

MINUTES OF THE GRANT HOLDERS MEETING

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University of Nis



Strengthening of master curricula in water resources management
for the Western Balkans HEIs and stakeholders

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Project implementation and monitoring	3
3. Financial and contractual management	4
4. Bilateral contact between project representatives and National Erasmus+ Offices and Project Officer	6
5. Networking and synergies among projects in the Western Balkans	7
6. Improving the implementation of the CBHE projects	8
ANNEX I – Grantholders’ meeting agenda	9

1. Introduction

This document reports the Capacity Building in Higher Education Grant Holders' Meeting, organized by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), in Brussels on January 29 – 30, 2019. There were two representatives of the SWARM project, Milan Gocic as a Project Coordinator from UNI and Emina Hadzic as a member of partner country from UNSA.

The purpose of the meeting was to address the following practical issues:

- grant agreement management (rules and reporting requirements) and
- the life cycle of the projects.

It should be noted that 147 projects were selected out of 887 applications. These 147 CBHE projects are distributed among:

- 133 Joint Projects (90%),
- 14 Structural Projects: 14 (10%),
- 61 National projects (41.5%),
- 86 Multi-country projects (58.5%) of which 69 regional + 17 cross-regional.

This meeting provided the chance for networking, exchanging experiences and preparing future cooperation projects. The meeting was chaired by Ralf Rahders, Head of Unit, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

The meeting topics can be divided into the following parts:

- project implementation and monitoring,
- financial and contractual management,
- bilateral contacts between project representatives and National Erasmus+ Offices and Project Officer,
- networking and synergies among projects,
- improving the implementation of the CBHE projects.

In the following sections listed topics will be explained in more details using presentations from the meeting.

2. Project implementation and monitoring

Speaker:

Ralf Rahders, EACEA

Summary:

Project implementation should comply with three different sets of rules, regulations, requirements, practices:

- those of the European Commission and Erasmus+ CBHE action,
- those of the countries where the project activities will be implemented,
- those of the partner institutions.

All beneficiaries are jointly responsible for carrying out the project in accordance with the GA and have the same obligations. They are also jointly responsible in case part of the grant must be recovered, or if they are audited in their premises.

Partner country partners are responsible for:

- Enhancing Project results relevance / added value,
- Raising awareness and disseminating results,
- Involving target groups and local stakeholders,
- Respecting national requirements / legal constraints,
- Ensuring implementation and sustainability of the project results.

It is mandatory to ensure that EU financial support is clearly advertised in line with Article I.10.8 on Dissemination, Article I.10.9 Publicity Obligations, and Article II.7.1 of Visibility of the EU funding (logos, disclaimers). Also, there is an obligation to use stickers on purchased equipment.

It is important to define stakeholders and plan dissemination according to target groups. Also, internal dissemination should ensure that the project and its results are known at each partner institution. It is mandatory to make project results available for dissemination purposes.

It should have in mind clauses related to possible penalties such as non-compliance with publicity obligations (penalty up to 20% of the grant), visibility obligations listed in article II.7.1, administrative and financial penalties, and poor, partial or late implementation. The publicity and implementation penalties are calculated on the maximum grant and not on the grant spent.

A Project Officer (PO) has been assigned to your project with the objective of:

- Ensuring the project is on track and respects CBHE requirements,
- Supporting the partnership during the project implementation,
- Anticipating difficulties,
- Identifying best practices.

EACEA monitoring will be done through:

- Regular email / telephone communication with the project coordinator,
- Organisation of video-conferences,
- Assessment of reports, requests for amendment,
- Visits to projects (individual visits or in the context of cluster meetings).

3. Financial and contractual management

Speakers:

Giulia Moro and Wolf Besche, EACEA

Summary:

Financial and contractual management are divided into following sub-sections:

- financing principles,
- actual costs,

- unit costs,
- management of the Grant and amendments,
- financial reporting,
- final grant,
- checks and audits.

Grant is a combination of two different financing approaches i.e. actual costs (equipment, subcontracting and exceptional costs) and unit costs (staff, travel and costs of stay). Grant will never exceed maximum amount indicated in Grant Agreement.

Eligible costs (Article II.19.1 Grant Agreement) should fulfill the following requirements:

- Incurred by the beneficiaries during the eligibility period,
- Foreseen in the application/budget,
- In connection with action/necessary for project implementation,
- Identifiable, verifiable, recorded in the accounting records,
- Comply with requirements of tax/national legislation,
- Reasonable, complying with sound financial management (economy and efficiency).

Ineligible costs are costs not fulfilling requirements of Art. II.19.1.

Actual costs are expenses actually incurred, documented and justified with corresponding level of cost.

There are two exchange rates (Art. I.10.2 Grant Agreement):

- 1) From start of eligibility period until receipt of second pre-financing: monthly rate of reception of first pre-financing,
- 2) From date of receipt of second pre-financing until end of eligibility period: monthly rate of reception of second pre-financing.

All transactions must be declared in EUR in the Final Report.

Equipment should be relevant to the objectives of the project and foreseen in the project application. Prior authorization from the Agency is needed for the equipment not foreseen in the application.

Equipment should be recorded in the inventory of the institution and labelled with E+ stickers (to be printed by beneficiaries - https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/visual-identity-and-logos-eacea/erasmus-visual-identity-and-logos_en).

Equipment should be purchased and installed as soon as possible in order to be used during project implementation.

Subcontracting is an implementation of specific tasks, by third party, to which a contract is awarded by one/several beneficiaries and involves tasks that cannot be performed by beneficiaries. There are no project-management related tasks.

Unit cost is a fixed contribution multiplied by number of units, based on "Triggering events" (activities/outputs). There is no need to justify level of spending.

Staff cost is a contribution to Institutions for staff (formal contractual relationship with a beneficiary organisation) performing tasks necessary to achieve the objectives of the project. Unit cost is an amount in Euro per working day per staff (not linked to the actual level of remuneration in the salary slip). During calculation three variables should be taken into account:

- staff category (Managers, Researchers/Teachers/Trainers, Technical, Administrative - nature of work performed, not status of individual),
- country in which staff is employed, independently of where tasks are executed,
- number of days proportioned to the work carried out.

Travel costs and costs of stay is travel/stay for staff/students participating in eligible activities related to the achievement of the project. During calculation three variables should be taken into account: travel distance (travel costs), duration (costs of stay) and type of participant (staff or student).

Travel should be done from home institution to venue of activity (project beneficiaries' countries) and return. For the calculation of distance, travel distance calculator (one-way travel) should be used (http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance_en.htm).

Management of the grant and amendments are part of the Grant Agreement. Methods for distributing the grant/reimbursing the costs between coordinator and partners are detailed in Partnership Agreement. Transfers amongst project beneficiaries must be done only to institutional bank accounts.

Financial monitoring per budget heading/partner/WP will be done during project implementation (for budget consumption). Financial reporting at final report stage should be supported by Audit Certificate (Report of Factual Findings on the Final Financial Report - Type II).

EACEA/Commission may carry out technical/financial checks and audits in relation to the use of the grant. Checks and audits can be done during implementation of Agreement and for a period of 5 years starting from the date of payment of the balance/recovery order.

4. Bilateral contact between project representatives and National Erasmus+ Offices and Project Officer

Two representatives of the SWARM project, Milan Gocic as a Project Coordinator from UNI and Emina Hadzic as a member of partner country from UNSA, took part into the meeting between project representatives and National Erasmus+ Offices (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia) and Project Officer (Inmaculada Rodriguez). Milan Gocic presented project objectives and explained current and future project activities. Also, he highlighted the taxation in Kosovo* that can affect on purchasing of equipment.

5. Networking and synergies among projects in the Western Balkans

Speakers:

Giulia Moro and Albert Sese, EACEA

Summary:

The aim was to establish synergies among projects in the Western Balkans. According to the CBHE results, Western Balkans HEIs will be a coordinator institution in 13 projects out of 19 selected projects.

The role of education must be given a higher priority especially in terms of fostering greater tolerance, promoting European values and strengthening the cohesion of society. The Western Balkans should invest more in their younger generation, our future EU citizens, and give them a perspective for the future, not the past. Cooperation in the field of culture with and within the region should also be enhanced.

Common political challenges in HE in the Western Balkan region are:

- Recognition of qualifications (Ministerial priority of last year),
- Inclusion and access to equitable education (special focus in the new Programme post 2020),
- VET sector reforms (new VET pilot scheme + 2019 Ministerial main topic),
- Governance of HEIs,
- Internationalisation of HEIs,
- Teacher Education,
- University – world of work cooperation.

The discussion between participants gave answers to the following questions:

- Did you meet new people?
- Can you use these contacts during your project implementation?
- Did you get to know new institutions you could work with in the future?
- Any synergies that could be developed with other projects?
- Have you identified among the policy challenges in the field of HE some issues that your project might tackle?

6. Improving the implementation of the CBHE projects

Speakers:

Paula Ranne, Deputy Director European Association for the Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)

Summary:

Paula Ranne presented quality assurance strategies, tools and recommendations for the implementation of international cooperation projects.

Principles for quality assurance are:

- Higher education institutions have the primary responsibility,
- Responds to the diversity of HE systems,
- Serves a variety of purposes: enhancement – accountability,
- Provides transparent and independent information,
- Involves stakeholders,
- External and internal QA build on each other,
- Supports the development of a quality culture.

Quality plan can:

- support the project development and provide feedback on the extent the objectives are accomplished;
- allow results to be improved by comparing the identified objectives and the established processes;
- support the project decision-making process by evaluating the results;
- monitor the involvement of project partners and other stakeholders;
- monitor the chosen means used and the level of efficiency of implementation;
- identify any risks and issues related to implementation, alert the coordinator and propose solutions.

ANNEX I – Grantholders’ meeting agenda



Agenda

Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education

Grantholders’ Meeting

28-30 January 2019, Brussels (Belgium)

Meeting place:

Management Centre Europe

Rue de l’ Aqueduc 118, 1050 Brussels

Monday 28 January 2019							
MORNING							
PLENARY SESSION							
08.30-09.15	Registration						
<i>Chairman: Ralf Rahders, Head of Unit, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)</i>							
09.15-10.00	Capacity building for Higher Education: Opening remarks and future perspectives, by EACEA & EAC						
PROJECT MANAGEMENT							
10.00-11.30	Project Implementation & Monitoring						
11.30-12.00	<i>Coffee break</i>						
WORKSHOPS ON FINANCIAL AND CONTRACTUAL MANAGEMENT							
12.00-13.00	7 Parallel Workshops on Financial management (Session I)						
	1 (Spanish) <i>Copenhagen</i>	2 (English) <i>Budapest</i>	3 (English) <i>Dublin</i>	4 (English) <i>Oslo-Paris</i>	5 (English) <i>London-Madrid</i>	6 (English) <i>Brussels-Berlin</i>	7 (English) <i>Amsterdam-Athens</i>

13.00-14.30	<i>Lunch offered</i>						
AFTERNOON							
WORKSHOPS ON FINANCIAL AND CONTRACTUAL MANAGEMENT							
14.30-16.30	7 Parallel Workshops on Financial management (Session II)						
	1 (Spanish) <i>Copenhagen</i>	2 (English) <i>Budapest</i>	3 (English) <i>Dublin</i>	4 (English) <i>Oslo-Paris</i>	5 (English) <i>London-Madrid</i>	6 (English) <i>Brussels-Berlin</i>	7 (English) <i>Amsterdam-Athens</i>
16.30-17.00	<i>Coffee break</i>						
HELPDESK							
17.00-18.30	Helpdesk (1st part) Helpdesk for CBHE projects with EACEA staff <i>MCE Restaurant</i>	Desks <i>Amsterdam-Athens</i> Youth Marie-Skłodowska Curie Jean Monnet ICM EMJMD			ICA WG <i>Copenhagen</i>		
18.30	<i>Networking Cocktail offered by EACEA at the Management Centre Europe</i>						

Tuesday 29 January 2019

MORNING

HELPDESK

09.00-11.00	Helpdesk (2nd part) Helpdesk for CBHE projects with EACEA staff <i>MCE Restaurant</i>	Bilateral contacts between project representatives and National Erasmus+ Offices/International Contact Points (<i>on individual appointment</i>)	ICA WG <i>Copenhagen</i>				
11.00-11.30	<i>Coffee break</i>						
11.30-13.00	Networking & Synergies among projects (<i>by regions</i>)						
	Western-Balkans <i>Copenhagen</i>	Africa <i>Oslo-Paris</i>	Southern Mediterranean <i>Amsterdam-Athens</i>	LA & Caribbean <i>Budapest</i>	Eastern Partnership <i>Dublin</i>	Asia <i>Brussels-Berlin</i>	Central Asia & Russia <i>London-Madrid</i>
13.00-14.30	<i>Lunch offered</i>						
AFTERNOON							
PLENARY SESSION							
<i>Chairman: Ralf Rahders, Head of Unit, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)</i>							
14.30-15.20	Improving the implementation of the CBHE projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality Assurance ▪ Capacity building in practice! 						
15.20-16.00	Closing session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SDGs in Capacity Building projects ▪ Closing remarks 						
16.00-16.30	<i>Coffee break</i>						
HELPDESK							
16.30-18.00	Helpdesk (3rd part) <i>MCE Restaurant</i>	Bilateral contacts between project representatives and National Erasmus+ Offices/International Contact Points (<i>on individual appointment</i>)					