ISOLEARN

Innovation and Social Learning in Higher Education Institutions

EXPLOITATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

in the Erasmus+ project ISOlearn for Higher Education Institutions

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Content

Definition of sustainability and exploitation

Sustainability is the capacity of the project to continue its existence and functioning beyond its end. The project results are used and exploited continuously. Sustainability of results implies use and exploitation of results in the long term. A project can be considered as sustainable if its outcomes or parts of these continue after the end of the funded project duration. Sustainability may not concern all the aspects of a project. In each project some results may be maintained, while others may not be required to maintain. A project can therefore be considered as sustainable if relevant results are pursued and products are maintained or developed after the end of the EU funding.

Exploitation is associated with the use of the project's results at different levels, during and after the implementation of the project. It is related with the necessary action that will bring visibility to the project in order to involve the target groups, end-users, stakeholders and transfer the results/products into their professional scope. Exploitation is mostly related to the idea of convincing the key actors to use the main products and services of a project. Exploitation is closely associated with the sustainability of the project after its conclusion, since exploitation activities should ensure that the results of the project are used by its target groups and possibly are transferred to other contexts (e.g. other countries; other pedagogical areas, other sectors).

Introduction

The implementation of more inclusive systems of education is possible if educational establishments themselves are committed to becoming more inclusive. The development of enabling mechanisms such as national policies on inclusion, local support systems and appropriate forms of curriculum and assessment are important in creating the right context for the development of inclusion. Inclusion has important benefits for all students as it produces schools with more enriching learning environments that view diversity as a positive force which must be acknowledged and celebrated. Inclusion produces institutions that move away from rote learning and place greater emphasis on hands-on, experienced based, active and co-operative learning.

The main products of the ISOlearn project are the Handbook for Higher Education Institutions and the Quality Label in a form of a checklist. The ISOLearn Handbook describes how ICT based learning instruments and tools should be designed and delivered to support higher

levels of inclusion of visual or hearing impaired students in Higher Education. Moreover it should be considered as a first step towards supporting and allowing the testing of the initially proposed ISOLearn Assessment that will try to measure the level of compliance and provide feed-back regarding the adequacy of Higher Education offers to the special needs of visually and hearing impaired persons.

These products are the main target for further exploitation after the project end.

Lessons learned

The implementation of ISOlearn involved institutions were asked to report on particular challenges they overcame. These fell into three broad categories:

1. Improved communication; project management issues; senior management commitment; and institutional management of inclusion issues. Several institutions noted they had seen improved communications across their HEIs with regard to inclusion issues or equality and diversity activities. Similarly, the initiative provided project staff with the motivation and opportunity to invite other colleagues, from other areas of the institution, to come together to act as focus groups, sounding boards or to share good practice and information. It was noted, by several institutions participated in the project. Therefore, it is important that project extend its networking and involve a network of other interested parties.

2. Equally, the partnership recognized the need to engage staff earlier on in the project, a difficulty inherent in this program given the challenging time frame. While pilot could prove useful the key is then to work on an embedding strategy and to sustain gains.

3. What ISOlearn project showed was the issue to understand change at all levels, it is important to know what change looks like from different points of view. How the teacher, student, local and national government see change is vital to understand how individuals and groups act and, indeed, react to each other. Reforming educational systems to become inclusive is not only about putting in place recently-developed inclusive policies that meet the needs of all learners, but also about changing the culture of classrooms, districts and universities etc. It is important to note that these change processes towards inclusion often begin on a small scale and involve overcoming some obstacles such as:

- Existing attitudes and values
- Lack of understanding

- Lack of necessary skills
- Limited resources
- Inappropriate organisation

Sustainability and exploitation strategy of ISOlearn

The Strategy of ISOlearn, represents the broader and longer term aspects of the Plan including the aspiration for Sustainability, Principles, Goals and Strategies. This component of ISOlearn Sustainability Plan is set for a long term, however, it will undergo a cursory review every two years to ensure relevance in light of potential changing conditions.

ISOlearn strategy describes how partnership is going to achieve our goals by providing overall direction for an initiative in order to:

- Ensure current sustainability initiatives are maintained and working as intended regarding ISOlearn guidelines.
- Increase visibility of sustainability initiatives on implementation of guidelines.
- Develop a formal communication plan around sustainability initiatives and their benefits targeted to internal and external audiences with regards to guidelines and vision- hearing impaired audience.

The practical steps will be following:

- The partnership will provide annual reports on implementation of ISOlearn guidelines in their respective countries.
- Four major partner Universidade Aberta (PT), Folkuniversitetet (SE), Uninettuno (IT) and Effebi Association (IT) prepare new follow-up application for Eramus+ to further-develop and disseminate the main results of ISOlearn.
- The partnership will create national network to highlights obstacle regarding implementation as basis for new project ideas.
- Initiative to create a European network for inclusion policy in higher education will be started.
- The partnership will continue active dissemination of the Handbook and Quality Label in their local and regional networks as well as through relevant events, seminar and conferences.