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)

KICK-OFF MEETING
5th – 8th March 2019

MINUTES

Venue: Berjaya University College, Malaysia
Attendees: see list attached

5th March 2019

1. Official opening
Prof. Walter Wong, Vice-Chancellor of Berjaya University College (BUC) greeted the participants to Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur and the Berjaya premises. Prof. Todor Radev, President of Varna University of Management (VUM) welcomed the participants to the FRIENDS project and thanked everyone for the trust and support in joining VUM in this exciting journey.

2. Introduction to FRIENDS project
Christina Armutlieva, FRIENDS project coordinator presented in the beginning key project facts and focused on the project's theoretical background that is the concept of internationalisation at home (IaH). In particular, she drew partners' attention to Beelen and Jones' 2015 definition of IaH that is embedded also in the project's overall goal, namely to strengthen the involved Asian universities' internationalisation capabilities and to develop their students' global competence through the purposeful integration of intercultural dimensions into the universities' formal and informal curriculum. Christina also reviewed the key project outcomes and outputs to be produced by the consortium over the next 3 years and informed the partners that detailed analysis and planning of the upcoming activities in the development WPs will be executed jointly during the respective parallel workshop sessions scheduled in the agenda for 6th March.

3. FRIENDS partners' presentations

4. Project and contract management workshop
The project coordinator used the Implementing and Monitoring your CBHE project ppt presented by EACEA at the CBHE Grant Holders meeting in Brussel in the end of January 2019. For starters, special attention was paid to the CBHE Rules and Regulations slide and the key documents that stipulate the management and implementation of the project. Christina made a general overview of the Grant Agreement's structure and annexes and emphasized the approved project application form's integration into the Grant Agreement as Annex I. She also clarified that only costs incurred at the partner institutions listed under Annex IV could be considered eligible. It was also discussed that in light of the signed multi-beneficiary Grant Agreement all project partners are jointly responsible in the project in case of recovery and in case of audits, checks, or evaluation at their premises. Furthermore according to the Erasmus+ CBHE programme, Partner Country HEIs have additional roles and obligations to fulfil that are linked to project's relevance and added value in the 5 Partner Countries involved, dissemination of results, involvement of relevant stakeholders, ensuring project results' implementation and sustainability.

In addition to the Grant Agreement, the project coordinator focused on the applicable Erasmus+ Guide and on the Partner Agreement's text that had been drafted based on the template provided by EACEA. In terms of Article 5 Payment Arrangements of the Partnership Agreement, it was proposed that the Erasmus+ grant contribution to each of the 15 partner universities shall be implemented according to a predefined schedule. Within 15 days of the date when the last of the parties has signed the Partnership Agreement, the coordinator shall make an advance payment to the beneficiaries' account specified in Annex III. The first advance payment amounts to 15 % of the estimated Erasmus+ grant contribution of the respective beneficiary as provided in Annex II and shall cover unit costs expected to incur at the partner HEIs until 14th October 2019. Given the fact that during the project life time only 90% of the grant will be transferred to the consortium, it is also expected that at any time project partner universities shall have the operational and financial capacity to cover costs through own resources too to be later reimbursed when and if proved eligible. Over the 36-month project duration, the 15 partner HEIs will be eligible to submit to VUM a report and claim for payment on a regular basis, in line with the schedule detailed in Annex V. The coordinator will carry out further advance payments to the beneficiaries for work completed satisfactorily according to the description and the work programme. Naturally, all advance payments made in the course of the project are considered advances pending explicit approval by EACEA of the final report.

Concerning Article 8 General Administrative Provisions, the project partners proceeded to election and voting of the members of the first Steering Committee. In line with the project management mechanisms embedded in the approved project application form, over the project lifetime 2 Steering Committees will be elected, i.e. the first one at the project initial phase and the second one halfway through the project. Each Steering Committee will consist of 7 members (one of them being the coordinator) who will ensure timely completion of the project activities, smooth communication and a positive working atmosphere in the partnership. Furthermore, the Steering Committee members will take active part in the processes of task distribution and production of appropriate project evidence and documentation and will prepare the annual project progress reports. In addition to the Steering Committee members' election, the project partner institutions in the 5 Partner Countries involved were also invited to discuss and appoint local management facilitators (1 in each Partner Country). The local management facilitators are expected to provide active support to the project coordinator in all country specific matters and management issues such as equipment purchase, VAT, staff costs payments, national labour legislation etc. In light of the fact that all equipment and VAT issues will need to be clarified and solved during the first half of the project lifetime, it was decided that the selected 5 local facilitators play double-headed role as Steering Committee members as well. Based on the conducted discussions and negotiations, the following Steering Committee members were elected through voting:

1. Royal Thimphu College, Bhutan
2. Dewey International University, Cambodia
3. Asia Pacific University of Innovation& Technology, Malaysia
4. Payap University, Thailand
5. University of Cebu, Philippines
6. Budapest Metropolitan University, Hungary
7. Varna University of Management, Bulgaria.

The Steering Committee members will meet online on a regular basis. The following online meetings via gotomeeting.com were scheduled and mutually agreed until the end of 2109:

3rd May 2019, 10 am Brussels time
5th September 2019, 10 am Brussels time
12th December 2019, 10 am Brussels time.

Attendance of the Steering Committee members is compulsory and all other consortium members are also invited to join these webinars.

In addition, the partners had the dates of the 2nd project meeting to be hosted by Istanbul Aydin University confirmed as follows:

10th June 2019: arrival day
11th – 14th June: 4-day meeting on the spot
15th June 2019: departure day.

Svay Rieng University participants asked for additional time to confirm the dates of the 3rd partner meeting as these need to be further discussed internally. Due to the high number of public and official holidays in Cambodia in October, it was suggested that the 3rd project meeting will be scheduled and held in mid-November 2019.

According to Art. I.10.5. of the Grant Agreement, it is a consortium's contractual obligation to submit scanned copies of the signed Partnership Agreement to EACEA at the latest 6 months after the signature of the Grant Agreement. In line with this, the consortium members were asked to send to the project coordinator scans of the signed Partnership Agreement within 2 months after the end of the kick-off meeting and no later than Friday, 10th May 2019. The 2-month period is considered reasonable and long enough to allow partner HEIs' to verify internally the Partnership Agreement across all decisional making levels in charge and to formally process the signing of the document by the HEIs' legal representatives.

The online meeting between Mr Luigi Saia, Project Officer at EACEA and the consortium members scheduled for 5:30 pm local time in Malaysia could not take place due to technical problems.

6th March 2019

1. Internationalisation at Home: State of Play (WP1)
Christina opened the discussion by providing an introduction to the topic of IaH. In particular, she focused on the development and evolution of the term following its initial mention by Bengt Nilsson in his 1999 International at home – theory and praxis with concern to the large non-mobile student bodies and universities' responsibility to internationalize these too. The notion of IaH was later elaborated and approached from various angles. According to Nilsson's famous definition from 2003, IaH is „any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student mobility" (Nilsson, 2003, p. 31). According to Jane Knight (2008, p. 22), IaH covers "those aspects of internationalisation which would happen on a home campus". Knight's perception of IaH should be analyzed in the context of her general definition of internationalisation in higher education from 2003 that is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of postsecondary edication" (Knight, 2003, p. 2). In 2011, by building on Knight's earlier research conclusions, De Wit summarized IaH as a variety of on-campus, curriulum oriented activities aimed to develop students' international awareness and intercultural skills. On the

contrary, internationalisation abroad activities encompass all forms of cross-border education cooperation including mobility of students, staff, curricula, initiatives and education institutions (De Wit, 2011).

In reality, in Europe the term IaH as opposed to outbound mobility and internationalisation abroad received increased attention outside the education management expert circles only after its inclusion in the European Higher Education in the World (2013) policy document. In this EU level internationalisation strategy that laid the foundations for the Erasmus+ Programme implemented in the period of 2014-2020, the correlation of IaH and digital learning is promoted by the European Commission to one of the three key higher education internationalisation priorities and areas for recommended interventions and actions. As a result, more and more EU higher education institutions have started embracing IaH as an institutional policy for internationalisation in the domains of curriculum, teaching and learning, extra-curricular activities as well as the meaningful interactions with local cultural and ethnic groups. The IaH is further embedded in the European Commission's renewed EU agenda for higher education published in 2017. The 2 EU policy documents have served as a stepping-stone at the FRIENDS project's initial development phase.

For the purposes of the FRIENDS initiative, the partners agreed to apply consistently throughout the whole project the IaH definition as provided by Beelen and Jones. The latter perceive IaH as "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all the students within domestic learning environments" (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 12). The FRIENDS project relies entirely on Beelen's and Jones' IaH definition when defining its chief objective.

Following this introduction, Ms Ayse Deniz Ozkan reported shortly on the EURIE 2019 that had taken place during the week preceding the FRIENDS kick-off meeting. In particular, Ayse focused on Jos Beelen's presentation during the EURIE and briefed the partners on the challenges the concept of IaH is currently facing as well as the misconceptions of the term.

2. Parallel workshops on WP2, WP3, WP4
Project partners split in 3 groups to work on each of the 3 Development WPs in FRIENDS.

Outcomes of workshop WP2 Internationalisation at Home: From Awareness to Action were presented during the subsequent plenary session. WP2 leader Silesian University of Technology reported on the activities planned to lead to WP2 successful completion that include:
1. Preparation of the Workshop European Higher Education in the World
2. Facilitation of 2-day Workshop European Higher Education in the World
3. Delivery of IaH Capacity Building Webinars
4. Organization across the 12 Partner Country HEIs of round tables Campus & Curriculum: InterRationalise This!
5. Drafting and endorsement of institutional IaH Action Plans – one per Partner Country HEI.

In addition, an action plan with fixed deadlines and identified partner institutions in charge was presented and approved.

Outcomes of workshop WP3 Intercultural Certificate: Design and Prototyping were presented by WP3 leader Saint Louis University. In total 6 key tasks and deliverables were identified as follows:
1. Organization of Intercultural Passport Design Workshop during the 3rd partner meeting scheduled for October/November 2019.
2. Drafting and crafting of the Digital Storytelling How-to manual
3. Elaboration and endorsement of the Intercultural Passport Award Guidelines
4. Organization of Digital Storytelling Contest across the 12 Partner Country HEIs
5. Initial release and delivery of the IACD MOOC
6. Intercultural Passport Award.

Apart from planning and timing in WP3, the partners discussed and clarified also challenges that may arise with regards to the IACD MOOC registration, MOOC target groups' interest and engagement,

MOOC hosting and content etc. as well digital stories' assessment criteria, profile of the assessors, promotion etc.

Outcomes of the workshop on WP4 FRIENDS Teahouses: Set up and Piloting were presented by WP4 leader Prince of Songkla University. The following main tasks were discussed in WP4:

1. Organization and delivery of Student Boot Camp in summer 2020
2. Facilitation of the Home Away from Home Retreat event planned to take place during the 5th project meeting in Thailand
3. Drafting and approval of the Home Away from Home programme for integrated care and support for international students. Establishment of FRIENDS Teahouses at the 12 Partner Country HEIs involved.
4. Endorsement of FRIENDS Teahouses' Code of Conduct and drafting of events calendars
5. Organization of FRIENDS multicultural festivals across the 12 Partner Country HEIs.

The partners clarified various relevant questions and risks that may arise during the WP4 activities implementation including Student Boot Camp timing in view of the diverse academic calendars at the 12 Partner Country HEIs; student visa issues, agenda and leadership of the team-building activity at the Home Away from Home Retreat; formal institutional decision concerning the FRIENDS Teahouses' venue; FRIENDS Teahouses' equipment and furniture issues; FRIENDS festivals planning, agenda, promotion, realization.

3. Round table on project management topics specific to the Partner Countries (VAT, equipment tendering procedures and instalment, etc.)

The meeting was attended by all 12 Partner Country HEIs and VUM team. Firstly, the project coordinator focussed on the issue of VAT. According to the Grant Agreement, costs related to VAT are by default considered ineligible. An exception could be made in case a beneficiary organization could provide an official document from the competent national authorities stating that the corresponding VAT costs cannot be recovered. Special attention was drawn to the wording of the document that should include the explicit statement of *cannot recover*. Partners agreed that each of the 12 Partner Country HEIs shall clarify its VAT status as soon as possible and no later than 2 months following the kick-off meeting. The VAT issue is crucial in terms of the equipment tendering procedure organization and any delays in clarifying a Partner Country HEI's VAT status would lead to delays with the tender. Given the relatively short equipment list approved in the application form, it is highly recommended that requests for any relevant and justified adjustments to this list at each of the 12 Partner Country HEIs are sent to the project coordinator as soon as possible and no later than 2 months following the kick-off meeting. Such requests should be in any case duly justified and should identify why the approved equipment is not needed for the purposes of the FRIENDS Teahouses' operation and how the suggested replacement, if any, would benefit the FRIENDS Teahouses' work and primary target groups.

Christina and Ronald Binati from BUC who attended the CBHE Grant Holders' Meeting in Brussels in January 2019 informed the partners on the CBHE requirement to always purchase in bulk whenever possible. Therefore, in the project the partners will make every effort to organize the equipment tenders at national level by grouping the HEIs in each Partner Country in 5 tendering procedures in total. The partners would have 2 months to clarify if this is possible and in line with their internal procurement rules and procedures. If proven that a particular HEI is not able to have its equipment purchased through a tendering procedure organized at national level, then the partners in this country will proceed to purchasing the equipment individually at institutional level. Finally, the project coordinator confirmed that a list with the equipment issues waiting for clarification will be sent to the Partner Country HEIs via email so they could provide their feedback as soon as possible as to ensure that all equipment in the project is purchased before the end of Year 1 of the project lifetime.

1. Project financial management workshop

The workshop was co-led by Ms Desislava Sariyska, member of VUM financial team and Christina in her capacity of project coordinator. The speakers used 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 key financial principles applicable in the CBHE projects. In particular, the principle of co-funding was discussed that applies to all costs to incur during the project lifetime that are not covered by the grant. These costs may include overheads, costs for dissemination, internet use and postal services for the purposes of the project, costs for travel, costs of stay and staff costs that exceed the unit costs amounts etc. Partners also got acquainted with 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. Any authorization to be obtained could only concern specific costs to incur only after a formal written approval is granted. Furthermore, all project costs to incur at each of the 16 partner HEIs shall be verifiable and recorded in the accounting records of the institution concerned. In terms of the actual costs planned in the project, in addition to the VAT and the equipment tendering procedures issues, the partners also discussed the reporting documents to be provided as well as the applicable exchange rate in the project in line with Art. I.10.2. For partners' convenience, the project coordinating team demonstrated how the conversion of currencies used in the project other than EUR works on the InforEuro website. It was emphasized that until the second 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.

During the second part of the workshop, the topic of unit costs applicable in the project was discussed in detail. Special attention was paid to the slide listing the 3 phases of the grant management cycle and how these relate to the unit costs. Unlike the grant allocation phase, when the unit costs are planned based on the estimated work programme in the project, at the grant justification phase the unit costs will be reported based on the activities actually implemented. During the grant implementation phase, the partners are free to use the allocated unit costs by "cooking their own financial recipe" that is a metaphor for applying their own internal institutional practices and institutional decisions taken in regard with the project implementation. These practices and decisions shall be reflected in Annex VI Beneficiary specific payment modalities and procedures of the Partnership Agreement that aims to identify the remuneration modalities and travel costs and costs of stay reimbursement procedures to be applied by each partner HEI in the project.

In terms of the unit costs reporting, 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. Therefore, it is highly important that partners document and record carefully all important project activities and are able to provide evidence of these incl. in the form of attendance lists, tangible outputs / products, proof of attendance in meetings, agendas, minutes, formal certificates of attendance etc.

Finally, the partners became acquainted with the rules for financial monitoring and reporting applicable in the CBHE project and the procedures for calculating the final grant. As mentioned also during the first day of the kick-off meeting, the consortium is jointly responsible in case of audits, checks or evaluation in their premises as well as in case of recovery. At the final grant calculation and verification stage, if there is a difference between the amount of the Erasmus+ grant contribution actually used by the partnership and the amount of expenditure declared eligible by the Executive Agency at the end of the project, the following procedure will apply according to the Partnership Agreement:

- Project partner HEIs responsible for the expenditure declared ineligible will reimburse the corresponding amount to the coordinator within 15 days after the project's final report approval by EACEA.

- in case Art. I.10.6 linked to penalties for weak, poor, partial or late implementation is applied, the beneficiaries commit to take in charge a percentage of the ineligible amount(s) corresponding to their share of the Erasmus+ grant and will reimburse it to the coordinator within 15 days after the project's final report approval by EACEA.
- in case Art. I.10.10 linked to penalties in case of non-compliance with publicity obligations is applied, the beneficiaries commit to take in charge a percentage of the ineligible amount(s) corresponding to their share of the Erasmus+ grant and will reimburse it to the coordinator within 15 days after the project's final report approval by EACEA.

2. Visit to Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation. Campus tour

3. Dissemination and exploitation panel (WP6&7)
During the final session of the day, Sheryl Satorre from University of Cebu that is also the institutional project coordinator of the CBHE project BEEHIVE: Building Entrepreneurial Ecosystems to Enhance Higher Education Value-Added for Better Graduate Employability presented the good practices established and applied to promote and exploit the BEEHIVE project results. The BEEHIVE project is coordinated by VUM and involves, inter alia, University of Cebu and Saint Louis University. Apart from building relevant synergies between the 2 CBHE projects, Sheryl's presentation aimed to share good practices and to provide useful tips and insights into the activities planned in FRIENDS that are similar to those in BEEHIVE, namely the dissemination and exploitation of the MOOC and the structural units to be established in the project, the Swag Designs Contest, the project mascot etc.

8th March 2019

1. Brand image workshop
The workshop was led by Mike Meallem from Payap University, WP7 leader in FRIENDS. In the beginning, Mike made an overview of the main dissemination activities and deliverables planned in the application form as follows:
1. Dissemination and Communication Plan
2. Project online presence
3. Swag Design Contest
4. Newsletters
5. Promotional materials
6. FRIENDS Reunions
7. Final Dissemination Conference in Bhutan.
Prior to the 2nd partner meeting in June 2019, the partners shall have completed all activities linked to FRIENDS project logo design and approval, identity and Brand Book, design and publication of project website with the 5 planned subdomains (one per Partner Country), set up of facebook account and project's social media presence. Furthermore, the Swag Design Contest preparations shall be also started as soon as possible so that the Contest could be announced and successfully completed by mid-July 2019 at the latest.
Mike also shared with the partners a table template with information to be collected and collated on all project dissemination activities to be completed in the project. In total, 5 reporting deadlines for provision of dissemination related information and evidence to WP7 leader will be applied, the first reporting period being 11th June 2019.
Finally, the partners were invited to participate in a brand image workshop and to brainstorm on the FRIENDS project identity and personality, the possible logo colours and the prospective project mascot. Workshop outcomes are summarized below:

Personality of FRIENDS

Happy	Vibrant	Cool	Adventurous	Charismatic	Caring
Ageless	Open-minded	Empathetic	Funny	Respectful	
Smart	Friendly	Inclusive	Reliable	Sociable	
Peaceful	Fearless	Curious	Hip	Loving	

Colors

Blue IIIIII	Orange II	Yellow I	Green IIIII	Red II	Gold I

Mascots
M&Ms type figure – round with hands (body has globe pattern)
Smiling Dolphin in ocean with FRIENDS logo
Antz type figure / Caterpillar with each letter of FRIENDS
Superhero type figure.

After the end of the kick-off meeting the project coordinator proceed to contracting the company to design the project website. Partners' preferences regarding the project personality, colours and mascot will be forwarded to the external company and the project identity will be designed around the mutually messages.

2. Quality Panel (WP5)
During the workshop, Dr Sokhoun Hov from Saby Svay Rieng University that is WP5 leader presented in detail the activities planned in WP5. In particular, he focused on the project's Quality Plan that defines the criteria for measuring the quality of different types of outputs, outcomes and activities, based on the quantitative and qualitative indicators included in the Logical Framework Matrix. Furthermore, Sokhoun presented to the partners the mechanisms for quality control over project milestone achievements and the Milestone Achievement Reports to be prepared in the project. The partners discussed also the distribution of evaluations tasks in the consortium as well as the communication plan linked to the planned quality control measures and activities. A Quality Panel will be organized at each of the 6 upcoming partner meetings.

3. Programming of Year 1 project activities including upcoming partner meetings in Turkey and Cambodia (please see the attached excel sheet)

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