

Key Findings and Recommendations from Leo-Net's Barcelona Seminar 2015 on Sustainable Employability

Ways forward in the implementation of ERASMUS+

LEO-NET, a group of close to 100 HEI members from 32 different countries, organised its annual EU policy Barcelona Seminar in April 2015. Sustainable employability of students and graduates and the connection of this to the Erasmus+ Programme were the topics for discussion.

The following **key findings and recommendations** are the outcome of the successful seminar:

➤ **Transition from the Life Long Learning to the Erasmus+ Programme**

In general the transition went well and people did really appreciate the fact that they could / were asked to give input during the process of implementing Erasmus+. A few parts / subjects were experienced as 'not working well'.

Some of those subjects can / will probably be solved in the current Erasmus+ Programme:

- **Past performance:** in some countries the past performance of Consortia under the Life Long Learning programme was only partly taken into account. Therefor the Consortia were confronted with a serious cut down in budget. In other countries the past performance of graduate mobility was not taken into account at all. Therefor there was none or hardly any budget available for the target group 'young graduates'.
- **Online Linguistic Support (OLS):** Sometimes the course was given in the **wrong languages** (e.g. the difference between work and country language), or at a wrong level. Furthermore different institutions use **different approaches on how to distribute the language courses**. Some countries can distribute them at their own insight, whereas other countries have to distribute them according to (tight) regulations set up by their National Agencies. Finally the decision to go abroad is especially with placements often last minute. But a grant cannot be distributed after the internship has already started. Also an OLS course can in this situation not been taken before the internship starts.
- **Zero grant students:** for example a student does an internship for six months but due to budget constraints, receives two months of funding and receives a zero-grant status for the remaining four months. It isn't possible to pay the students more months on the moment one knows there is budget for it.

Others subjects might have to wait to take into reconsideration till the preparations for the successor of the Erasmus+ Programme start.

- **Participation of Young graduates:** The rules that count for the participation of Young Graduates under ERASMUS+ are hindering the participation of Young graduates. This is a real pity because the Life Long Learning Programme has been proven very successful in connecting this group with the labor market. Very often students in the last phase of their studies are not planning a traineeship for after their studies. But they have to apply during

their last year of study. Although an administrative burden, a solution for this is, just to be sure, that universities advise their students to apply in any case. For Consortia this is more difficult because they have no direct contact to the students of the Consortia partners.

- **Remaining educational sectors:** If we want companies to be a real stakeholder in the traineeship mobility schemes for students, apprentices and graduates we have to take their needs serious. Companies do often look for young people with different study back grounds. However due to the remaining educational sectors within the Erasmus + Programme in most cases there is not one organization on behalf of the different sectors that can serve them. Therefor they still have to deal with different educational institutions which is not a customer friendly way to meet their needs. We should find a solution for this in order to get more companies on board.

➤ **Employability subjects for an ongoing discussion**

- **Highly evolving labor markets:** a serious concern is that technical skills are becoming obsolete in a very high rate. How do we all cope with changing technical skills and how do higher education institutes cope with changing technical skills? Besides the technical skills, there are also the soft skills that need to be addressed. Are we giving our students all the necessary skills which they need for their working life? And is it even possible to give our students all the right skills? There should be a dialog with companies to identify which skills are needed. An 'adapt, adopt, improve' strategy is needed for meeting the demands set by society.
- **Development of employability at institutions (HEI).** A changing role and changing responsibilities of providers of higher education is detected. The key problem is creating awareness with people working at HEIs. What is employability - the concept should be defined before it can be debated or actions can be discussed - and what is the role of an HEI to incite this?
- **Consortia:** more links between universities are needed to communicate about finding all opportunities within the subject of (sustainable) employability. Working together in a Consortium is a proven solution for that. Consortia are a recognized facilitator for actions to increase employability. Communication between these networks is necessary and has been proven to be an added value.