# Policy Updates

## Introduction

This documents provides an update on the mobility programmes, legislative procedures followed by the EDF secretariat.The two revisiod regullations are the ones establishing the new Erasmus+ Programme and the European solidarity Corps Programme

## Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps

On May 18th, the European Parliament adopted the new regulations for the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps Programmes of the European Commission.The Regulation establishes the programmes for the period of 2021-2027. The legal bases of the mentioned programmes contains provisions for persons with disabilities, yet not all our recommendations have been included, mainly the one on accessibility of the websites and online platforms used by the programmes, which are essential to get information, register for the programmes, reporting, get some administrative services  and the linguistic preparation

The above two mentioned programmes are the mobility programmes for young people; Erasmus Programme for adult and young learners, students trainees and staff in educational settings and NGOs and other bodies sending or hosting mobilities, and the European Solidarity Corps is the programme of volunteering for young people.

The New Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Programmes are very ambitious. One of the main priority of the programmes along become green, digital, simplified is being inclusive. This can us only rejoice.

The terminology under which persons with disabilities are included, people with fewer opportunities is now used by both programmes and the measures foreseen for this group are present across both programmes.

There is an entire article dedicated to inclusion that sets up the provision to dedicated funds for persons with disabilities and the costs that are linked to it, which is one of the most important reasons of not participating in the previous programme. The same article foresees the possibility of prefinancing the necessary funds. This article sets also the development of an [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](https://www.edf-feph.org/mobility-programmes-for-young-people-should-become-more-inclusive/) by the European Commission, document that was published on 29 April. All EU member States part of the programme must develop their own Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in line with the European one.

What does concretely offers the programmse for persons with disabilities:

* Priority to projects focusing on the priorities of the programme
* Funding to costs related to disability
* Supporting measures for projects including people with fewer opportunities, the ones with disabilities too: support in setting the project preparatory visits, mentoring, etc, the measures are described in Chapter 5 of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy
* National Sign Languages are considered as languages
* Blended mobilities including a virtual mobility component to facilitate the participation of those who can not move physically.
* Cumulation of the Funds with other benefits, such as the disability one
* Two indicators on inclusion, the number of people with fewer opportunities participating in the mobility activities and the number of new comer organisations and institutions.

More measures are described in the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

We are very disappointed to see that an essential axe is missing. The accessibility of websites and online tools used by the two programmes. Nor the Regulation, neither the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy are mentioning it. There is mention that the tools should be user-friendly, but this does unfortunately not mean that they should be compliant with the Web Accessibility Directive. This is even more disappointing when the programme has inclusion as priority and that Digitalisation is one. More ironic is that the component of virtual mobility is seen as an opportunity to be used by persons with disabilities. But how can they when the tools used for are still not accessible, just to mention an example, the Online Linguistic Support Platform used to learn languages.

What do we miss in these Regulations?

* The accessibility of websites and online tools used by participants organisations participating in the programmes
* The lack of legal reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Web Accessibility directive,
* Training on accessibility for National Agencies and European Commission staff developing the platform’s website is not mentioned.

### **Next steps**

* Organise a meeting with the Inclusive Mobility Alliance before the summer where we invite someone from the Commission.
* Analyse the Users Guides of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes. The first one in progress with the IMA and the second by EDF.
* Prepare a toolkit with model letter for National entities to send to their Ministries of Education and to get in contact with the National Agencies to ensure that the National Inclusion and Diversity Strategies are CRPD compliant and to include the points not included in the legal documents
* A letter to the Commission on the lack of mentioning Accessibility of websites and online platform used by the programmes. The European Youth Forum wishes to support it.

## The Inclusion and Diversity Strategy

The [Implementation guidelines for the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity_en) has been published by the European Commission on 29 April 2021. This so highly-anticipated document is the result of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps co-creation process, in particular to reinforce their inclusion and diversity dimension.

### What does the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy contain?

* Shared definition across both programmes
* The mechanisms and measures to support inclusion
* Defines the role of the organisations applying and the National Agencies managing the application process
* Provides good practices in inclusion and resources to help organisations running projects with people with fewer opportunities

At a first glance at EDF we identified the following positive points:

* A good overview of the mechanisms and measures available to supporting projects involving people with fewer opportunities including persons with disabilities (Chapter 5)
* The national agencies are should ensure providing accessibility features during their events and the information they provide should be available in several formats such as easy read (Chapter 7)
* The possibility to receive prefinancing to cover costs linked to disability
* Appoint in each national Agency and Resource Center Inclusion officer that are focal points for the EU institution and all the staff should be trained in issues linked to inclusion training on Inclusion
* The addition of Inclusion as an indicator for evaluation and the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities in the pool of evaluators of projects and staff.

We still see the need for improvement in the following points:

* Invisible disabilities are not included in the definition of disability (Chapter 4) .
* Accessibility of the platforms used by both programmes such as Youth Portal, Mobility Tool etc, is not addressed
* Training on accessibility for National Agencies and European Commission staff developing the platform’s website is not mentioned.
* More visibility of the measures put in place for people with fewer opportunities, those with disabilities too, should be better addressed to ensure that these are visible on both platforms websites and social media channels.
* Publishing the National inclusion strategies is encouraged but not an obligation for the National Agencies.

### What can be done further?

On National Level each of you can be active and emphasise the importance of publishing the National Inclusion strategies,raise awareness on the accessibility of information and websites.

On EU level we will further urge the European Commission to ensure the accessibility of the platform used and the information produced by the Commission.

With the Inclusive Mobility Alliance of which we are part, we will prepare action points and documents that will help in your advocacy work.

Loredana had a meeting with the Commission DG EAC and its Communication team on April 6 where the Commission presented their Communication Plans for the Erasmus+ Programme and asked what can they improve.