ERASMUS
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UK ACROSS EUROPE

Project Management and Implementation notes
24 October 2019

Introduction

On 24 October 2019, we welcomed attendees to the Learning Networks Project Management and Implementation event in Cardiff. Facilitated by Sion James from the British Council and Stephen Green from Ecorys, the workshop focused on final report writing for Erasmus+.

The workshop began with attendees getting to know each other better through an icebreaker activity. The group then welcomed Sian Holleran from CollegesWales/ColegauCymru to share her experience from delivering high-scoring projects. Stephen Green provided an example from another high-scoring project by Firm of Arch.

Erasmus+ Assessor, Dr Audrey McKeown, then delivered a final report writing workshop, sharing a valuable insight from the other side of the reporting process. At the end of the day, the group came together to share common issues around report writing and work together to suggest solutions to the identified issues.

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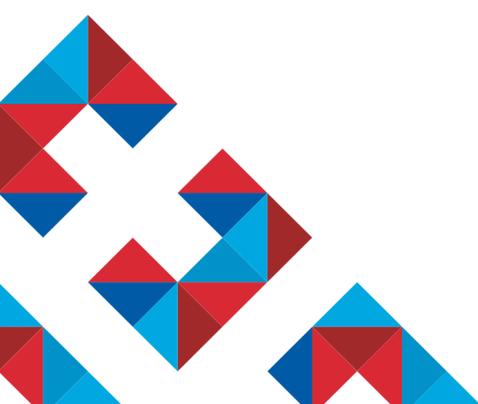
Case study

Sian Holleran from CollegesWales began by sharing her organisation's experience with Erasmus+, with their expanding projects now including 12 colleges, 12 different countries and over 600 learners in their most recent project.

As a coordinating organisation, CollegesWales organise two-week work placements through VET college partners abroad, as well as engaging local employers like Tata Steel. They also arrange staff mobility projects that focus on Welsh government priority areas, such as embedding literacy and numeracy into the curriculum.

Sian described the final report as an opportunity to evaluate your project, by looking back at your application and assessing whether you did what you originally said you would do. If you haven't achieved your initial aims, Sian advised to be honest about it and reflect on what you could do to achieve this next time. In this way, the report can then serve as a starting point for future projects.

Sian's top tips:
- keep Mobility Tool+ up to date from day one – this will calculate the budget for you;
- begin to input information for the final report as your project progresses so that when you come to write your report you have notes to remind you of what you've achieved;
- read UK National Agency guidance thoroughly, highlighting important sections to focus on; and
- use copy and paste with caution – ensure it makes sense and ask someone unconnected to proofread for you.

For more information about CollegesWales Erasmus+ projects and to view Sian's presentation, visit our Slideshare page.

Final report writing workshop

Erasmus+ Assessor, Dr Audrey McKeown, led the final report writing workshop, drawing on her 11 years of experience as an assessor.

Audrey reminded the group that each report is assessed in isolation – so any previous reports will have no impact on the one currently being submitted. She also highlighted the fact that impact and dissemination is often the worst-scoring area of the report and advised that beneficiaries pay extra attention to this section of the report, ensuring they understand what is being asked and prepare throughout the project.

Audrey advised revisiting the project's work plan throughout the project and continually developing it. This way, beneficiaries are able to reflect on their work and assess whether they are on track to achieve objectives.

The group were reminded that project partners are getting paid and, as such, they should have formalised responsibilities. Audrey stressed that, as the coordinator, you are not expected to manage all the activities alone, so ensuring there are clear roles and responsibilities from the outset for all partners will help share the work fairly.

Roles you may need to consider are:
- Who will take the lead if there is an emergency while on placement – the host, the sending organisation or the coordinator?
- Who is measuring impact?
- How will each partner be promoting the project?

Dissemination should be considered throughout the project, and not simply at reporting stage. In doing so, it is important to consider whether you are reaching the European and international levels, as Audrey noted these levels are often overlooked. Assessors are looking for impact both internally within the partner organisations and externally, whether that's local, regional, national or impact at a European level.

For internal impact, just a few of the things you may want to consider are new skills, developed networks, new or improved collaboration and improved internationalisation. Audrey stressed that 'local' does not just mean local for the coordinator, it is local for each partner. Audrey also suggested surveying project partners to ask what the impact was for the organisation, what skills they have learnt, whether there are new curriculum areas, new methods or new tools that have been implemented.

For external impact, Audrey noted that the simplest way to disseminate at this level is to make the most of the platforms that already exist such as the E+PRP, EPALE, or eTwinning. It is also worth considering whether there are any international or European forums or platforms focused on your thematic area.

Audrey also commented that case studies are useful for sharing anecdotal success stories, but nice quotes should not be relied on in a report, as it should be strategic.

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Top tips:

- utilise the Erasmus+ Digital toolkit and video guide;
- remember to use all partners' intranets, social media pages, newsletters, events to reach local level impact;
- use the impact+ resources;
- send the National Agency your story;
- construct a dissemination plan and review it at your meetings; and
- include other people in your organisation even if they are not part of the project.

Common problems and suggested solutions

Common problem	Suggested solution
Some partners asking for participant fees.	Put partner agreements in place from the start of the project, outlining ground rules and expectations.
Having to chase partners for information – partners do not always dedicate time to paperwork.	You could write into your partner agreement that if one organisation causes reduced final payment, that organisation will take on the reduced payment.
Maintaining positive relationships with partners when chasing them.	Use video call instead of telephone to develop rapport with partners.

	Be as detailed as possible with job roles for all partners in advance.
Ensuring partners have shared expectation of health/allergies/needs.	Share health and safety and risk assessments between partner organisations from the start.

Share terminology e.g. around dietary requirements to ensure a shared understanding. |
| Participants not understanding participant report. | Each day of mobility could end with a brief with feedback forms, so participants have something to work from when they have to fill in participant portal.

Consider whether participants need additional support to complete final report and what format is best for them to receive this support. |

Other suggested top tips:

- Choose your partners based on your project – not the other way around.
- Consider having back up staff assigned to roles.
- Ensure all partners are happy with agendas for mobilities or meetings and all provide sign off.
- Do your research about your partners, but trust your gut!
- Start with bullet points as an activity diary and then you can build on this when you come to write your final report.
- Sign-post your dissemination results – uploading 200 photos isn't helpful for an assessor with no context.
- Manage expectations about reporting from the outset with your partners and participants.

View our photo album from the day on Facebook.

For more information about the Project Management and Implementation network, please visit the website.