



Innovating Teaching and Learning European Studies (INOTLES)

**Annual progress report
Year 2015**

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Executive summary

Throughout its second year, INOTLES project has managed to follow closely the framework of activity, deploy the required resources and capabilities for successfully implementing its activities and achieving the planned results.

The year was overall successful and in line with initially planned activities, outputs and outcomes. Information exchange, communication and archiving have been improved through the launching of the INOTLES intranet space.

Within Workpackage 4, INOTLES staff developed teaching materials for core modules in European Studies: Research Methods, EU policy-making, EU law, EU institutions and EU external relations. Each PC university has been implementing at least one of these modules in their academic programme in 2015-2016. The core modules applied innovative pedagogies developed in WP3 and contributed to the overall modernisation of ES curricula in PC countries.

WP4.6 inter-university course represents a unique opportunity for hands-on experience with innovative teaching methods of instructors and students from all INOTLES partners. Scheduled between September 2015 and March 2016, the course is planned to finish with a student and staff mobility for a face-to-face meeting in Brussels in March 2016.

INOTLES staff has been active in disseminating project results through various strategies. Dissemination within national and international conferences and international publications were at the core of dissemination activities. Several papers are being prepared for INOTLES Papers Series and the Editorial office has been regularly circulating the call for papers internally and to the external audience.

Several major challenges were met during project implementation. The lack of e-skills of some PC staff, particularly senior staff, has caused minor challenges in the use of the official e-platform. Some of the originally identified risks, such as the level of English language and the digital literacy, have represented real challenges during the inter-university course. Also, students gave preference for more “informal” communication channels, with which students were more familiar and had previous experience (emails, skype, google docs, etc.). But the local instructors acted as connecting points between the course coordinators and their students and have facilitated the efficient course communication.

PC partners encountered problems with buying equipment. The major challenges were the compliance to the rule of origin (EACEA TEMPUS requirements) and the tendering procedures. Some partners found a solution in changing the type of equipment (e.g. buy more books and e-journal subscription), avoiding administrative challenges with the hardware equipment.

From the management perspective, Ukrainian politico-economic context has continued to present a main challenge for project management, causing also a delay of the transfer of Ukrainian partners funds.

In sum, the activities followed closely the initial objectives and workplan. Whenever needed, measures have been taken for adjusting future activities to the realities, taking into account EACEA expert evaluation reports, the advises of national Erasmus+ offices and EACEA.

Workpackage achievements and challenges

WP1 Management

Overview

Workpackage (WP) 1 Management aims at establishing lean and effective project administration and transparent resource administration throughout the project life cycle. WP follows project management work-flow, with local project coordinators reporting regularly to Project Manager (PM) based at MGSOG, UM, responsible for day-to-day project management and financial reporting. Local project coordinators are in charge of coordinating project activities at local level, including dissemination activities.

Activity achievements

Project Management Board (PMB) has been meeting regularly via skype (1*2 months) and face-to face (January and June 2015) to discuss progress of project activities, strategic development, budget management and quality assurance monitoring, as well as intermediary EACEA reporting.

WP1.3 Annual reports

Second annual report was compiled and delivered, MGSOG, UM responsible for compiling data and writing up the report, with contribution of partners and WP leaders as well as writing of the report. Project progress was assessed during the year 2015, specifically the success of activities, achievement of objectives, challenges and solutions.

WP1.4 Transparent resource administration

Transparent resource management has been ensured via regular financial reporting, checking of supporting documents. MGSOG, UM overseeing financial reporting from each consortium partners and collection of requested supporting documents.

WP1.5 Lean and effective project administration

Lean and effective project administration throughout the second year of project timeframe was ensured via facilitation of communication among partners, clarification of various TEMPUS rules and the conflicts with national level legislations; continuous monitoring and update of workplan, reporting periods, transparent budget management.

Challenges and solutions

For budget-saving purposes, PMB face-to-face meetings (1.2) were combined with other project activities (in line with EACEA/experts evaluation report). In June 2016, the PMB meeting was held in Chisinau, Moldova, hosted by ULIM during INOTLES mid-term conference.

In order to improve the communication or information exchange between the WP leaders, activity leaders and university coordinators, all INOTLES staff was encouraged to actively use the intranet space, the project's e-platform, as of January 2015. During the WP4 activities, course development, intranet was the main e-platform for the exchange of information and archiving the communication and the on the e-platform. The lack of e-skills of some PC staff,

particularly senior staff, has caused several minor challenges in the use of the e-platform.

Political crisis in Ukraine has continued to present a main challenge for project management and implementation. Moreover, the national and university level administrative obstacles for project registration led to a delay in the transfer of pre-financing to Ukrainian partners and required the management of Ukrainian partners resources and partial bookkeeping by the grant holder. Equipment purchase was further delayed due to the mentioned-above circumstances in Ukraine, postponed for the year 2016.

The other PC partners have also experienced administrative challenges for equipment purchase, common problems being the compliance to the rule of origin based on EACEA TEMPUS requirements and tendering procedures (Georgian partners). Some partners have chosen to change the type of equipment (e.g. buy more books and e-journal subscription) to avoid administrative challenges with the hardware equipment.

WP3

Overview

WP 3 focused on training the participants in using several teaching methods they can apply to their European Studies curricula. The training was conducted through a blended learning approach, including a face-to-face training session in Brussels, followed by online group training, giving the participants the chance to work together with their peers over a period of five months deepening their understanding of a pedagogical method of their choice. The activities of this WP were informed by the results of the literature review and needs analysis conducted in WP2 and constitute the pedagogical foundation for the course development planned to take place in WP4. The training outcomes were presented and discussed during the wrap-up conference in January 2015 in Tbilisi, Georgia and synthesized in a training handbook.

Activity achievements

WP3.5 Development of a Training Handbook

The Training Handbook, compiled by IES and MGSOG staff, summarizes and synthesizes the outcome of the face-to-face and online training sessions, focusing on the essential features of the three pedagogical methods and how they can be best implemented in teaching various aspects of European Studies. The Handbook will serve as a valuable resource for further training within the participating universities. The Handbook was translated in the languages of the countries participating in the project.

Challenges and solutions

The training handbook has been compiled by March 2015 and translated in Romanian, Ukrainian, and Georgian languages. Following EACEA expert advises, the translation was done in-house in order to minimize the costs. However, as in most of the cases the translation was done by local staff involved in other INOTLES activities, there was a delay in the translation schedule.

WP4

Overview

WP4, coordinated by University of Surrey, aims at translating the work from earlier WPs into real-world examples of using new pedagogies. This requires a mechanism for supporting practical implementation in partner institutions.

The WP focused on the joint development of a set of modules in PC universities, to be implemented (at least one module) within each PC partner. In addition, one inter-university course (WP4.6) planned to be developed and implemented in 2015-2016 in which all EU and PC institutions participate (5 students and 1 trainer from each institution). The inter-university course, developed and coordinated by the IES, VUB and MGSOG, UM envisages a blended learning approach, combining online course work and one face-to-face mobility at the end of the course (March 2016) in Brussels.

Activity achievements

The aim of this WP is to translate the work from earlier WPs (2-3) into real-world examples of using new pedagogies. The range of activities (preparation of materials for local implementation and wider sharing) has been achieved on schedule so far. The first part of WP 4 (course development) was on track and in line with INOTLES objectives.

WP has been focused in its first phase (Jan-Jun 2015) on producing materials for modules in European Studies: Research Methods, EU policy-making, EU law, EU institutions and EU external relations. Each of these now (Jun 2015) has a set of materials that can be posted on the internet site (for other users) and each PC institution has been implementing at least one of these modules in their academic programme in 2015-2016. All modules produced use the innovative pedagogies developed in WP3 and contribute to the overall modernisation of ES curricula in Eastern Partners.

WP4.6 inter-university course was schedule to run between 15 September 2015 and 31 March 2016. One instructor from each university was involve in the course, being in charge of various assignments as well as tutoring the various student groups during their project work.

The course was delivered using a blended learning approach, in line with the active learning pedagogy at the core of the INOTLES project and following-up on the "Training the Trainers" activities (WP3). Throughout the duration of the course, a mix of various online and traditional methods was used, with the aim of engaging both students and participating academic staff.

The online part consisted of an asynchronous and a synchronous dimension. The asynchronous part involved various types of tutorials and assignments (involving the staff from the participating universities) such as: PBL tutorials, forum discussions and case studies. The synchronous part included three webinars focusing on topics from the courses, led by instructors from participating universities.

Challenges and solutions

The WP has followed the workplan closely. The only notable change from the original proposal was that sub-WPs have been led by PC partners, and not EU partners. It was agreed that this would facilitate the production of more useful and focused materials and would involve the PC staff more fully in the project.

PC staff, leading the development of core modules WP4.1-4.5, has not had as much experience of running such projects, especially via remote communication. Therefore, after the Tbilisi meeting in January 2015, the WP leader (US) and PC sub-leaders have had to keep up pressure on all partners to ensure that they comply with the requirements and contribute appropriately. The intranet has also proved tricky for some users, but this has not caused any major difficulty.

Regarding the inter-university course, there were several major challenges. Firstly, student recruitment was challenged by the English language skills of PC students as well as the course workload, which was on top of the mandatory academic programmes. As a result, there were various levels of commitment and involvement of EU and PC students. An obstacle in this sense (or at least a demotivating factor) was that for some of the students the course ECTS were not recognized by their home university. Despite these obstacles, course coordinators acknowledged the high level of commitment on a purely voluntary basis of the majority of students.

Secondly, even if efforts were made to make the course requirements very clear and transparent, sometimes there were gaps in communication using the “official” channels (online platform); in those cases, the local instructors acted as connecting points between the course coordinators and their students. Moreover, especially for the group project work, students and tutors often used more “informal” communication channels that allowed them to better coordinate their work, such as: emails, skype, google docs, etc.

Lastly, the IT-related issues (participation in webinars, features of the platform, etc); support both on the side of the course organisers (IES) and locally made the various course features work eventually to the benefit of all parties involved.

WP5

Overview

WP 5 focuses on dissemination of the results of each project activity both within the consortium of partner universities and outside, reaching communities of academic faculty and learners interested in teaching ES, as well as policy-makers/practitioners within PC and at the regional and EU level. Each workpackage and sub-workpackage activity leads to a deliverable, taking the form of a product, method or an agglomeration of experience and is disseminated via various channels: video recordings, webportal, WIKI, conference participation publications, etc.

Activity achievements

WP5.2. Mid-term conference

The mid-term conference took place on June 17-18, 2015 at ULIM, Chisinau, Moldova. Around 50 consortium participants plus external stakeholders participants (academia, national government officials and NGO representatives, EU practitioners). INOTLES staff has presented the results of consortium activities implemented in the first half of project lifetime. The conference included one roundtable organized with the representatives of Moldovan Ministry of Education, higher education institutions and INOTLES staff. It represented a valuable platform for exchange between various stakeholders. The discussion was focused on understanding the needs of the job market and ensuring the transfer of some core knowledge and skills to ES graduates across various disciplines and programs. The setting up of national Centers of European Studies (CES) was another key issue on the meeting agenda. EU and PC partners have exchanged their ideas and experience with setting up autonomous centers within higher education institutions, sustainability strategies and administrative procedures.

WP5.4. International conference dissemination at UACES workshop and conference, Bilbao, Spain 6-10 September 2015

EU and PC academic staff have disseminated INOTLES project results during the **Annual Conference of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies** – the largest organization within the field of European Studies. INOTLES partners presented four papers based on their research from INOTLES surveys on teaching ES and ‘Training the Trainer’ activity, as well as their experience with implementing innovative ways of teaching ES. A total of six INOTLES staff participated in the UACES conference as paper givers, panel chair and discussant.

Moreover, the project coordinator has been invited to share INOTLES collaborative project experience in a separate international event - **UACES Teaching and Learning Workshop**, on 6 September 2015 in Bilbao. This represented a unique occasion of disseminating INOTLES results to an international audience comprising pedagogical experts, practitioners and academics in the field of European Studies.

WP5.4. International conference dissemination 5th International Conference The Danube - Axis of European Identity

PC partner staff from USC, Moldova have organized an international conference in collaboration with Danubius University of Galati, Romania, Izmail State Liberal Arts University, Ukraine, University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev", Bulgaria and EDUCONS University, Serbia. The conference took place in Novi Sad, Serbia, on 29 June 2015. USC staff have disseminated INOTLES project results through a paper presentation on “The innovating triangle in teaching European Studies: trends, legal regulations, vocations.”

WP5.4. National conference dissemination ISE 2015 Conference - Improving Academic Standards in Education

PC partner staff from IES, TSU, Georgia disseminated INOTLES results through a presentation on “INOTLES- concept and ongoing results” during the ISE 2015 Conference - Improving Academic Standards in Education. The conference represented a venue for exchange of practices and results of various TEMPUS Projects within the Georgian context, networking and generating ideas for prospective projects.

WP5.5. Preparation of various international publications

INOTLES project partners have been collaborating in preparing and finalizing several international peer-reviewed publications. One international publication has been submitted in 2015 and accepted in 2016 for publication in the Journal of Contemporary European Research (JCER). The article is based on WP2 activities - literature review and survey data from WP2.2 – “Innovating Teaching and Learning of European Studies: Mapping Existing Provisions and Pathways.”

The second published article was a conference proceeding of 5th International Conference The Danube - Axis of European Identity. Its title is “The innovating triangle in teaching European Studies: trends, legal regulations, vocations” and it was published in Journal of Danubian Studies and Research, Vol 5, No 1, 2015, <http://journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/research> .

Another international publication is in preparation by IES, VUB staff from Belgium, disseminating the results of the “Training the Trainer” activity (WP3). It is aimed to be published in a higher education international journal and has the title “Online Teacher Training on Active Learning in an International Setting: The Trainers’ Perspective.”

Challenges and solutions

The preparation and submission of national and international publications in highly ranked peer-reviewed journals requires extra time and care of producing high-quality collaborative papers. A remaining obstacle is the ongoing competition in national and international journals and long reviewing processes.

Whenever possible, INOTLES staff considers publishing more international publications, rather than national ones, in order to reach a broader audience and various stakeholders.

As part of broader dissemination strategy, INOTLES project results have been taped and shared on youtube, short reports and blogs were uploaded on INOTLES website.

WP6**Overview**

Exploitation and sustainability are at the core of WP6 activities, which aim at exploiting the results of WPs 1-7 through mainstreaming and multiplying these

results via webportal (newsletter to internal and external audiences; blogposts, videos, documents, etc.), Papers series (online and printed) reaching both academic and policy-making audiences, WIKI, with voluntary contributions from project staff and international academic community, as well as national CES (establishment, capacity building and institutional strengthening of national CES in each PC), which will act as nodal dissemination and exploitation points.

Activity achievements

WP6.1 - Webportal

Webportal was maintained, updated and translated into Romanian, Ukrainian and Georgian languages, in cooperation with IT company from MD (subcontracted). MGSOG, UM staff is responsible for the coordination of tasks with the IT company, upload to the webportal of project information and of activity results from each WP; development and maintenance of intranet space (online project collaboration mechanisms).

Intranet space was developed and used as a main platform for communication and archiving of project information and correspondence as of January 2015.

WP 6.2 WIKI

Development and maintenance of WIKI, an academic open-source welcoming voluntary individual contributions worldwide, exploitation of results of WP2 and WP3. MGSOG, UM staff, responsible for creating starting pages on innovative teaching methods based on expertise of EU staff and used in training activities and moderating the WIKI activity.

WP 6.3 Working papers and Policy Papers series

The Editorial office, hosted by FASOS, UM, has sent regular invitations for internal (project) and external submissions within the INOTLES community and through various professional networks. Several working and policy papers are being prepared by INOTLES staff and some commitments were given by external contributors.

WP6.4 Establishing or supporting national CES

The mid-term conference in June 2015 at ULIM, Moldova, included a roundtable discussion on setting up of national Centers of European Studies (CES). EU staff from IES, VUB, Belgium and MGSOG, UM, the Netherlands have shared their experience with setting up autonomous centers within higher education institutions, sustainability strategies and administrative procedures. Ukrainian partners have reflected upon advantages and challenges of setting up the Ukrainian CES.

IES, VUB and MGSOG, UM have been coordinating the discussion among the PC partners about administrative requirements for setting up/supporting CES in UA, MD and GE, the development of the mission and vision and the CES strategies.

Challenges and solutions

Buying equipment was delayed due to national and university level legislative obstacles in the majority of PC partners (see also above section on WP1).

One of the mobilities envisaged for activity 6.4 (national CES) was combined with the mid-term conference in MD (June 2016) for budget saving reasons.

Several calls for voluntary individual internal and external WIKI contributions led to modest results so far. INOTLES staff acknowledges the time and e-skills as a major challenge of using WIKI as a tool within the courses taught at PC universities as well as the challenge of motivating their students to use the WIKI as a course tool.

The WP6 leader has been promoting regularly a more active use of INOTLES webportal, WIKI and intranet during PMB meetings and other face-to-face meetings.

WP7

Overview

WP7 ensures the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the advancement and quality of each project activity. MGSOG, UM as WP7 coordinator ensures deploying and updating of quality assurance, process evaluation and reporting to European Commission.

An external evaluator, Ms. Eniko Kovacs from HESP, Open Society Institute, has been invited to monitor and evaluate project activities, providing a mid-term and a final external evaluation report.

Activity achievements

WP7.2 Mid-term evaluation report

The mid-term evaluation report has been submitted in the fall 2015. The report provided an overview of activities implemented in the first half of project lifetime, the major changes and the planned activities. The report also addressed some of the evaluations and recommendations of the external evaluator.

Challenges and solutions

Mid-term reporting was delayed for the autumn of 2015. The diversity of academic schedules across the EU and PC universities and the coincidence of the initial reporting term with the end of the academic year and academic holidays were among the major challenges of mid-term reporting.

Some improvement has been achieved since the launching of INOTLES intranet space, the project's e-platform, for keeping a better track the exchange of information, monitoring and evaluation of project activities. However, the email continued to be the most preferred source of communication, particularly among PC staff. PC staff, particularly more senior staff, expressed their challenge of learning and using new e-tools and appeared less motivated to use the e-platform.

Conclusion

The second project year was overall successful and in line with initially planned activities, outputs and outcomes. Information exchange, communication and archiving of project information have been improved through the launching and

the use of the INOTLES intranet space. During the WP4 activities, course development, intranet was the main e-platform for the exchange of information and archiving the communication and the on the e-platform. However, the lack of e-skills of some PC staff, particular senior staff, has caused several minor challenges in the use of the e-platform.

Workpackage 4 activities were at the core of the year 2015. In January - June 2015 INOTLES partners have worked in groups on producing materials for core modules in European Studies: Research Methods, EU policy-making, EU law, EU institutions and EU external relations. Each PC institution has been implementing at least one of these modules in their academic programme in 2015-2016. WP4 modules and the WP4.6 built on the innovative pedagogies developed in WP3 and contributed to the overall modernisation of ES curricula in PC countries.

WP4.6 inter-university course represents one of the most interesting project activities, allowing the practical application and hands-on experience with innovative teaching methods of instructors and students from all INOTLES partners.

Some of the originally identified risks, such as the level of English language and the digital literacy, have represented real challenges during the inter-university course. Course coordinators have noticed gaps in communication using the “official” channels (online platform) and the preference for more “informal” communication channels, with which students were more familiar and had previous experience (emails, skype, google docs, etc.). The local instructors acted as connecting points between the course coordinators and their students and have facilitated the efficient course communication.

The year 2015 has been productive in the dissemination of project activities (WP5), particularly within national and international conferences and international publications. Several papers are being prepared for INOTLES Papers Series and the Editorial office has been regularly circulating the call for papers internally and to the external audience.

With regard to the setting up of national CES, one of the biggest challenges continued to be project registration (e.g. Ukraine) and local and national level legislation regarding the buying of equipment. Some common problems for buying equipment were the compliance to the rule of origin (EACEA TEMPUS requirements) and tendering procedures. Some partners found a solution in changing the type of equipment (e.g. buy more books and e-journal subscription), avoiding administrative challenges with the hardware equipment.

From the management perspective, Ukrainian politico-economic context has continued to present a main challenge for project management, delay in the transfer of Ukrainian partners funds. MGSOG, UM had to take care of the management of Ukrainian partners resources and partial bookkeeping.

In sum, the activities followed closely the initial objectives and workplan. Whenever needed, measures have been taken for adjusting future activities to the realities, taking into account EACEA expert evaluation reports, the advises of

national Erasmus+ offices and EACEA, as well as designing various dissemination strategies for reaching broader internal and external audiences.