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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)**

10th WEBINAR
20th August 2020

MINUTES

Venue: online session at gotomeeting.com

Attendees: Representatives of all FRIENDS HEIs

1. Project meeting scheduled for October 2020 in Thailand

Christina Armutlieva, FRIENDS project coordinator greeted the webinar participants and gave the floor to Mike Meallem from PYU to brief the partners on the upcoming project meeting in Thailand. In line with the Thai government's current regulations, every visitor entering the country is subjected to a compulsory 14-day quarantine period spent in a government-approved facility. As a result, the upcoming project meeting to be hosted by PYU will not take place as originally planned in October 2020. The meeting is combined with del. 4.2. Home Away from Home Retreat. Christina confirmed that the face-to-face meeting in Thailand should be postponed and will, hopefully, take place in the course of 2021. The benefits of staff and students' physical mobilities, especially those linked to cultural immersion and intercultural communication, are by far more than the benefits of virtual mobility. The latter could only complement and enrich physical mobility but not substitute it. On the other hand, the project activities in WP4 could not be stalled until physical meetings could take place in the project. Therefore, in the course of October 2020 the partners will hold a half-day long online session to discuss the content and to draft the Home Away From Home Programme (del. 4.3.). PSU project team members in charge of WP4 leadership confirmed that they will discuss the matter internally and with VUM, and the FRIENDS partners will be informed in due time on the online event's timing and agenda.

2. Student Boot Camp

Due to the international travel bans still in place across the 9 countries represented in FRIENDS, the face-to-face organization of the Student Boot Camp (del. 4.1.) will be further postponed for 2021. In

the meantime, the digital storytelling contests' winners will need to start working on the FRIENDS Teahouses' formal launch and subsequent activities. To enable them to do so, Christina suggested the facilitation of an online introduction to the Student Boot Camp. The online introductory sessions cannot substitute the actual 8-week training event and will cover only a small part of its content. VUM would take the lead and deliver during the week commencing 28th September 2020 an 8-hour long online training in Leadership. The online training in Leadership will be organized in an interactive manner as much as this is possible when dealing with 39 trainees. Between early October and early November 2020, the other 3 Programme Country HEIs in FRIENDS will follow with similar format trainings on Student Boot Camp's themes and topics originally assigned to them. Ayse Ozkan from IAU asked to have matter clarified in detail via email. Gyorgy Tury confirmed that BMU agrees with the proposal to hold an online introduction to 4.1. as a way to work around the delays with the facilitation of the actual face-to-face event. Christina thanked the European partners for their collaboration on this and assured the Asian partners in FRIENDS that she will share with them all details concerning the online introduction to del. 4.1. as soon as possible.

3. Possible prolongation of project's eligibility period

Relative to the above raised points and in view of COVID-19's heavy impact on the planned physical staff and student mobilities in FRIENDS that are aimed to foster intercultural competence through cultural immersion and in-person exchange, Christina noted that the formal prolongation of the project's duration by 12 months might become soon imminent. In light of EACEA's letter dated 10th August 2020 that informed the consortium on the 2nd pre-financing initiation, Christina suggested for the consortium to wait and receive EACEA's feedback on the consortium's Progress Report submitted in early May 2020 and the Executive Agency's recommendations for improvement. Subsequently, the consortium will revisit the matter of project duration's prolongation and will jointly discuss the next steps in the framework of an ad hoc webinar.

4. FRIENDS Teahouses' formal establishment

Based on the updates the 12 Asian HEIs provided in early July 2020, all of them have already set up their FRIENDS Teahouses that will operate as an extension to PC HEIs' International Relations Offices. For the purposes of project reporting, sufficient evidence need to be collected and collated on the FRIENDS Teahouses' formal act of establishment. Each PC HEI will need to provide to VUM copies of relevant university documentation reflecting the completed formal procedures in this respect, i.e. minutes from university management meetings, copies of administrative bodies' decisions, Rector's orders, etc.. In addition, the FRIENDS Teahouses need to be included in the 12 Asian HEIs' organizational charts clearly identifying the new unit's position and relations with the rest of the university's administrative and academic bodies. Christina asked the partners to investigate the issue internally and to inform VUM project team at friends@vumk.eu by 30th September 2020 at the latest about the type of administrative procedure applicable at institutional level when it comes to the formal setting up of a new administrative unit and the respective evidence generated.

5. Intercultural Passport's exploitation

With WP3 activities successfully completed in late July 2020, the consortium members have already moved to the next stage of the Intercultural Passport (IP) activities that is the virtual module's exploitation at institutional, national and international levels. Christina provided examples for utilizing the Intercultural Passport at all mentioned level as follows:

A) Introduction of the IP as a new module at 12 PC HEIs' elective curricula offered to students across campus; embedding of IP's content within already existing modules delivered at the PC HEIs; IP's

inclusion as a prerequisite in the selection procedures for outgoing mobile students; IP's embedding in the induction programme targeted at incoming students, etc.

B) Proactive promotion of the IP to PC HEIs outside the FRIENDS consortium in the framework of the FRIENDS Caravans and other similar dissemination events aimed to significantly increase the number of higher education students to complete successfully the virtual module across the 5 Asian countries involved; IP's exploitation outside the higher education sector, i.e. by members of local ethnic and cultural communities, high school students, employees of multinational companies based in the 5 Asian countries etc.

C) IP's introduction to HEIs in other Asian countries through FRIENDS synergies with other CBHE projects, i.e. in the framework of the CBHE project entitled Internationalisation and Virtual Exchange: Borderless between EU and Asian Countries recently approved for funding that includes VUM and focusses on HEIs in India, Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Christina emphasized that this list of IP's potential exploitation strategies and actions is not exhaustive and the FRIENDS partners are encouraged to proactively explore further exploitation opportunities and to network with new final beneficiaries. Finally, she thanked the partners for their participation in the webinar and wished everyone successful continuation of their project activities.