

# Facing sustainability for partnerships

*Entering a Comenius/Grundtvig partnership also means being open to new friends, new experiences and new ideas – something that you expect to go on even after the funding period? Sooner or later you will have to face the question of how to achieve sustainability for this new or ongoing partnership?*

*There are basically two ways of looking at sustainability after the funded project period and these are:*

- I. Consolidation & development – how to pursue and further develop the good work at your own organisation and/or in the local community (pages 3–6)*
- II. Continuity – how to continue the collaboration with your partner organisations on a European level (page 7)*

*In the following pages you will find ideas of how to proceed in the beginning of or during the funded project period, whether you choose consolidation & development and/or continuity.*

## I. Consolidation & development within your organisation and/or in the local community

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|---|---------------|
| a. Agree on a working plan for international cooperation  | <i>page 3</i> |
| b. Take steps to integrate the management (the headmaster) in the Partnership activities                                | <i>page 4</i> |
| c. Identify efficient strategies to establish activities on a national level  | <i>page 4</i> |
| d. Agree on a future working plan to implement findings   | <i>page 4</i> |
| e. Establish an international coordinator/project manager   | <i>page 4</i> |
| f. Elaborate a staff manual for future use  | <i>page 5</i> |
| g. Develop a bank of themes treated during the project, to be re-used in future years                                   | <i>page 5</i> |
| h. Extend the use of ICT ( information and communication technologies)  | <i>page 5</i> |
| i. Continue the communication in foreign languages in different educational contexts                                    | <i>page 5</i> |
| J. Take part in in-service training of staff in an international context  | <i>page 5</i> |
| k. Be open to new partnerships, new projects, new partners - perhaps within other programmes than Comenius or Grundtvig | <i>page 6</i> |
| l. Build a local network for each partner region with public and private actors   | <i>page 6</i> |
| m. Use your knowledge and experiences locally, regionally and nationally  | <i>page 6</i> |
| n. Start disseminating your Partnership plans as soon as possible   | <i>page 6</i> |

### I a. Agree on a working plan for international cooperation

Your Partnership might be your first step into international cooperation and your chance to show decision makers the importance of this kind of activity. Don't miss this chance! What you need is a kind of insurance that international cooperation is a natural part of your activities in your organisation. A written and signed long-term agreement with the partners will be very helpful, and don't hesitate to ask your partners for good examples of documents that can be used. The Swedish adult education organisation "Centre for Flexible Learning" in Söderhamn is very successful in international cooperation funded by EU. They have a clear plan and economic strategies including a budget for international cooperation. Even if an application is turned down, their opinion is that the discussions in the partnership before applying are valuable. For instance they use their continuously growing network to arrange study visits and other kinds of exchanges if no funding can be obtained.

Both written plans and a reasonable budget for international cooperation work as a signal system for staff, parents and learners. And so do activities where learners take active part in international activities; cooperation and competitions. In a situation of competition between schools or adult education providers this might be a useful promotion tool!

#### I b. Take steps to integrate the management (the headmaster) in the Partnership activities

A conclusion made by a large number of previous Partnerships is that the success of a Partnership and certainly of the survival of a Partnership depends to a high degree on the interest from the management. Not only should the entire responsibility of the project lie on only one person but include several members of the staff, but you should also see to it that the management is involved from the start. If the manager doesn't take any interest in the Partnership activities and only signs the application as a formal matter, the workload could be too large for the involved staff and you might be expected to work with the project activities after having done your normal work in the organisation. Once the management is hooked, e.g. after having travelled with you to a project meeting, it will definitely be easier to have their important support in the future.

#### I c. Identify efficient strategies to maintain activities on a national level

Although the European dimension is in focus in a Partnership and you will obtain e.g. a multicultural view on certain fields of interest during your Partnership, there is still a possibility to maintain activities on a national level.

If no other educational organisations can provide the multicultural aspects, there are probably associations or organisations based on different national origins that could be contacted in the local community.

Use your local, regional and national networks!

#### I d. Agree on a future working plan to implement findings

Your Partnership is probably the result of needs in your own organisation to develop your international dimension and certain more specific methodological or educational needs. Once the Partnership is over, you have most likely achieved important results that should be taken profit of for a long time. Do not work alone on this - take the chance to compare your plans for implementation within the Partnership. Together you can achieve more than if you try to be creative by yourselves. Once you have agreed on how to proceed, make a mutual future working plan and also consider establishing a written long-term contract for future commitment by all parties.

#### I e. Establish an international coordinator/project manager

Together with a plan for your long-term international cooperation and activities, you will probably need to establish an international coordinator/project manager. This function needs to be confirmed not only in a plan but also to be granted sufficient resources as regards time and budget. A serious commitment from the organisation has the effect of signalling that new ideas and initiatives are welcome and will be anchored in the organisation.

#### I f. Elaborate a staff manual for future use

Often when Partnerships work on pedagogical/didactical issues or also directly with methodological aspects of teaching certain subjects, many good ideas are found and elaborated together. These should all be gathered in a manual for future use for two reasons: one not to lose track of all good ideas and two to extend the lifecycle of the findings from the European cooperation. This is what a Swedish nursery school has done, (Tusenskönan förskola, Landskrona) but not only that. Thanks to the Comenius Partnership, they also develop a manual for staff on how to introduce new pupils in a well-prepared way. The introduction of newcomers, especially from other countries, is tricky and the more you know about other cultures, the easier the introduction will be. All the partner organisations in the Partnership contributed to the manual with their different cultural aspects as to traditions and customs, but such a manual can naturally be elaborated further by using associations or organisations based on different national origins that exist in the local community.

#### I g. Develop a bank of themes treated during the project that can be re-used in future years

Instead of dropping all the interesting themes that you touch or work on during the Partnership, you should keep them in a data bank or a data base at your organisation. This way you can, like the Swedish upper secondary school, Vadsbogymnasiet in Mariestad, bring up the subject again during e.g. a class of English from time to time. Do not forget to store, not only the theme itself, but also more importantly the way in which you worked with the theme. All in order to save valuable time for preparation!

#### I h. Extend the use of ICT

Take the chance to invite everyone involved in the Partnership locally to try new ways of using ICT. Communication by e-mail, web cams, platforms and so on will strengthen everyone's feeling of involvement in the Partnership and will also have spin off effects. Many teachers and students have come to know each other more personally and decided to visit each other on holidays and the communication enhances their ICT-skills.

#### I i. Continue communication in foreign languages in different educational contexts

You will probably have noticed it already – as soon as you drop your fears of speaking a foreign language you will be open to use it in new contexts.

#### I j. Take part in in-service training of staff in an international context

In-service training funded by the EU is often used both in Comenius and in Grundtvig. Training courses, attending seminars and conferences as well as job shadowing are valuable instruments for all organisations with an ambition to work in a more internationally-oriented way. In many countries there are national programmes as well as EU programmes.

In one Grundtvig Partnership, the Swedish partner Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan in Stockholm was asked to organise a training course in the partner institution Hellenic Institute of Sign Language in Greece. In another Grundtvig project, the participation of a Swedish

partner was not funded. A representative from the organisation, Kommunledningskontoret in Karlstad, managed to join the partnerships meetings anyway and held a course for the colleagues. Afterwards he acted as a coach for his colleagues.

Be open to invitations as well as to going abroad for a course or a conference, and be prepared to be the expert and not only the learner!

#### I k. Be open to new partnerships, new projects, new partners

New contacts, new knowledge, new needs. The more you work with new people and in new contexts, the more you come across new challenges and opportunities. Ask your partners in the Partnership for tips and ideas and try to be open for other EU programmes than the one you have experience from!

#### I l. Build a local network for each partner region with public and private actors

A French organisation called DEVMED in Nancy, France, whose Partnership aim was to develop relationships between Mediterranean countries, started a local network in their region as a means to maintain activities started during the Partnership period. One regional institution is responsible for hosting and for providing information, orientation, training as well as monitoring. The network created a platform where project ideas could be developed while focusing on e.g. communication strategies, dissemination, evaluation and experiments with different target groups. Another example comes from Eskilstuna, Sweden, where two schools joined the same Partnership – one lower secondary and one upper secondary school (Tegelviken and Rekarne-gymnasiet). By doing so, they could take profit of their intense mutual cooperation during the Partnership and pursue the cooperation on different issues also after the funding period.

#### I m. Use your knowledge and experiences locally, regionally and nationally

Use your experiences and results of the partnership as an opportunity to take part in different kind of events, discussions, seminars and conferences – it will result in new contacts and networks.

#### I n. Start disseminating your Partnership plans as soon as possible

Dissemination is essential for sustainability – it will enable you to obtain interest, support and feedback from persons and organisations outside the partnership as well as from decision makers, colleagues and learners. By involving persons who will not directly take part in the Partnership, you will also secure increased visibility of your organisation in the local community.

## II. Continuity within the partnership

There is a considerable amount of possibilities for continuity within the partnership but most of them concerns the “after-life” and the ones that you can start thinking about during the funding period, concern strategic questions, which we have listed below. For further information about other suggestions for actions after the funding period, please see the tool “Sustainability Kit” on the QAS website.

### Strategies

- a. Agree on a communication strategy for the future. The main aim is to establish a communication on a frequent basis which can be saved.
- b. Develop strategies in the beginning of the project on how to maintain and deepen the contact between the partners.
- c. Choose partners just like you do privately. Don't waste your time on partners if you don't want to cooperate with them for a long time – use your efforts on fruitful relations!
- d. Define your short term and long term aims and goals with the relationships within the partnership.
- e. Do your best to be seen as a competent actor and a partner for future cooperation.
- f. Plan for sustainability of the partnership early in the process – one partner will perhaps fail in being approved, and how will you deal with that?
- g. Decide who in the partnership will be responsible for sustainability after the funding period.
- h. Be generous with your own tools and findings within your Partnership. Your partners will then do the same and you will find a win-win situation that is the beginning of a long stable partnership.
- i. Pay economic issues a thought – sponsoring. Perhaps you will create something, a product that others are prepared to buy.
- j. If you are going into some kind of business together in the future – begin thinking of future economic and juridical relations.
- k. Discuss the possibility to continue into a Multilateral Project or into a Multilateral Network.