

T3.3 Transnational learning during Action Plan development

InnoSchool

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Introduction

The InnoSchool project aims to promote a change of mindset in the currently weak areas of entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and social innovation. The project is primarily aimed at students in secondary education, for whom the highly innovative InnoSchool learning system is the main output of the project. Secondary school students, identified as the primary target group, are at a stage in their lives when they are highly receptive to their environment, open-minded, interested in everything and have a strong sense of justice. They are therefore highly sensitive to social challenges in their environment. The project will build on this to change their awareness of the issues and help them to become social entrepreneurs and social innovators, while learning the right entrepreneurial skills.

The project will of course also offer learning and experiential opportunities for others outside the main target group. Obviously, teachers working with students are also part of a serious learning process. Social entrepreneurship and social innovation, although no longer completely unknown concepts, are still elusive and nebulous concepts for many. Teachers are no exception. The project has thus also helped to shape teachers' attitudes. The learning process has been taken to an even higher level and naturally extended to the institutional level. At the institutional level, we also mean the participating schools themselves and their managing authorities, the policy bodies as well.

Last but not least, of course, we cannot ignore the fact that the partners involved in the project were also involved in different learning processes. On the one hand, in the above-mentioned thematic area, and on the other hand, in the process of developing the action plans. The development of the action plans followed a similar methodology in all countries and in many cases the partners encountered similar problems with similar solutions, but of course there were also unique experiences. The sharing of these within the partnership certainly provided a major development and learning opportunity for the partners involved.

The methodology

The objective of the action plans

The primary objective of developing the action plans is to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the project by proposing the integration of the InnoSchool Learning System developed during the project into the school curriculum. This can be facilitated by identifying the challenges in the region or country that may hamper or even block the process. It then proposes solutions in the form of actions to address each challenge.

Implementation process

Implementation at local level

The development of action plans started in the framework of the second institutional learning workshops. This was where the partners had to present the idea of the action plans and start consulting the participants, gathering input for their elaboration. Of course, the pilot activities already carried out in the past, from which a lot of personal experience was gathered, added considerable value to the work

All partners started to collect information at this workshop, but of course one workshop is far from being enough to have all the necessary data. All partners sought further opportunities for consultation, in many cases by telephone, email, face-to-face meetings, because organising further workshops on a wider scale is a very difficult task due to the busy schedules of the participants.

Based on the information gathered by the partners, all partners were able to identify the main challenges and obstacles. On this basis, they could start to develop actions that could help to address the challenges, overcome the obstacles and achieve the main objectives of the action plans.

Learning process at transnational level

The learning process at transnational level started after the partners at local level had sufficient information and the challenges were more or less defined. The exchange of experience at transnational level took place through four meetings.

The first three occasions were held in the framework of monthly virtual partner meetings. These meetings took place in three consecutive months. At the first meeting, partners gave a general overview of how they had carried out the first phase of information gathering at local level to develop the action plans. The second meeting was used to discuss the challenges identified. The third meeting was an opportunity to review the actions and activities undertaken in response to the challenges.

The fourth occasion when the transnational learning process could take place was the final conference of the project. This event was planned to take place in Budapest, but unfortunately, due to the pandemic, it could only be organised online. The advantage of organising it online was that the number of participants was extremely high, exceeding 200 people. A round table discussion was organised as part of the event. Not all participating partner countries delegated representatives to this round table, as such a session would have been unfeasible with 9 panellists. However, with the participation of 4 countries (Romania, Czech Republic, Austria, Moldova), the territorial diversity was well represented. The panellists exchanged views on project experiences, action plans and long-term sustainability of the project in a professionally moderated dialogue.

Challenges and difficulties

The whole project was affected by the **pandemic COVID-19**, and this part of the project was no exception. The organisation of the workshops alone was a major challenge during the epidemic. Partners implemented the workshops in different ways, depending on the epidemiological requirements of the country. In some cases, face-to-face meetings were possible, but in the vast majority of cases these meetings were conducted online. As virtual meetings were already planned in the transnational learning process, they were not affected by the pandemic, except for the final conference of the project, which had to be organised in the online space.

A major difficulty was that **partners could not move at the same speed in developing action plans**. There were a number of reasons for the slippage in time. Firstly, the partners themselves had different working speeds. There were partners who were quicker to complete tasks and there were also partners who were less dynamic. Differences between countries also caused variations. Some countries were much quicker to organise coordination workshops, while others were much more cumbersome, possibly requiring central approvals. The pandemic mentioned in the previous point also contributed to the different pace of implementation, as in some cases either the external person involved or a staff member of the partner organisation was taken ill. For the reasons mentioned above, not all transnational consultations had the same level of partners. In some ways this was a disadvantage because there was less information to exchange, but it could also help the partners who were lagging behind because they had examples to follow.

It should be mentioned that it **was a challenge to find suitable panelists for the final conference roundtable discussion**. The primary objective was that this discussion should not necessarily involve participants from the partners involved in the implementation of the project, but rather organisations involved in education, mainly those responsible for the organisation of

education in the partner countries. We had to face the fact, however, during the organisation, that these people are not really easy to involve in such a discussion. This was mainly because there was no staff with adequate English language skills available in the organisations concerned. Also, there were some who could not squeeze this event into their schedule.

Finally, 4 panelists were involved. One panellist represented the lead partner of the project (Czech Republic), two panellists represented organisations involved in the partnership that are themselves responsible for education in their country (Austria and Moldova) and one representative of an 'external' organisation responsible for education (Romania). Overall, the discussion was thus more diverse than if the list of participants had been as originally planned, as different perspectives (external and internal) were able to exchange views.

Outcomes and lessons learned

The transnational learning process had several objectives. On the one hand, to increase the individual experience and knowledge of the organisations involved in the process and, on the other hand, to promote the sustainability of the territorial action plans and the project. It is safe to say that both objectives have been accomplished.

The organisations involved in the transnational learning process have certainly gained a lot of individual experience. On the one hand, they were able to follow the activities of partners and partner countries throughout the process. They could see how things work in other countries and in other organisations. They could see good examples and also bad ones to avoid. The individual experiences of the organisations themselves were also enriched by the fact that they were able to gain a deeper understanding of the way the education system in their own country works. Thinking together on a problem or challenge as part of an international cooperation can in itself be

an extraordinary way to increase the level of knowledge of an organisation, through the development of the staff involved in the process. The organisations involved could thus become more versatile, open-minded and experienced.

From the point of view of the development of the action plans and the sustainability of the project, it can perhaps be said that the transnational learning process has achieved its purpose and has had a significant added value. The partners identified common challenges and common problems to be solved during the development of the action plans in many cases. Discussing these at transnational level was extremely instructive. On the one hand, it was reassuring to know that the challenge was faced by others too, there was a sense of 'a partner in need'. On the other hand, it was possible to use the experience of prior individual reflection to find solutions to common challenges, to think together. For the same challenges, joint actions could be planned, good practices from other countries could be used. In addition to common challenges, specific challenges could be easily addressed by the partners involved, because there was a partnership of like-minded people who could help develop actions with an "outside eye". The different levels of development of the partner countries could also help to develop action plans, because more developed countries had encountered a problem before and could have a proven solution. In this section it is also worth mentioning what was already mentioned earlier in the document, that slower partners, who progressed less quickly, were able to complete the work and not completely crumble thanks to this transnational learning process.

Conclusion

Overall, transnational learning has been both an important and useful part of the project. This area is one of the priorities of cooperation programmes such as the Danube Transnational Programme. In these projects, it is not enough for individual partners to work in isolation to find a solution to a possible common problem in the partner countries. It is crucial that partners work together, learn from each other, think together, develop common solutions and thus be part of a common learning process.

In the InnoSchool project, this joint thinking and cooperation was constantly present, and although it was mentioned in the development of the action plans, it accompanied all the professional activities of the project. The transnational learning process has resulted in action plans per country that can greatly contribute to the sustainability of the project. The organisations involved in this learning process have gained a wealth of international experience that can contribute to their daily operations at a high level, and have also become part of an international network that can provide much support or a basis for future international projects and cooperation.