

Horizontal Priorities: Inclusion and Diversity

In this briefing sheet, we focus on *inclusion and diversity*, as one of four horizontal priorities for the Erasmus+ programme, and consider how this should be addressed when assessing a funding application or final report for a Small-Scale Partnership (KA210) or Cooperation Partnership (KA220). This briefing sheet was developed in collaboration with [SALTO Inclusion and Diversity \(Education and Training\)](#) and builds on information and guidance provided in the *Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Guide for Experts on Quality Assessment, Handbook on the Lump Sum Funding Model* and [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#).

Setting the Scene

The [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#) confirms the importance of promoting equal opportunities, access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across all its actions, and underlines the need for organisations to promote *inclusion and diversity* in their projects and activities.

An accompanying [Framework on Inclusion Measures \(2021\)](#) confirms the principle of Erasmus+ being accessible to all, leaving no one behind, regardless of barriers faced, and contributing to more inclusive societies. It sets specific objectives for: mainstreaming *inclusion and diversity* as a cross-cutting priority; ensuring inclusive features and mechanisms within programme design; establishing a common understanding of persons with fewer opportunities; and supporting beneficiary organisations in delivering high-quality projects that address *inclusion and diversity*.

A dedicated [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy \(2021\)](#) highlights increasing societal diversity and the need to create inclusive and cohesive systems and opportunities. It defines persons with fewer opportunities as “people who for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason [...] face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities”, while underlining that “some types of diversity are more obvious than others, such as ethnicity, religion, culture and language” and that “diversity expands beyond just these aspects [...] it also refers to different (dis)abilities, educational levels, social backgrounds, economic situations, health statuses, or the place of origin” with Erasmus+ aiming to “embrace and celebrate diversity so that difference becomes a positive source for learning, rather than the cause for negative competition and prejudice”.

The [Roadmap Towards Active Engagement: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+ \(2024\)](#), underlines the importance of an inclusive approach in project design, and considers how to actively involve persons with fewer opportunities in all project stages. Recommendations and ideas are presented to inspire project leaders, including suggestions to: research needs, interests and barriers faced by persons with fewer opportunities and directly involve these audiences in needs assessment; create partnerships with networks and organisations that already support persons with fewer opportunities [before project]; enquire about reasons for non-participation to better understand and address possible barriers; introduce clear support systems and protocols so that difficulties can be easily identified and resolved; embed peer learning, consultation and feedback actions to facilitate open and honest feedback [during project]; and ensure that dissemination processes are participatory, open and accessible and that materials are accessible to all user and beneficiary audiences [closing stages or after project]. Outreach approaches can also be found in [Outreach Recipes: Inclusion and Diversity in Erasmus+ \(2025\)](#) published by SALTO Inclusion and Diversity (Education and Training). Additionally, for KA2 projects that include mobility, the [Inclusion and Diversity E-course for Assessors Evaluating KA1 Applications](#) is a useful resource that can be accessed via Erasmus+ National Agencies.

Application Stage

SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS aim to widen access to the programme for small-scale actors and less experienced organisations, contributing to a more inclusive Erasmus+. When assessing applications under this action, it is important to respect the principle of proportionality, ensuring that the proposed actions are consistent with the targeted aims, while recognising that these are smaller projects with limited funding and often more modest ambitions.

COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS are larger projects with higher levels of funding, targeting transformation and change at individual, organisational and/or sectoral levels, including improved quality of work and practices, and strengthened capacity to work transnationally and across sectors.

Both partnership types require applicants to address at least one horizontal and/or relevant sectoral priority and, in all cases, projects selecting the *inclusion and diversity* priority should be considered as highly relevant. Additionally, for both partnership types, applicants are encouraged to take into account all horizontal aspects of the programme (inclusion and diversity; environmental sustainability; digital dimension; participation and civic engagement) when preparing their application for funding.

In terms of how projects might implement the inclusion and diversity priority, the following options exist:

- projects which select the inclusion and diversity priority and which directly address this topic;
- projects where inclusion and diversity measures help in achieving other horizontal or wider programme priorities;
- projects which actively embed inclusion and diversity into plans for delivering their activities.

The insights presented below, for the four core assessment criteria, should help in your assessment of *inclusion and diversity* at the point of application

Under **RELEVANCE**, you should consider:

- how effectively the project addresses *inclusion and diversity*, where selected as a priority.
- how convincingly the selected priority aligns with project objectives, innovation goals, target groups, their needs and plans for engagement and for addressing possible barriers to participation.
- whether planned activities align with EU values and are designed in a non-discriminatory manner.
- whether the proposal includes credible and well-planned activities that can effectively address the selected priority (for example, networking and capacity building for inclusion and diversity; equitable and transparent selection and engagement of participants; awareness-raising and outreach).
- the extent to which transnational cooperation offers added value in the targeted activities, including through collaboration, co-creation and an exchange of practices.

Under **QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN**, you should consider:

- how clearly the proposal integrates inclusion and diversity into the targeted methodology and expected results.
- whether efforts to build knowledge-skills-capacity-awareness in support of inclusion and diversity are clear, credible and achievable, being responsive to the needs of key user and beneficiary audiences, including persons with fewer opportunities, with clear plans for their engagement.

- whether actions centred on the development and testing of tools-platforms-frameworks-resources are clear, credible and achievable, being responsive to the needs of key user and beneficiary audiences, including persons with fewer opportunities, and with clear plans for their engagement.
- whether planned tasks and budgets have been considered through the lens of inclusion, to ensure the full and equal participation of persons with fewer opportunities, highlighting specific actions centred on supportive and supported engagement.

Under **QUALITY OF THE PARTNERSHIP**, you should consider:

- whether the required capacity and expertise exists to allow for the effective engagement and support of users and beneficiaries with fewer opportunities.
- the extent to which newcomers and less-experienced organisations are involved in the partnership.

Under **IMPACT**, you should consider:

- the adequacy and sufficiency of the targeted actions, both during and beyond the project lifetime, to achieve positive impact on users and beneficiaries with fewer opportunities.
- how levels and forms of engagement among users and beneficiaries with fewer opportunities might be specifically measured and reported.
- the adequacy of dissemination measures and resources to reach all identified user and beneficiary audiences, including efforts to ensure accessibility in outputs and wider outreach measures.

Final Reports for Small-Scale Partnerships

At the final report stage, Small-Scale Partnerships are judged against the same criteria used at the point of application (relevance, project design, partnership, impact) yet with a focus on results.

The insights presented below, for the four core assessment criteria, should help in your assessment of the inclusion and diversity dimension at the final report stage.

Under **RELEVANCE**, you should consider:

- the extent to which the project effectively addressed *inclusion and diversity*, where selected as a priority.
- whether project delivery was non-discriminatory, with overall respect for EU values.
- the extent to which transnational cooperation added value to project delivery, including through collaboration, co-creation and an exchange of practices.

Under **QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN**, you should consider:

- the extent to which planned inclusion and diversity measures-actions-results were actually delivered.
- the extent to which plans to build knowledge-skills-capacity-awareness in support of inclusion and diversity were effectively achieved, being responsive to the needs of key user and beneficiary audiences, including persons with fewer opportunities, and with evidence of active engagement.
- the extent to which plans to develop and test tools-platforms-frameworks-resources were effectively delivered, being responsive to the needs of key user and beneficiary audiences, including persons with fewer opportunities, and with evidence of active engagement.

- the extent to which task and output delivery were considered through the lens of inclusion, ensuring the full and equal participation of persons with fewer opportunities through actions centred on supportive and supported engagement.

Under **QUALITY OF THE PARTNERSHIP**, you should consider:

- the extent to which partner capacity and expertise were used as a means of reaching and engaging the targeted individuals and communities, including efforts to effectively engage and support users and beneficiaries with fewer opportunities.
- the extent to which newcomers and less-experienced organisations were involved in project delivery.

Under **IMPACT**, you should consider:

- the extent to which the targeted actions were sufficient, both during and beyond the project lifetime, to achieve positive impact on users and beneficiaries with fewer opportunities.
- the extent to which levels and forms of engagement among users and beneficiaries with fewer opportunities were effectively measured and reported.
- the extent to which dissemination measures and resources were sufficient to reach all identified user and beneficiary audiences, including efforts to ensure accessibility in outputs and outreach measures.

Additional insights into scoring bands and thresholds for SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS can be found in the [Expert Briefing Sheet for KA210 Final Reports](#).

Final Reports for Cooperation Partnerships

At the final report stage, Cooperation Partnerships focus solely on Work Packages defined at the point of application, and on the quality and extent of achievement of all planned tasks and deliverables.

As a guiding principle, your assessment should focus on *the extent to which the project was implemented in line with the approved grant application*, as per Annex 2 of the beneficiary agreement, including reflections on horizontal priorities as a part of the overall assessment.

Efforts to address *inclusion and diversity* in any aspect of project delivery, should be predominantly addressed under **WORK PACKAGE 1**, reflecting holistically on eventual project implementation and comparing this to the original project proposal. Where a beneficiary has selected the *inclusion and diversity* as a named priority at the point of application, it is especially important to reflect on the extent to which project delivery actively contributed to this priority, according to insights presented in the final report.

You might also reference this in **OTHER WORK PACKAGES**, where relevant actions were integrated into the original project design. In such cases, it is important to focus on the nature, extent and quality of task and output delivery, highlighting significant changes as well as positive aspects of project, task and output delivery that merit recognition.

Additional insights into scoring bands and thresholds for COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS can be found in the [Expert Briefing Sheet for KA220 Final Reports](#).