

International Education Mobility Programs: Inclusive by Definition, Exclusive in Practice

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Abstract : This abstract summarizes the combined findings of several analyses carried out by the authors on the barriers to accessing international education mobility programs by people with fewer opportunities, especially those with a low level of cultural and social capital. Two flagship educational mobility initiatives of the European Union - the Erasmus+ Program and the European Solidarity Corps are aimed at equipping young people and participants of all ages with the qualifications and skills needed for their meaningful participation in a democratic society intercultural understanding and successful transition in the labour market. The heart of these programs is to come closer to people with fewer opportunities, including people with disabilities, migrants, as well as those facing socio-economic difficulties and displaying a low level of social and cultural capital. Still, people who participate in such initiatives usually demonstrate higher than average cultural and social capital, as understood by Pierre Bourdieu. First of all, the educational attainment of their parents is higher than the average. Secondly, they mostly live in large agglomerations, with good access to education and culture, which affects their foreign language skills as well as social and cultural competencies. Finally, participation in Erasmus+ Program or European Solidarity Corps is not their first educational mobility experience. It is therefore justified to state that their social and cultural capital, already high before taking part in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, becomes even higher once their international mobility activities have been over, at the expense of those people with fewer opportunities, who, in theory, could participate in those initiatives, nonetheless did not, for the following reasons: lack of sufficient information on such programs, financial obstacles or unappreciation of the value of international mobility. In their work, the authors will discuss what are, in the light of Bourdieu's perception of social and cultural capital, the main obstacles for young people to participate in international mobility programs of the European Union and will offer comprehensive solutions rooted in their vast experience in management and implementation of Erasmus+ Program and European Solidarity Corps.

Keywords : cultural capital, educational mobility, Erasmus+, European solidarity corps, inclusion, social capital

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