

Staff Week Report “Internationalisation: Let's Create Project Ideas!”

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Cite as: Yaman, S., Durmuş, S., & Erdoğan, G. (2023). Staff Week Report – Internationalisation: Let's create project ideas!. *Manisa Celal Bayar University International Journal of English Language Studies*. 2(1), 10-14.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10435802>

Introduction

Continuous professional development for educators is essential in the fast-paced world of higher education to stay up to date on advanced opportunities for funding and teaching approaches that improve the educational experience for both students and institutions. It is with this commitment to excellence that the MCBU School of Foreign Languages proudly hosted a transformative Staff Week event from April 24th to April 27th, 2023. The focal point of this event was to equip educators with the skills and knowledge required to write successful Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (KA2) projects. Before delving into the specifics of our Staff Week event, let us define the key terms that underpin this event.

Staff Week¹: A Staff Week, in the context of higher education, is a specialized training and networking event designed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices among educators, administrators, and other staff members from different institutions. These events serve as platforms for collaboration and professional growth, ultimately benefiting the participating individuals and their respective institutions.

Erasmus+ Projects²: Erasmus+ is a flagship European Union program aimed at promoting international cooperation and mobility in the field of education, training, and youth. Erasmus+ projects encompass various actions, including Key Action 2 (KA2), which focuses on Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education. These projects aim to foster innovation, cooperation,

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and the exchange of knowledge between institutions from different countries, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the quality and relevance of education.

KA2 Projects³: Key Action 2 (KA2) projects, within the Erasmus+ framework, specifically target Capacity Building in Higher Education. They aim to support the modernization, internationalization, and improvement of the quality of higher education institutions through strategic partnerships, knowledge transfer, and the development of innovative practices. KA2 projects encompass a wide range of activities, including curriculum development, staff training, and the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation.

With these key concepts in mind, this report will provide a comprehensive overview of the MCBU School of Foreign Languages' Staff Week event, highlighting the objectives, activities, outcomes, and impact of our endeavor to empower educators with the expertise needed to craft effective Erasmus+ KA2 projects. Through this event, we sought to contribute to the advancement of internationalization in higher education and foster collaborative partnerships that will benefit our institution, our participants, and the broader educational community.

Objectives

The goals of staff week events held by universities often vary depending on the institution's particular priorities and objectives. Our objectives are to promote professional growth, opportunities for networking, a forum for idea sharing, wellness, and work-life balance.

First of all, with the training session on how to write a KA2 projects, we aim to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of participating university staff members in the field of project writing. Moreover, the Staff week event brings together staff members from various departments and units, providing an opportunity for networking. Building a professional network can be beneficial for both personal and career development. We aim to create new ideas together and exchange them to reach improved innovative ideas. Staff week activities give staff an opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences because universities are frequently centres of expertise. The dissemination of innovative ideas and best practices may result from this. Finally, sessions on work-life balance, stress management, and personal well-being may also be included in various staff week activities in addition to professional development opportunities to promote the general wellbeing and happiness of staff members. Our staff week also accepted this objective as one of its main objectives and finalised the week with a cultural immersion day.

Participants and Activities

Participants

Staff week event was held with 21 participants from 15 different European universities. In addition to academic staff, the participants included experts working in the Erasmus offices of their Institutions. The participants, who are academic staff, have no previous experience in project writing. Since diversity was aimed in the academic field, care was taken to select participants from different departments such as Computer Engineering, Food Engineering, English Language Teaching, Music and Psychology. The participants working in the Erasmus office of the universities were selected from among the institutions that Manisa Celal Bayar University did not have a previous agreement with. Thus, it is aimed to establish student and

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staff mobility collaborations after the event. In order to reach students more easily, some of the participants were selected among Erasmus faculty coordinators.

Training Sessions

The training lasted three days. Days were divided into 3 hour-length sessions. The first day started with the presentation of participants to introduce their institutions and their project ideas. In the first session, they gave presentations about their institutions. In the second session, they presented the project ideas they had prepared before their arrival. In the last session, common points between project ideas were discussed and working groups were formed as shared platforms for possible future partnerships.

In the morning session of the second day, a training titled "How to write an Erasmus+ project" was given by the expert from Manisa Celal Bayar University Erasmus office Dr. Devrim Zerengök. The afternoon session was moderated by Serap Durmuş, Gonca Erdoğan and Seda Yaman, and the project ideas of the working groups determined on the first day were discussed, developed, and turned into proposals in accordance with the project writing instructions.

In the morning session of the last day of the training, the matured project ideas were presented by the groups. In the second session, the groups exchanged ideas by giving feedback to each other about their presentations. In the afternoon, there was another staff week event organized simultaneously by Manisa Celal Bayar University Erasmus office. The participants attended the opening ceremony of this event. Thanks to this event, they had more opportunity for networking by meeting staff from different institutions in European and African countries and develop their academic environment for further cooperation.

Cultural Immersion

To assist the general health and happiness of staff members, various staff week events may also include seminars on personal well-being, stress management, and work-life balance. Our staff week adopted this goal as one of its key goals and included a day of cultural immersion to wrap up the week. Throughout the day, the team visited the historical places such as Virgin Mary's House, Ephesus Ancient City, and Şirince Village. They were able to recover from the demanding three-day training period thanks to excursions and by getting to know one another better through enjoyable time spent together.

Outcomes

The MCBU School of Foreign Languages' Staff Week event, where participants learned how to write a KA2 project, developed creative project ideas, and formed partnerships, has the potential to produce a number of tangible results that could have a significant impact on the participants as well as their respective institutions. The information and abilities required to successfully write KA2 projects have been acquired by the participants, including knowledge of the project's structure, goals, and evaluation standards. They will be able to propose and contribute to highly qualified project ideas in the future thanks to their newly acquired experience. Furthermore, thanks to this event, valuable partnerships have been established for future project calls. The event gave participants a chance to network with colleagues from various institutions and backgrounds. The participants' academic and professional networks

can be expanded as a result of these professional ties through potential future collaborations, joint publications, and resource sharing. For our university specifically, we have mutually agreed upon mobilities for both staff and students. This could lead to greater staff and student mobility, chances for cross-cultural interaction, and the integration of international perspectives into research objectives.

In summary, the Staff Week event had tangible results that went beyond the event itself, such as enhanced skills, creative project ideas, worthwhile collaborations, and increased internationalisation. These results not only assist the participants, but they also help progress higher education institutions.

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