ERASMUS+ COALITION

FOR STRONG EU PROGRAMMES FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS

This paper outlines the vision of the Erasmus+ Coalition on the next learning mobility framework that the European Commission will prepare for 2023. *The Erasmus+ Coalition*, set up in 2015 by the *Lifelong Learning Platform* and *European Youth Forum*, is an informal alliance of civil society organisations with extensive experience in working with Erasmus+ and previous generations of the programme. Both organisations coordinate dialogue between the EU institutions and civil society organisations across Europe representing all categories of programme beneficiaries. We meet regularly to discuss issues of common concern in the programme implementation and to formulate common recommendations.

As the European Commission is currently running an *Open Public Consultation on the topic of learning mobility* and is engaging citizens in direct consultations on the topic by means of Citizens' Panels, as established in the follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe, it is topical for the civil society working in the field of education and training to share its vision. The following list of recommendations provides concrete solutions on the shape needed for the upcoming Learning Mobility Framework in order to boost the inclusion of mobilities in Europe and ensure that learners benefit from enriching learning experiences.

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1. LEARNING MOBILITY TARGETS

Any effort to boost participation and achieve inclusion in learning mobilities must be underpinned by clear targets that can be monitored, so that the milestones can be followed and remedial action can be taken whenever necessary. This, of course, is required for all education and training sectors, as mobilities take place in school education, in VET, in higher education, in adult education as well as in non-formal settings, including by volunteers of all ages, and can cover both learners and staff (employed and volunteers). At the same time, more ambitious targets are required and can be leveraged and built upon the success of previous learning mobilities, which have been a highlight in the work of the EU.

- **The importance of targets** requires expanding them to all education and training sectors, achieving a lifelong learning dimension: giving visibility to all forms of learning and educational sectors in all stages of life.
- **Targets should be more ambitious**, yet realistic and achievable: existing targets should be doubled, covering a period of 10 years. Any Council Recommendation must

state specific commitments to set targets by the next programming period clearly referencing a participatory multi-stakeholder co-creation process.

- **Learners demand real learning mobilities**, as virtual exchanges must not be counted towards mobility indicators. We advise against the term 'virtual mobility' as it does not represent the *physical movement of learners*. Data collection on virtual exchanges, blended and physical mobilities should be processed separately allowing for data disaggregation and transparency.

2. LEARNING MOBILITY PROCESS

A wide variety of barriers have been identified by the members of the Erasmus+ Coalition over the years, some of which have been iterated over different programming periods in the EU. To this end, the recommendations below provide various solutions in tackling some of the most relevant challenges.

- **Addressing barriers to mobility**, acknowledging their diversity and establishing clear categories *based on evidence*. *Research shows* that together with financial and linguistic barriers, targeted information addressing the concerns of different target groups as well as *whole-institution approaches* are needed to surmount those barriers.
- **Increased, strategic and inclusion-oriented public investment** can ensure learners of all ages and from different backgrounds have equal access to information and financial support matching their needs. *More transparency* is needed in terms of what is covered by mobility funding and when it will be available.
- **Removing unnecessarily bureaucratic and work-intensive procedures** required from education providers can increase the interest and motivation in offering mobility for individual learners, as well as enable more time and resources to be invested in recruiting and supporting mobile learners.
- **Supporting the learners and their support environments** through increased funding for individuals and more support to strengthen the structures of learning providers and mobility facilitators ensuring quality and inclusion.
- **Moreover, learning mobility needs to be acknowledged through the different Key Actions** of the Erasmus+ Programme and European Solidarity Corps, to ensure inclusivity of mobility participants of all ages across all education sectors. The inclusion of the most marginalised, as well as older people who have not been in education was further reinforced during the European Commission-organised Citizens' panels on learning mobility, providing an additional impetus to ensuring inclusivity in mobility.
- **Cross-sectoral cooperation** should be highlighted in any upcoming recommendation, solidifying cooperation between educational institutions, civil society, policy makers and nonprofit organisations experts in learning mobility.
- **Virtual exchanges as part of blended mobilities** can only be an added value to physical mobility, enhancing the experience of the learner before, during and after.
- **Greening does not equal defunding learning mobility**, which means that the transformation of learning mobility must be done through holistic evaluations of

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programmes and infrastructure: improving transport infrastructure, incentives to shift to greener options including better tailored green top-ups for sustainable transportation options, promoting cross-border mobilities and improving the infrastructure of learning centres and households.

- **No learning mobility programme is complete without recognition and validation** of learning. This requires funding for their development and/or improvement, making such processes easy to navigate and less bureaucratic. Clear measures should be provided to foster trust and transparency across education systems and widen their scope to all sectors of education and training.
- **The outcomes of learning mobilities** should be recognised and validated by relevant education institutions, including non-formal learning providers, as well as by employers so as to ensure transferability of learning outcomes across all spheres of learning.
- **Regional and local level**: Clear guidelines for Member States must be provided to work with subnational levels to improve administrative support, create adequate structures to support mobility and promote cross-border mobilities. Subnational funding can complement EU and national funding, ensuring mobility is widened to more sectors and to create synergies among different funding programmes.

3. MONITORING LEARNING MOBILITY

Once targets are established and barriers for engaging mobilities are tackled, it is important to maintain strong monitoring of the process in order to ensure that the diverse responses provided to support mobilities are adequately implemented and that the monitoring is tied with the European, national, regional and local levels of funding.

- **Quantitative and Qualitative indicators are a must** for the Council Recommendation, giving Member States clear guidelines for monitoring learning mobility across the EU. Lessons from Higher Education can be adapted to other sectors.
- **Support a cross-sectoral monitoring process**, where mobilities across different sectors and EU funding programmes are counted as well as national, regional and local mobility schemes, including those undertaken through private organisations (nonprofit and for profit). Support capacity building of sub-national entities in data management, standardising and raising the quality of data collection across Member States.
- **Ensure data transparency** in collection, availability, analysis and use in decision-making. The Education and Training Monitor remains central to present learning mobility progress in all sectors of learning at the EU, national and regional levels. It must be complemented by data collection on educators' mobilities. LLLP argues for streamlining of mobility data in the European Semester, ensuring that EU recommendations on funding for learning also target mobilities.
- **Monitoring Inclusion ensures an Inclusive Mobility**; collecting disaggregated data on the participants with fewer opportunities and publishing them is essential to get a clear view whether the mobility programmes are meeting their main principle of inclusivity. All education and training stakeholders should be able to get clear information on how many

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participants with disabilities, refugees, rural and remote areas have been part of the Programmes, as well as taking into consideration the information on gender and age.

- **Public funding from all levels is key** to effectively operationalise the monitoring process and develop a quality monitoring system. The funding must be distributed according to the needs of the different actors and ensure they reach the ones most in need. Building the capacity of civil servants, learning providers and educators to guarantee quality data collection is essential and cannot be properly implemented without adequate resources.

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