



Strengthening non-formal youth work and adult education

Position Paper on the further development of Erasmus+

The present paper was drafted in collaboration between 5 organisations active in catholic youth work and adult education. The Association for Catholic-Social Educational Centres in the Federal Republic of Germany (AKSB e.V.), the Office for the Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' conference (AFJ), Catholic Adult Education of Germany (KEB), the European Federation for Catholic Adult Education (FEECA) and the Association of German Catholic Youth (BDKJ). Whose members run 994 installations all over Europe and employ 3.218 staff. Their non-formal educational activities reach 5.3 million young people and adults per year.

We acknowledge that Erasmus+ is one of the most successful EU-funding programmes and emphasize its significance for an ever closer Union and the future of European Integration. AKSB, AFJ, KEB, FEECA and BDKJ regard the continuation of the programme as essential while emphasizing the need for further development.

For the new programme the organisations of catholic youth work and adult education would like to put forward the following recommendation:

Budget

- Educational mobility across Europe is essential for the formation of a European identity. Thus, it is vital that more citizens have the opportunity to participate in Erasmus+. Europeans are highly motivated: In all key actions funding demand exceeds the available offer many times. Consequently, it is recommended to, at the very least, double the current budget.
- Despite the low budget share in Erasmus+, non-formal youth work and adult education are committed to the European dimension in their daily work. Numerous youth exchanges and workshops organised by non-formal education organisations outside Erasmus+ allow thousands of Europeans to meet and learn together each year. The training of staff members abroad and the forging of alliances with partner organisations from all over Europe play a key role within the sector. Youth exchanges can have an enormous impact upon peoples' lives. For many adults graduating from school or university marks the beginning of life-long learning. The potential of the non-formal education sector for the formation of a European identity and European citizenship should be acknowledge and fully develop. Therefore, our recommendation is to increase the budget share of youth in Erasmus+ from 10% to 15% and the budget share of adult learning from 3,9% to 6%.

Access to the programme

- Erasmus+ is intended to be an easily accessible programme. Completing the application forms with their 30 questions requires so much expertise and preparation that a sector of

commercial application advisers has developed. This was not the intention of the programme. Therefore, in order to enable organisations without a professional fundraising department to work with Erasmus+ the catholic organisations propose to drastically shorten the application forms. A second application deadline should be offered for projects on adult learning.

- Just like the application forms, the 300 page programme guide is too complex .We recommend to shorten and simplify the programme guide. One option would be to split it up into several specialized programme guides for different topics such as "higher education", "school", "adult learning" and "youth".
- Currently, learners of non-formal adult education cannot participate in mobility actions in Erasmus+. People who pursue an education outside the formal sector are as open and curious about educational mobility in Europe as university students and have similar multiplier roles. Learners in non-formal adult education should once again receive the opportunity to participate in mobility projects. To this end, the Grundtvig workshops should be reintroduced to the programme.
- The national agencies are inconsistent when it comes to providing information. This is as true for the registration of new project partners in the URF (Unique Registration Facility) and the ECAS (European Commission Authentication Services) databases as for the approval of projects or the counselling of applicants, e.g. on project drafts. These differences in approach can be observed as much among the four national agencies in Germany as with other European national agencies. Approximately the same concepts and information should be available on all relevant websites throughout Europe. National agencies should choose time frames as to allow potential applicants sufficient preparation time.

Implementation

- The previous funding period offered the possibility to apply for the funding of preparatory visits dedicated to the development and proposal of GRUNDTVIG projects. This opportunity should be reintroduced with regard to the more complex structure of the new programme. To limit the administrative work to a minimum, we suggest that a cost category "preparatory visits" be included in the application form.
- The introduction of lump-sum grants is welcomed. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain how lump-sum grants may be used and what for. No certified information is available on what kind of co-financing is apt and does not affect the funding. The administration lump sum under key action 2 is too low to fulfil all task requirements. The lump sums should be graded according to income groups (country groups), like the staffing expenditures for intellectual outcomes.
- Travel expenses may only be refunded if the travelled distance exceeds 99 km. Travel expenses are calculated from the linear distance between two places. In border regions cross-border mobilities below a distance of 99km are very common. Calculating travel expenses from the linear distance does not allow for a realistic display of real costs and

disadvantages participants from remote areas and cities who will always travel at a higher cost, even if planning thoroughly. We propose replacing the linear distance based calculation by a lump-sum reimbursement per kilometre covered, starting from a distance of 20km.

- Projects with disadvantaged people require more social work resources during the preparation, the implementation and the follow-up. This must be reflected in extended funding. Currently, the exact amount of the additional funding has to be indicated in the application form, yet the cost it is difficult to predict, especially when it comes to psychosocial or mental disabilities. In order to ensure comprehensive inclusion, an ex post adjustment of the required additional funding needs to be made possible. Special funding for disabled people must not be included in the maximum grant. Facilities, institutions and organisations working with disadvantaged or disabled young people should be enabled to bill the expenses for professional full-time staff. This is the only way to guarantee the continuity in attendance which is especially important to disadvantaged young people.
- A consistent and co-ordinated assessment by a single authority – supported by independent experts – is required under YOUTH IN ACTION and GRUNDTVIG. Leaving the assessment and decision-making exclusively to independent experts is inadequate.

Programme design

- In the current programme period the EU funds for life-long learning, youth, sport and higher education were merged into Erasmus+. This integration strengthened EU-funded mobility projects and can therefore be regarded as successful. Unfortunately, the integration of multiple programmes into one also caused a loss of visibility for the individual programme parts. To protect the visibility of Erasmus+ and maintain the focus on mobility projects, further merging with other programmes should be avoided. A usage of Erasmus+ funds to promote employment cannot be advised. The European Solidarity Corps should be established as a separate programme outside Erasmus+.
- The national mid-term evaluation for Germany confirmed the effectiveness of Erasmus+ and its sub-programmes. Thus, a holistic approach to youth and adult education should be a key element of the programme. Non-formal education is especially effective to promote European exchange, intercultural learning, European citizenship and volunteering, the reduction of prejudices as well as citizen education and value formation. These objectives need to be more than statements of intend. The thematic priorities for projects on youth and adult learning should explicitly reflect those goals.

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www.aksb.de

www.keb-deutschland.de

www.feeca.eu

www.afj.de

www.bdkj.de