

Summary of good tips and hints for a successful Partnership

Conceive your project

Make up a stable multidisciplinary team

Choose a coordinator for the project and a learning team in collaboration with the management of the organisation.

Consult each other to prepare the application

- Check the pertinence of your objectives
- Plan and organise the activities by encouraging the participation of learners.
- Try to agree on the acquired skills' modes
- Define the common production that you want to achieve
- Anticipate the evaluation modes of the project, its impact and its promotion
- Organize the monitoring of the project (financing, co-financing)

Elaborate a clear and coherent Working Plan

- Set a realistic schedule for the project
- Share tasks between partners
- Conceive the follow-up tool
- Plan mobility activities and information meetings
- Choose means of communication with partners, identification of the linguistic skills, appreciation of technique equipments and choice of communication channels (mail, fax, e-mails, and video-conference)

Launch your project

Communicate on your project:

- Inform your colleagues of your organisation (also the administrative and financial team).
- Inform the learners about their expected involvement
- Inform the learner's parents about the learning objectives of the European project; obtain their agreement for the mobility.

Involve the local community and other potential actors in the project

- An opportunity to create links with local community partners.
- Let them define evaluation indicators of the project
- Let them set the cultural and linguistic preparation for learners

(Extract from the guide : « Monter un projet européen en lycée professionnel, guide pratique, SCEREN »)

During the project

Sometimes unexpected problems happen during your project:

Withdrawal of a partner or a person

Despite the fact that only three partners are required to form a European Partnership, it is recommended to launch a project with 4 or 5 partners in case of withdrawal from a partner or a refusal from the NAs.

Confusion in the sharing of tasks

It is decisive that each organization involved in the project, knows its own tasks. Be sure that your partners are aware of the working-time necessary to achieve the project.

Lack of time

Sometimes the objectives are too ambitious and you will not have the opportunity to accomplish it. It's important that each partner agree on concrete objectives to realize. However, it's also necessary to have a sufficient room for maneuver in order to adapt your objectives during your project. You should evaluate the financial and human resources of your partners which could be different from yours.

Cultural differences

When you work with colleagues from different countries, you should take the cultural context in account. Remember that each country can have its own working method, specific rights and obligations. The added-value of your project (the European dimension) is due to the combination of different practices/cultures/methods/values...

Problems of languages and communication

It's decisive to check that every partner can use a common language. It's not recommended to ask for a translator because it's a loss of time and it doesn't enable direct communication. One mean to succeed is to communicate regularly with your partner. Try to fix some rules for communication (like e.g. one e-mail per week). The best means of communication is the e-mail because it's efficient, fast and economical. If you partner does not have an easy access to internet, try to find another alternative.

Differences in the annual schedule

Sometimes there are high disparities between the schedules of each partner (vacation of trainers and learners in organization). You should try to anticipate those differences.

Lack of support from your own organization

When you launch an initiative like a Comenius or Grundtvig Partnership, be sure that your management supports it.

Unexpected problems

If you've got any problems, don't hesitate to contact your NA.

Dissemination of the project

If you have planned to realize a book/CD ROM/DVD/website which contains some pictures of the learners and the trainers, don't forget to ask them for their authorization to publish it. Try to get more information of the copyrights legislation in your own country.

(Extract from the "Guide Comenius 1")

Evaluate your project

Transnational evaluation

It's important to make sure that any transnational evaluation looks at the added value of the transnational Partnership, rather than just at the management of the Partnership. Participant observation is one method, which could be used to gather data for evaluation of the transnational elements of the project. Transnational evaluations are often constrained by budget. You may also have the problem of the different partners having different agendas and expectations. You will therefore need to produce objectives that are realistic and achievable. In large transnational Partnerships, the partners forming small working groups who each report to the transnational evaluator might facilitate the evaluation.

Partnership working evaluation

You need to set objectives and indicators to evaluate the work of the Partnership. Think about what the Partnership is supposed to achieve and how it can improve on what went on before.

Evaluating a partnership event

One way of doing this is to determine expectations before the event and check whether these have been met after the event. This can be achieved by a phone call to a sample of participants prior to the event to find out their expectations and after the event to find out if those expectations were met and what they got out of the event.

Evaluating innovation and multiplier effect

A project needs to devise a realistic time-frame which takes account of budget constraints and prioritize the evaluation of activities accordingly. Evaluation should focus on the innovative elements of the project, and the development resulting in significant changes to the project.

Self evaluation and external evaluation should complement each other

Their roles within the overall evaluation framework should be clearly defined to avoid duplication and consequent waste of resources.

Exit strategy

Evaluation should be a part of your exit strategy. Your evaluation will add weight to your claim about your project input and will give insights into why your project achieved (or did not achieve) those outputs. This information will be useful in security follow-on funding. one or more beneficiaries who could help to determine the evaluation process.

Involvement of beneficiaries in the evaluation process

Beneficiaries can be more appropriately involved in some parts of the evaluation than others. One or more beneficiaries could act as an evaluator as a part of their training. The project steering group could involve one or more beneficiaries who could help to determine the evaluation process.

Soft outcomes

It is important to try and include in your evaluation some way of determining these more subtle outcomes. Proposed methods include the use of before and after measures, reflective staff diaries, tutor observations, beneficiary self assessment, profile/case studies etc.

Continual feed-back loop

Apart from a formal formative evaluation, you will be continually gathering evidence about how well the project is working whilst it is being delivered e.g. course evaluation sheets, attendance and informal feed-back. This information should be fed-back into the project to make adjustments to the project when necessary.

Evaluator's Diary

Evaluators could keep a diary to locate themselves in the project and to evaluate the data they are collecting. The diary can be a useful tool to detect any emerging patterns.

Fly on the wall

Some projects (with permission of the staff and beneficiaries) use videos to record particular sessions. This can provide useful data for the evaluator.

Participant evaluation

One project reported using observation of web site interaction to gather data about their project. The "invisibility" of the observer in this instance overcomes any potential problems with the participant's behaviors being affected.

Participant feed-back

It is important that participants do see the results of any feed-back they give and know that their views and opinions are being acted upon.

(extract from Evaluation Guidance Note for Leonardo Projects: Important tips for evaluation)

Some pieces of advice from project developers

- ◆ Try to be like water, it always takes the form of the vessel that it is poured into, but at the same time always remains water. I.e. be open-minded and flexible, but never forget your own vision of the project.
- ◆ If you have the idea of doing your project with Grundtvig/Comenius, it is the best if you find a partner by yourself! It's good to start an intercultural project where you can travel abroad and learn about countries and have new interesting contacts for your institution.
- ◆ Some keywords: broaden the minds toward cooperation. Review constantly the products obtained as a key to future improvement and quality results. Establish common ways to get information on all the projects thematically linked throughout Europe.
- ◆ To have the knowledge of European citizenship and to have the enthusiasm of team work.
- ◆ For us we found it very helpful that we are members of a European network, the EEC (European Contact group). Here we found partners and also experienced project leaders who have helped us a lot.
- ◆ Idea from a tutorial company; get in contact with an organization that already works with Grundvig /Comenius, take profit of their experiences, let them help you (conception of idea, better understanding of your basic idea) and then look for ideal partners that work in the same area and help to deepen the idea.
- ◆ You should try to start it by contacting your twin cities in the first instance; this is how we start AXLE and it was very successful as it involves the authorities. This might also provide your Partnership with some extra funding for social activities which are important elements in Partnership.
- ◆ In the first meeting it is important to make a "common code" language in order to communicate effectively, for the sake of the program. If you find out that you can't communicate effectively, you have a serious problem which will be tiring and time consuming. So build your own "code".
- ◆ To start a Partnership is to feel and recognize that the cultural diversity is a unique chance of richness in a reciprocal way and to strengthen a fabulous idea to an activity which has a local impact on the civic society.

(These pieces of advice have been recorded from the 3rd Grundtvig partnership Conference, October 2004, The Netherlands, project developer ideas).