

Work Plan 2020

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European Association of Regional & Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning.
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Policy & Advocacy

Positioning EARLALL and its members as a benchmark for lifelong learning expertise in the European arena, by means of bringing the regional perspectives to the European debate, as well as policy shaping and implementation.

Antenna of opportunities and platform for exchange

Providing opportunities for EARLALL members to enhance their strategies, plans and actions, and enabling exchanges of good practices, experiences and expertise; with a view to facilitate concrete actions between members and other stakeholders, as well as participation in calls for proposals, tenders and initiatives by the EU.

Effective communication and dissemination

Publicizing and showcasing EARLALL's voice and actions via a dynamic and interactive webpage and an effective social media strategy, providing at the same time regular, timely and relevant information to the members.

Governance & impact monitoring

Planning, budgeting and running general assemblies, seminars and other internal meetings, as well as monitoring and assessing the effectiveness and impact of the actions and deliverables of EARLALL.

1. Introduction

If 2019 marked the end of a very productive decade in promoting lifelong learning and strengthening the regional dimension of education at European level, 2020 will be a key point to consolidate EARLALL's achievements and prepare the pace to lead the transition to a healthy planet and a new digital world. EARLALL's activities in the road to this new horizon will seek to guarantee that regions and local authorities are recognised as key stakeholders in education and training policies, and that the lifelong learning approach is understood as the root of personal and professional development.

The new European Commission's priorities for the next five years, introduced by President-elect Ursula von der Leyen in July 2019¹, include points that are aligned also with EARLALL's priorities and work in the years to come. Reinforcing a green mindset, leaving no one behind in digitalisation processes and matching skills and regional labour market needs will be drivers for EARLALL's activities, in partnership with key stakeholders, such as the EU institutions, education centres, companies, and citizens.

The coming years will be fundamental to tackle 21st century realities, such as climate change, international and internal migration trends, ageing population, digitalization and the future of work. In this context, education will have an essential role in successfully embracing these challenges to foster regional development and guarantee the well-being of every single citizen. With these medium-term goals in mind, along with the SDGs agenda, the new European Commission's policy guidelines and its members priority fields, EARLALL's 2020 Work Plan proposes the following key thematic areas:

- ▀ Green skills for a green Europe
- ▀ Vocational excellence and skills ecosystems
- ▀ Entrepreneurial spirit to tackle 21st century's challenges
- ▀ Fostering inclusive societies
- ▀ Building regional capacity to attain a high level of participation in the EU programmes post-2020
- ▀ Promoting regional education systems internationally

Working together around those priority fields will contribute to improving EARLALL Member Regions' peer-learning opportunities, and to positioning the network with a solid and excellent profile towards privilege partners such as the EU institutions and other international education and training associations. Hence, a global underlying objective for EARLALL activities during next year will be the strategic development of its network in order to become a stronger actor in the European arena and provide its Members with further opportunities for cooperation.

A new decade ahead and a new political context, without few challenges both of them. This will be the scenario in which EARLALL will continue building cohesive societies, fostering inter-regional cooperation and promoting lifelong learning pathways. We are ready, let's do it!

¹ Ursula von der Leyen (2019), *Political guidelines for the next Commission (2019-2024)* - "A Union that strives for more: My agenda for Europe." Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/interim_en#political-guidelines.

2. Key thematic areas

2.1. Green skills for a green Europe

Building on the “Green Deal” proposal by European Commission’s President-elect Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, EARLALL will strengthen its work in promoting a green mindset by means of education and training systems. Green skills and a green meaning for regional development will be key to achieve the 2030 and 2050 objectives of sustainable development and climate neutrality, and the regional and local context will be key in achieving them in a just and inclusive way.

In this sense, EARLALL will provide a regional and local perspective to the work carried out by ILO and Cedefop in 2018 (“[Skills for the green economy project](#)” and [country reports](#)), and cooperation with other stakeholder groups will be a fundamental pillar of its work towards the implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the green agenda. EARLALL’s activities in 2020 will set the path for a longer-term action plan to place the role of education policies at the centre of green development and raise awareness about the regional dimension in achieving a climate-neutral economy.

Therefore, the main activities that will be oriented towards this priority are as follows:

-  Joint conference with EfVET at the LLLWeek 2019 (December 2019) EVENTS
-  Joint policy paper/declaration with EfVET, and adherence by other education associations POLICY
-  Becoming part of UNESCO’s stakeholder network POLICY
-  New working group PROJECTS
-  A breakout session within the conference on ‘The role of regions for apprenticeships’ (organised by the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, EARLALL, the Basque Country and with the support of the German Presidency of the Council) EVENTS
-  Project results and final conference of the VET in Urban Centres project (Erasmus+ KA2) (February 2020) PROJECTS

2.2. Skills Ecosystems and Vocational Excellence

Building on the previous years’ achievements in terms of EU recognition of their activities, EARLALL Member Regions will keep on working towards building regional skills ecosystems that fit for their local needs, bearing the European and worldwide context into account. As pointed out by the [latest report of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre about skills and smart specialisation](#) (2019), “the concept of a skills ecosystem has evolved overtime, but essentially it demonstrates that skills supply relates to a complex set of intertwined issues, including the structure of labour markets, the attractiveness of certain kinds of work, patterns of recruitment and selection, and poor deployment of labour.”

Therefore, our goal will be to keep on connecting relevant stakeholders at regional level while keeping a European approach of cooperation and exchange among regional skills ecosystems. Regional smart specialisation strategies are progressively taking skills and education systems into consideration for a successful regional development strategy,


and, as pointed out by Mr. Jonathan Barr (OECD, at “Building Regional Skills Ecosystems” workshop, organised by EARLALL on 10 October 2019 within the European Week of Regions & Cities), “understanding the local labour market” and “promoting programmes for lifelong learning and retraining” will be key for success in this sense.

The Centres of Vocational Excellence initiative, launched by the European Commission in 2018, are a clear example of setting up regional skills ecosystems and connecting them internationally. The initiative has been closely followed by EARLALL and its Member Regions. Indeed, EARLALL Member Regions Basque Country and Västra Götaland were included in the *Mapping of Centres of Vocational Excellence* report launched by the European Commission in October 2019, and the Basque Country (TKNIKA) is coordinating one of the pilot projects under 2019’s call for Erasmus+ KA2 in advanced manufacturing (EXAM 4.0 project).

With excellence and inclusion as main pillars, the Centres of Vocational Excellence initiative is aimed at creating “trans-national platforms of centres of vocational excellence closely integrated in local and regional strategies for growth, innovation and competitiveness, while supporting overall structural changes and economic policies in the European Union” (European Commission, 2018). Therefore, EARLALL Member Regions will be strongly encouraged to take part in the 2020 call. In addition, the further integration of the initiative into the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 will be closely followed from the Secretariat.

Key actions:

- ▶ EARLALL project activities in 2020 and follow up: PROJECTS / EVENTS
 - ▶ BRIDGE+: regional groups + final conference in autumn 2020
 - ▶ VET’s CLIL multiplier event in Barcelona (March 2020)
 - ▶ KEYMOB project results + final conference in Brussels (September 2020)
 - ▶ Skill Network in Advanced Manufacturing (Erasmus+ KA3 project, approved in 2019)
 - ▶ New project proposals under Skills & Labour Market + Mobility working groups
- ▶ Follow up to the “Building Regional Skills Ecosystems” workshop during EURegionsWeek 2019: EVENTS
 - ▶ Further contact with OECD: Local Development Forum in Antwerp (December 2019), etc.
 - ▶ EURegionsWeek 2020
- ▶ Capacity building activities for EARLALL Member Regions under the Mobility Working Group PROJECTS
- ▶ Project Development Workshop 2020 (ReSET network) EVENTS
- ▶ Participation at the EU Vocational Skills Week 2020 in Berlin EVENTS
- ▶ Apprentices Support Services stakeholder group at European Commission’s DG EMPL POLICY
- ▶ European Alliance for Apprenticeships – promotion of EAfA and its activities among EARLALL members; promotion of new EAfA video and brochure with participation of EARLALL POLICY
- ▶ Organisation of the EAfA conference on ‘The role of regions for apprenticeships’ (organised by the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, EARLALL and with the support of the German Presidency of the Council) EVENTS

 Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition – promotion of activities and news among EARLALL members POLICY

Working groups involved:

- Mobility
- Skills & Labour Market
- Lifelong Guidance




2.3. Entrepreneurial spirit to tackle 21st century challenges

Keeping young talents in rural areas is one of the key current challenges identified by EARLALL Member Regions, who are looking to promote an entrepreneurial attitude to foster rural development and take 21st century challenges as a window of opportunity for innovation. Indeed, the YES Conference (II edition) held in Brussels under EARLALL's Working Group on Youth Policies, led by Tuscany Region, highlighted the importance of having education opportunities available to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among the younger generations. The objective is to build local communities which are attractive to live in by boosting innovative ideas to foster economic development and social innovation, in key areas such as sustainable agriculture, green tourism and creative industries.

This initiative connects with the Committee of the Regions' opinion on "Brain Drain in the EU: addressing the challenge at all levels," which focuses on "the challenges that the brain-drain phenomenon can pose to the EU's territorial development, cohesion, and competitiveness" not only for the sending regions, but also for those who are receiving young talents. Furthermore, the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU (January-June 2020) will have youth entrepreneurship as one of its priorities.

In addition, not only rural areas will benefit from boosting an entrepreneurial mindset by education, but also job market shortages can also be tackled by doing so, involving also citizens' inclusion in the digital era. Indeed, an entrepreneurial spirit means also active job-seeking, self-initiative for re-skilling and up-skilling, and social innovation. In this sense, it can also be of great help in empowering third-country nationals and refugees who are newly arrived in European regions and in fostering inclusion initiatives in local communities and the business sector.

Key actions:

-  Follow-up to YES Conference, possible third edition in Brussels EVENTS
-  YESpecialists Erasmus+ KA2 project proposal to foster youth entrepreneurship through innovative models (cooperatives, etc.) PROJECTS
-  Policy paper with feedback to the Brain Drain opinion by the European Committee of the Regions POLICY

Working groups involved:

- Youth Policies

2.4. Fostering inclusive societies

A fast-changing Europe in terms of demographics, innovation, and digitalization, implies leaving no one behind if we want to build veritably inclusive societies. This goal is also in accordance with the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), whose first principle regards in

fact to education. Ageing societies, international and internal migration, and the impact of digitalization need to be seen as catalysers for social innovation and sustainable development, rather than challenges to be solved, with especial regard to the local and regional dimension. In this context, education and training policies will set the foundations on which the future of Europe will be built, and special attention should also be given to principles such as upskilling and reskilling of adults and mature workers, life competences, volunteering and intergenerational learning.

Therefore, improving communication with citizens raises as a key area to be tackled, and community-based learning acquires a very relevant role, as was also highlighted by Cedefop and the Lifelong Learning Platform (2019, [*Implementing a holistic approach to lifelong learning Community Lifelong Learning Centres as a gateway to multidisciplinary support teams*](#)). EARLALL will continue its efforts to improve the inclusiveness of education and training practices in European regions, fostering cohesive communities and safe learning environments for all, taking all stakeholders, including local communities, on board.

Key actions:

- FIER project results + final conference (19 November 2019) + follow-up ^{PROJECTS}
- TALENTS project results (end 2019) ^{PROJECTS}
- AMIF proposal for building community networks for the integration of third-country nationals ^{PROJECTS}
- Participation in the European Migration Forum 2020, by the EESC ^{EVENTS}
- #Regions4Integration initiative by the European Committee of the Regions ^{POLICY}
- Project proposal under Erasmus+ KA3: Social Inclusion and Common Values (lot 2: networks of adult education providers) ^{PROJECTS}
- EU-Level Network for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the context of the Lifelong Learning Platform ^{POLICY}
- Inclusive digitalization processes initiative: digital skills ^{POLICY}
- Two breakout sessions within the conference on 'The role of regions for apprenticeships' (organised by the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, EARLALL, the Basque Country and the support of the German Presidency of the Council) ^{EVENTS}

Working groups involved:

- ➔ Integration of Third-country Nationals
- ➔ Lifelong Guidance

2.5. Building regional capacity to attain a high level of participation in the new EU programmes post 2020





As specified above, European regions find themselves in a fast-changing context, which requires accurate, specific actions, threaded by a long-term research and innovation strategy for smart specialisation (RIS3). With a potential increase of the Erasmus+ programme (whether it will be of two or three times the amount of the previous programming period is yet to be approved by the European Council), and new programmes in the horizon, such as Digital Europe and a renewed ESF+, regional and

local authorities also need to improve their programme management skills to guarantee a good implementation that is in line with their smart specialisation strategies.

Further contact will be established with DG REGIO, also envisioning the post-2020 funding programmes and European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Funds, which feature a more social Europe as key priority, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare. Provisions for capacity building and staff training are also foreseen under these funds.

European context awareness and specific programme-management skills will be key to ensure an efficient and effective use of European funds, and regional and local authorities must be taken into consideration. A tripling of the funding will also mean a tripling of possibilities, and capacity-building will be key to make the most of the opportunities ahead. European regions and municipalities are in direct contact with citizens, and therefore are very much aware of their needs, but an increase in knowledge of a wider perspective and technical requirements is required to act as a bridge between them and Europe and build a cohesive, yet diverse, European Education Area.

Key actions:

-  Boosting Mobility WG POLICY
-  Stride4stride project proposal PROJECTS
-  Training workshop on future programmes (and webinars for EARLALL regional stakeholders) EVENTS
-  Possible proposal under Horizon 2020 or Erasmus KA3 with EAEA and other EU-based organisations PROJECTS

Working groups involved:

- Mobility
- Skills & Labour Market

2.6. Promoting regional education systems internationally

The global impact of local activities is out of doubt, and therefore the regional and local dimension need to be considered when looking outside of Europe. In the context of the recent EU-Africa partnership and the EU-Japan agreements, the international expansion of the impact of the European Education Area is also to be taken into account, without forgetting the possibilities that decentralized cooperation and potential exchange activities can offer. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations are also setting the path to guide internationalisation strategies for education, being SDGs 4 (quality education) and 17 (partnerships) key elements to be taken into account.

The European Education Area to be set up by 2025 preconizes a space where no borders hamper learning, studying and doing research. After the long-established international tradition in the field of higher education, the global dimension has been recently included in VET-fostering programmes, which constitutes a testimony of the blurring barrier between the two sectors. This is why EARLALL Member Regions will reinforce their role in the international scene, learn from each other about what they are doing with respect

to internationalization of their education and training policies and practices, and look out for new partnerships.

Key actions:

- New potential associate partners POLICY
- A breakout session within the conference on the role of regions for apprenticeships (organised by the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, EARLALL, the Basque Country and the support of the German Presidency of the Council) EVENTS
- International dimension of CoVE PROJECTS
- Survey about EARLALL Member Regions' international cooperation strategies in education and training POLICY

Working Groups Involved:

- ➔ Mobility
- ➔ Skills & Labour Market
- ➔ Lifelong Guidance

3. Strategic development and governance

Alongside with consolidating past achievements and working in priority thematic areas, EARLALL envisages the reinforcement of its governance structures, communication channels, visibility and improvement of the cooperation with its member regions and privilege partners. Current and future challenges need a strong proactive network that can react fast and provide advice and expertise when needed. The new statutes that will enter into force in 2020 provide the adequate context for the network to reinforce its regional dimension and develop new alliances and partnerships.

3.1. Member regions: current and new

The strength of EARLALL's network relies on its member regions. A constant dialogue with representatives from the network's regions is carried out regularly in order to learn their new, future and revised local priorities in education and training. This dialogue is an intrinsic part of EARLALL's work and numerous will be the occasions when the Secretariat will have the opportunity to align the network's direction with the regions' one. The network is guided by and provides a dedicated service to its regions and not the other way around.

Education is a priority for European policy leaders, and EARLALL has to embrace this opportunity and widen its membership to other European countries and regions. The Secretariat and EARLALL current member regions are in close contact with education and training representatives from many regions in Europe and some of them have already expressed their interest in joining the association: South Denmark, North Denmark, Puglia, Salzburg, West Finland, Wielkopolska, and Balearic Islands, among others. EARLALL is consolidating its position as a unique regional network dealing with lifelong learning practices and policies.

The overall goal is to strengthen the basis for cross-territorial cooperation in lifelong learning policies and widen the scope for the exchange and implementation of best practices and common-challenge tackling. Independently of political turmoil in some European territories, EARLALL should be seen as a platform where education and training regional authorities can share practices and policies and learn from each other. When reaching out to new regions, EARLALL aims at gaining:

- ➔ New expertise:
 - Regions with experience in EARLALL priority areas will bring their best practices to the table.
 - Regions aiming at improving their work in EARLALL priority areas will bring new insights and a better understanding of policy making and implementation.
 - Regions that share common challenges with EARLALL Members will contribute to tackle them by bringing their experience and strategies.
- ➔ A wider geographical scope:
 - New territories for the implementation of best practices, including territorial diversity such as insular, rural, and metropolitan areas.
 - A north-south east-west balance for a pan-European perspective that is founded on a regional and local perspective.

- A diverse territorial structure
 - NUTS-2 regions with different political structures, competence distribution and working strategies.

3.2. Strong stakeholder cooperation

EARLALL Secretariat and Member Regions will maintain and encourage further relations with high-level officers at the European institutions by taking part in meetings and conferences dealing with education and training policies: European Commission's DG EAC and DG EMPL, European Parliament (CULT and EMPL committees, and Lifelong Learning Interest Group), European Committee of the Regions (SEDEC), and the Croatian and German Presidencies of the Council of the EU. Furthermore, EARLALL will continue participating in meetings within the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the Apprentices Support Services stakeholder group.

Beyond the EU institutions, relations with OECD's Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (started in 2019) will continue to be fostered and follow-up work to the Local Development Forum (Antwerp, December 2019) will be done. Also, EARLALL will potentially become an official partner of UNESCO to have a more active role and participation in its activities.

At stakeholder level, EARLALL will continue its membership within the Lifelong Learning Platform and take part in its meetings, initiatives and events. Membership in the informal network ReSET will also continue. The fruitful collaborations with strategic associations that were developed in 2019 will be consolidated, and the Secretariat will continue to promote joint initiatives with EfVET, EAEA, EURADA, ERYICA, and other international networks. Partnership agreements (observer status) with regions and local authorities that are considering joining EARLALL could also be proposed under the new statutes.

3.3. Working group reorganisation

New priorities will require new structures that respond to their needs. Therefore, EARLALL Secretariat will propose the creation of a new working group to deal with green skills. Also, digital skills have been a *hot topic* during the last years and will be integrated as a transversal area covering all working groups, as it has been already done during the last years; for example, via the Lifelong Guidance (e.g. BRIDGE+ project) and the Youth Policies (digital entrepreneurship in rural areas as key topic) working groups.

A discussion should take place regarding the ageing society working group, whose activities have been scarce in 2019. Adult learning is key for EARLALL, as it is also strengthened in the upcoming European Commission's programming period. Calls for proposals are expected to support adult education providers, and topics such as validation, guidance, upskilling and reskilling, apprenticeships for adults, etc. are recurrent at all EU high-level events. A proposal could be to integrate adult learning within the Lifelong Guidance working group or to consider adult learning to a transversal element to be considered by the other working groups.

On another note, a slight modification is proposed for the "Integration of third-country nationals" working group, led by Västra Götaland, to adapt its title to the current context. Proposed titles are "Building inclusive and cohesive societies" and "Inclusion of third-country nationals."

4. Communication and dissemination activities

EARLALL's communication and dissemination activities are an open window to showcase the network's achievements and its Member Regions' commitment to lifelong learning policies and practices. For 2020, more ambitious audience targets are envisioned to raise EARLALL's social media profile, and strategic events dealing with its priorities will be organised to involve key stakeholders in them.

EARLALL Member Regions will continue to have a central role in all communications, as it was established in the Work Plan 2019, and updated information about best practices and events will be uploaded to EARLALL's website and further shared via social media upon request and/or approval of each Member Region. Key target groups for EARLALL's communication strategy will be: EARLALL Member Regions' and Partner Regions' representatives, other European regional and local authorities' representatives, international networks, and EU institutions officers.

Therefore, key communication objectives for 2020 are as follows:

- Helping EARLALL's Member Regions best practices be known at European level and consolidate their position as regional leaders in education and training policies.
- Showcasing EARLALL project outputs and fostering their impact at EU, national, regional and local policy-making level.
- Raising the network's profile as a major actor in the European arena.

To fulfil these aims, specific objectives will be the following:

Social media targets:

- 1,500 followers on Twitter
(1,044 as of 31/10/2019)
- 350 followers on Facebook
(238 as of 31/10/2019)
- 200 followers on LinkedIn
(109 as of 31/10/2019)

Printed materials:

- Updated leaflet for 2020
- Policy papers
- Visit-card handing at events

Website targets:

- Regular posts as up until now
- Reach 3,500 website users
(2,018 as of 31/10/2019)

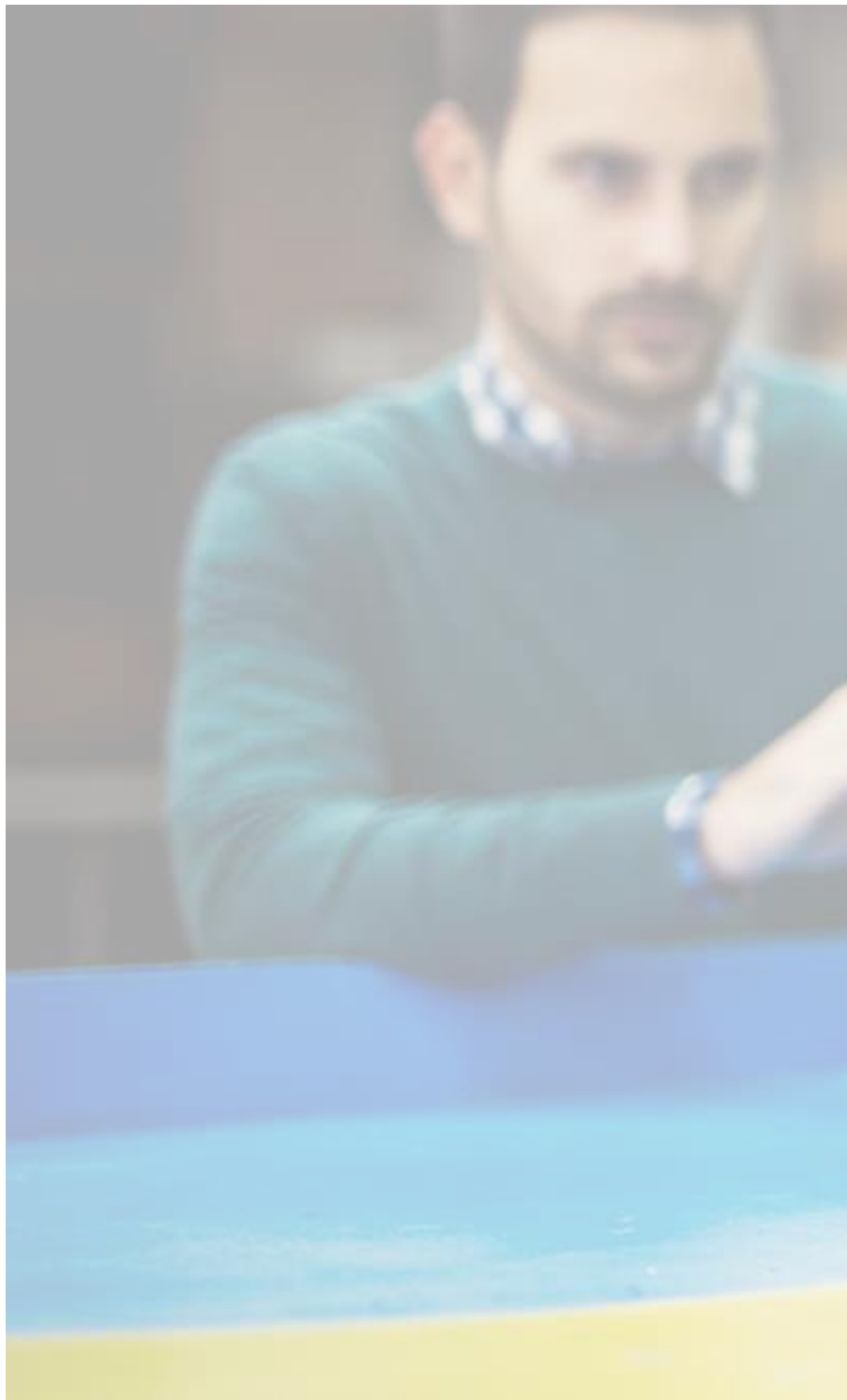
Newsletter targets:

- Reach 550 EARLALL Insights Newsletter subscribers
(457 as of 31/10/2019)
- EARLALL Insights, quarterly launched
- EARLALL EU Monitoring, monthly launched

4.1. Event & activity plan for 2020 in short



- + Training workshop on Erasmus+ funding programmes post-2020
- + YES Conference (iii edition), tbc.
- + Erasmus+ KA1 and KA2 deadline



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