



Erasmus+

Inclusion and Diversity Strategy

– in the field of Youth

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1. Introduction

Young people have been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath. Today, an increasing number of young people are long term unemployed, face discrimination and situations of social exclusion and poverty, or are at risk of socio-economic marginalisation.

The European Union is taking active measures to counter this by helping some of the most vulnerable people in society: those young people who have fewer opportunities compared to their peers.

Targeting young people with fewer opportunities has long been a pillar of the European Union's work in the youth field, notably through project funding for organisations working in this area. Between 2007 and 2013, the EU Youth in Action programme reached successful results as regards social inclusion as demonstrated by the figures in Annex III. The work on social inclusion in the context of the Youth in Action programme was supported by an Inclusion Strategy, launched in 2007.

To achieve even greater impact in targeting young people with fewer opportunities and to ensure that Erasmus+ responds positively to diversity in the field of Youth, a revised strategy is herewith presented. As stated in the Erasmus+ legal basis: "when implementing the Programme, inter alia as regards **the selection of participants[...]**, the Commission and the Member States shall ensure that particular efforts are made to promote social inclusion and the participation of people with special needs or with fewer opportunities".¹

What follows is a strategy to meet these ambitions. It is a strategy for Inclusion *and* Diversity – both are equally important; neither can be considered in isolation. It builds on the results achieved by the previous Inclusion Strategy and takes into account the input from National Agencies and practitioners in the field.

The European Commission together with SALTO Inclusion and SALTO Cultural Diversity organised an intense stakeholder consultation with experts. Based on this consultation, two novel elements were introduced:

- **Diversity:** diversity in all its forms is referred to throughout, alongside inclusion. This ensures there is a dual focus – not only on including young people but also on strengthening the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to fully accept, support and promote the differences in society.
- **Practical guidance:** practitioners in the field emphasise the need to make information about inclusion and diversity measures more accessible and user-oriented. This advice has notably been put in practice in the more practical success-criteria for inclusion and diversity projects in Annex I. The annex can be used as a common guideline for beneficiaries, agencies and experts to improve the quality of inclusion and diversity projects. The Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, and in particular the practical guidance included in it, will also be communicated

¹ Article 11.1.a of the Erasmus+ legal basis states that the Programme shall pursue the following specific objective: "to improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, as well as to promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, in particular through increased learning mobility opportunities for young people, those active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders, and through strengthened links between the youth field and the labour market;". In addition, one of the indicators for the evaluation of the programme is the number of participants with special needs or fewer opportunities.

through channels and formats such as audio/video, publications, web, social media etc.

2. Background

2.1 Building on the Inclusion Strategy of the Youth in Action programme

The Inclusion Strategy of the previous EU programme for young people, Youth in Action (YiA), helped ensure strong support for social inclusion projects. Throughout the programme, close to 24% of Youth in Action participants were young people with fewer opportunities (Annex III). The projects they were involved in had positive results for both the organisations and participants taking part as well as the communities around them.

The Youth in Action Inclusion Strategy underlined the importance of youth projects for the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and helped mainstream inclusion in the Youth in Action programme. In the interim evaluation (2011)² of Youth in Action, the focus on social inclusion was highlighted as a unique feature of the programme. The evaluation report also suggests increasing the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities by further encouraging youth organisations to target this group. The new Erasmus+ programme offers an opportunity to continue and further strengthen this important work through an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy for the Erasmus+ youth chapter.

Why Inclusion *and* Diversity? The focus of the previous Inclusion Strategy was to include young people with fewer opportunities in Youth in Action projects and in society in general. It is important to reach out to these underprivileged groups but outreach alone is not enough. It is also vital to equip young people and youth workers with the necessary competences to successfully manage and support diversity. This will contribute to positive interaction with different inclusion groups, regardless of their ethnicity, (dis)ability, religion, sexuality, skin colour, socio-economic background, appearance, educational level, language spoken and so on. Supporting a positive response to diversity will ultimately benefit young people with fewer opportunities and their inclusion in society.

Where inclusion of everyone ensures that all young people can take part, the focus on diversity ensures that everybody can take part on their own terms, recognising the value of differences in norms, beliefs, attitudes and life experience. Erasmus+ youth projects are ideal tools for inclusion and at the same time these projects train young people (and youth workers/leaders) to manage diversity in a positive and respectful way.

The revision of this strategy has been undertaken through a consultative process: two roundtable meetings with practitioners in the field in 2014 as well as consultations with National Agency officers who are competent in this area. The process was coordinated by the European Commission together with SALTO Inclusion and SALTO Cultural Diversity resource centres.

² Interim evaluation of the Youth in Action programme: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/;ELX_SESSIONID=yN3WJKYHnXW269KsFdPyHSy8c4FfRHnP5J92QpKhFQJ25cykGHQn!1469323985?uri=CELEX:52011DC0220

2.2 Policy context

Through its policy decisions, the EU seeks to bring about social inclusion for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Embracing a Europe of differences as well as ensuring that everyone has the possibility to take part are European values.

Following the line taken by Erasmus+, the programme shall contribute to the achievement of policy objectives such as the ones encapsulated in the Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (the EU Youth Strategy³). The EU Youth Strategy for the years 2010-2018 contains eight policy fields of action, of which social inclusion is one. The 2012 EU Youth Report⁴ notably recommended a focus on social inclusion for the following three-year work cycle of the EU Youth Strategy (2013-2015).

Against this background, social inclusion has been the priority of the Trio Presidency Countries of Ireland, Lithuania and Greece, resulting in three Council Conclusions⁵ and one Council Resolution⁶ on the topic. The Trio Presidency countries each chose a specific priority as their contribution to the overall topic of social inclusion: quality youth work, raising opportunities for young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), and youth entrepreneurship respectively. The LT council conclusion on enhancing the social inclusion of NEETs emphasises the use of the Erasmus+ programme to address young people with fewer opportunities, especially those in a NEET situation. In addition, the focus on social inclusion of young people with emphasis on those with migrant background (Council Conclusions under Cypriot presidency in 2012⁷) further supports the need to see inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in relation to supporting diversity.

Social inclusion was therefore also the overall thematic priority for the third cycle of Structured Dialogue between young people and policy-makers, from January 2013 to June 2014.

The work with inclusion and diversity under Erasmus+ also fits into the wider framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy⁸ that aims to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU. The EU 2020 Strategy has a clear social dimension expressed in its headline target to lift 20 million people out of risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020. One of the EU 2020 flagship initiatives in support of this target is the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, which outlines actions to be taken at both European and national levels.

³ EU Youth Strategy: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1390996863108&uri=CELEX:32009G1219%2801%29>

⁴ EU Youth Report: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52012XG1220\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52012XG1220(01))

⁵ Irish Presidency (Jan-June 2013): Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people
Lithuanian Presidency (July-Dec 2013): Council conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training
Greek Presidency (Jan-June 2014): Council conclusions on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people

⁶ Council resolution on the overview of the structured dialogue process including social inclusion of young people

⁷ Cypriot Presidency (July-Dec 2012); Council conclusions on the participation and social inclusion of young people with emphasis on those with a migrant background

⁸ Europe 2020: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

3. Aims of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy

The following outlines what the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy aims to achieve. Based on consultations with experts in the field, a number of needs were highlighted in order to improve the number and quality of inclusion and diversity projects within Erasmus+ in the field of Youth.

1. Create a **common understanding** of those who may be considered as young people with fewer opportunities and a coherent framework of support for the Erasmus+ programme feature "Equity and Inclusion".
2. Increase the **commitment** to inclusion and diversity from different actors in Erasmus+: Youth in Action.
3. Promote Erasmus+: Youth in Action as a **tool to work with young people with fewer opportunities** and actively reach out to disadvantaged groups.
4. **Reduce obstacles** for young people with fewer opportunities to participate in the programme and help applicants to overcome obstacles.
5. Support organisers in developing **quality projects** that involve or benefit young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. provide training, tools, funding, coaching etc.).
6. Link where relevant to **other initiatives** that benefit young people with fewer opportunities – both cooperation with other sectors (joined-up, cross-sectoral approach) as well as for youth policy and projects at local, national and international levels.
7. Invest in the **intercultural and social skills** of young people and youth workers as well as their competences to manage and work with diversity in all its forms.
8. Increase the **recognition** of the experience and skills gained by young people with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+ and by the youth workers working with them.
9. Ensure that the focus on inclusion and diversity is present in **all stages of Erasmus+: Youth in Action management**, including promotion, support for applicants, selection of projects and evaluation and dissemination of project outcomes.

Each of these aims should contribute to positive impact on young people with fewer opportunities. In this way, Erasmus+ can become a lever for positive change in the field of Youth for disadvantaged groups in society.

The objective of this remaining strategy is to respond to these aims, by highlighting the support available, the actors involved, measures taken as well as the definitions and concepts that provide the underlying structure.

4. Definitions

4.1 Young people with fewer opportunities

Inclusion and diversity projects should have a positive impact on the situation of young people with fewer opportunities. These are young people who are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the exclusion factors and obstacles below.

The following situations often prevent young people from taking part in employment, formal and non-formal education, trans-national mobility, democratic process and society at large:

- **Disability** (i.e. participants with special needs): young people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities etc.
- **Health problems:** young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions etc.
- **Educational difficulties:** young people with learning difficulties, early school-leavers, lower qualified persons, young people with poor school performance etc.
- **Cultural differences:** immigrants, refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties etc.
- **Economic obstacles:** young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system, young people in long-term unemployment or poverty, young people who are homeless, in debt or with financial problems etc.
- **Social obstacles:** young people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc., young people with limited social skills or anti-social or high-risk behaviours, young people in a precarious situation, (ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers, young and/or single parents, orphans etc.
- **Geographical obstacles:** young people from remote or rural areas, young people living on small islands or in peripheral regions, young people from urban problem zones, young people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) etc.

This definition deliberately focuses on the situation young people are in, to avoid stigmatisation and blame. This list is not exhaustive, but gives an indication of the type of exclusion situations we are talking about. Some target groups of this strategy, such as notably young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), find themselves in several of the situations listed above at the same time.

The causes of disadvantage can be manifold, and the solutions similarly so. The **'comparative disadvantage'** is important, because being in one of the situations referred to above does not automatically lead to fewer opportunities compared to peers (not all people from minorities are discriminated, a person with a disability is not necessarily disadvantaged if the environment is adapted etc.). The risk of exclusion because of specific factors and obstacles varies according to country and context.

Besides these context-dependent factors, there are also a number of **'absolute exclusion factors'**. When people's fundamental rights are violated, they are always disadvantaged no matter how common this situation is in a particular context (for instance all homeless, everyone who lives in poverty). Special attention should be given to groups for whom absolute exclusion factors apply.

4.2 Inclusion and diversity projects

When we talk about **inclusion and diversity projects** in the context of Erasmus+ in the field of Youth we refer to projects that:

- either actively involve young people with fewer opportunities (providing tailor-made preparation, support and follow-up for them);
- and/or address issues of inclusion and diversity that ultimately benefit young people with fewer opportunities (even when they are not directly involved in the project).

4.3 Understanding diversity

Diversity in the context of this strategy refers to differences of all kinds. Some types of diversity are more obvious than others, such as ethnicity, religion, culture and language. But diversity goes wider. It also refers to different (dis)abilities, educational levels, social backgrounds, economic situations, health statuses, the place where people come from – as described in the definition of "young people with fewer opportunities".

The European Union is a good example of people of different backgrounds and with different experiences joined together, as suggested by the EU motto "Unity in Diversity". In the wake of increased immigration to and within Europe, racism and ethnic and religious stereotyping is on the increase in many countries. A robust strategy embracing diversity among peoples can serve to challenge and address these issues.

The Inclusion and Diversity Strategy sets out to embrace and celebrate diversity so that difference becomes a positive source for learning rather than the cause for negative competition and prejudice. Young people and youth workers should be equipped with the necessary competences to manage and work with diversity. This will encourage positive interactions between people of all walks of life and ultimately improve the situation of young people with fewer opportunities.

5. Inclusion and diversity projects in Erasmus+

5.1 Support features in Erasmus+ for inclusion and diversity in the field of Youth

To reach the aims set out in this strategy, Erasmus+: Youth in Action has a number of features that help projects making social inclusion happen by including young people with fewer opportunities and contributing to diversity in society.

Easy and particularly useful project formats

Several project formats are relatively accessible for first-timers and inclusion groups. Listed below are examples that are useful to know about and can inspire both newcomers and experienced users of the programme to consider inclusion and diversity oriented projects⁹.

- **Youth Exchanges** offer an international mobility experience in the safety of a group and only need one partner organisation to do so. The rather short duration makes the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities appropriate. As a short term learning experience, a youth exchange can also be a good setting for discussing and learning about inclusion and diversity issues.
- **European Voluntary Service (EVS)** normally lasts from 2 to 12 months, but for EVS activities involving young people with fewer opportunities (and group EVS) it is allowed to go for a shorter period, starting from two weeks.
- **Transnational Youth Initiatives**, in the context of a Strategic Partnership, allow informal groups of young people in minimum two countries to address challenges encountered in their communities – the project can be set up and managed by the young people themselves.

Erasmus+ also has a number of project types in the field of Youth that allow youth workers to improve their skills and competence in inclusion and diversity. On a wider scale, there are also project formats available that aim to support new partnerships and impact practice and policy in the youth field.

- **Training and networking** allows youth workers/youth leaders to exchange and gain professional competences to work on inclusion and diversity.
- **Strategic Partnerships** is a novel format introduced under Erasmus+ aiming to support projects that develop innovative practices and ideas. Stakeholders, such as youth organisations, experts in relevant sectors (health, justice, employment etc.), education institutions and many more can join forces to address and find solutions to the situations faced by young people with fewer opportunities.
- **Structured Dialogue** allows organisations to set up national or international meetings to interact with policy makers, get the voice of young people with fewer opportunities heard, and/or target the topic of inclusion.

Additional support

Young people with fewer opportunities often just need a little more support to make the transition to an international project. There are several funding options available under Erasmus+ for this purpose.

- **Advance Planning Visit:** These planning visits help to build trust, understanding and a solid partnership between organisations. Young people can be involved in this visit to integrate them fully in the project design.
- **Additional group leaders:** The programme guide indicates a minimum of group leaders per national group, but no maximum. It is possible to take more leaders than the minimum for an inclusion and diversity project.

⁹ The application procedures allow applicants to combine several activities (Youth Exchanges, EVS, training courses) strategically within one application.

- **Mentorship:** It may be a good idea to consider whether young participants with fewer opportunities would benefit from the support of a mentor; for instance reinforced mentorship in European Voluntary Service.
- **Recognition:** Every participant in an Erasmus+ project in the field of Youth is entitled to a Youthpass. This is more than just a certificate. Youth workers can use Youthpass to help young people reflect on their learning and train them in how to present the competences they have gained. These skills, in addition to the certificate itself, can be of particular help for young people with fewer opportunities such as NEETs who are trying to get a job.
- **Linguistic Support:** Organisations can apply for additional funding or access to online support for linguistic training in long term youth mobility (lasting more than 2 months).

Open applications

Projects need to be assessed before they can be granted and this takes time. Some young people with fewer opportunities have volatile lives and it is difficult to keep them on board while applicants wait for the grant decision.

It is possible to apply for a project grant, without having selected the participant(s) in advance. However, the profile of the young person(s) that would benefit from this project has to be specified and the applicant should give the necessary guarantees that they will select that type of participant(s) once the project is granted. The final programme can then be customised to meet the needs of the selected young people with fewer opportunities, but without changing the aims and outline of the granted project.

Extra funding available for inclusion and diversity

Two budget items in Erasmus+ projects in the field of Youth are dedicated to young people with fewer opportunities. This should allow a project to accommodate people with special needs and to cover the exceptional costs related to inclusion and diversity.

- **Special needs support** (due to disability or health): Erasmus+ can fund 100% of the costs to make it possible for people with a disability or a chronic health condition to participate in a project. This can be the costs of a personal assistant, the rental of assistive equipment, additional medical care or insurance due to the project (not the 'usual care').
- **Exceptional costs** (due to other exclusion factors): like the case for special needs, Erasmus+ also funds exceptional costs incurred when running a mobility project with young people with fewer opportunities, in addition to the regular organisational support. This can cover coaches and mentors, plus items needed for going abroad, such as visa costs, travel insurance, translation/interpretation etc.

Project organisers need to explain and justify these costs in the application form and show how the persons in question would not otherwise be able to participate. If these costs are clearly needed to implement the project up to 100% of the actual costs under these two items can be included in the grant. Costs covered elsewhere (for

instance through travel and organisational support) and certain other costs (for instance bank loan interest) cannot be covered by these budget items.

Erasmus+ funding is not intended to cover 100% of the total project costs but inclusion and diversity projects often require more human and financial investment. Therefore, NAs should help project organisers to **find possible co-funding** (or do their own fundraising). NAs can provide links to other public, private and voluntary organisations which may be able to offer additional resources in support of inclusion and diversity in international mobility projects.

5.2 Action by different stakeholders

The European Commission, the National Agencies and the SALTO resource centres are **jointly responsible** for ensuring projects supported under Erasmus+ in the field of Youth are as inclusive as possible and incorporate a diverse group of beneficiaries and participants.

In order to support the **strategy implementation**, a steering group for the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy will be established. The group will consist of members from the Commission, National Agencies and relevant SALTO resource centres. Beneficiary organisations and other relevant actors in the field can also be involved.

The steering group will take stock of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy achievements, adopt it according to needs and envisage any useful action to promote Inclusion and Diversity in the programme.

National Agencies will support the steering group in its work by submitting the necessary information. The Commission and the relevant SALTOs will coordinate and support the organisation of the steering group meetings and will stimulate the exchange of information and virtual cooperation between the members.

Inclusion expertise

National Agencies will bring in the **expertise** needed to work with inclusion and diversity. This can be done by hiring staff with inclusion and diversity background or expertise, training staff in relevant inclusion and diversity topics or cooperate with external partners that specialise in inclusion and diversity.

Each Erasmus+ National Agency for the field of Youth should identify at least **one Inclusion and Diversity officer** who coordinates the inclusion and diversity efforts in the National Agency and communicates with other National Agencies, the Commission and SALTOs on the topic. In addition, all the staff of National Agencies should know the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and implement it across all key actions.

It is also important that **the project evaluators and the selection committees** have relevant inclusion and diversity awareness. They should be attentive to the specificities of inclusion and diversity projects and know what extra support is needed. The selection committees should know about the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, in particular the "keys to success" listed in Annex I. These points are a good basis for assessing inclusion and diversity project applications. The notion of proportionality is also central to the selection process: the principle that in order to ensure a fair assessment, experts shall take due account of the different nature and scope of the

projects proposed, considering the experience and capacity of the participating organisations.

SALTO Inclusion and SALTO Cultural Diversity will organise training and networking events for the **Inclusion and Diversity Officers** of the National Agencies to address relevant inclusion and diversity topics.

Strategic approach

National Agencies will address all obstacles and situations mentioned in the definition of young people with fewer opportunities, without excluding any particular target groups. It is recommended to develop a **national inclusion and diversity strategy**¹⁰, based on the particular situation in the country and link it to the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy. National Agencies can decide to put a strategic focus on one or more of the exclusion factors. The agency should communicate publicly about this national strategy and be transparent in granting inclusion and diversity projects.

Based on the specific needs in their national context, each NA defines a **plan of action** (from scratch or based on existing initiatives under Youth in Action) to support inclusion and diversity. National Agencies are also encouraged to set up national inclusion and diversity working-groups to help implement this Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

National Agencies are invited to also make the **link to other partners, programmes and policies** to ensure that cross-sectoral partnerships and cooperation can take place in inclusion and diversity. An obvious partner would be the colleagues of the other Erasmus+ educational fields who are also working on equity and inclusion. National Agencies could support beneficiaries in finding other or additional funding opportunities to implement their inclusion and diversity projects. The European Social Fund (ESF) is one relevant example. Partnerships with employment agencies or skills training centres could improve the chances of young people on the labour market. Best practices should be documented and disseminated.

Reaching out

The National Agencies will **monitor** which types of groups with fewer opportunities apply and which groups are not reached well. The national inclusion and diversity strategy will encourage special efforts to reach out to underrepresented groups with fewer opportunities.

The European Commission, NAs and SALTOs will develop **communication material and campaigns** tailored to specific target groups. These should show the value of international projects for young people with fewer opportunities. Communication tools should be in plain and simple language, they should be dynamic and appealing to the target group.

The European Commission, SALTOs and the NAs will ensure that inclusion and diversity is mentioned as an **important feature** in all relevant documents produced to implement the programme.

¹⁰ The Shaping Inclusion publication by SALTO Inclusion takes National Agencies through different steps towards a coherent and effective national inclusion strategy to reach out to a diversity of target groups: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/ShapingInclusion/

National Agencies are invited to liaise with **organisations or key persons** that are in contact with specific types of young people with fewer opportunities. Via these multipliers or community role models the NAs can reach a wider range of groups than through their traditional channels.

The focus of the communication efforts should be on the **potential impact** on the lives of young people with fewer opportunities. A youth project should be presented as an educational method in a longer-term approach towards the young people with fewer opportunities – and not a one-off project.

Supportive approach

National Agencies should provide **systematic and tailor-made support** to the organisers of inclusion and diversity projects at all stages of the project cycle. It is particularly important that a supportive approach is provided to newcomers and less advantaged target groups in order to remove the obstacles to full participation in the programme¹¹. If they do not have the capacity to do it themselves, they can implement systems of multipliers, coaches, project visits, consultancy via phone, social media or email etc. National Agencies should dedicate sufficient human and financial resources to this.

National Agencies and SALTOs will organise **training, networking and showcasing** moments for inclusion and diversity organisations on both a national and international level. They should also create an **easy-entry offer for 'newcomers' to the programme** to give them a taste of the potential of Erasmus+: Youth in Action for inclusion and diversity. Training on inclusion and diversity for mainstream youth workers is important (for those not specifically working on inclusion and diversity). National Agencies can use their Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA) for this.

The training offer of NAs and SALTOs should be made available online at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/training/ and should be **accessible and adapted** to a diversity of inclusion groups (e.g. accessible venue/material, special diets, spaces for praying, child care for single mums/dads, personal assistant, exceptional costs, sign language interpreter etc.).

National Agencies and SALTOs are recommended to use and promote the available **tools for inclusion and diversity**, developed by SALTOs, the Commission and NAs. Where appropriate, these can be translated or adapted to particular target groups. Tools should be accessible for people with a visual impairment. NAs and project organisers are also invited to contribute to the online resources for diversity and inclusion¹².

Document the results

Inclusion and diversity projects and practices should be documented and showcased for others to learn from them or to inspire new projects. National Agencies and the SALTO resource centres are encouraged to provide such opportunities.

¹¹ Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

¹² Some available tools:

- Inclusion manuals for youth work: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/InclusionForAll/
- Cultural diversity publications: <http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/PublicationsCulturalDiversity/>
- Toolbox with methods and exercises: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/
- Atlas partner-finding: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Atlas/
- Good practice examples: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/GoodPractices/

The Erasmus+ legal basis contains indicators regarding the implementation of the Programme, of which one is "the number of participants with special needs and fewer opportunities". In order to be able to follow up this and other indicators as well as to ensure both quality and quantity when it comes to inclusion and diversity, a continuous effort is needed to know whether progress is being made in inclusion and diversity in the Programme.

The National Agencies should **keep statistics** on:

- the number of young people with fewer opportunities that participated in the different Erasmus+: Youth in Action projects – and correct the figures according to the final number of young people with fewer opportunities in the projects,
- the number of Erasmus+: Youth in Action projects on a topic related to inclusion and diversity per key action and activity type,
- the number of projects where young people with fewer opportunities took part per key action and activity type.

It is important that the statistics on inclusion and diversity projects are as **reliable** as possible:

- NAs should make sure that the inclusion and diversity projects submitted are indeed to be considered as such.
- IT tools to extract inclusion and diversity related data will support the reliability of the data, and be further developed and/or improved when needed.
- Besides the quantity, the **quality of inclusion and diversity projects** and their impact on young people with fewer opportunities will also be part of the evaluation.

National Agencies are encouraged to **share good inclusion and diversity projects** with the network and suggest them for the SALTO good practice database (www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/GoodPractices/). Research into the longer-term impact and success stories of young people with fewer opportunities who participated in Erasmus+; Youth in Action projects is also needed.

Make things better

National Agencies are closely involved in the management of inclusion and diversity projects. They should keep eyes and ears open to make an inventory of the obstacles inclusion and diversity organisations face when setting up mobility projects with young people with fewer opportunities. They should bring them to the attention of the Inclusion and Diversity steering group and the Commission, so that they can be tackled as part of continuous improvement in programme implementation.

The Commission, together with SALTO Inclusion and SALTO Cultural Diversity, will ensure that the staff of National Agencies are trained on inclusion and diversity issues and meet regularly in order to exchange good practice, share ideas and give feedback on inclusion and diversity.

The Commission, SALTO Cultural Diversity and SALTO Inclusion will work in close collaboration to sustain and intensify progress towards inclusion and diversity efforts.

Annex I: Practical guidelines to work with inclusion and diversity in Erasmus+ in the field of Youth – keys to success

There is a tradition of working on inclusion and diversity in international youth projects. Over the years a number of success criteria for inclusion and diversity projects have been collected. These aim at serving as a guide for *organisations to improve the quality of their projects* and for *National Agencies to assess these projects*.

The following 'keys to success' are intended to support applicants and other Erasmus+¹³ stakeholders in implementing the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

Reaching out

Youth organisations and other stakeholders are invited to consciously reach out and reduce obstacles for a variety of target groups. This makes an organisation truly welcoming for minorities and young people from all different walks of life.

- **Appeal:** Does the organisation make a conscious effort to appeal and reach out to different target groups? What do they do to get young people with fewer opportunities on board?
- **Obstacles:** How does the project in question reduce obstacles for diverse target groups to participate? In what way does it respond to the needs of different young people? Does it make extra efforts (equitable measures) needed to ensure equal opportunities for all?

Keeping young people at the centre

A youth project is not only for young people, but should also be conceived by them or **even better run by them**. Even though we use the European term 'young people with fewer opportunities', **projects should be based on the strengths of the young people and their active contribution**.

- **Needs-based:** Is the inclusion and diversity project built around the needs, interests and aspiration of the young people? Did the organisation carry out a needs-analysis? How do they know what the young people really want?
- **True participation:** Are the young people embedded in the project design? Can they steer, carry out tasks and take initiative? Does the process allow them to use their competences and develop? Do the youth workers encourage participation of all young people?
- **Tailor-made:** Is the project adapted to the competences and previous experience of the young people? Are the methods suitable to their age, background, religion etc.? How does the project strike a balance between the safety of the known and the challenge of the new?
- **Supportive approach:** What support does the project foresee for young people with fewer opportunities? How does the team cater for special needs? Are the exceptional costs adequate? Are the youth workers skilled to deal with the special needs and sensitivities in the groups? How is the programme adapted so that it is inclusive of all?

¹³ The keys to success are intended to help the design and evaluation of an inclusion and diversity project. All criteria for the different projects possible under the Key Actions in Erasmus+ are laid down in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide or in specific Calls for Proposals, which are the basis for the grant application. Inclusion and diversity related measures as well as financial incentives are clearly defined in the Programme Guide.

- Social dimension: Does the programme help everybody to mingle and find their place in the group or project? How does the project deal with stereotypes about different excluded groups? Is the project fun, without losing the educational dimension?
- Risk assessment and crisis management: Do the youth workers involved have a clear view, not only of the benefits, but also of the potential risks, of the things that could go wrong when working with this target group? Do they have systems in place to respond to any emergency situation that might arise?

Dealing with diversity of all kinds

Our societies become increasingly diverse. People from different countries, backgrounds, situations interact on a daily basis and this reality should be reflected in a youth project. This requires specific attention from the organisations involved in implementing the activities.

- Preparation: How are both the young people and the team prepared for the encounter and inclusion/exclusion issues during the project? Does the project focus on common interests rather than difference?
- Mixed groups: Are young people from different backgrounds (socio-economic, educational, cultural, religious, geographical, disability, sexual orientation, gender etc.) mingled in the project? Is this diversity taken as a learning point?
- Homogenous groups: In exceptional justified cases (e.g. when dealing with sensitive topics, such as identity, violence, personal development) it might be beneficial to work with one particular target group only (a particular immigrant community, lesbian and gay youth, girls only, etc.). Where relevant, is it well justified and beneficial to work with a homogenous group?
- Social and intercultural competence: Is the project used to learn to deal with difference in the widest sense of the word? Does the project envisage promoting diversity and countering intolerance and discrimination? How does it deal with taboos?
- Language support: How do the organisations prepare the young people for communicating across cultures? What methods does the programme foresee to allow young people to interact despite linguistic barriers? What linguistic support is available?
- Reflection and time-out: Does the project foresee enough breathing space for vulnerable young people? Are there moments in the programme when young people (alone or together) can make sense of what is happening and what they learn?
- Youth workers from inclusion groups: Does the team of youth workers reflect the diversity of the participants? Do they understand the needs of the target groups they work with? Do they provide specific support and set a positive role model?

Using non-formal learning

Non-formal learning refers to learning undertaken voluntarily, outside the formal setting and structures of for instance a school or university. Youth projects provide non-formal learning experiences. They are an attractive way to gain competences and life skills. They can be especially valuable for young people who may be at risk of low levels of attainment in formal learning, who have dropped out of school or are in a situation of unemployment where achieving new skills might increase their chances of finding a job.

- Clear objectives: Even though non-formal, the project should still have clear and realistic objectives. Are the methods appropriate to achieving them? Is the project presented to the young people in a way that is relevant and understandable for

them? Are the expected outcomes tangible for the young people? What do they get out of it?

- Attractive methods: Young people participate in non-formal learning of their own free will. Are the methods learner-centred and participatory? Do they engage young people and allow them to try out new things?
- Peer learning: Are young people seen as a source of learning? How does the project encourage all young people to come up with their own solutions to challenges and work together to reach their goal?
- Simplicity: Is the project clear, simple and tangible enough for the young people? How will the general objectives be broken down in manageable actions? Is the project work accessible for all involved in the project?
- Documenting learning: Is there time and space for the young people to think about their learning? How do the youth workers help young people to become conscious of their learning? How do they learn to present their learning? (Youthpass¹⁴)
- Fun: How do the organisers make sure the project is attractive and exciting for the young people?

Keeping eyes on the long-term impact

Designing and organising an inclusion and diversity projects involves keeping eyes on its long-term impact; to improve lives of young people with fewer opportunities. A project should be seen as a piece of a longer-term process of social change, for the young people and for the communities they live in.

- A wider process: Is the project with young people with fewer opportunities embedded in a process before and after the actual project or does it remain an isolated event? How do the organisers ensure the follow-up of young people after the project?
- Step-by-step approach: Do organisations have a strategic approach for young people with fewer opportunities towards positive change? How do they create a pathway for the young people to a better life – and how does international mobility fit in this? Are the young people ready for it?
- Motivating experience: Does the project take into account on young peoples' competences and aim at developing their potential, rather than focus on deficits and problems? How does the project give them appreciation for their involvement and achievements? How does it motivate them?
- Follow-up: What happens to the young people after the project? Does the organisation have plans to continue the work (outside the project)? Do they keep **track of young people's evolution and guide them to next steps on a path of change?**
- Dissemination and exploitation: Are the organisers clear about the tangible and intangible outcomes of the project? How do they foresee to make other organisations or young people benefit from those project results? Do they help others to do similar activities?¹⁵

Ensuring a holistic approach and partnerships

A young person (and youth worker) is not an island. It is important for the success of a project that it is embedded in a wider context and that it makes links with the world around it. Together with relevant stakeholders, a project can have considerably more impact.

¹⁴ More information on Youthpass: <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>

¹⁵ Find more ideas about increasing the impact and visibility of your project in Making Waves – www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/MakingWaves/

- Holistic approach: How do the project partners make bridges to others in contact with the same young people (family, peers, health services, employment agency, school, etc.)? What cooperation and complementarity do they foresee?
- Solid partnership: Do the organisations and individual youth workers involved in the project know and trust each other? Did they develop a set of commonly agreed objectives, concepts and working methods? Are they aware of each other's strengths and differences?
- Strategic Partnerships' projects: Does the project envisage innovative ideas and solutions? Are relevant stakeholders involved, notably experts in different fields that can contribute with their knowledge?
- Training: have the youth workers/other staff members involved taken part in training that focuses specifically on inclusion and diversity?
- Professionalism and commitment: Do the partners take the inclusion and diversity projects seriously? Are they aware of the commitment and competences needed to get the most out of the projects? Do all staff-members involved know what they are doing?

Annex II: Best practice inclusion project examples

The following projects are part of a selection of good practice projects published in a dedicated database¹⁶ managed by SALTO Inclusion.

The aim of the database is to "make waves" by disseminating project results and by stimulating the creation of ideas and opportunities within the Erasmus+ programme. National Agencies choose among their best project examples and submit these to SALTO Inclusion.

The topics of the projects listed hereunder are "Inclusion" and "Cultural Diversity".

Title: "No shell on the shelf: a tool of promoting social inclusion"

Training course in Cyprus

The project brought together participants from Italy, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus, who were interested in gaining knowledge and developing skills needed to create a so-called Living Library team in their country. A Living Library is the coming together of people with all kinds of backgrounds and in all walks of life in a safe and open environment, with the aim of breaking down stereotypes and fostering understanding. The Cypriot Living Library team already had experience in creating five Living Libraries and was therefore able to share their experience and knowledge with the other participants.

At a first stage the participants were informed about the topics of Human Rights and Social Inclusion. This was followed by an introduction into the Living Library concept and training in developing one. At the final stage of the project the participants were actively engaged in the implementation of a library. As such they had the chance to put in practice the theory they had learnt and create for themselves Living Libraries that will enable future possibilities to get together, challenge stereotypes and contribute to understanding and tolerance of others.

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/goodpractices/project/no-shell-on-the-shelf-a-tool-of-promoting-social-inclusion.188/>

The project received the European Charlemagne Youth Prize 2012.

Title: "The Magic of Integration (Part II): Overcoming obstacles"

Youth Exchange in Germany

During one week, a group of young people with mixed abilities aged between 13 and 23 years old from Spain and Germany experienced the obstacles people with disability are faced with when trying to move around the city. Using wheelchairs, pretending to be blind or deaf, they tried undertaking tasks such as shopping, visiting various offices etc. They also visited the companies where some of the German participants with disabilities worked.

A meeting was organised between the youngsters and politicians from the City of Kassel to talk about the needs of people with disability in public spaces and to learn about the efforts being made by the public administration of Kassel in this respect.

¹⁶ <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/goodpractices/>

This discussion ended with a city game to see and feel some of the positive results of these efforts, as well as becoming aware of some of the remaining challenges to be addressed. Circus methods were used during the project and participants worked together to develop circus skills as clowns and acrobats. At the end of the week, there was a public presentation of the results where 90 spectators attended.

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/goodpractices/project/the-magic-of-integration-part-ii-overcoming-obstacles.131/>

Title: "Roma short-term EVS"

European Voluntary Service in United Kingdom

This European Voluntary Service project gave Hungarian youngsters with Roma background an opportunity to take part in a volunteering project in the United Kingdom. The project was designed so that they would not need knowledge of the English language in advance (since lack of knowledge in a different language can be a barrier to participation).

The young volunteers spent the month of their EVS in Wales. During the first two weeks, they received lessons in English. They also spent time on developing ideas on how to share information about their Roma background with others.

After this initial preparation the volunteers spent the last two weeks in a project with ten other volunteers from all over the world. In this project, the volunteers with Roma background had many, both formal and informal, opportunities to share their Roma heritage and culture. During their stay the volunteer also has the chance to connect with Welsh organisations working with Roma children living in Wales. Interacting with these organisations gave the volunteers the possibility to further develop competence in communication and leadership.

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/goodpractices/project/roma-short-term-evs.172/>

Title: "Apple"

European Voluntary Service in Estonia

A three week long EVS project gave the chance to a group of six volunteers from Spain, France, Finland and Latvia, with mixed background (mental disabilities, previous substance abuse, learning difficulties, background from a rural area and an orphanage) to live an inspiring experience and to try different voluntary jobs.

The first few days of the project the support persons were helping volunteers to get installed and they were given language and mental support. After that volunteers took part in a three day long on-arrival training focusing on group-building, communication, risk and crisis management and exchange of cultures.

During the project they visited several local organisations, where they did a day of "local volunteering" as one of the learning methods and gathered materials for their final presentations. The volunteers visited among others a kindergarten and a recycling centre. There was interaction with the local volunteers of the organisation. At the end of the project the EVS volunteers gave a presentation on their home countries to an audience of 60 young people. They also took part in an information event for EVS and provided information about voluntary work.

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/goodpractices/project/apple.170/>

Title: "Queer your mind"

Transnational Youth Initiative in Sweden

This one year project aimed to increase the knowledge among young people from Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on issues such as gender neutrality, heteronormativity, queer theory and breaking norms. Moreover, the project sought to explore how these ideas can be implemented in the lives of those who took part. The participants actively reflected on the mechanisms that lead to discrimination and how these can be changed.

After one week of training and study visits in Stockholm, participants went back to their local youth groups and communities to share their newly gained knowledge and skills with other people. The methods for this knowledge sharing consisted in giving workshops and organising events. The project challenged the participants' views on inequality and discrimination in order for them to become more active citizens that appreciate diversity and encourage other people to do the same.

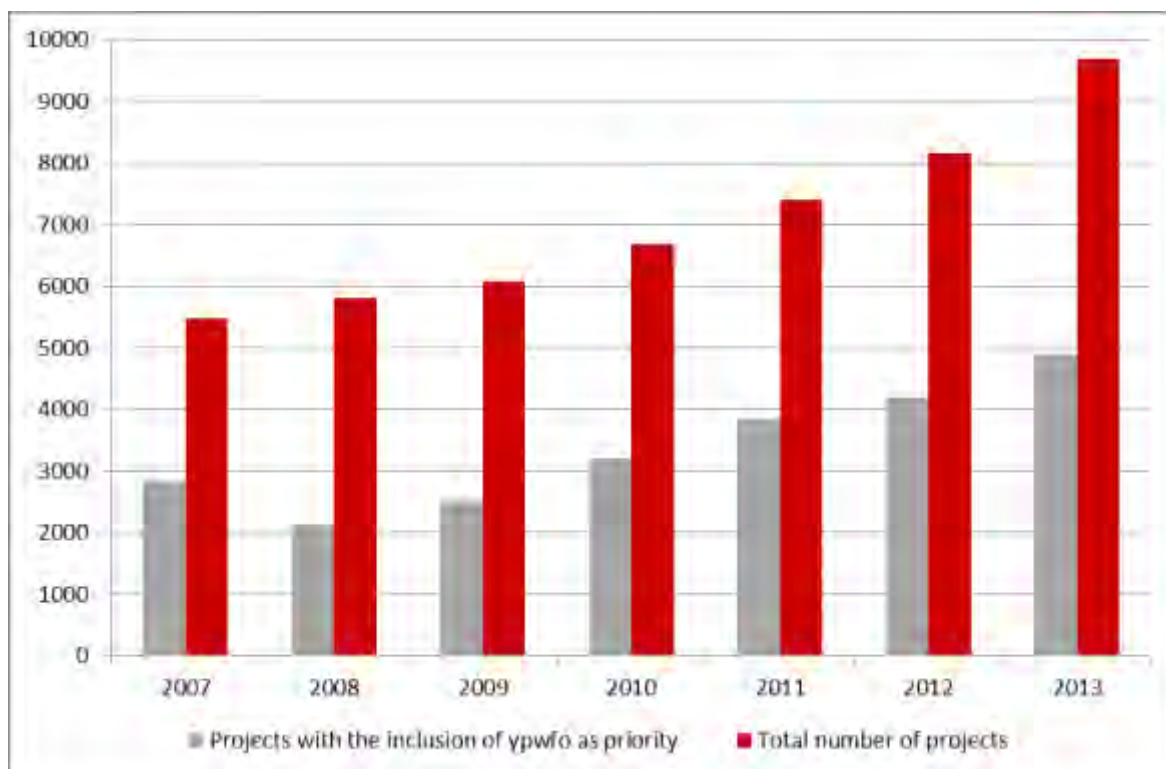
<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/goodpractices/project/queer-your-mind.214/>

Annex III: Social inclusion in the Youth in Action programme 2007-2013

Inclusion as a programme priority

One of the permanent priorities of the Youth in Action programme was "Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities". On average throughout the programme, 47.3% of the projects supported had identified their project activities as belonging to this priority.

The number of projects for each year of programme implementation are included in the following graph, comparing to the share of these that had the priority "Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities".

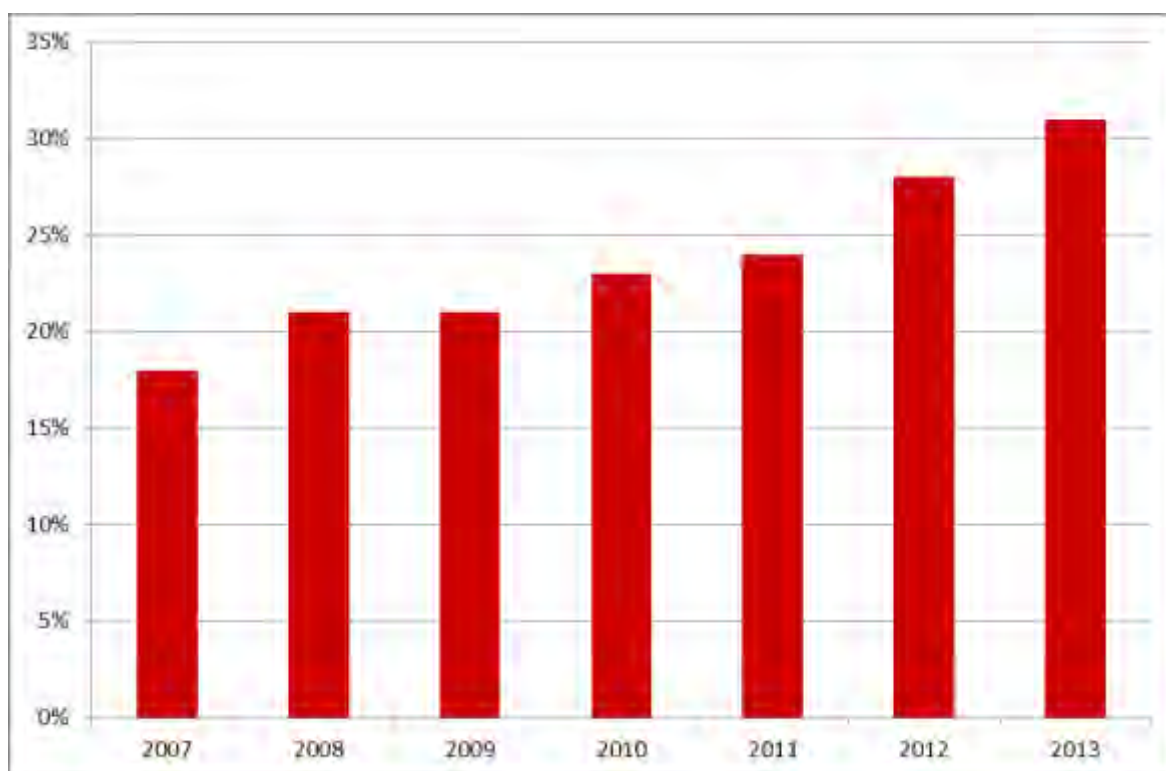


Graph 1: Total number of projects under Youth in Action and total number of inclusion projects.

Inclusion of participants

The number of young people with fewer opportunities increased almost year by year. In the relevant actions¹⁷ of the Youth in Action programme the total of young people taking part were close to 800 000 of which almost 200 000 were young people with fewer opportunities.

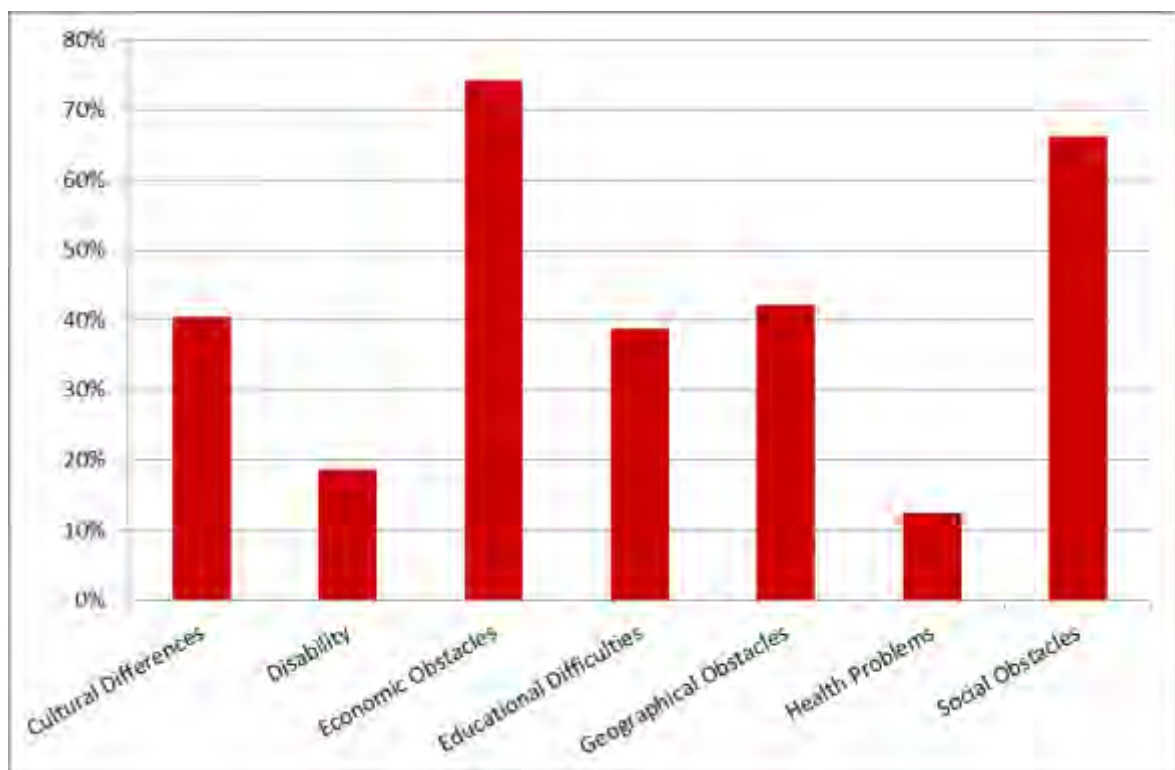
The percentage of participants that were young people with fewer opportunities increased throughout the Youth in Action programme as showcased in the graph below.



Graph 2: Young people with fewer opportunities as the percentage of participants in relevant actions in the Youth in Action programme 2007-2013.

¹⁷ Actions involving young people with fewer opportunities: Youth Exchange, Youth Democracy Projects, European Voluntary Service, Cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries of the European Union and Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy. Youth Initiatives were not included in this presentation.

When applying for a project grant, applicant organisations planning to involve young people with fewer opportunities were asked to identify which obstacles these were facing. They could name several obstacles. Among the projects supported under Youth in Action, involving young people with fewer opportunities, the frequency of the different obstacles was the following:



Graph 3: Obstacles identified by project applicants.