



The European Dimension of International Staff Training Courses

GINCO T&T is a Grundtvig Multilateral Project and aims to improve the quality of provision and delivery of international training courses for adult education staff and to contribute to the professionalization of trainers and organisers running these courses.

The European dimension is a very important aspect in an international staff training course. It deals with the added value of a European course, compared to a national course. It answers the potential participants' question: "Why should I go abroad for this course instead of taking a similar one in my own country?" Therefore it is very important that course organisers pay attention to the EU dimension of their courses.

An international course must be relevant for and answer to the needs of an international audience. Why should other nationalities join your training course? Here we are not only talking about content (topics) but also about learning and teaching approaches, transfer and applicability of outcomes, validation and recognition of competences developed, intercultural aspects etc.

Focus on the European dimension of the topic

The European countries are economically and socially linked to each other and a number of trends in education and training have a European level. In order to gain relevance for a European audience one needs to ask the question how the approach or the themes of a course are perceived at this European level.

Since education and training is a national matter, Europe can only work via common goals, guidelines, indicators and standards in order to entice the member states to reach a common level (open method of coordination). One of these common goals is the European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. A competence driven approach with references to the European Framework of Key Competences would add to the European dimension of the staff training courses. A special GINCO T&T chapter and set of competences is dedicated to innovative didactics and competence oriented training for staff.

Link up with European educational priorities

Education and training also has a 'European dimension' referring to education policy and priorities at European level (e.g. ET 2020 and Erasmus+ priorities). Europe has tried to steer

a number of innovative educational trends by presenting them as priorities in the yearly call for projects and as such has offered preference funding opportunities. Course organisers can link up with European policy and/or European education and training priorities as a way to enhance the European dimension of their courses. However, this does not imply that courses should be restricted to the existing policy agenda; there is no need to squeeze courses in the policy box but they should foster existing policies and provide new steps for developing them.

Transferability of course outcomes and materials

An organiser of an international course should also be aware of the fact that teaching and learning approaches and organizational conditions differ from country to country. In order to be relevant for an international audience it is imperative that the course outcomes and/or materials can be applied in the different 'home organizations' and education systems of the participants. A course therefore should offer international transfer & application opportunities. In this respect it is important to start from the learning needs of the participant. This identification and articulation of learning needs should start before the course (on-line contacts) but should be an ongoing process during the course.

It is also important to take the expertise of the participants into account. All participants are professionals in their national system. The course theme/topic can start from the home situation of the participant: "How do you do this in your organization, what is the meaning of this 'term' for you, how is it used in your context?" Don't try to create 'distinction' but emphasize context and approach. Flexibility, reciprocity, constructivism are key.

Validation processes and multinational certification relevance

The aim of validation is to evidence and value an individual's competence development, irrespective of where these have been acquired. Formative validation reveals individual strengths, weaknesses and particular learning needs and can be used as a basis for further training. Summative validation on the other hand should result in formal recognition. There are strong arguments for international course organisers to validate the learning outcomes of the participants at their course. Staff mobility courses are run in an international context and – from the perspective of the participant – always in a foreign country. How can a participant get evidence of what he/she has learned and acquired at this course and how can it be recognised in his/her home country? It is also clear that especially adult educators, proven to come from a variety of backgrounds, would benefit from evidenced professional development. A learning outcome validation system would therefore considerably increase the value of an international course for its participants.

A special GINCO T&T chapter and set of competences is dedicated to course organisers validating the learning outcomes of their course participants.

Networking and international project and mobility opportunities

The essence of international in-service training courses is the presence of participants and trainers from different countries, all professionals in their field. This offers opportunities for international networking, exchange of expertise and future cooperation. Make sure that networking is part of the approach and time frame. Promote international cooperation and international mobility actions in the Erasmus+ programme, make sure that this information is available.

Take the intercultural dimension into account

An international course is characterized by mixed nationalities of participants and these courses may be organised by an international team of trainers (would be ideal but is not a requirement any more in the new programme). Course participants will have different individual attitudes, values and norms related to their cultural backgrounds. Take advantage of the international diversity in the group. Trainers should have basic awareness of intercultural issues. Also be aware of language issues in the group, not all participants will master the working language equally. Provide training material in advance in order to let people prepare for the language, to allow them to get acquainted with the terminology etc.

A quality course not only focusses on professional competence development of the participants but also on their personal and social competence development. The European added value of an international course is exactly this intercultural competence development since international courses offer the ideal context for learners to become more competent in intercultural skills. This aspect should be part of the course objectives and course programme.

Link up with the locality, social elements, local professional systems.

A training in a foreign country offers opportunities for encounters with the local (national) education system and 'in situ' visits or trainings. This offer also applies to the social and cultural aspects of the host country. A course should not take place in a confined 'enclave' but interaction with the local culture should be built in in the programme. It is up to the course organiser to find an appropriate balance for training, professional visits and social programme in the light of the objectives of the course and the needs of the participants.

More information, support documents and training tools can be found on the project website: www.ginconet.eu .

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