

Regional Cluster Meeting Capacity Building in Higher Education projects' impact in the Western Balkans

Conclusions of the Workshop 4 –
CBHE fostering regional cooperation in Western Balkans &
convergence with EU developments in higher education.

Facilitation Questions

Facilitator: Ms. Jehona Lushaku (Coordinator Erasmus+ Office in Kosovo)

1. To what extent has your project contributed to **regional integration / cooperation**?
2. Has there been **inter-institutional agreements or bilateral agreements** signed / to be signed by partner country institutions to promote cooperation in the field of education and / or research, as a result of the cooperation in CBHE Projects?
3. What **levels of synergies** exist between your project and other CBHE Projects?
4. To what extent is your project **aligned with the EU Policy objectives**?

Facilitation Questions

5. How does your project relate to the transparency and convergence tools developed in the context of the Bologna Process (e.g. ECTS, DS, study cycles, EQF, QA, etc.).
6. To what extent does the project contributes to the EU Cooperation & Development Policies?

Discussion topics introduced by Ms. Anila Troshani

7. Is there an interest for double / join degrees in the region?
8. Do you consider Regional Credit Mobility (RCM) as an attractive opportunity for staff and students?

Key Conclusions

Each Coordinator / Representative briefly presented the project.

Q1 Conclusions: Regional integration / cooperation

- Few bridges of collaboration: Previous limited cooperation at education & research levels among WBCs / cooperation among regional HEIs was considered not attractive (compared to partnerships with EU HEIs).
- Prejudices on the work and quality of regional partners (for instance, private or recently established public HEIs in the region).
- Internal rules & regulation, domestic legislation frameworks differences and political decisions challenge a lot the implementation of regional comprehensive initiatives.
- More work on the projects' sustainability can foster and sustain the regional integration / cooperation.

Key Conclusions

Q1 Conclusions: Regional integration / cooperation

- Static EU Models / Vision of the WBCs' People – so what can we learn from each-other is the question?
- In general, CBHE Projects are considered a great opportunity for beneficiary partner institutions to network with other institutions in the region.

Q2 Conclusions: inter-institutional / bilateral agreements

- More intra-institutional / bilateral agreements have been signed; yet not all of them are active or have promoted the regional cooperation in the field of education & research.

Key Conclusions

Q3 Conclusions: Levels of synergies

- There is a relatively high level of synergy among projects since they are in many cases replication of previous initiatives (usually is the same implementing consortium / partners).
- Yet, in terms of currently being implemented projects more efforts are needed to increase the level of synergy among these initiative and contribute more at the capacity building of WBC HEIs.

Q4 Conclusions: Alignment with the EU Policy objectives

- In principal, implemented CBHE projects are in line with the EU Policy objectives; yet new areas and sectors need to be explored through future CBHE Projects.

Q5 Conclusions: Relation to the transparency and convergence tools

- Many of the CBHE projects implemented are inspired by the transparency and convergence tools developed in the context of the Bologna Process (e-VIVA for instance – EQF).

Key Conclusions

Q6 Conclusions: Contribution to the EU Cooperation & Development Policies

- Many projects contribute to the EU Cooperation & Development Policies; yet due to many challenges in the implementation of regional comprehensive initiatives make national CBHE projects an attractive option.

Q7 Conclusions: Double / Join Degrees

- In principle, join-degrees can be somehow attractive; yet, administratively are a ‘nightmare’.
- No automatic degree recognition practices in WBCs so the process becomes even more challenging.
- A complex support system needed; outsourcing as well. Yet, there is a lot of work & challenges to cope with.

Key Conclusions

Q8 Conclusions: Regional Credit Mobility (RCM)

- With or without Erasmus+ ICM Program, there are a lot of regional mobilities.
- In principle, there are always challenges working with mobilities (even for Program countries), so just change mentality & embrace the challenges.
- It is more easier to initiate and promote regional staff mobilities rather than student mobilities.
- University administration provides limited support to ICM) and so will be for RCM) – teaching hours must be included in the normal workload of the academic staff.
- Lack of financial support (such as Erasmus+ ICM Program) is a barrier to the RCMs. More funding would make these mobilities more attractive.

Key Conclusions

Q8 Conclusions: Regional Credit Mobility (RCM)

- **Financial Support**: Lack of financial support (such as Erasmus+ ICM Program) is a barrier to the RCMs.
- **Language barriers**: regional languages preparatory courses vs. more courses taught in English offered at regional HEIs?
- **Legal barriers**: By law in many WBCs it is a requirement for the academic staff to have some international experience – EU teaching and research experience is eligible only.
- Overall, international ICM Program is (and with high chances will continue to be) much more attractive compared to RCM.

‘Students choose first experience and after go for knowledge’

We share common challenges, common problems and a common EU Perspective – so why not to regional cooperation?

THANK YOU!

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