

NEWSLETTER 12

Older People in the New Erasmus+ Programme

In the previous funding period of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013), older people formed part of the main target group. Referring to the demographic change in Europe, there were many different opportunities to actively include older people as learners in projects and mobilities, not least through the Senior Volunteering Programme. In the [ForAge database](#) many of these projects are listed with further links to relevant websites.

In 2014 a new seven-year funding period with different priorities started. Entitled Erasmus+, this new programme has brought significant changes. At first sight it seems that older people are now excluded from the programme, as there is virtually no specific mention of them in Erasmus+ with the programme seeming to focus much more on younger people.

So, what about older people in the new Erasmus+ programme?

Erasmus+ has a strong focus on the [Europe 2020 Strategy](#) and the 5th target of this strategy is “Fighting poverty and social exclusion”. Later-life learning can bring great benefits for our ageing European societies as it can empower older people, improve well-being and health, enhance employability, reduce social exclusion and promote independent living.

The [Erasmus+ programme guide](#) lists the important features of the Erasmus+ programme and one of these is “Equity

and inclusion” which embraces disability (i.e. participants with mental, physical or other disabilities); economic obstacles; cultural differences; health problems; social obstacles (people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.); geographical obstacles. Later-life learning can help to overcome many of these obstacles.

The approach, the concept and the target groups in Erasmus+ are different, compared to the previous Lifelong Learning Programme, but the two examples above show that older people are still included. We should still focus on the target group of older people, on informal and non-formal learning, intergenerational learning, and active ageing. We know that this can improve the quality of life of older people and can have a huge impact on individuals, families and the whole of society.

“The Union recognises and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life.”

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 25

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