

Consortia - a proven organisational model in European education programmes

Mobility is essential for the continued integration and stability of Europe. For this reason, the European Union has supported the mobility of young trainees, students and workers for over thirty years. The programmes Comett, Tempus, Leonardo da Vinci I and II, the Lifelong Learning programme, Erasmus and the current Erasmus+ programme have always focused on gaining practical experience in the European labour market.

Since the 1980s, applying universities have been able to choose a special organisational or management model for implementing mobility projects in all generations of programmes when organising practice-oriented stays abroad: an association of several actors forming thematic or regional consortia. This organisational model has proven its value within Europe throughout the history of European education and mobility programmes.

Consortia offer proven advantages for the cooperation of practice-oriented, cross-border mobility between universities and industry presented in a focused manner:

1. the centralisation of administrative and financial management, reporting, marketing and public relations work for a project manager leads to a reduction in time and costs, to an increase in efficiency and to a continuous improvement in quality;
2. receiving and sending organisations, the direct beneficiaries as well as the National Agencies and the EU Commission have a single competent contact person (contractor), who usually has many years of experience in organising stays abroad and in project management;
3. small universities in particular often do not have their own resources to implement European mobility projects. Only participation in a consortium can enable organisation to benefit from the positive effects of mobility;
4. it is difficult to predict the desired destination countries of the beneficiaries and the planned duration of their stays. The actual number of mobility projects cannot be predicted exactly at the early stage of the application for the entire project. The expected fluctuations can be balanced better, faster and more effectively within a consortium with several partners;
5. usually many mobility flows are facilitated in a consortium. Extensive knowledge of the programme rules, the IT tools, European partners and the intercultural and legal conditions typical of the country, on questions of the actual beneficiaries (e.g. language skills and courses, intercultural skills, finding housing, scholarships, etc.) is available. This bundle of knowledge increases the efficiency and quality of the projects and supports the partner universities and in particular the International Offices in their internationalisation efforts;
6. each of the partner universities within a consortium has a wide range of contacts with receiving organisations. These data can be easily exchanged within a consortium. The beneficiaries benefit from a wide range of internship providers. A large number of reports from the beneficiaries also provides a broad basis for orientation for interested parties;
7. the framework of a consortium offers participating universities the opportunity to exchange the content and structure of their study programmes and organisation. This communication may take place at regional level, nationwide or subject-specifically between private and public universities of applied sciences and universities. Discussions and synergies will then also develop in the areas of further education, university organisation (International Office, Career Centre etc.) and technology transfer as well as applied research and innovation;
8. the competence development of the employees in the consortia also leads to extensive knowledge about mechanisms and working methods of other European funding programmes (Horizon 2020, ESF, ERDF, Interreg etc.). Consortia thus have the opportunity to position themselves in other areas at European level.

In the discussion about the redesign and prioritisation of the new generation of Erasmus programmes from 2021 onwards, the German consortia would like to reiterate the well-known advantages of this organisational and management concept, and encourage the political leaders and in particular the National Agency of the German Academic Exchange Service (NA DAAD) to continue their constructive commitment to the consortia model.

At this stage, the German consortia do not wish to take a critical stance on individual points in the existing Erasmus+ programme or, for example, on IT instruments, but rather to encourage the discussion on the new Erasmus programme to support and promote the consortia concept more strongly in future. Consortia are hardly in a position to continue their work exclusively through the known overhead rates per mobility or through the universities' own funds.

The Consortium organisation model has proven successful and will help all stakeholders to effectively implement Erasmus 2021 - 2027. Greater financial support for the consortia is therefore required.

The German consortia in July 2018
Friedrich Uhrmacher

Technical University Berlin
SRH University of Applied Sciences GmbH Berlin
Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg
Technical University Dresden
University of Applied Sciences Fulda
Georg August University Goettingen
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz University Hannover
ABB Training Center Heidelberg
Technical University Ilmenau
University of Applied Sciences Karlsruhe
Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg
Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
Osnabrueck University of Applied Sciences
University of Applied Sciences Schmalkalden
University of Applied Sciences Trier