

1. Fish Bowl – Dissemination

In a 10 minutes discussion, the expert circles explored the concept of dissemination of project results in relation to the requirements of Erasmus+.

The discussion addressed the questions: why, what, when, to whom, and how to disseminate the results of a project. Experts described how they tackled these issues in their own projects and highlighted successful procedures and challenges.

After this exchange of views among the experts on dissemination practices, the discussion was opened to the external circle. The key findings of the group discussions were:

- Dissemination has to start from the beginning, i.e. already at the application stage so that all partners develop an early awareness of this issue (GR). To this end, the dissemination plan is a key document as it identifies the main steps, targets and distribution of tasks.
- The dissemination plan should be the result of a proper needs analysis at the outset. It is important to bear in mind that it is work in progress. It should remain sufficiently flexible to allow for new dissemination opportunities arising during the project implementation. It might be helpful to have a plan B, like using ambassadors or experts to monitor the results (HU, Budapest University of Technology and Economics).
- The role of the coordinator is crucial: While he or she is not necessarily the one in charge of dissemination, he or she should nevertheless get regularly feedback from each partner and make sure that the dissemination plan is correctly implemented. Also, he/she should make supporting tools available to all, e.g. a dissemination tool box containing logos, disclaimers, photos to share, templates, etc. (DE, TU Dortmund)
- Regarding the distribution of dissemination tasks among partners, the discussion showed various existing practices. While for instance the Lithuanian project (Vytautas Magnus University) recommended leaving this task to one partner as a specialist for the topic, the University of Stanford project (UK) decided to put in place a communication and dissemination working group. The majority of project representatives was in favour of giving a share to each partner, as this facilitates a wider dissemination.
- Reaching the leadership of organisations is essential for a successful dissemination (HU, Budapest University of Technology and Economics)
- Importance of involving the right staff at the university (e.g. the communication department), Contacting a PR agency proved to be useful (LT), at least for a limited period, even if it was more expensive.
- Involving dedicated networks of universities has proven to be effective for dissemination at local, national or European levels. The importance of associated partners was also stressed by several participants.
- NAs have an important role to play in supporting projects. NA representatives stressed that they act as multipliers by publishing examples of good practices, using monitoring visits for involving different departments of the university (NA DE) or announcing on their website forthcoming multiplier events of projects

(NA PAD, NA PL). One project representative suggested that NAs might provide some guidance on how to deal with the new data protection regulation in the field of strategic partnerships.

- Financial resources for dissemination remain the biggest challenge. The current programme does not foresee any budget for these tasks, assuming that related costs have to be born by the beneficiary institutions. Participants agreed on the necessity to change this, as it has proved difficult for many projects to cover dissemination costs from the project management budget. They called for the NAs to convince the EU of considering dissemination in the structure of the programme: „If the EU wants more impact, it has to give more money“. NA representatives agreed fully with this request. However, a positive aspect of the current rule was stressed by the Hungarian project representative (HU): As in Hungary there is no tradition for academic staff to promote themselves, they learned to do it through the project. This encourages commitment among staff.
- Ways of achieving wide dissemination in a cost-effective manner were identified, such as:
 - using the compulsory project reports, each project partner writes a different article for a different target group (6 partner/6 articles) or
 - involving PhD and other students in communication tasks, e.g. on social media.
 - taking advantage of already planned activities for spreading the word about the project or combining events (e.g. multiplier event after a project meeting gives the opportunity to meet stakeholders
 - Using resources at the own institutional (e.g. communication department)
 - Contacting NA (see above)
 - Using personal contacts might be more effective than digital communication like social media (Turkey project representative)

Additional considerations for successful dissemination:

- Dissemination channels: The project website was generally seen as the most important tool in this regard. It was stressed that special care should be given to addressing the audience adequately, i.e. differently from the description of results in reports. Somewhat surprisingly, one project representative questioned the relevance of a project website, as it runs the risk of becoming a „dead“ website after the end of the EU funding. One participant (UK) stressed the importance of the website for internationalisation at home. NA Poland suggested that the responsibility
- Open access to results required by Erasmus+ as a way to disseminate results more widely (NA FR).
- Use of EU tools like the Erasmus+ project results platform (NA FR)

2. Fish Bowl – Sustainability

The key findings of the group discussions about the topic sustainability were:

- Big commitment of universities and administrations even after funding has ended. Partners have to know where they want to see their projects in 2-3 years. Result oriented course of action makes a project more sustainable
- Projects need to have an international connection; self-sustainability is otherwise over. Choosing your international partners is a sustainability factor since you are building a network. You choose partners due to their international experience, past performances are important as a comparison.
- A diversity in the administration is important as well as good communication. It should be well-known that the funding ends and that thereafter sustainability sets in.
- Result-orientation makes projects more sustainable. Concentration should be maintained on intellectual as well as actual outputs. This increases theoretical points and explicitly works on sustainability.
- A practical way to examine sustainability through reaction from social media is to collect feedback from students (Ulm). Thereby you can also collect valuable project ideas.
- It is easier to sometimes have small partnerships (*Karelia University* Finland).

General discussion:

- There is a lack of national funding, especially in the field of humanities. At this point sustainability cannot solve this problem alone. Universities have to become more visible by themselves in order for projects to become more sustainable.
- A key measure for sustainability is social media. Universities should keep their websites up-to-date. This first of all relates to the presence of the university itself on the internet and the study programme. Different Computer platforms and services, like Facebook, Instagram etc, have to be maintained. On the other hand, this also relates to the different outputs and projects of the study programme.
- Internationalisation needs to be maintained, self-sustainability is otherwise over.
- Projects have to find good partners and have to establish good administrations. This way good career opportunities as well as intellectual outputs can be established.

Do universities show enough commitments to the projects? Projects shouldn't end after funding stops. (Questions Herr Birk) The development of good administration is the key point of sustainability and an alternative to reapplication. "Be more practical, implement actual guidelines and stick to them after the project ends". Answer: Yes, universities show enough commitment!

- Project ideas have to be checked regularly – aware daily walk – in order to maintain the goals of the projects in order to stay realistic, full of results and to keep an up to day funding. Checking the project is in other words collecting the feedback.
- As the NA we need to know, where you want to see your project in 2-3 years.

3. Fish Bowl – Impact

The key findings of the group discussions were :

- It is crucial to have a need analysis at early stage. You have to find out what is really needed and determine the change you want to make with your project.
- Generally, the impact on participants and involved institutions can be realised.
- Impact on other stakeholders outside of the consortium is not so easy to achieve. Therefore it is important to involve them from the beginning of the project.
- Especially rectors of the HEIs should be involved as key persons in the project, not only as representatives. Their commitment can ensure the ownership of the project results and the professional network of the rectors can be used for dissemination.
- It is important to choose a topic that is high on the agenda. Especially when you want to achieve impact not only on the local but also on the national level. A topic of national importance is easier to sustain and therefore will have bigger impact.
- Be realistic. Impact is important but has to be reasonable, manageable and focussed. Manage expectation on impact for your next project. Strategic Partnerships might not have an impact on the system as such.

General discussion:

- Use the Impact Tool to determine the change you want to make. From the envisaged impact you can plan the outcome/output and then the input you need.
- To reach impact outside of the consortium the leadership of the project is important. Especially the active role of the rector/dean of the HEIs as they have the necessary networks established and can disseminate the topic.
- It can be more difficult to convince the own university management on the importance and the impact of the project than the stakeholder outside of the consortium. But if the project is in line with the International Strategy or the Third Mission of the university it can help to arise the attention of the rector and get support (Example Uni Bologna).
- How can stakeholders be involved in the project to maximise the impact of the projects?
 - Involve stakeholder (business, enterprises, associations...) in the need analysis, get their commitment, convince them on the benefit of the project and explain how the change will be positively for them
 - The need for innovation can be in incentive to participate
 - Involve research intensive organisation as they are easier to convince
 - Explain what effect the project outcomes/output will have from a financial point of view
 - Project results/products can be reused
 - The participation of companies can be part of their social responsibility
 - Participation of association of employers is positive but better is the real participation of companies
 - The participants agreed that the involvement of ministries is desired but remains a challenge
- Multiplier events planned in connection with other big events can enhance impact.
- Example of measuring and evaluating of impact: One group of students follows the project and the impact on them is constantly explored.