

Minutes INTAKT-Final Conference

Berlin, 6th / 7th September 2012

Participants: Sebastian Welter, Julia Kalisch, Heiner Wörmann (ARBEIT UND LEBEN), Robert Kampe (Culture et Liberté), Mark Halls (Westbourne Academy), Maria Ruiz, Renata Lorusso (ESMOVIA), Carl Schuppan, Benedikt Eimann (Friedrich-List Schule), Henrik Hjorth, Lise Agerbaek, Bernadette Besenhofer (SDE), Anna Skocz, Anna Papprocka (Semper Avanti), Joan Walsh, Paul Crean (Partnership Europe)

Themes:

- Welcome and Agreement about tasks and programme of the final conference (6th September 2012).
- Conference: Welcome and Introduction of the INTAKT-project
- Conference: England and Europe – History and Development of Mobility Projects in Bournemouth
- Conference: Presentation of „European Vocational Skill Training“ projects by participants
- Conference: Invasion of „Aliens“? – Experiences with German Trainees in England
- Conference: Round-Table-Discussion: Experiences with the EVST-project approach in mobility-projects by sending and hosting organizations
- Conference: The INTAKT-database – Presentation of its functions and use for the organisation of trans-national mobility-projects
- Conference: Lecture: “Understanding Europe” – from “Lifelong Learning to “Erasmus for All”. The new generation of EU-Education programmes from 2014 on
- Conference: Closing remarks and Evaluation
- INTAKT-Training: Projectresults to test: Workshop for the testing of the INTAKT-database and the the EVST-project approach in transnational mobility-projects
- Preparation of the Final Report

Welcome and Agreement about tasks and programme of the final conference

After arriving at Berlin all partners meet at 6th September in order to prepare the final conference at ARBEIT UND LEBEN Berlin. Sebastian Welter welcomes all partnerorganisations represented and explains changes in the conference programme, caused by the refusal of external and international experts, who could not realise their planned attendance at the conference. To day 70 – 75 participants are expected. Due to a misunderstanding the invitations to the conference were sent delayed during the time of summer-holidays and not to all circles as planned. Therefore the envisaged number of 100 participants was not reached. Nevertheless the conference-programme should be interesting, presenting the results of the INTAKT-project in a good manner. The project-partners agree further upon their statements within the “round-table“-discussion. Afterwards the partner prepare their stand-presentations.

Progress of the conference:

Conference: Welcome and Introduction off the INTAKT-project

Most of the participants of trans-national mobility-projects are only able to participate in short-term mobility activities of 3-4 weeks due to a limited leave by their vocational schools and sending companies. Because of a lack of foreign language skills and previous intercultural experiences most of those trainees are not able to carry out complex professional tasks during their stay abroad. Therefore the internships often are reduced to simple professional tasks, not reflecting the individual level of qualification and skills of the participants.

Therefore the project aimed at establishing an online-database in order to create task-settings and learning objectives for „Intercultural Professional Field Researches” related to the learning fields of vocational training in different professions. The intended result of this approach is to improve the validation of learning outcomes also for those participants of vocational training activities abroad who are not able to carry out complex professional task-settings during their short-term internships abroad due to a lack of language skills and intercultural experiences.

This conference aims at introducing the results of the project to a broader audience.

England and Europe – History and Development of Mobility Projects in Bournemouth

Initiatory Mike Francis, Managing Director of the Westbourne Academy in Bournemouth, described, basing on personal experiences the development of exchange-activities within Europe. In the years after the Second World War these relations were mainly based on personal contacts and mutual sympathy, today there exists a wide network of organizations, working in this field, including all member-states of the EU and beyond. For this development the existence of the EU-programmes, as Leonardo da Vinci, has to be seen not only as support, but as a crucial factor, because only the offered opportunities for funding were often the key new mobility-initiatives. Actually not only Bournemouth are characterized by many young people, attending European countries within trans-national mobility-programs. This has led to a reduction of mutual stereotypes and many people express now interest in visiting the home-countries were mobility-students are from. But nevertheless, Mike Francis, pointed out, a stay abroad is always more than a study-trip or a work-placement within a vocational training-program: Despite of all efforts to increase transparency of educational standards and acceptance of qualifications, the trans-national mobility projects should always include also the aspect of intercultural exchange und mutual understanding.

INTAKT in practice: Best-practise examples of EVST-projects

Introduced by Benedikt Eimann several vocational trainees present the results of their EVST-projects, which they carried abroad individually or in small groups, while participating in different mobility-projects. They report in an impressive manner their made experiences, the difficulties they have met and the solutions, which they found for unforeseen appearing problems. The presentations and video-clips demonstrate very clearly the creativity and engagement of the participants while dealing with the thematic aspect of their project and carrying out related work-tasks. All of the young people involved in these EVST-projects state the positive aspcts of this approach. A young vocational trainee told the audience, how the EVST-project carried out abroad opened her concrete new professional carreer options. Her EVST-project, presented at the company were she undergoes her vocational training, was taken as a proof, that she has potential to manage international business-relations and was invited by the management of the enterprise to change her position from one of the branches into the company-headquarters.

All participants named especially the opportunity to organize the work-process within their EVST-projects indepentendtly as a challenge, but also as a good chance to train personal and social skills while agreeing on tasks and necessary work-steps in a team, This possiblity

to work in small groups was seen as a further positive aspect: It offered the opportunity to carry out in a team complex work-tasks and comprehensive outputs by using specific skills and competences of the different group-members. Especially the task to organise and conduct interviews and surveys in the host-country was seen as a good option to get in direct contact with people at local level and to train own communication-skills.

For a group of trainees, undergoing their vocational training in different regional branches of a company the common work on an EVST-project offered the possibility to get acquainted among each other. As stated by the responsible representative for the vocational training, the internship abroad had also the positive side-effect of a better mutual-cooperation and work-atmosphere in the sending company. All presentations of the participating trainees, held in English, were met with prolonged applause by the audience of the conference.

Invasion of „Aliens“? – Experiences with German Trainees in England

Mark Smith, Director of Tourism for Bournemouth, add to the presentations of former participants of mobility-projects some positive feedbacks from side of companies and inhabitants towards the foreign interns. Especially trainees from Germany have a good image due to their high developed work ethic and their ability to understand given work-tasks. Despite of the fact that in general among local companies the acceptance of short-term internships remains low, there are long waiting-lists of firms, willing to host long-term interns. This is especially true for 24-week work-placements for young, qualified people with finalized vocational training. This mobility-project has developed to a success-story. Meanwhile are more than two dozen of former interns living and working permanently in Bournemouth, even several weddings has taken place. Due to these positive experiences the newly founded “Costal Academy of Tourism” plans also to offer mobility-programmes for students and trainees from the catering- and hotellery sector. The EVST-approach, developed under the INTAKT-project will be integrated in order to combine theoretical and practical learning during an internship abroad.

Round-Table-Discussion: Experiences with the EVST-project approach in mobility-projects

Sebastian Welter starts the report about experiences and „lessons learned“ during the INTAKT-project with a remark, made by Mark Halls, representative of the partner-institution Westbourne Academy: When the idea of the project was introduced to him, he answered spontaneously: „This is easy!“. But in reality the project developed not always this way.

Despite of the already before existing close relations among project-partners and the common experiences in carrying out trans-national mobility-projects, some unforeseen difficulties occurred: The first partner-meeting was for example strongly influenced by a discussion around the question: How far task-settings for EVST-projects should be pre-defined by teaching-staff and sending organisations? While one part of the partnership voted for an approach with fixed tasks, another part of the partners preferred the option to choose themes and tasks independently, in order to motivate the participating trainees to own initiative and creativity within the learning-process. In the opposite there was seen as a risk, that a free choice of tasks would lead to difficulties in the validation of learning outcomes.

Benedikt Eimann, Friedrich-List-Schule, reported related experiences, gained during the testing-phase of project results in different mobility-projects. As shown in practise a fixed task-setting for EVST-projects has a demotivating effect on the participating trainees, especially if they had beforehand no opportunity to influence the establishment of tasks. Paul Crean, project-coordinator at Partnership Europe, told about experiences made with a group of young vocational trainees, who could give no information about contents and task-settings for their agreed EVST-projects after arriving at Cork, Ireland. Despite of an intensive preparation-course, they were under the impression of a different culture and country not able to imagine, how they could carry out any tasks in a foreign country. Only after one week

with different integration-activities it was possible to motivate them to project-related activities. Out of this experiences the conclusion was drawn, stated Mark Halls, that hosting-organisations has to be integrated in the agreement of project-tasks. In Bournemouth it had been the case, that a group of young trainees, working in the administration-sector, had the task to conduct interviews with representatives of the city-administration. But as they had no permission, it was impossible to realize this project-tasks. The problem was solved by a change of task-settings. As also important named, Maria Ruiz-Gamez, Head of the department for international relations at ESMOVIA, the participation of hosting-organisations in the validation of learning outcomes. In many cases it has been insufficient, to proof results only by submitted reports. In fact the development of the learning-process itself should be taken into consideration. Already the test of the INTAKT-approach provided important hints on how to match differing expectations among all participating sides of a mobility-project. She expressed the expectation, that with support of the INTAKT-database a platform will be established, helping to organize a constant dialogue-process among project-partners and mobility-participants. Robert Kampe, project-coordinator at Culture et Liberté, emphasized beneath of the concrete results, the meaning of the common work-process among European project-partners while realising the INTAKT-project. Due to geographical distances and existing language-bareers, the agreement on work-tasks turned out more difficult than on national level, but the cooperation on European level has therefore the advantage, that problems and their possible solution can be discussed from different prospects. He felt this finding as an important added value, to recognize, that beyond of own national behaviour and reflections exists further useful approaches and ideas. Sebastian Welter thanks on behalf of ARBEIT UND LEBEN all participating project-partners for their efforts realising the INTAKT-project in the last two years. He expressed also the hope, that this fruitful cooperation will continue in using its results in future, while carrying out common mobility-projects.

The INTAKT-database – Presentation of its functions

Bernadette Besenhofer and Sebastian Welter introduce the EVST-database, developed during the INTAKT-project. The abbreviation “EVST” means „European Vocational Skills Training“ and was established, as experience had shown, that for the German expression „Berufsfelderkundung“ exists no adequate English translation. The database was constructed following the INTAKT-concept, defining several steps for the establishment of EVST-projects and their implementation in trans-national mobility-projects.

The database includes two sections - one for mobility-participants and one for project-coordinators, both linked, in order to allow among participants and coordinators a dialogue-process. The concept is basing on results, developed in the previous Compass-project. But the initial intention to use the COMPASS-database as basic tool and add steps of the INTAKT-approach proofed to be not realistic due to technical reasons. Instead of that the database was set up completely new in order to integrate new functions and to design it more user-friendly. The most difficult challenge was to create a system, but to open it for a flexible use, adopted to differing expectations of different users. Accordingly the database includes now also the opportunity to use it for the participants-management in mobility-projects not using the EVST-approach. The reason for this was the decision to create a tool usable for a wide range of mobility-projects in order to ensure its acceptance among external project-coordinators, interested in using the database for different target-groups. The EVST-database is therefore open for “pool”-projects and projects with a professional specialisation. It is open to individual applicants as well as for groups of mobility-participants. Next to vocational trainees also persons on the labour-market, undergoing an long-term work-placement abroad, are able to present their learning-outcomes and project-results via the database.

To offer an additional value for coordinators of mobility-projects, the database also includes the function to document learning-outcomes in a certificate, which follows in its structure the

categories, given in the Europass-Mobility. Therefore the description of learning-outputs can be taken over into this certificate.

Workshop-participants, interested to get acquainted with the INTAKT-approach in detail are welcomed to following workshop, explaining the systematic of EVST-projects and the functions of the database.

Lecture: "Understanding Europe" – from "Lifelong Learning to "Erasmus for All".

Dr. Philipp Sternberg, Vice-president of the Socialdemocratic Party of Berlin, gave in his lecture an introduction in the role of EU-grants for the city of Berlin and gave from this prospect some comments concerning the proposal for the new generation of the EU-education-programme „Erasmus for All“, which intends from 2014 on a remarkable improvement of grants for trans-national mobility-activities. He reports, that the draft, provided by the EU-commission is actually under discussion in the EU-parliament. There was a heavy reaction to the commission's proposal, criticizing the small focus of the new programme, emphasizing the role of mobility and employability for young people in Europe. Due to high unemployment-rates in many member-states this approach seems understandable, but education has to be seen in a broader sense than only as professional qualification.

For Berlin as Federal State in Germany EU-grants play. due to the actual budget-situation, an important role in many areas. But especially Berlin reflects in its role as city between East and West and the transition-processes since the fall of the Berlin wall the challenges, connected with the now emerging European integration process. Differences are existing further on, not only with regard to the financial situation in the EU-member-states, but also with regard to the challenges Europe is actually facing. Therefore he stated it as necessary to add to the future EU education programme also the possibility for people to meet and to discuss their vision of a future Europe. The actual financial crisis illustrates how easy stereotypes take effect in public, which seemed already resolved. Europe has to be seen as „peace-project“ and as a guaranty for social and economical cohesion. This structure would have to be developed further under active participation of as many people as possible.

Project results to touch: Workshop for the testing of the INTAKT-database

The workshop based on the training-concept developed from the INTAKT-project. The participants were divided into small groups and got the task, with help of virtual participants-profiles to follow some steps of the INTAKT-approach:

- to establish a profile for a mobility-participant in the EVST-database,
- to establish learning objectives,
- to set up task-settings for EVST-projects,
- to document learning-outcomes with help of virtual EVST-project-reports.

The prepared profiles demonstrate participants with different background, expectations and interests towards an internship abroad. Respectively the procedure for the establishment of learning-goals and task-settings for EVST-projects can be simulated for different target-groups.

As intended some of the workshop-participants expressed some irritation when the task-setting was fixed and there was only little chance to put in own ideas for an EVST-project. In the opposite other participants reported afterwards difficulties in establishing work-tasks, when there were no settings at all. During the following discussion it was clarified, that the database in itself is not replacing a dialogue with mobility-applicants and participants, but as

a learning-platform helps to support the whole process from the establishment of learning-goals up to the documentation of learning-outcomes.

In generell the training was used intensivley by the participants to get acquainted with the concept as procedure. Afterwards a number of interested representatives asked for the oppportunity to use the database in own mobility-projects.

Preparation of the final report

Sebastian Welter lines out the next steps for the completion of the final project-report. Up to 30 November 2012 the project-partnership in total has to provide as well the project- as the financial report. Up to 30 September 2012 it is possible to put the related costs for realisation of the project results under this project. Invoices with later date will be not accepted. All products has to be provided also with the final report.

Therefore all partners are requested to send all documets, including the tables G.1 – G.7 of the form for the final report to ARBEIT UND LEBEN up to 30 October 2012, in order to check and sort documents in the necessary order. By experience there exist especially difficulties in the documentation of staff-costs, as related documents (pay-slips, labour-contracts) remain usually locked because of data-security matters. But these documents are requested, as they are necessary to make the daily-rates transparent, related tos taff-members working for this project.

A second, usually problematic area are travel-expenses, as here invoices, especially of flight-tickets and boarding-passes is requested. Often problems occure, because it remains for auditors intransparent, whether the imbursed travel-costs correspond to the rates, fixed by the travel-regulations of the sending institution. Therefore also the documentation of travel-costs should be sent in time in order to clarify specific cases.

Sebastian Welter

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