

EUE-Net
134546-LLP-1-2007-1-RO-ERASMUS-ENW
External evaluation

The present document aims at contributing to the work of the European University Enterprise Network (EUE - NET), supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme. It is produced on the request of the Network.

In accordance with the project's management and quality scheme, the external evaluation of EUE-Net takes place in the final phase of the project's eligibility period (1 Oct 2007 – 30 Sept 2010). In order to do so, I was kindly invited to attend the final workshop of the project, held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 7-9 September 2010. On that occasion, I could sense the warm atmosphere within the group and I had an overview of the network's main achievements and objectives for the future.

The following aspects of the project were taken into consideration as key components of the external evaluation:

1. Coherence between the set objectives, initial work programme, activities achieved and final outputs
2. Quality control of final outputs / achievements for each Work Package
3. Conclusions and final recommendations regarding the project's impact

Through a systematic analysis, achievements, coherence between the initial objectives and final output and project management will be covered in order to issue recommendations to the project management group and possibly partners.

The following comments are mainly based on the information available on the project's website (information available to public and documents with a restricted access to project partners). As an extensive source of information, the website provides a comprehensive overview of the project's activities and outcomes. For some aspects of the project (e. g. dissemination, exploitation, partners involvement and project management), more detailed information is delivered in the "confidential part" of the Final Report. Therefore, the latter part of the activity report was also subject to external evaluation.

1. Coherence between the set objectives, initial work programme, activities achieved and final outputs

The overall structure of the work programme and the parallel structure of each work package allow a systematic evaluation of the coherence between the objectives, the activities and achievements.

The common thread of each work package is divided into:

- 1- Activity planning
- 2- Analysis of existing practices
- 3- Proposal of a new scheme of action
- 4- Put into practice / pilot projects
- 5- Set up of guidelines
- 6- Roadmap for implementation

Generally speaking, EUE-Net implemented the activities according to the initial work and the set objectives.

The distribution of activities, both per topic and per group of partners, into 7 Work packages (including 4 vertical sub-networks and 3 operational work packages), has proven to be relevant in order to complete the various tasks and objectives.

As initially planned in the application, the project managed to cover the various aspects of the University – Enterprise cooperation and to complete the primary objective: to assemble and to coordinate the efforts towards a better collaboration between universities and enterprises at European level, to disseminate cooperation models and to promote best practices of collaboration in Europe.

With a high participation rate from the partners (keeping the partners active is usually one of the main challenge faced by network coordinators), the projects succeeded in building up and maintaining a paneuropean network. The ambitious goal of reaching not only the students, learners and academic but also professionals, entrepreneurs and managers was generally achieved. All outputs were analysed one by one below.

2. Quality control of final outputs / achievements for each work package

In accordance with the European Commission's rules, all the outputs include the reference to the European Community funding and the Socrates Logo.

General recommendation: Despite the very clear presentation of work packages (and coordinating institutions for each WP), outputs and project events / meetings, it is recommended to add a clear listing of partners involved in each working groups. Such a list would be a value added to the project's achievements and an appropriate way to demonstrate the relevance of the partnership. In addition, please note that this partners list is indicated as a "quality indicator" in each WP tasks (in the application).

Follow-up: List of partners have been added for each workpackage except the "transversal" workpackages WP5...WP7 which involved all partners.

WP1: Quality of Student Placement Sub-Net

Output O1: EUE-Net official guidelines on Practical placement in Europe

This first sub-network tackled the lack of structures for transnational practical placements because of the inexistence of real mediation between the sending university and the receiving enterprises. In accordance with the work programme, the first project's workshop in February 2008 focused on "Quality Control of Students Practical Placement in Enterprises". Minutes of the workshop are available on the project's website.

The Guidelines on Practical placement in Europe delivered by WP1 fulfil the initial objectives as, starting from an analysis of existing practices, the Guidelines provide a "code of practice" for the different stakeholders and establish a model for quality control in transnational placements.

In addition to the "EUE-Net Official Guidelines on Practical Placement of Students in Europe", a synthesis document on Practical of Students in Europe, also called "EUE-Net proposal for Quality of Student Placements in Europe" is also available on the website under "Best practices". By doing so, the project succeeded in delivering all the results initially foreseen for this Work Package.

- Strong points:

The question of students' practical placement in enterprises as part of their curricula was raised and analysed by EUI-Net project through the identification and analysis of generic and specific competences for practical stages, according to the Tuning methodology.

WP1 activities and achievements are in direct line with the extensive work that had been done in the frame of EUI-Net and managed to bring the reflexion and results to a further level.

The series of documents produced under "A classification of Student Placements organisational models" (see spelling mistake) provides an excellent overview of the practices in most of the countries (16 in total) represented in the Network.

This Sub-Net has proven to be sustainable with the creation of the Q-PlaNet project (142308-LLP-1-2008-1-DE-ERASMUS-ECUE) for the detailed development of the Quality Standards for student placements and the model of Quality Reference Centres.

- Weak points and recommendations

From a formal point of view and for consistency purposes, the entry to Workpackage 1 on the website requires small corrections:

- in the headline we read: "~~Work-packages~~ → ~~Work-packages~~ Work-package 1: Quality of Student Placement Sub-Net". The term "~~Work-packages~~" can be removed once.

Follow-up: The error have been corrected

For that particular WP, a clear mention to:

1. The heritage from EUI-Net in the field of Students Practical Placement
2. Q-PlaNet project

is recommended in the final report. EUE-Net built a very valuable structure in terms of quality control of transnational practical placements. On one hand, this achievement was allowed by a 'state of affairs' achieved under EUI-Net, on the other hand, this structure allowed Q-PlaNet to further develop a transnational frame to set up quality standards for practical placements in enterprises (curricula development, assessment and recognition of placements, contact to enterprises, quality control, student exchange programmes synergies).

Follow-up: Following this recommendation the Final Report include a dedicated chapter "EUE-Net roots and synergies" that describes in detail the recommended issues. A link dedicated to this aspect was also added on the website

WP2: Career Development offices Sub-Net

Output O2: EUE-Net CDO Sub-Network and European unified employment database

WP2 played an important role in the project's achievements as the Career Development centres are crucial in putting the students in direct contact with enterprises.

The workshop in Nicosia (April 2009) kicked off the discussions that led to the creation of a distinct network (CDOnet), still in the framework of EUE-Net, and a distinct series of events called Career Conventions and a distinct website: www.cdonet.eu.

The first general assembly of CDOnet took place in Vienna, Austria from April 15th to 18th 2010. The Convention Proceedings are available online.

- Strong points:

WP2 activities and partnership have proven to be very relevant and WP2 itself a forum where discussions identified the lack of a European dimension and interactions between career development offices. The fact that CDOnet turned into a distinct network, with its own events and dissemination tools, under the status of an association, is definitely a plus to EUE-Net.

Sustainability of CDOnet seems to be ensured given that the next Career Convention is planned in May 2011 in Reykjavik, beyond the contractual period of EUE-Net and therefore without co-founding from the Commission.

- Weak points and recommendations

The links to the “Database for graduates” and “Database for available jobs in enterprises” seem to lead to the same database entitled “Questionnaire for Graduates”. Shouldn’t there be a distinction?

Follow-up: It was a regrettable error that has been corrected

The initial work programme mentions the creation of “EUE-Net Guidelines for the development of a European database for employment: requirements, technical specifications, protection of personal data etc”. This document doesn’t seem to be available online yet or is not clearly identifiable. This issue requires clarification.

Under Output 2, the hyperlink “Conference proceedings” (from the Conference in Vienna, April 2010) doesn’t seem to be activated.

Follow-up: The document “EUE-Net Guidelines for the development of a European database for employment” was missing and has been added to the project website.

The Conference proceedings link has been activated

WP3: Entrepreneurship teaching and learning Sub-Net

Output O3: Report on “Teaching and learning Entrepreneurship in Europe as a general competence”

Activities and results of WP3 were achieved successfully.

- Strong points:

As initially planned, the activities of WP3 included a research about University – Enterprise partnership in training entrepreneurship was conducted and presented in a comprehensive synthesis, available online under the “Tuning” section. The Tuning methodology was applied and fully respected. Tuning questionnaires are available on the website, as well as the EUE-Net Tuning publication.

The added value of the research around entrepreneurial competences under EUE-Net is very well described as “the entrepreneurial competences were included neither in the original TUNING researches, nor in the above mentioned EUI-Net researches”. Through this research, EUE-Net brings a new aspect to overall Tuning methodology.

WP4: Entrepreneurial mobility Sub-net

Some discussions around the achievements and challenges faced in the frame of this WP took place during the General Conference in Vienna (April 2010) and the final workshop in Istanbul (September 2010).

Output O4: Workshop on “Entrepreneurship mobility” conclusions

As a result of the so called “Entrepreneurship mobility”, 3 flows took place in the frame of the project:

- the 3-month practical placement of a student in Italy as a follow-up of the visit undertaken by an Italian entrepreneur in the coordinating university, Romania
- the 3-day visit of an entrepreneur (member of JEUNE association) in Vienna
- the 3-day visit of a young Greek entrepreneur in a German University.

- Strong points:

The activities run under WP4 are coherent with some of the activities initiated under EUI-Net (e.g. the first mobility flow that led to the mobility of a student through an experimental 3-month practical placement (split into 2 phases in 2008).

Partners involved in WP4 managed to identify consistent challenges faced within the U-E cooperation, especially as regards the cooperation between the academic world and the SMEs, and to draw conclusions out of 3 mobility experiences. Through these experiences and within the frame of activities allowed by the Erasmus programme (Networks), the project has touched some of the priorities of the Commission, translated into 2 programmes: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and ERASMUS for enterprises – involving business in higher education.

The 3 “entrepreneurship mobility” flows involved a good variety of countries.

- Weak points and recommendations

Unfortunately the last two “mobility flows”, were planned only in the last year and thus a possible student placement follow up was not identified. The reasons were however developed: no specific business expansion was identified, especially given the fact that SMEs and microenterprises were the first victims of the economic crisis.

In that respect, the Output 4 ~~couldn't be~~ although fully achieved, was influenced negatively by the crisis aspect.

According the initial workprogramme, the organization of the entrepreneurs mobility would be done through the publication on the website of a “call for application”. The information delivered under Output 4 doesn't provide any details regarding the interest for such experimental mobility and the selection process. Given the impact of the conclusions drawn by WP4, additional information regarding the both the necessity and the interest related to entrepreneurs mobility may be included. The involvement of JEUNE had a key role in the activities of the WP.

Follow-up: The initial interest expressed by the entrepreneurs represented by JEUNE was initially high but following the change of contact person in JEUNE (Rosa Solanes left and the activities have been transferred to another person) the communication with the JEUNE community has had many difficulties. Moreover, it has been noticed that the application procedure made available within EUE-Net was considered by the entrepreneurs difficult to understand and therefore was rather slowed down the process than helping it. In this context, the entrepreneurs to be involved in mobility flows have been selected based on the principle “first arrived – first approved”. This explanation is added into the Final report as well

Output O5: Guidelines for a European Programme of Entrepreneur's mobility within Universities

The Guidelines regarding the transnational mobility of entrepreneurs are available online.

The document mainly describes how 3 entrepreneurship mobility pilot projects will be conducted during the last contractual year of activities of EUE-Net. This experimental programme is open to EUE-net academic members and entrepreneurs associations (e.g. JEUNE) and consists in a short visit of an entrepreneur in a university that can be eventually followed by a 2-3 month student practice in the enterprise in case a common interest business opportunity identified.

- Strong points:

The involvement of professional associations at that stage of the project is a key element.

The document presented as “A model for a PEP project” is interesting, in particular as it provides practical details as timetables and a budget dimension.

- Weak points and recommendations

The guidelines are not very elaborated. The document available online is still indicated as "draft" version. At this stage, a final version should be available.

Follow-up: The guidelines have been enriched and the final version was posted online.

A spelling mistake was identified in the document first page, in the title itself: « EUE-Net Guidelines for a Programme of mobility involving Entrepreneurs ».

Follow-up: The error was corrected

According to the information available on the website, only one PEP project was reported. According to the minutes of the General Conference in Vienna (April 2010), the pilot projects were planned to take place during the third week on May 2010. Were the other 2 experimental projects actually run? If yes, further information should be provided and conclusions from this experiment should be presented.

Under the "Best Practice" section, the document called "An EUE-Net innovative mobility scheme for entrepreneurs towards the academic world" links to a "JEUNE NEWSLETTER" produced under EUI-Net and reporting a mobility activity that took place in 2006-2007. Without any further explanation or update, this document doesn't show a real relevance to EUE-Net activities.

Follow-up: Following the completion of the three mobility flows, the document has been revised and enriched and is now in the final version.

An explanatory document has been also introduced at the link under the Best practice which brings as well further clarifications on the entire

WP5: Dissemination and exploitation of results
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Output O6: Conference proceedings

Generally speaking, all the project meetings minutes are available online, together with the presentations, list of participants and photos taken during the events.

In total, 5 meetings (2 workshops, 2 EUE-Net conferences and 1 General Assembly + the Career Convention combined with the General Assembly) were organised among the project's achievements.

- Strong points:

The project's events and meetings are clearly presented in a separated item on the website homepage. This is a good management decision as it allows to gather easily all documents related to meetings.

The fact that the participants are clearly listed for each meeting or event is a good point.

- Weak points and recommendations

The "minutes" of the meeting in Nicosia actually link to the minutes of the Brasov workshop. Still regarding the Nicosia Conference, the link to the "Proceedings" does not seem to work.

Follow-up: The error has been corrected

Output O7: Project website

EUE-Net website is fast, user friendly, homogeneous, clear and contains a great deal of useful information in an accessible form. All facets of the project are covered: background, objectives, partners, work packages, meetings, outcomes, news... All outputs are available online, which is a particular strength of the website.

- Strong points:

The website has apparently been set up at an early stage of the project, and, as consequence, it has been used an efficient communication tool, not only internally, mostly as a management tool between the coordinating team and the partners, but also externally, as a dissemination and information vehicle. The “documents” section of the website, including the project’s application, contract and amendment accessible only by the partners is a useful tool in terms of partnership management.

- Recommendations

Some recommendations were already above (draft documents to be replaced by final version, a few links lead to documents uploaded in the wrong place).

It is recommended not to forget to mention the user name and password to access the restricted area in the Final Report.

Follow-up: The authentication info is included in the Final Report

Output O8: Newsletters

7 newsletters were published during the project duration.

As foreseen in the initial work programme, newsletters provide information about past and upcoming events and main developments in the WP.

- Strong points:

The layout of the newsletters, including hyperlinks in coherence with the structure of website itself, is an efficient way to promote the website itself and make the partners and visitors used to the website structure.

- Recommendations

It is not very clear what is the target group of the newsletters. Are they only designed for the benefit of the partners?

It would be interesting to provide in the Final Report some information regarding the number of receivers of the newsletters.

Follow-up: Relevant information has now been included in the Final Report

WP6: Network expansion and sustainability

The main achievements in terms of expansion and exploitation are described in a distinct section on the website, at three different levels: “multiplication”, “mainstreaming” and “national impact”. EUE-Net activities were presented in a series of events in several countries.

In terms of direct national impact, the main result of EUE-Net is a strategic project in Romania funded by Structural Funds to be implemented between 2010-2013, for national and transnational placement of Romanian students.

As mentioned in the work programme, the network also expanded in terms of number partners and 3 new partners (from CY, FR and IT) joined EUE-Net during the contractual period.

Output O9: EUE-Net Agenda 2010-2013

A comprehensive document covering the different aspects of the project (university – enterprise cooperation context, sub-net 1, 2 and entrepreneurship) was produced and published on the website. EUE-Net Agenda 2010-2013 draws the need for the further developments in the various areas and for a permanent structure and infrastructure at European level to implement the activities undertaken and the guidelines designed in the framework of EUE-Net.

In line with the agenda 2010-2013, a “White Paper of EUE-Net - University Enterprise Network for cooperation and dialogue was also produced and published”.

As anticipated in the initial work programme, the question of the life of the network beyond European funding was discussed at a late stage of the project, during the final workshop in Istanbul (September 2010).

- Strong points:

In terms of expansion, EUE-Net has a set an umbrella for university – enterprise cooperation under which a number of projects were initiated between 2007 and 2010. In addition to the Q-PlaNet and CDONet projects, other actions were undertaken (CAREER-EUshop, LLA involving several of the EUE-Net partners).

Sustainability of the network activities and partnership appears to be well handled as the next annual EUE-Net conference is planned to take place in Reykjavik in May 2011, without any co-funding from the European Commission.

The sub-network CDONet will equally still be alive beyond the project’s contractual period as a general assembly will also take place in combination with the EUE-Net annual conference, as stated on the CDONet website itself.

- Recommendations

Under the “Exploitation” section → National impact, CAREER-EUshop was listed twice.

Follow-up: The error was corrected

Additional comments regarding Dissemination and Exploitation, on basis on the Final report:

General comment: Although the general project’s achievements regarding dissemination and exploitation are covered, this section might be a little under-developed and can be improved. The information available on the website shows more strength of the project in terms of dissemination and exploitation.

- Recommendations

A clear mention of the “child” projects is an important aspect. The fact that independent business plans and IPR arrangements were set up is certainly to be mentioned. This is however only one aspect of the “filiation”. The sub-networks clearly contributed in carrying EUE-Net values and achievements, generally speaking.

Follow-up: In the Final report, the exploitation description was developed on three threads – along the main S-Net’s of the project

Although it’s a good thing to indicate that all EUE-Net documents are made available to the public and that some documents are accessible only to the partners, I would suggest to mention the “restricted area” (including the username and password) under the partnership management (7.3) as it is a clear management tool.

Follow-up: The restricted area and authentication information has been included

WP7: Project management and evaluation
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Output O10: Quality Procedures set

The project’s quality management is based a strong and comprehensive quality plan called

“Quality Procedures and Templates”, available online.

A Quality Manager is responsible for the administration of the Quality Plan and can advise the Project coordinator.

- Strong points:

The management team benefit from the experience of the previous 3-year project (EUI-Net). The coordinating institution ensures a smooth management of the administrative and financial aspects of the project, as well as a good collaboration amongst the network’s partners.

Project’s administrative questions were discussed with partners during every partner meetings.

- Recommendations

The document “Quality Procedures and Templates” is accessible from 2 places on the website (under Output N. 10) and under the “Quality and monitoring” section. The document downloadable from the “Quality and monitoring” section is a working document (in word format), including a mention of EUI-Net (Point 2 in the table of content). Or more consistency, it is recommended to either upload the pdf version also under this section or to include a link to Output N.10.

Follow-up: The error has been corrected

Additional comments regarding project management and partners involvement, on basis on the Final report

The management aspects and internal evaluation mechanisms are well described and, in that respect, the final report demonstrates an improvement compared to the progress report. The list of inactive (or less active) partners shows that the partnership have been well monitored and managed all along the project.

- Recommendations

The distinction between “inner” and “outer” circles is absolutely relevant. Regarding the “outer” circles, rather than limiting the input of the partners towards their region, I would recommend to mention as well their input towards the project, not only by contributing to surveys but also by participating in meeting for instance.

Follow-up: This information has been explicitly provided in the Final Report relevant tables

The tasks distribution and overall achievements per WP is consistent with the activities and output delivered. It appears however that more partners are listed on the website than in the report itself (e.g. 32 partners listed on the website for WP1 and only 8 in the final report). For a matter of consistency, I would suggest to list the partners that were not allocated any specific particular tasks in the WP as general contributors to meetings and debates. The report mentions that “all partners of SNet1, SNet 2, etc”. It would be clearer to re-list the partners with their number, when not listed with particular tasks. Make sure as well that the resources allocated (staff costs) are consistent with the tasks distribution.

Follow-up: This information has been explicitly provided in the Final Report relevant tables

Regarding attendance to the various meetings, make sure that “travel and subsistence” costs are consistent with the partners involved.

Staff involvement

The list of individuals involved in the project, as presented in the Final report, is generally coherent with the activities run under the various WP. The partners that joined the project during the eligibility period are also mentioned (with 07.01.2008 as starting date).

- Recommendations

Some partners are missing (P16, P31...) although they are not listed as “inactive partners” under section 7. Is it still data to be collected?

Follow-up: No. P16 and P31 have been included in the list of passive partners

Output O11: External evaluation report

The present external evaluation takes place in the final phase of the project. A particular section is dedicated to the External Evaluation from the website homepage.

3. Conclusions and final recommendations regarding the project impact

Overall, the activities planned upfront were thoroughly implemented. Through a structured mapping of the current situation, the network managed not only to identify the main existing challenges related to the practical placements of students and the need for a greater cooperation between universities and enterprises but also to propose a viable scheme of action, applicable at local, regional and European levels.

The distribution of activities and responsibilities into 4 vertical work packages (sub-networks) and 3 transversal work packages allowed a smooth implementation of the project’s objectives.

The project delivered all planned outputs, in a package that illustrate an extremely wide scope and a high quality of the work performed within the project. The outputs have in general a very good quality and show a strong collaboration among the partners as well as a large amount of work carried out in trans-national teams. While for WP1 and WP3 the project delivered excellent results (WP3 delivered even additionally – an excellent Tuning book published along the synthesis article initially planned as output of WP3), some weaknesses were pointed out in delivering the products in the frame of WP2. Even so, improvements can be still brought up before the final report submission.

The impact, both in a short-term and long-term perspective, is very well analysed and described. The description in the final report is consistent with the documents and information available on the website (e.g. Agenda 2010-2013, conferences proceedings...).

The presence and presentations of EUE-Net in a number of workshops and conferences is a very strong point in terms of dissemination and sustainability. If it, indeed, demonstrates “that EUE-Net has an important long-term impact”, I would recommend elaborating also a large scale impact and developing that aspect.

EUE-Net benefited from EUI-Net (the previous Erasmus Network) legacy, especially in terms of collaboration between the partners and using some working methodologies experimented in the previous 3-year project (e.g. Tuning methodology). After this other 3-year cycle of activities, the network is established well enough to be remain active beyond the European funding.