a whole.



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