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F R I E N D S

ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME, KEY ACTION 2
CAPACITY BUILDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Furthering International Relations Capacities and Intercultural Engagement to Nurture
Campus Diversity and to Support Internationalisation at Home
(FRIENDS)**

2nd PARTNER MEETING
11th – 14th June 2019

MINUTES

Venue: Istanbul Aydin, Turkey (IAU)

Attendees: see list attached

11th June 2019

1. Opening address by IAU senior management team

Prof. Zafer Aslan, Vice-Rector for International Affairs at IAU and Prof. Prof. Hasan Saygin, Advisor to the Board of Trustees at IAU welcomed the participants to Turkey, to Istanbul and to the premises of IAU and wished the consortium a successful and productive meeting and project continuation. Ayse Deniz Ozkan, Vice director at DIR responsible for global education and partnerships and FRIENDS institutional coordinator at IAU briefed the participants on the meeting agenda and practicalities.

2. FRIENDS updates and recent developments. FRIENDS Code of Conduct

Christina Armutlieva, FRIENDS project coordinator thanked the meeting hosts for their hospitality and efforts to organize the 2nd FRIENDS meeting in the best possible way. She continued with an overview of the project management related developments between the first meeting in early March 2019 and now. All Partnership Agreements have been signed by the 15 co-beneficiary organizations' legal representatives and subsequently sent to the project coordinating institution before the originally agreed in the consortium deadline of 10 May 2019. As a result, soft copies of all 15 Partnership Agreements were sent to EACEA on 9th May 2019 that is fully in line with the contractual obligation to provide such copies within 6 months following the signing of the Grant Agreement on 18th December 2018. Furthermore, all first advance payments had been transferred to the partner HEIs within max. 15 days of the date when the last of the parties had signed each Partnership Agreement. Christina thanked the partners for their timely and proactive contribution and support in all project management matters so far and expressed her hope that this sort of exemplary project management and smooth communication in the consortium will continue and will be the case throughout the whole project lifetime.

In fact, integrity, mutual trust and respect, teamwork, solidarity, effective communication, commitment to quality, professionalism, avoidance of internal conflicts and conflicts of interest, compliance with Erasmus+ CBHE, cost efficiency, and transparency and accountability that constitute together best project management practices are embedded in the FRIENDS Code of Conduct. The draft of the latter covering also, inter alia, the principles of sustainability, intellectual property protection, non-discrimination and respect for diversity was discussed by the FRIENDS partners. As a result, they all fully agreed and committed themselves to the FRIENDS Code of Conduct's content and ethics.

Following the approval of the FRIENDS Code of Conduct, Christina updated the partners on the successful completion of the activities in WP1 IaH State of Play. Most recently, the 12 infographic reports summarizing the data provided by the 12 PC HEIs through the means of IaH Self-Evaluation Tool were uploaded on the newly released project website. The project website's URL is www.erasmusplusfriends.eu and its design had been inspired by the colours and the spirit of the project logo. The logo had been designed based on the outcomes of the brainstorming exercise conducted during the kick-off meeting. It symbolizes the core message of the FRIENDS project that is mutual respect, care, unity, friendship and diversity. The project website structure and content were designed with the intention to provide relevant project information in a user-friendly way. The website's main part, e.g. the main site is in English and its content will be regularly updated and managed by the project coordinating institution with the inputs of all project partners. Furthermore, the main site will host the Intercultural Awareness and Cultural Diversity MOOC platform to provide registered and free of charge access to the MOOC learners. On the other hand, the project website's 5 subsites, one for each Partner Country (PC) included in the project, will provide regular updates on the project implementation at national levels in Bhutan, Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. It was decided at that in the 5 PCs, the 5 project subsites' content will be produced and administrated by the following institutions:

bt.erasmusplusfriends.eu, Bhutan: Royal Institute of Management

kh.erasmusplusfriends.eu, Cambodia: Dewey International University

my.erasmusplusfriends.eu, Malaysia: Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation (APU)

ph.erasmusplusfriends.eu, Philippines: Cebu Technological University

th.erasmusplusfriends.eu, Thailand: Prince of Songkla University (PSU).

Christina confirmed that the representatives of the partner HEIs in charge of the 5 subsites' will be shortly provided with full access to the respective subsites' dashboards and admin. accounts.

3. Project Dissemination panel. The FRIENDS Swags Design Contest.

Mike Meallem from Payap University that is leader of WP7 FRIENDS Dissemination made an overview of the consortium's planned dissemination tasks and, in particular, of the recent dissemination activities. The project's brand book had been recently prepared by Sheryl Satorre from University of Cebu. The project website is already public and the consortium needs to establish as soon as possible relevant social media accounts to ensure FRIENDS social media presence enhances the project visibility and stimulates the future exploitation of project results. Furthermore, Mike focussed on the upcoming FRIENDS Swags Designs Contest that will be announced online and will aim to encourage and inspire PC HEIs' students who are the primary project beneficiaries to get acquainted with the project at this very early stage and to create original mock-up designs. The winning project swags design will be selected based on the predefined criteria of originality, creativity, functionality as well as adequacy to FRIENDS spirit and philosophy. The swags designs will aim to promote project visibility, create buzz and engage with internal and external project stakeholders.

During the dissemination panel, the partners discussed also the contest's judging mechanisms, deadlines and prizes. As a result, it was agreed that the contest will be facilitated in 2 rounds, namely at institutional and at consortium levels. Each of the 12 PC HEIs will announce and conduct the contest at first internally at the institution. All 12 PC HEIs will apply the same requirements and selection criteria and will select one winning design. The 12 winning designs (1 per PC HEI) will after that compete at consortium level and all 16 partner HEIs will vote online to select and appoint the best swags design to be used subsequently in all project promotional materials. The FRIENDS swags designs contest will be announced on the project website and the submitted applicant designs will be subsequently uploaded on the project website and its subdomains too to ensure a high number of

new website visitors and effective project promotion among the PC HEIs students. The following timeline for the FRIENDS Swags Designs Contest was agreed by the partners:

1. Opening the competition: 1st July 2019
2. Submission of entries: 1st July – 31st August 2019
3. Judging Period at institutional level: 1st – 8th September 2019
4. Announcement of winners at institutional level: 9th September 2019
5. Announcement of overall consortium winner: 30th September 2019
6. Start of production of swags: October 2019

4. Project Financial Management workshop

Given the fact that the majority of the FRIENDS HEIs are new to the CBHE programme, the project coordinating institution had decided to repeatedly facilitate a workshop to detail and clarify again the key financial management principles and rules applicable in the project. The workshop was co-led by Ms Desislava Sariyska, member of Varna University of Management (VUM) financial team and Christina in her capacity of project coordinator. The speakers used again the presentation Financial Management of the Grant from the CBHE Grant Holders' Meeting in January 2019. In the beginning, the partners were reminded of the regulatory framework and the key financial principles applicable in the CBHE projects. In particular, the principle of co-funding was mentioned again. Typically, costs to be covered via co-funding outside the grant provisions include overheads, costs for dissemination, internet use and postal services for the purposes of the project as well as costs for travel, costs of stay and staff costs that exceed the predefined and fixed unit costs amounts etc. Partners were also reminded of Article II.19.1 of the Grant Agreement stipulating the basic requirements necessary to define certain costs as eligible. Costs not included in the approved project application form are considered ineligible unless a specific prior authorization is granted by EACEA. Furthermore, all project costs to incur at each of the 16 partner HEIs shall be verifiable and recorded in the accounting records of the institutions and it is up to each partner HEI to clarify and ensure internally the mechanisms for recording and verifying the project costs incurred in the institutional accounting systems.

In terms of the actual costs expected to incur in the project during the 18 months of the project lifetime such as equipment and promotional materials purchase, it was again emphasized that until the 2nd project pre-financing will be received, the partners shall always select on the InforEuro website Month 12, year 2018 that is the month of the first pre-financing to the project. VAT costs are typically not eligible for reimbursement unless the HEI at which these costs are made could substantiate and prove in line with EACEA's requirements that it cannot recover VAT.

In terms of the unit costs' payments and the respective compulsory evidence to be provided by the partner HEIs, Desislava presented examples of pre-filled timesheets and joint declarations for the 4 different applicable staff categories as well individual travel reports. It was emphasized that the supporting documents' list provided by EACEA is non-exhaustive and depending on the type of activity, additional evidence may be required at any time during the project implementation, final report verification and ex-post audit's phases. Desislava also outlined again that all staff members to work and participate in mobilities in the project should be employees of the FRIENDS consortiums' HEIs and their employment relation with the institution and the fact that they are on the institution's payroll list should be duly proved through copies of employment contracts as well through extracts from the universities' accounting systems, salary slips etc.

Finally, Christina reminded once again the partners that the CBHE programme provides certain level of flexibility when managing the project budget at institutional and consortium levels. In any case, no transfers higher than 10% of the originally approved budget within a particular heading are allowed at consortium level. To ensure the consortium budget's balance and eligibility, no partner HEI is allowed to make budget transfers higher the 10% of the respective headings without asking the project coordinator for specific permission. In terms of the staff costs' heading, all partners are required to strictly stick to the rules and to not exceed the 10% threshold.

5. FRIENDS Quality panel

During the final session for the day, Sokhun Sov from Svay Rieng University (SRU) that is leader of WP5 Quality Assurance and Quality Control made a presentation of the project's Quality Control Plan. He focused in detail on the indicators and success criteria applicable to key project outputs and outcomes. Furthermore, for each of the key project results, Sokhun Sov identified the specific tools to be used in the process of quality assessment and evaluation. The Quality Control Plan in FRIENDS envisages, inter alia, the monitoring and evaluation of such project intellectual and events as the IaH trainings and IaH Action Plans in WP2, the MOOC and Intercultural Passport Award procedure and results in WP3, the Boot Camp, the Home Away from Home Programme and FRIEND Teahouses' key events in WP4 as well as the project events planned in WP6. For the purposes of the workshop European Higher Education in the World to be conducted in the course of the next 2 days, the consortium will collect feedback from all target users, e.g. the staff members from the 12 PC HEIs to take part in the workshop as trainees. Similarly, the quality of the 4 upcoming IaH themed webinars and the PC HEIs' round-tables in WP2 will be monitored and evaluated. Summary of the quality report on the implementation of WP2 will be presented after the successful completion of all scheduled activities.

12th June 2019

Workshop European Higher Education in the World

The 27 project partners from the 12 PC HEIs who took part in the workshop as trainees were divided in 2 groups to ensure better training dynamics and interaction with their peers and the trainers. The 4 Programme Country HEIs' representatives acted as trainers and delivered content relevant to the workshop's theme for both trainee groups. Trainings topics and presentations could be found [here](#).

13th June 2019

Workshop European Higher Education in the World

During the 2nd day of the workshop, the remaining part of the planned parallel workshop sessions were delivered. After these, in the afternoon all partners gathered again and in the framework of a plenary session facilitated by Grzegorz Kłapyta from Silesian University of Technology (SUT) discussed in detail the planning, programming and reporting of the upcoming activities in WP2 IaH: From Awareness to Action. The completion of the face-to-face workshop European Higher Education in the World in Istanbul will be followed by 4 webinars, each one with an average duration of 1 – 1.5 hours and facilitated by a different Programme Country HEI in FRIENDS. Tentative webinars' themes cover different aspects of IaH and include internationalisation of formal curriculum, global skills development in local contexts, virtual mobility, campus diversity and intercultural engagement. It was agreed that all 4 webinars will start at 9 am Brussels time. The following webinars timeline was agreed:

24th July 2019, Wednesday; facilitator: IAU

31st July 2019, Wednesday; facilitator: SUT

7th August 2019, Wednesday; facilitator: VUM

14th August 2019, Budapest Metropolitan University.

Each of the 4 webinars should be attended by at least 20 staff members per PC HEI, or at least 240 at consortium level. Proper and sufficient evidence should be provided of the 4 webinars' attendance by each of the 12 PC HEIs. The partners will use the GotoWebinar online tool and all 4 online sessions will be recorded.

Between 15th August and 14th September 2019, each of the 12 PC HEIs should schedule at least 1 round-table at institutional level to discuss with relevant internal stakeholders the integration of the IaH concept in the institutional strategic plan and the day-to-day internationalisation activities and

operations at the university. The round-table discussions should cater for the design and development of institutional IaH Action Plans (1 per PC HEIs) which are considered key outcomes of W2 activities. The 12 IaH Action Plans should be formally endorsed and ready for implementation by 30th October 2019 at the latest.

3. Equipment panel

The session was attended by all 12 PC HEIs and the VUM project team. Firstly, Violeta Dimitrova from VUM went through the equipment purchase's general eligibility criteria and requirements. Furthermore, she provided clarifications on how to determine the value of the equipment purchase contract. Depending on the latter, different equipment tendering and equipment purchasing procedures will apply. To ensure that the partners purchase the project equipment in bulk whenever possible, e.g. they do not split the contract's total value into smaller contracts, the VUM team members highly recommended that the partners group and initiate only 1 equipment purchasing procedure at national level. If this is not possible for any legal reasons, clear and detailed explanations must be provided by the respective PC HEIs to duly justify the need to organize and complete the equipment purchasing procedures at institutional level.

In FRIENDS, depending on the applicable VAT, if any is calculated and paid and based on the initial information provided by the 12 PC HEIs, the following 2 equipment purchasing scenarios are deemed relevant and possible at this stage, namely: i) the contract value is under 25000 EUR; ii) the contract value is of 25000 EUR or more. Violeta drew partners' attention to the different type and number of reporting documents to be prepared and/or obtained in order to prove equipment costs' eligibility in each of the 2 scenarios. In addition, she presented a list of minimum requirements relevant to each of the 2 above mentioned scenarios that should be met by the organizers of the equipment tendering and purchasing procedures.

Finally, it was agreed that all 12 PC HEIs should share with VUM project team their finalized and well justified requests for prior authorization to introduce both quantitative and/or qualitative changes to the originally approved equipment lists ideally by 21st June 2019 and not later than 28th June 2019 at the latest. The following week, the project coordinator will forward those to EACEA. No further changes of the equipment lists will be possible after that.

14th June 2019

1. FRIENDS: the way ahead. Parallel workshops on WP3 and WP4

Partners split in 2 groups and participated in parallel workshops on WP3 and WP4 facilitated by the respective WP leaders. As a result of WP3 workshop, Richel Lamadrid from Saint Louis University (SLU) reported on the plan to start consulting in the consortium on the Intercultural Passport Award Guidelines as early as possible to ensure an advanced draft of the document is in place for the upcoming meeting in Cambodia in October 2019. The 3rd project meeting will be combined with the Intercultural Passport Design workshop in WP3. WP3 activities' timely and successful completion is a precondition for the timely start of the activities in WP4 hence any delay in WP3 could have an impact on the overall project implementation process. Richel asked the partners to send her via email their inputs and vision for the Intercultural Passport Award Guidelines by 5th July 2019 at the latest. Christina confirmed that VUM will play a key role in the crafting and drafting of the award guidelines document. In addition, Richel asked the partners to share their inputs and ideas on the Intercultural Awareness and Cultural Diversity MOOC, another key output of WP3 by 31st July 2019 at the latest. Finally, in terms of the digital storytelling component's initial draft, SLU will work closely with the project team of APU.

Regarding WP4, Wongkot Phumphumirat, FRIENDS institutional coordinator at PSU that is WP4 leader made an overview of the planned activities that include: i) organization and delivery of Student Boot Camp in summer 2020, ii) facilitation of the Home Away from Home Retreat in Thailand, iii) drafting and approval of the Home Away from Home programme for integrated care and support for international students, iv) establishment of FRIENDS Teahouses at the 12 PC HEIs involved, v)

endorsement of FRIENDS Teahouses' Code of Conduct and drafting of events calendars and, finally, vi) organization of FRIENDS multicultural festivals across the 12 PC HEIs.

For starters, it was agreed that the start of the Boot Camp in Bulgaria should be scheduled for mid-July 2020. At the upcoming 3rd project meeting in October 2019 in Cambodia, the partners will further discuss and fix the timeline of WP4 activities. Issues related to the students' visa application timing and conditions were also discussed. It was confirmed that all students should start their participation in the Boot Camp in Bulgaria at once and on time as planned.

2. Programming of the upcoming partner meeting in Cambodia

Saravuth Tum, Rector of SRU in Cambodia to host the 3rd project meeting reassured the FRIENDS partners of his team readiness to welcome the consortium at the premises of SRU in October 2019 and to organize the meeting in the best possible way. Further, he passed the floor to his colleague Veasna Chhay who introduced the partners to Cambodia, to Phnom Penh, to Svay Rieng City and to SRU. He also covered key practical issues such as visa, accommodation in Phnom Penh and in Svay Rieng, and transportation between both cities. The following 4-day meeting timeline was agreed:

7th October 2019, Monday: arrival day to Phnom Penh; all meeting participants should arrive by the end of the day at the latest

8th October 2019, Tuesday: departure in the early morning to Svay Rieng with organized transportation; arrival to Svay Rieng and meeting work day at SRU

9th October 2019, Wednesday: meeting work day at SRU

10th October 2019, Thursday: meeting work day at SRU; departure to Phnom Penh in the late afternoon by organized transportation

11th October 2019, Friday: visit and meeting work day to the Ministry of Education of Cambodia.

12th October 2019, Saturday: departure from Phnom Penh.

The 3rd FRIENDS meeting will be combined with the workshop Intercultural Passport Design in WP3. Therefore, the meeting agenda will be drafted together by the project teams of SRU, VUM and SLU that coordinates WP3 activities. The finalized meeting agenda will be circulated in the consortium by 5th September 2019 at the latest when the partners will e-meet in the framework of the scheduled Steering Committee webinar.

3. Debriefing and closing session. Delivery of certificates. Consortium networking activities.