

**NEO-ICP Coordination Meeting,  
Brussels, 29 September - 2 October 2014**

**"How to build on the success of your project?"  
Summary of the groups discussion**

In the framework of the 2014 NEO-ICP coordination Meeting in Brussels, the Agency organized a training on *"How to build on the success of your project?"*.

The participants were divided in eight groups. Each group was asked to address two specific and pre-established questions focusing on aspects of dissemination and sustainability within Tempus and Erasmus Mundus projects. The objective of each group was to identify the main obstacles encountered (human, institutional, financial, etc.) and the solutions adopted. Here below is a summary of the main observations made and conclusions reached.

**Question 1 (internal dissemination):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice you have identified in the recent past when it comes to disseminate the results/achievements/outcomes of projects within an HEI, beyond the people/units (department, institute, faculty, etc.) who/which were initially involved in the project. Identify which were the main obstacles encountered (human, institutional, financial, etc.) to ensure this internal multiplying effect and the solutions envisaged to address them. Identify the success factors.

The following observations on the main challenges and obstacles to a sound **internal dissemination** strategy were identified:

- Projects seem to suffer too much from individual ownership and information is not deliberately shared with others colleagues. The most important channel for internal dissemination is the dissemination between peers as it creates a snowball effect and increases the project visibility and impact
- The top management in the higher education institutions is not always involved, hence, not always very committed to the projects and its objectives. It is important that the project is institutionalized and that important project developments are regularly presented at the official meetings of the higher education institution council, senate or other bodies.
- Dissemination initiatives are left towards the end of the project implementation whereas the effects of the dissemination activities are maximized only if they are carried out from the beginning of the project implementation.
- Communications skills of the academic staff play an important role. Presentation of the information should be well planned in advance and the content needs to be clear and easy to understand.
- Lack of motivations from academic staff and from project management represents an important challenge. The project participants should be more

encouraged to use dissemination tools if they are convinced about the value of project outputs. This aspect has to be taken into account during the planning of future dissemination activities.

In addition to the points above, the groups identified the following series of tools and good practice to be adopted with regard to **internal dissemination**:

- Creation of a project website with contact details of the people involved. Use of mailing lists, University newsletters, University radio, RSS feed, social media and other tools that could enhance the interaction between relevant target groups
- Establishment of a link between the website of the University and the website of the project
- Participation in project info days or promotion and dissemination of the projects' activities in other events
- Ensuring a concrete involvement of the international relations offices (IROs) at the university to support and disseminate the projects activities
- Reporting about the progress of the project to the management body of the university on a regular basis
- Inviting other faculties and other academic members to projects information/awareness campaign/dissemination events
- Ensuring that more students are involved in the activities of the project and rely on active academic staff and connecting staff between faculties
- Combining the activities of the HEREs/NEOs and the projects activities

**Question 2 (external dissemination):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice you have identified in the recent past when it comes to disseminate the results/achievements/outcomes of projects outside the partners which initially benefited from the project. Identify which were the main obstacles encountered (human, institutional, financial, etc.) and solutions envisaged to remedy these. Identify the success factors. In this context, external dissemination refers in this context to dissemination to external stakeholders, such as future students and their families, companies, line ministries, etc.

The following challenges and obstacles to a sound **external dissemination** strategy were identified:

- HEIs top management sometimes underestimates the purpose and effective value of any external dissemination initiative.
- Financial resources to ensure sustainability of project results and dissemination after the project lifetime are very difficult to find.
- In several cases all project activities are concentrated in the hands of one person, the coordinator. Tasks and work-packages should be delegated within the consortium. For instance, the leadership of the dissemination work-package could be allocated to one partner institution. This approach would maximise the performance of human resources and contribute significantly to the project overall development objectives.
- Lack of inter-institutional communication.
- Political situation and country instability hindering the dissemination of information at national level.

In the light of the above mentioned obstacles, the groups identified the following series of good practice to enhance and ensure the **external dissemination** of the projects results:

- Establishing a project website and ensuring its maintenance after the project lifetime; production of flyers, leaflets, newsletters and other relevant dissemination materials; production of documentary materials on the project, including interviews of project staff members on project activities and main outcomes; use of social media to promote the projects.
- Organising round-table discussions at national level with the involvement of all interested stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education.
- Participating in annual *Information Days* and *Project Fairs* in the EU and/or in the Partner Countries in order to disseminate the results of the project; holding *Press Conferences* with a broader media coverage on the project's objectives and results; combining two type of events such as the project Final Conference and "open" workshops in order to engage interested local parties and to generate more impact.
- Establishing and reinforcing a good dissemination plan in order to raise awareness on the project, to inform the community on the developments, to engage interested stakeholders in project activities and to promote project outputs and results.
- Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA) can play an important role in disseminating information through their different channels, particularly their E-journal.

**Question 3 (student mobility):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice you have identified in the recent past when it comes to ensure that student mobility carried out during the life time of projects have had a sustainable, recognised, valued impact on individuals. By "individuals", we mean the students who benefited directly from the mobility, but also those who stayed in their home institution but may have benefited from side / indirect effects of the mobility of the others. Last but not least, you may also consider the impact on the institutions themselves. The role of social media, in particular, should be addressed during the discussion. Identify which were the main obstacles encountered (human, institutional, financial, etc.) and solutions envisaged to remedy these. Identify the success factors

The following challenges and obstacles regarding the impact of **student mobility** on the institutions and on the individuals, in a broad sense, were identified:

- The recognition of study periods and degrees represents a challenge. The involvement of national authorities and key executives of HEIs is essential to increase their awareness of the value of Erasmus Mundus and Tempus and to move towards a systematic recognition of qualifications and credits acquired abroad.
- There is a lack of financial resources to promote individual mobility. In addition national authorities and national regulations should be more flexible to facilitate the accreditation processes.
- Erasmus Mundus and Tempus are not well known to employers and enterprises. For this reason, more info days and awareness activities should be held; social media should be used more to disseminate Erasmus Mundus and Tempus; more

students should be involved (especially student associations) in promotion activities; Erasmus Mundus alumni associations should be more active, etc.

The working groups observed that **student mobility** has the following positive impact at institutional and individual level:

- Good impact on the HEIs and their visibility, internationalization and teaching methods. As an example, it enables inviting lecturers from other (EU and non-EU) Universities.
- Good impact on labour market. Companies start to prefer Erasmus Mundus students. Many Erasmus Mundus students work at foreign relations offices at universities.
- Good impact at national level in some countries. As an example, some countries have initiated national mobility programmes, fully funded by the state, to enable students do mobility to any country.
- International students mobility has pushed HEIs to offer more and more courses and programmes in English, which in turns is expected to create a further increase of the international mobility. HEIs became more attractive to foreign students. This in turn improved the quality of HEIs and their students and graduates.
- Involvement of students in the development and management of projects.
- Tutoring and twinning systems applied in Erasmus Mundus Action 1 to prepare scholarship holders for the upcoming mobilities. This links to the important role of Erasmus Mundus Students' and Alumni Association.
- Institutional cooperation between Home and Host Institutions when it comes to evaluate students' mobility.
- Allocation of additional funds to finance student mobility by enterprises which also promote the employability of students.

**Question 4 (international programmes):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice you have identified in the recent past of projects which lead to the sustainable development of international programmes such as joint programmes and degrees.

The working group identified a series of challenges and obstacles to the establishment of **international joint programmes**:

- The legislative, administrative and financial context is not favorable to develop such programmes. The procedures of accreditation of joint programmes with HEIs from other counties have never been elaborated and the diploma recognition procedures are very lengthy process that sometimes requires Ministries' decision.
- There is a lack of understanding of the mechanism and of the importance of developing joint programmes/degrees. HEIs sometimes do not have mobility procedures and do not recognize the importance of having students/staff mobility and recognition of ECTS within joint programmes.
- In some cases HEIs are lacking in the effective capacity to deliver joint diplomas (starting from appropriate quality of teaching, to the language skills of staff, to the fact that administrative and/or teaching staff don't feel ready to propose a creation of joint programme with other HEIs);

- Employers rarely understand the value and benefit of joint diplomas; however for graduates who wish to work in international companies, in private sector, joint diploma is an asset;

In the light of the above mentioned obstacles, the working groups came up with the following suggestions in order to foster the creation of **international joint programmes**:

- Policy decisions and policy dialogue with the EU should be formulated in support of the creation of joint programmes within certain regions, with certain countries;
- Development of national legislation on international programmes with the support of QA bodies (accreditation standards and procedures) has become necessary;
- A Piloting phase of joint programmes within the same country would represent an essential step before considering the creation of joint programmes at international level;
- Promoting the benefits that international joint programmes could bring to the institution; disseminating manuals, conferences, workshops, successful examples; encouraging academic staff to go more abroad to improve their skills and to get involved; credit mobility can be an important and supportive tool in this sense.

**Question 5 (staff development and training):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice you have identified in the recent past when it comes to ensure that project activities, beyond the life time of the projects, have had a long lasting impact on staff (academic and support staff) from a point of view of their skills, competence, teaching practices and further career development. Focus on real strategies put in place by departments, faculties, universities and analyse them.

The working group identified a series of challenges and obstacles on the beneficial impact that Erasmus Mundus and Tempus had on **university staff development**:

- Lack of incentives for projects members who participate in the projects like academic promotion or financial incentives. Unstable work environment and high rate of turnover.
- Resistance to share information and experiences with other academics. In addition, lack of transparency in selection process of academic staff who will participate in the project jeopardizes the effective impact and development benefit of the project.
- Lack of linguistic skills
- Enterprises sometimes are not aware of the skills developed by the staff

In the light of the above mentioned obstacles, a series of possible solutions, suggestions and good practices were identified:

- There should be a strategic approach for staff development within the institution and the project should contribute to the career plan of the academic staff
- There should be enough support from the university management to the outcomes of the project. Incentives should be there for those who work in the

- project or those who develop projects, thus enhancing the internationalization process and strategy of the institution
- Academic staff should disseminate the results of the training to their colleagues. Forming teams at department level to learn good practices in sharing knowledge or developing joint projects
  - Linkages with industry should be encouraged

**Question 6 (complementary funding and resources):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice you have identified in the recent past when it comes to mobilise complementary/additional resources and funding, beyond the life time of the projects, to ensure a sustainable impact and further development of the achievements of the projects. Identify which were the main obstacles encountered (human, institutional, financial, etc.) and solutions envisaged to remedy these. Identify the success factors.

The working group identified the following challenges and obstacles in order to find complementary funding and resources to those granted by Erasmus Mundus and Tempus:

- The involvement of relevant stakeholders is not sought from the very beginning of project implementation and only at a later stage; similarly dissemination, sustainability and exploitation activities start late, only in the third year of the project implementation;
- The economic and social needs are not clearly identified and governmental decisions or guidelines to encourage and to prioritize the development of specific "fields/sectors" is missing sometimes (or is not known);

The working group drew up a series of observations on the feasibility to find complementary funding and resources to those granted by Erasmus Mundus and Tempus:

- Encourage/strengthen the cooperation with private sector before the project starts and since the very beginning of the project implementation – try to approach companies, motivate them, involve them to be at least associate partners, offer solutions for their challenges and problems and show the benefits of possible cooperation;
- Involve and seek for companies commitment to employ graduates, to accept students for internships and to invest in projects that can improve their productivity too;
- Encourage fund-raising as a new concept for HEIs (HEIs should be aware and encouraged to devote time to this continuously);

Examples of good practice in searching and attracting additional funding and resources beyond project life-time:

- In some countries, HEREs organized a round table discussion among HEIs and representatives of various enterprises (e.g. in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce - pharmacy, transport and traffic engineering, ICT);
- Public-private sector partnership showed a big contribution to sustaining TEMPUS Projects by providing financial resources to laboratories for equipment and running cost in order to cover the training costs of some cohorts.

- Applying fees to degree programmes launched through Tempus project proved to be a common practice after the project eligibility period in order to ensure regular financial resources and the continuity of the training/ programme.
- In some cases under EM-A2, the institutions themselves provided additional necessary funding to their students at the end of the EM scholarships in order to allow the students to complete the degree study abroad. This support proved to be significant and it was due to the fact that Universities Senior Management was aware and involved in the projects from the very beginning of the action.

**Question 7 (national policy level):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice you have identified in the recent past of projects which managed to have an impact at national level on policy making issues including legislative processes. Illustrate how the projects have had a systemic impact and managed to actively involve and impact ministry(ies).

The working group identified two main challenges and obstacles on the possible impact that Erasmus Mundus and Tempus have at **national level on policy making**:

- Political Instability and
- Accreditation process

One example of significant impact at National Policy Level comes from Egypt where the Supreme Council of Universities created a special sub-committee in order to study and implement regulations and procedures for the accreditation and equivalence of ECTS to Degrees awarded in Egypt.

Involvement of Senior Management from the beginning of any action proved to pave the way for resolving most of the hurdles. This can be done through lobbying, inviting them to meetings, events etc. in order to raise the general awareness about the actions.

**Question 8 (institutional strategies):** Based on your experience of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes, could you please identify and describe some examples of good practice of HEIs you have identified in the recent past that managed to embed the activities implemented in EU programmes in the development strategy of the institution, ensuring the relevance of the projects' objectives with the need of the institution and providing the proper mechanisms to guarantee the dissemination and sustainability of the results within the institution at large

The working group drew up the following observations related to the impact of Tempus and Erasmus Mundus on **the institutional strategy** of the HEIs involved:

- Sometimes HEIs need to revise their internal legislations and/or the organizational structures in order to establish a new unit or team in charge of the participation in international programmes.
- Financial resources as well as trained (qualified) human resources are insufficient and so much needed to implement the needed structure, strategy, etc.
- In several cases HEIs established quality assurance offices and were able to embed quality measures in the institution (quality of services, finance, governance, autonomy, etc.). In addition a network of QA offices between

different universities has been created in order to set the basis for future exchange and cooperation.

- Some HEIs established a department within the international office with the specific task to link the university activities with business sector, involving students and staff, to align study programs with the needs of business sector, and consequently enhance employability.

The following recommendations were formulated in reply to existing challenges:

- Increase the awareness and interest of key decision makers at the HEIs to enable them to identify the necessary changes and implement them.
- Increase the technical assistance to Partner Countries to equip the HEIs with the knowledge, technology and know-how in the related subject and also to get engaged with decision makers in discussions about best practices.
- Develop toolkits with best practices to be disseminated to HEIs, highlighting benefits and potential impacts.
- Start projects dissemination activities as early as possible in the project life time, both internally (among projects partners) and externally (to as many HEIs / countries as possible).
- Introduce lifelong learning programs using e-learning or distance learning (to enhance skills and competences of staff), and recognize such study models towards staff promotions and development.
- Invest more in national and regional events in the EU to ensure wider dissemination.