



2nd Austrian Erasmus+ Annual Conference

Vienna, 10 May 2016

Recommendations to the European Commission

The second joint Erasmus+ Annual Conference of the Austrian National Agencies for Education (OeAD-GmbH) and Youth (Interkulturelles Zentrum) held on 10 May 2016 in Vienna dealt with the topic of the “Dissemination, Impact, and Sustainability of Erasmus+”.

The goal of the event was to shed light on the effects of the Erasmus+ programme in Austria and to identify which projects are being successfully implemented and how a lasting impact can be achieved. The participants examined the influence Erasmus+ has on the individual education sectors and on the youth segment and what strategic measures are constructive and efficient with regards to the programme’s dissemination, impact, and sustainability.

The following suggestions/recommendations were developed by 150 participants in an interactive setting. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the recommendations pertain to the segments of education and youth.

Thematic block 1: Dissemination and marketing of Erasmus+ projects

1. The project coordinators would like to receive more support from the EC for their dissemination activities:
 - a) At the moment, dissemination activities are hidden within an insufficient budget for project management and implementation and are at risk of getting lost among the other items contained there.

→ **RECOMMENDATION:** The EC should allocate financially appropriate funds for **dissemination activities** in the project budget and should **once again assign them to a separate budget item** (for KA 2 projects).
 - b) Participants called for funding agencies, the European Commission, etc. to provide project promoters with assistance in their dissemination activities. The participating institutions and parties in the education sector are not marketing experts and are confronted with requirements they are not able to fulfil.

→ **RECOMMENDATION:** The EC and National Agencies should provide **content-related support** such as workshops and informational materials and **offer** a broader range of dissemination events.

2. Dissemination platforms:

a) Constantly introducing new platforms is not very productive as the project promoters lose track when there are too many platforms (EPALE, eTwinning, etc.).

→ **RECOMMENDATION:** A **collection of links** (e.g. on the EC web site) containing links to all of the available platforms and databases pertaining to the Erasmus+ programme would make it easier for the project coordinators to keep track of the available offerings.

b) The project coordinators are very appreciative of the fact that dissemination platforms and project databases are made available to them as part of the Erasmus+ programme. In some cases, however, these offerings are designed in a way that makes it difficult to find the desired information (in particular the new Erasmus+ platform was mentioned).

→ **RECOMMENDATION:**

- The EC should **provide a functioning content management system** (the eTwinning online platform was cited as a positive example) and
- give the Erasmus+ platform a **more appealing graphic design** (e.g. by including pictures and videos and giving the site a more attractive colour scheme) and **provide easier and faster navigation options** for searching for information.

Thematic block 2: Impact and sustainability of Erasmus+ projects

3. Follow-up financing:

From the perspective of many conference participants, the provision of funding for dissemination activities even after the end of the project term is crucial for Erasmus+ projects to have a lasting impact.

→ **RECOMMENDATION:** The EC should provide follow-up financing for the roll-out of products. This would prevent projects from “going dormant” after the end of the term and getting stuck in the pilot phase because no more funding is available.

4. The conference participants agreed that the lasting impact of a project should be determined in a well-formulated application before the start of the project by way of:

- a) a realistic and honest needs assessment,
- b) the early and widespread involvement of the stakeholders and political decision makers who are needed for the lasting impact of a project,
- c) the professional development of the project results with a high level of relevance for the determined need and/or target group,
- d) the ongoing implementation of a professionally defined dissemination strategy including the measurement of the impact of the dissemination measures, and
- e) innovative activities aimed at ensuring a project’s lasting impact, e.g. the founding of a company or association for the purpose of a project’s long-term use and development

→ **RECOMMENDATION:** A well-formulated application already contains concrete considerations regarding the lasting impact of the project. Therefore, the EC should once again **provide resources for preparatory meetings** in order to improve the quality of the applications and, in turn, the sustainability of the projects.

5. The benefits of so-called **recycling projects** were also stressed. For example, a project that demonstrates a specific form of innovation and is implemented at a different point in time or in a different place can once again reach new groups of people. The concept remains the same but has a lasting impact because different people are able to benefit from it.

→ **RECOMMENDATION:** The EC should not primarily evaluate the innovative strength of project applications, but also **consider** the “**recycling effect**” of projects.

6. Another development that many conference participants said they have regretted to see is the fact that the change in the programme structure under Erasmus+, particularly with regards to the strategic partnerships in KA 2, has led to a paradigm shift in the planning of projects towards projects that are bigger in structural terms. The project coordinators had the impression that there are almost no opportunities for “newcomers” and inexperienced and/or small institutions any more.

→ **RECOMMENDATION:** The European Commission and the National Agencies should promote the subcategories of “projects of exchange of good practice” and “development of innovation projects” and the associated submission opportunities for smaller projects to a much higher degree.