



International Erasmus+-Conference, June 15 - 17, 2016 in Cologne

"Towards high quality in KA1 mobility projects for school education staff – a dialogue between National Agencies, Course providers and Schools"



PAD was glad to welcome about 85 participants from 24 countries (EUN, Commission, 30 NA colleagues, 25 School representatives, 28 representatives of institutions providing teacher training courses). For the first time representatives from schools participated in the (in the meantime third) conference on KA1 in Cologne and brought in their experiences and their expectations.

The main conference started on June 16 after lunch. Before this official conference there were already two discussion sessions ("mini-informal meeting" from June 15 to June 16) between NA colleagues and an informal get-together with ice breaking events and discussions of training providers and school representatives on the morning of June 16.

Main discussion topics

- ▶ Presentation of the view of the Commission on KA1 school education,
- ▶ Presentation of the new development in the School Education Gateway (catalogue, Teacher Academy) and discussion with the target group on potential improvements,
- ▶ Meeting of a steering committee and presentation of a new association of European training providers (europeantrainingproviders.eu),
- ▶ Exchange of experiences between NAs both on technical / administrative and on content related level (separate summary of the NA discussions will be circulated among NAs),
- ▶ Several discussion rounds on different topics,
- ▶ One central topic: How to promote the European Dimension in KA1 School Education.

Summary of Outcomes:

The conference was designed as a forum of discussions of the different target groups within KA1 School Education. For that reason there is no central result of the conference. Some central aspects will be listed hereafter as well as a short summary on some of the discussion rounds at the end of this

- ▶ There is a strong wish of schools to have really European courses with participants from different countries – on the other hand the new programme allows all kind of courses (e.g. tailor-made courses and even individual training) and providers report that the demand for tailor-made courses increases,
- ▶ Group discussion after the presentation of Regina Mourtu from the Commission on European Dimension which does not only mean the composition of groups of participants but also the content of the training provided,
- ▶ Feedback on the course catalogue and the SEG in general with some ideas that can be implemented soon,
- ▶ In order to promote the use of rating function of the course catalogue in the school education gateway NAs will encourage their beneficiaries to do a rating when they chose a course out of SEG catalogue – the Commission will be asked to add a phrase to the participant report (“If you chose your course in SEG, please do not forget to rate it so that others can benefit from your experience”),
- ▶ There are still a lot of topics left for discussion such as “Europass for courses?”, “Validation of learning outcomes”.... There will be a continuation (Cologne IV).

Some topics from the discussion among NAs:

- ▶ There is a strong need of discussing different approaches in the administration of KA1 mobility projects,
- ▶ A separate KA1 group should be established in Yammer where NAs can exchange their experience (e.g. in case of complaints on specific courses),

- ▶ Discussion of questions such as:
 - Reduction of requested grants in MT+,
 - Evaluation of participant reports,
 - Quality issues in KA1,
 - Way to run kick-off meetings,
 - National / common quality labels for courses, training offers?
- ▶ ...

Some topics from the discussion among Schools

Expectations towards course providers

- ▶ diversity of participants, different countries; European mixed course,
- ▶ clear description of the content and expected outcomes, communicate the knowledge level needed to follow the course,
- ▶ providers must be reliable partners,
- ▶ indication of minimum and maximum number of participants in the course description of SEG,
- ▶ prior communication among provider and participants and follow-up,
- ▶ participant list before the course,
- ▶ relevant and individualised content,
- ▶ motivating courses,
- ▶ concerning language courses: check the level.

Some aspects concerning Erasmus+

- ▶ very time consuming, but rewarding,
- ▶ Erasmus+ had a positive impact on the mobilities as it turned an individual approach into a process; it has become a project,
- ▶ mobility of pupils (and maybe even of teachers) should be in KA1 instead of KA2.

Some topics from the discussion among Course Providers

European Association of Training Providers (EATP)

The training providers have launched the EATP in June 2016. The main objectives of the EATP :

- ▶ to be the voice for all in-service Training providers,
- ▶ to be recognised by the European Commission and all NAs (Erasmus + National Agencies) working in the Education sector,
- ▶ to be the Association which will continue to drive the dialogue between Providers, Schools and National Agencies and provide feedback to the EU Commission on the School Education Gateway catalogue,

- ▶ to provide support to educational institutions and address the needs of institutions in terms of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) of staff working in the field of education through the development and provision of quality training programme.

The Association will be driven by a quality charter which will continue to enhance and support the development of quality training programmes. The EATP will have its first Headquarters in Edinburgh , Scotland for the first 6 months.

Deadline Dates

- ▶ All National Agencies who intend to launch a second application (should they have unused funding during the year) for Erasmus KA 1 during the year should announce and confirm the date by May of the year in question.
- ▶ The early deadline date for applications in February 2016 was much welcomed and improved the application process, however results in 2016 by some agencies are still too late (some were announced as late as June 2016) for schools who plan to include mobility programmes in the summer of the same year.
- ▶ Schools do not plan in advance and the only period when their teachers/ staff can attend mobility programmes during the Summer Period. Participants struggle to find low cost flights due to late responses from NAs.
- ▶ This leads to providers having to accept and run programmes on credit and accept payment after the course session once funding is received by the school –exposing providers to risk in carrying out their operation.
- ▶ It will be suggested the Commission to consider having the deadline for KA 1 applications during the Autumn (late October/ November) of the preceding year.

KA 1 Applications / Erasmus + Regulations

- ▶ Notwithstanding that the application process has much improved since the launch of Erasmus + in 2014 , unfortunately schools and providers still note that some National Agencies do not apply the Erasmus+ rules and regulations.
- ▶ Providers and the EATP aim to support applicants with the Erasmus + regulations when formulating KA 1 projects and the applications.
- ▶ It is noted that many NA's have suffered from serious cutbacks and are unable to answer routine questions from schools who turn to training providers for support. Training providers propose improved communications with NA's in order to provide accurate information to schools.

Prices/ Course Fee Support

- ▶ Scandinavian providers have reported a decrease in programmes in the Scandinavian regions. The main reason is that the cost of living in the Nordic countries do not allow to run sustainable programmes once these are capped at Euro 70.00 per day.

- ▶ The Commission may wish to revise the rates and also may reconsider differentiating the mobility support on the course fee by country / region.
- ▶ The reduction in fees and lack of support from NAs (underfunded) is discouraging German, Dutch, British and French schools from applying.

Nationality Mix on Course/ Training programmes / Internationalisation of Programmes

- ▶ Mixed reactions on this point.
- ▶ Schools are reporting that closed mobility groups – with participants from the same school / organization and nationality may address the objectives of the project better.
- ▶ At the same time such courses will not lose out on the Internationalisation factor notwithstanding that this aim can be achieved through the whole programme being held abroad in a different country.
- ▶ This point should be clarified to all stakeholders once it is listed as a key priority and objective of KA 1 Erasmus + programmes by the Commission. The Erasmus plus programme is attracting many applicants from Turkey and the east of Europe and is being abandoned by the north and west making it difficult to bring balance to events.

Free discussion/feedback session on School Education Gateway:

Different stakeholders could address their questions, comments and improvement ideas regarding the overall SEG, i.e. including but not limited to the Erasmus+ tools. Some of the points raised are listed below:

- ▶ To search for MO or SP, schools tend to use their established networks and contacts (e.g. from other KA1 project that they have participated into). These tools need more promotion. It was considered positive that individuals will be able to post their MO requests (new feature to be launched in July).

Course catalogue

- ▶ There could be a new filter per school subject (use of keywords).
- ▶ The possibility of an online evaluation form to be completed by participants after the course could be examined. This could help increase the number of evaluations.
- ▶ User ratings and reviews were commented a lot and considered important. However, it was mentioned that also rating/review of the course provider would be useful (not only of the individual courses). An insight on how a particular course provider is doing over time with different courses can be a good indicator for schools/teachers in their search for quality, especially when it comes to newly-announced courses. Some approaches could be: (a) aggregate average of ratings of already performed courses; (b) show the other courses by the same course provider and their ratings in the course description page; (c) gather user feedback through a specific anonymous 'digital feedback form' on the SEG.

- ▶ Schools would be interested to see/know what courses successful KA1 projects have taken (maybe through Dissemination Platform?).

Dissemination and visibility

- ▶ Currently only two tools are offered to KA1 beneficiaries: Reporting tool (official) and Valor (optional). The SEG or its tools are not mentioned in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. More promotion and visibility of the E+ tools is needed. The Commission informed that steps are being taken to include references in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.
- ▶ One NA had not been informed about the Teacher Academy online courses: it was clarified that NA need to use and visit the NAconnect regularly to be up-to-date, as this is where communication with the NA will be taking place from now on.
- ▶ It was mentioned that NSS and NA should be sharing the responsibility of promoting the eTwinning, SEG, Erasmus+, etc. Cross-dissemination is more powerful, especially in view of limited resources. Also the NA need a clear link between the SEG activities and the programme. The Commission informed that steps are being taken to update the templates of the NA Work Programme and Final Reports for 2017 with specific reference to promotional activities for the SEG and other platforms, in line with the conclusions of the NA / NSS workshop held in Brussels in January 2016.
- ▶ SEG will provide a 'promo pack' for NA and NSS (in 23 languages), to facilitate their promotional activities. It will include a comprehensive presentation on the SEG and its features, services and tools; as well as promotional material for use on the NA / NSS websites, for dissemination etc.
- ▶ Use of eTwinning is mentioned in the course quality criteria, but course providers don't have access to the platform so it can be difficult for them to integrate eTwinning in their course if they don't have access to it.
- ▶ An online space to share between schools and course providers was suggested (e.g. using a collaborative space). But it was noted that it's difficult to 'compete' with social media forums with more traditional online discussion forums.
- ▶ It was suggested to emphasize more the monthly theme on the front page of the SEG.

In addition, the verbal feedback received during the conference was positive, many people commented the platform is now much better than what it was last time (it was originally presented only 1 month after the launch). However, it was commented that people (e.g. schools) are still not yet fully aware of all the SEG services and more promotion is needed. The NA that were present seemed keen to support the promotion even if it's yet not a contractual obligation for them in 2016.

Some aspects from the session “Designing the perfect in-service training course on ICT”

- ▶ Combine online and F2F training was discussed. There are many online training sources (e.g. EUN Academy, and now SEG Teacher Academy) that the course providers and schools should use those to their benefit. To this end it was also asked how online courses can be taken into account in KA1? We assumed they can be used to reinforce the school's Development Plan and other activities, but since they are free of charge, they can't receive funding.
- ▶ Important to change the mentality of schools: ICT should be part of all subjects, not only ICT lessons
- ▶ In Greece the teachers are offered and they are taking part in ICT trainings; afterwards the schools are 'inspected' on how ICT is used
- ▶ It was 'obvious' that young teachers are more keen to use ICT in their teaching.
- ▶ Also it was noted it's more important to have courses on "How ICT can be used to enhance T&L", not courses focusing on specific technology, because technology is changing all the time.
- ▶ eTwinning can be a powerful tool to help teachers to integrate ICT in their teaching. For example, often there is one teacher in a school that joins eTwinning and runs a project, and when the project goes well and the students are excited about it, also other teachers get interested. One example came from Belgium, an eTwinning group of 165 members (based on a project) who share among them easy tutorials on how to use digital tools and recommendations of tools/apps to be used in the classroom - so it's a living network of practice. So eTwinning can be a great source for teachers wanting to improve their use of ICT in teaching.
- ▶ Finland/School: it was noted it was hard to find a good course especially for teachers who already had advanced skills in ICT or certain technology (like iPads). It was noted it's crucial to have access to a detailed course description and be critical about the content the course can offer to avoid disappointments.
- ▶ Finding a good course: It was also suggested that the school leader (or course coordinator) should invest time (and money) to make the best possible selection of the course providers to use the Erasmus+ funding in the best possible way, e.g. to visit the course provider, discuss with them, understand really what the course is about and if it's useful for the teachers.
- ▶ For a course provider the challenge is often the different skill levels of the participants. It is not perhaps very useful to join an international course if the participant is a total beginner. The basics should be learnt in the home country (get familiar with basic devices, Internet, logins, password management, etc.) and the international course time can be used in a more relevant, meaningful way.