



Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus+: Support for Policy Reform and Online Linguistic Support

EMREX Partnership

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Approval of the 2nd Progress Report

Dear Mr Koski,

I am pleased to inform you that the 2nd Progress Report for the above mentioned project has been accepted.

Approval does not concern reported expenses, which will be checked at the final report stage.


Enclosed you will find the Agency's comments and recommendations following this assessment. Please use them as guidelines for the implementation of your project as they will be taken into account when assessing the Final Report of your project.

Please note that the Erasmus+ logo, recognition of Community funding and official disclaimer should be included in all project products and outcomes, including the different project websites. Failure to add these elements could result in the Agency being unable to accept the results of the project at Final Report stage and have an impact on the payment of the last instalment of your project's EU Grant.

The Erasmus+ logo and a translation of the funding disclaimer in the official EU languages can be found on the following website: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/logos_en.htm.

Please do not hesitate to contact Erik Ballhausen should you have any further enquiries.

Yours sincerely,



P/ Mónica HOLIK
Head of Unit

Annex: Agency's Comments and Recommendations

Contact: Erik Ballhausen (erik.ballhausen@ec.europa.eu – Tel.: 00/32/2/299 17 30)

Erasmus+ KA3 Policy Experimentations 2nd Progress Report

Contract: 2014-3656
Project number: 388499-EPP-1-2014-2-FI-EPPKA3-PI-POLICY

Project title:
Field Trial on the Impact of Enabling Easy Mobility on
Recognition of External Studies - EMREX

1. Relevance of the proposal

	Score /20
<p><i>Have there already been any valuable results/products achieved at Progress Report stage in relation to the European/national priorities? Is there evidence of the public authorities' involvement in the evaluation of policy impact? Have the project's activities been in accordance with its aims and objectives as declared in the original application or as officially amended?</i></p>	18
<p>EMREX develops a solution for the electronic transfer of student records between higher education institutions in Europe. As the project has progressed substantially it now becomes clear that the full potential of the project is unfolding. In all participating countries the National Contact Points have been established successfully and are fully operational at the envisaged technical level, bar in Denmark where delays have occurred.</p> <p>This again confirms that the EMERX approach and tools can make a significant contribution in automatic recognition of mobility student data between member states. This will thus have a positive impact on the <i>Bologna Process</i> and its ET 2020 target of assuring that 20% of students within the European Higher Education Area should be mobile. In this respect, the aim of the project to provide qualitative and reliable information about student mobility records and their automated recognition of learning outcomes is highly relevant. More particularly, building on the Lisbon Recognition Convention, EMREX is in fact directly contributing to the <i>Yerevan Communiqué</i> for higher education in the EHEA, which calls for the automaton of recognition by 2020.</p> <p>Collaborating closely with the National Recognition bodies, the National Agencies and the NARIC network - of which some in fact are part of the partnership or function as associated partners, will assure that the proposed EMREX approach and suite of tools will be compliant with the <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance</i> in the European Higher Education Area. Being consistent with these standards guarantees that there is a coherent realisation of EMREX in the entire partnership and possibly beyond.</p>	

2. Quality of the project design and implementation

	Score /30
<p>Experimentation methodology and protocol <i>Has the experimentation method including the evaluation strategy been clearly defined and put in place? Are the field trials addressing specific groups, specific contexts or geographic areas? Have all key actors (public authorities, researchers, target groups) been involved in the experimentation? If there have been changes in the protocol, have they been addressed correctly? Have the public authorities acted actively to contribute to reach the stakeholders and target groups? How well has the project's strategy for evaluation/quality measures been implemented so far?</i></p> <p>Project and financial management <i>Have the planned activities been implemented in accordance with the project's work plan as declared in the original application, or as officially amended, and have any variations been adequately justified? Are the expenditures made so far appropriate and in line with the approved Work Plan? Are the expenditures made so far appropriate with the project's activities as described in the Interim Report? Are the expenditures made so far in line with the level of project's implementation ('best value for money' principle, i.e. the best price-quality ratio)?</i></p>	20
<p>EMREX has proven the validity of its experimentation method and the results obtained so far. The evidence of the systems effectiveness, for instance, has led to Norway's Ministry of Education decision to implement EMREX nationwide. This was further confirmed by the very positive response at the NARIC meeting in Brussels in the autumn of 2016, where a lot of centres present showed further interest to participate in one way or another.</p> <p>It is encouraging to see that some EMREX partners after their hands-on experiences wish not only to broaden the implementation (by up-scaling it) but want to further develop the system to automate and to cover possible areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National (internal) mobility• Extension to the admission process• Evaluation of credentials• Employer achievements• Non-formal and informal learning outcomes/results <p>Given the willingness of several partners for future developments it is important that the coordinator, nevertheless, makes sure that the current project is implemented as is foreseen. New activities should be undertaken in a future project and partners which are currently delayed have to be supported to guarantee that all partners will produce to equal quality the foreseen results. This is in particular the case for Denmark, which at the time of reporting had not undertaken the field trials yet.</p> <p>In this respect it is important for the final reporting for the Agency but also for the project's public and stakeholders to indicate the potential future policy relevance of the project findings, showcasing the contribution it will have made to the automation of the recognition process, the scientific trial methodology applied and the evaluation measures undertaken.</p> <p>As part of the report some minor implementation changes are being reported, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project has managed to complete the target with less work load;• Hourly costs per person is lower than expected for some staff• Travelling costs and conference have increased due to many invitations• The Polish partner did not need outsourced staff but was able to use internal staff instead• Denmark required/requires more consultant work to be able to integrate the National Contact	

Point with their local STADS system.

The coordinator estimates that this will lead to an amount of 50-100.000€ of underspending. This was discussed by the partnership and the following proposal to redistribute the surplus is being presented:

- Further integration of EMREX into the Usos system in Warsaw;
- Add two additional national dissemination events in Poland and in Italy;
- Add an extra final EMREX Seminar in Nov-Dec 2017 in Italy
- Enhance the cooperation with FAIR;
- Try to involve new HEIs to join the EMREX network;
- Add extra travel expenses and hours reserved by the partners for possible more dissemination activities towards the end of 2017 (e.g. a joint event at Online Educa in Berlin).

These changes had been previously discussed with the coordinator at the Brussels NARIC meeting in 2016 and can be accepted. In fact the cooperation with FAIR and the combined seminar at the Online Educa in Berlin have been proposed by the Agency to the coordinator and it is good to see that work on both is advancing. It is also noted that Denmark is allocated extra funding to enable them to integrate their local system into the EMREX platform via their National Contact Point. This needs to be monitored closely to make sure that the Danish field trials can be realised as is to be expected!

3. Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements

	Score /20
<p><i>Is there sufficient evidence that the partnership is working effectively? Are there clear evidence of a real and effective involvement of the partners and staff? Are there significant changes in the partnership compared to the application? If so, have these changes had any impact on the partnership and the implementation of the project? Is the project well-coordinated overall? Have the working tools and communication methods used by the consortium members allowed coordinating effectively the arrangements? To what extent were appropriate decisions made to support effective implementation and problem resolution? Have any deviations/changes been satisfactorily justified?</i></p>	16
<p>The project seems to have well progressed. Past difficulties in Poland and Italy in particular seem to have been overcome and both countries are now even ready to further develop EMREX in their countries. The fact that both partners want to organise each a special dissemination event towards the end of the project is an indicator of success in itself. This is of particular importance for the project as in the beginning the implementation in the northern partner countries seemed less problematic and it looked as if Poland and Italy had blocking issues substantially hindering a correct implementation. This positive turn-around is welcomed, as it will support the modernisation efforts in both countries and can serve as good practise examples.</p> <p>However, one problem has been identified which is the Danish delay in the field trial realisation. This needs to be monitored closely, especially as extra resources and funds are being made available to the Danish partner so that they can catch up. It needs to be assured that the Danish will deliver as is foreseen in the application!</p> <p>Generally, it is also noted that the report describes the continued difficulties encountered when trying to secure the involvement of students actually using the system (transferring their data successfully). It also seems problematic keeping them involved and finalising the survey after they have taken part in the student trials. This needs to be addressed in the reporting on the findings and included amongst the project recommendations.</p>	

4. Impact, dissemination and sustainability

	Score /30
<p><i>Could the initial results led to a potential systemic impact on systems and policies? How does the project develop communication, visibility, and the dissemination of its activities and results as outlined in the original application? With reference to the original application, to what extent have the target groups been reached and involved in the exploitation of the project activities/results during the project up to date? Is the project's website attractive, user friendly and of good quality? Has a project proposed a strategy for a long-term monitoring beyond the end of project and a possibility for a peer-learning and contribution to the TE2020 and EU youth Strategy</i></p>	25
<p>The visibility of the project is both outstanding and exemplary! As the project comes to a close the dissemination effort should be kept up and indeed the extra events mentioned in the report (two extra events, one each in Italy and Poland) and the combined event at Berlin Online Educa perfectly underpin that effort and can be accepted.</p> <p>Especially in the final stages of the project it is important that all project outcomes and, where appropriate, the findings of the trails and their evaluations are made publicly available on the project website, as much as possible on an ongoing basis with each partner contributing.</p> <p>In order to be policy-relevant, research and project findings must be disseminated as quickly as possible, using websites, newsletters, networks and thematic reports. The partnership has been successful with high level, policy-oriented briefings and it is hoped that similar events will take place in the final stages of the project.</p> <p>The project being in its final stage it might be useful that the target audiences are identified for each partner country so that dedicated and/or specific mailings can be directed to specific and project relevant policy, academic and media audiences in each partner country.</p>	

Is the visual identity of the ERASMUS+ program appropriately used and displayed (logo and disclaimer)?	Yes
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Overall evaluation

<p>Strong points</p>
<p>The EMREX project clearly demonstrates that it contributes concretely in the automation of recognition in mobility. It supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier & faster administration • Less Paper (modernised approach) • Higher recognition rates for studies abroad • More transparent mobility • Better service for students • Better quality of available information (about students records) • More efficiency in individual file treatment

It is very important that it is being confirmed that EMREX is a technically very flexible solution, which is proven by the fact that very few institutions had problems arranging the realisation of their individual plug-ins into the EMREX platform. This is an important prerequisite for the chosen bottom-up approach allowing each institution relatively easy access.

The technical support and user materials are state of the art again an important element for success. Likewise, all software in use is open source, hence freely available and can be developed and used to individual purpose, but also allows for co-creation in an easy way. Clearly this is an added value of the proposed system.

Weak points

Unfortunately some set-backs have occurred:

- The field trial in Denmark has been delayed considerably. This needs to be closely monitored.
- It is expected that all partners contribute equally to the final findings and that the results, outcomes and products are in line with what is foreseen in the application (and any subsequent amendment).
- As the finding participating sending and hosting HEIs which declare an interest to participate in has been underestimated by the partnership the participation of students' remains difficult and low. Given that their participation is vital for the further development of the EMREX project, the partnership should pay special attention to this aspect and reflect (in detail) how this is to be managed in the future. In this respect the Norwegian decision to implement EMREX nationally can be of interest – maybe a top-down implementation is required and/or beneficial (at least in some countries)?

Challenges and Recommendations

The report states unequivocally, that "no major obstacles found so far, just normal project activities and challenges". It is therefore assumed that the problems as identified above will be addressed by the partnership. It is assumed that the partnership will:

- Assure that the data sets will be collected and analysed as is foreseen in application. That these sets will be coherent and of the quantity & quality as is to be expected.

The project will be in a good position to make meaningful recommendations and here topics of particular interest could be:

- The intended and unintended consequences of policy experimentation in higher education;
- The advantages and potentials of European transnational cooperation in order to foster a Europe dimension in the EHEA (in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme);
- The impact of National & EU policies as experienced by the project in its specific area/sector of activity (pros & cons);

- The special requirements of automated recognition;
- The multi-dimensional aspects of policy experimentation in a project addressing automated recognition in Europe. The dynamics and influences on decisions concerning automation & recognition policies and their implementation in higher education;
- The advantages of specificities of the EMREX approach (high flexibility, open source and bottom-up).

Interim Report Summary scoring	
Criterion	Score (points)
1. Relevance of the project	18/ 20
2. Quality of the project design and implementation	20/ 30
3. Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements	16/ 20
4. Impact, dissemination and sustainability	27/ 30
Total	80/ 100