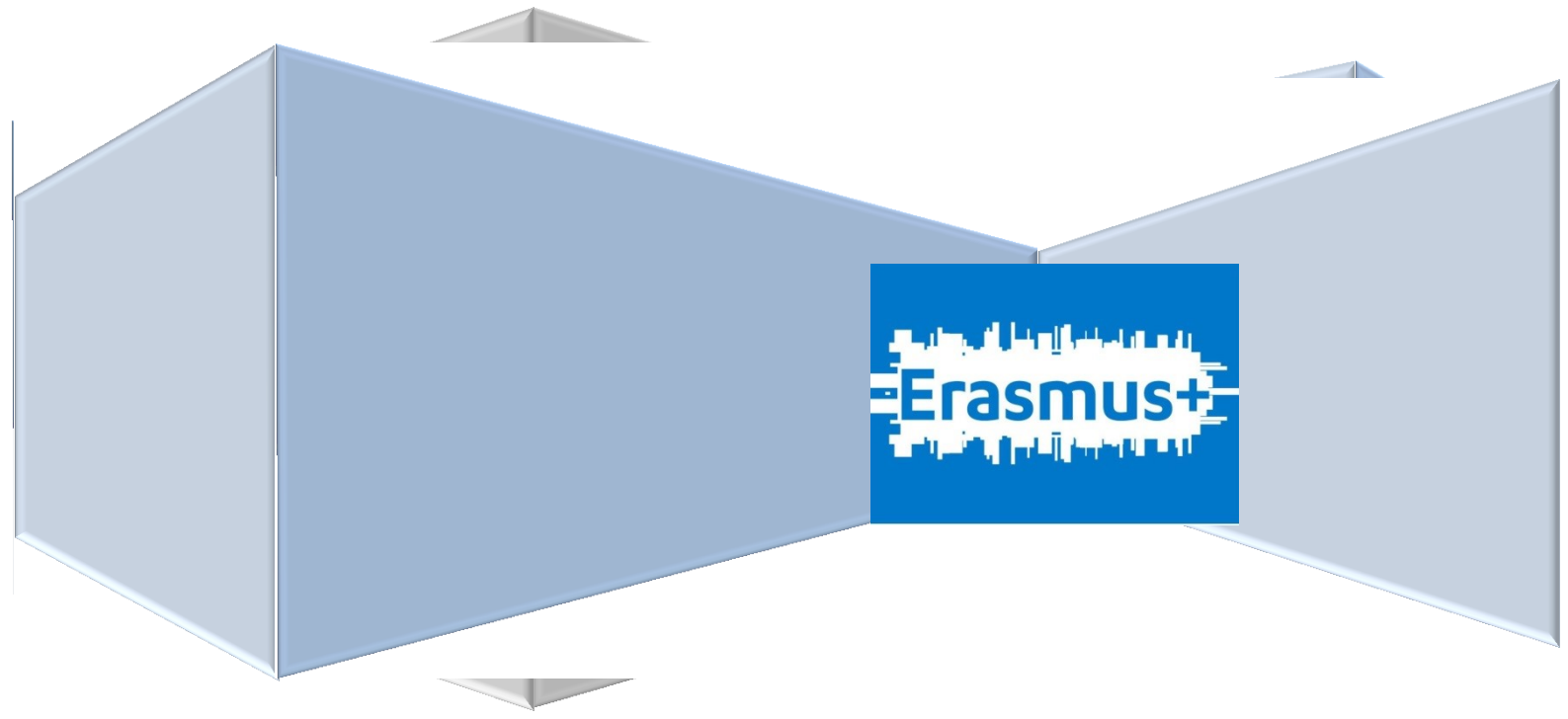
Do’s and Don’ts for Applicants

Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education in Erasmus+



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KA2 Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education – Do's and Don'ts

What is this Guide about?

This document has been created in order to give applicants in the area of Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education some tips for the successful submission of their project proposal. It has been developed by a working group of nine National Agencies for Erasmus+ (Archimedes Foundation Estonia, CIMO Finland, Agence Erasmus+ France/Education Formation, NA DAAD Germany, Erasmus+ National Agency/INDIRE Italy, NA Erasmus+/ EP NUFFIC Netherlands, Foundation for the Development of the Education System Poland, OAPEE Spain, British Council United Kingdom). The document is considered as an additional help to check if your application is well-written but does by no means replace the official documents provided by the EU-Commission such as the EU Call 2016 and the Programme Guide 2016. We strongly advise to carefully read all relevant documents (see section 'Where to find the relevant documents').

What is a strategic partnership and what is it not?

Strategic Partnerships aim to support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices at organizational, local, regional, national or European levels. Institutions of Higher Education can work with others (other sector fields, enterprises, social partners etc.) to help to improve higher education across Europe and to deliver high quality education which is relevant to national and European labor market needs.

Erasmus+ offers great flexibility in terms of the activities that Strategic Partnerships can implement, as long as the application demonstrates that these activities are the most appropriate ones to reach the objectives defined for the project.

Please note: A Strategic Partnership is a new action within the field of Higher Education. Make sure your project really fits the goals and priorities of Strategic Partnerships. Do not use 'old' action types of LLP. A Strategic Partnership is neither an Intensive Programme nor two or three Intensive Programmes combined in one project nor the running of a Erasmus Mundus Programme. Do not confuse Strategic Partnerships with other actions in Erasmus+. For example, a project focused on individual mobility can only be funded within Erasmus+ KA1.

What does the term 'strategic' mean in a Strategic Partnership project?

Strategic Partnerships are intended to develop and support the internationalization (strategy) of the organizations involved; keeping in mind the long-term and overall objectives they want to reach through the partnership. Project results should be substantial in terms of quality and prove they could not be achieved by a single institution. The project must also be sustainable and its European added value has to be mentioned explicitly.

Since a Strategic Partnership should support the internationalization of the organizations involved, Strategic Partnerships are to reflect the commitment not only of single persons but the joint effort of each partner's entire institution. It is not meant to be an 'isolated product' developed by individuals.

What is an innovative project?

Make sure to demonstrate the innovation with a well-researched and evidenced-based needs analysis. The Strategic Partnership has to be innovative for the partnership consortium and for this kind of education project in general. It is, for example, not enough to involve e-learning in your project. You should be explicit. What is innovative about this approach?

- How to define innovative? ➔ "There is no one single definition. But innovation as described in the Innovation Union plan broadly means change that speeds up and improves the way we conceive, develop, produce and access new products, industrial processes and services. Changes that create more jobs, improve people's lives and build greener and better societies." (European Commission website : http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-10-473_fr.htm)

Important hints

Applicants should be realistic and demonstrate their ability to undertake such projects. The subject should be clearly related to the priorities of Strategic Partnerships and to the project aims.

Where to find the relevant documentation?

All documents needed for application are listed under:
http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/guide/documents-applicants_en.htm
The following relevant documents can be found there.

Erasmus Call 2016 and supporting documents

- ⇨ Information about priorities, deadlines, activities
- ⇨ Information about the application form and annexes, the guide for application for the PIC

Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2016 (Erasmus+ Programme Guide (pages 105-122)

- ⇨ Specific Information about Strategic Partnerships concerning formal conditions, financial rules, requirements

Erasmus+ Guide for Experts

- ⇨ Information on the award criteria and assessment process:

Policy reference documents

- ⇨ Policy document with targets EU 2020

NA-Websites

- ⇨ Here you find a list of all National Agencies and their website
- ⇨ Specific NA information on Strategic Partnerships: www.siu.no

Good practices

- ⇨ Link to funded projects

When should I start?

Before you start, please be aware that you need time to develop a project idea for your Strategic Partnership. You need to contact suitable partners and make cooperation arrangements with them and within your own institution. You and your partners need enough time to write the proposal, read the documents and fill in the e-form. Maybe you need permission within your institution to develop a project and you will need support of other units in your own institution as well as signatures from the president of your university.

Important hints

Make sure that all partners are involved in the preparation of the project (design, development, writing, etc.). It is recommended not to finish the application at the very last minute before the deadline. Also, make sure to let an external person read your application to be as coherent as possible.

Call 2016: deadline for Strategic Partnerships (KA2) → 31.03.2016, 12:00h Brussels time.

Fields, priorities and topics of Strategic Partnerships

Do you understand the difference between field, priority, topic and subject?

In the application form:

-"Fields" choose the application form for the sectorial field of the project (Higher education, School education, VET, Adult education). If your project mainly addresses issues related to higher education you should choose "Strategic partnership for higher education".

- "Priority" refers to the link between your project and the priorities of Erasmus+ for Higher education. It has to be chosen in section "C" of the application form. Before choosing a priority from the drop down menu, please check the ones addressing higher education in the Erasmus + 2015 Guide. You have to choose at least one horizontal or one field-specific priority. However, you are recommended to choose at least one horizontal AND one field-specific priority" (max. three of each).

- "Topics" refers to the more concrete themes that are addressed by your project. It has to be chosen in section "E" of the application form and should be in direct line with the specific objectives of your project. Be as specific as possible and do not list too many topics, only the core ones should be selected (2 or 3) e.g. access for disadvantaged, Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship education, EU Citizenship, EU awareness and Democracy.

-"Subject": project content

What kind of subjects can be chosen?

Academic subjects:

- E.g. 'Educational Network on Soil and Plant Ecology'

Horizontal/transversal subjects (ICT, e-learning, entrepreneurship, student services, quality assurance, systemic impact):

- e.g. 'Open Distributed European Virtual Campus on ICT Security'
- e.g. 'Detecting and Preventing Drop out from Higher Education or Supporting Students to Switch Successfully to VET'
- e.g. 'Marketing Communication Innovativeness of European Entrepreneurs'

Cross-sectoral projects

Please be aware that in the 2015 application form cross-sectoral projects can be defined as such only by the means of description of the project, the partnership composition, chosen priorities and target groups. There is no separate application form any longer!

Do you understand the characteristics of a cross-sectoral project?

These projects involve cross-sectoral cooperation. This means developing, testing, adapting and implementing innovative practices between different educational sectors and other socio-economic actors. In this sense, cross-sectoral refers to applications addressing a topic that is relevant for more than one field of education, training and youth and that involves actors from the different fields concerned.

- ⇨ Is your cooperation based on a genuine partnership that will benefit all fields involved in the partnership?
- ⇨ Does the project theme relate to all sectors involved?
- ⇨ Does the project include representatives from all sectors involved?
- ⇨ Will the project genuinely benefit all sectors involved, through its objectives, activities and impact (the project may impact one sector more strongly than others).

Important hints

- ⇨ Please be aware that the involvement of organizations from different fields is not a sufficient element in order to highlight the cross-sectoral character of the project.
- ⇨ Cross-sectoral projects are expected to benefit different target groups in order to be considered for funding.
- ⇨ Please be aware that a project between one educational sector and enterprises is not cross-sectoral by itself (e.g. university-enterprise cooperation is NOT cross-sectoral but belongs to SP in Higher Education)

Inclusion of partner countries (3rd country partners)

Do you understand the difference between programme and partner countries?

Please refer to pp. 21-24 in the Programme Guide

By nature, Strategic Partnerships are intra-European networks/partnerships. You can add partners from non-programme countries (partner countries) if your project is able to fulfill the following conditions:

You will be required to give detailed information concerning the partner country's role in the project in order to prove the essential European added value for its participation.

The added value of a partner country participation depends on the special expertise of the organization concerned with respect to the project outcomes, provided that no other programme countries have the skills to give such a contribution.

- ⇨ Is this partner really unique?
- ⇨ Can it be replaced by a European partner?

⇨ Would all the outputs, results in the project be achieved without the Partner country partner?

Important hints
Please be aware that your project will not be considered for selection if the European added value of the partner country institution is not clearly justified!!! The applicant must provide all the evidences when justifying the partner country's role in the project e.g. unique contribution, analysis, comparative studies, etc.

Detailed explanation of award criteria

Strategic Partnerships are assessed by external evaluators according to four relevant award criteria that are written in the Programme Guide. Special attention should be given to the details of the award criteria as they are the core elements of the evaluation of your project.

The following questions (analogue to the award criteria in the Programme Guide) have been developed to help you understand the assessment aspects and give you a better idea **what the experts seek in your project proposal**. Make sure you have paid enough attention to these questions and fully described the content of your project activities, management and implementation, as the **independent experts will only evaluate what you have written.**

Please read the Award Criteria (Guide for Experts pp. 7 ff)!

Put yourself in the shoes of the assessor: Is the information clear, concise and complete? Is the evidence convincing and realistic?

Relevance of the project

- Did you choose at least one horizontal or sector-specific priority? See Programme Guide (p. 107).
- Did you describe how your objectives are linked with the priorities?
- Does the proposal demonstrate a strong link with policy objectives?
- Is the proposal based on solid need analysis?
- Is the project in line with the target group needs?
- Is your proposal innovative/extraordinary and do the evaluators see that?
- Does the project provide new solutions to the problems, challenges and needs identified?

Quality of the project design and implementation

- Can you visualize your project activities step by step? Can you compare it with a 'film script'?
- Does the proposal demonstrate a clear and realistic work plan/plan of activities?

- Does the timetable of the project correspond to the activities planned in the descriptive part of the application?
- Did you think about the quality control measures? Have you done a risk analysis?
- Does your proposal offer value for money? Would you support it?
- Are the training/teaching and learning activities linked with the project objectives?
- Have you foreseen the recognition of learning outcomes of the teaching/training/learning activities?
- Do all Intellectual Outputs planned fulfill the definition of Intellectual Outputs (see p. 119)
- Are the Intellectual Outputs linked with the project objectives?
- Did you describe and justify the way the project will be implemented?

Quality of the project team & cooperation

- Do you have reliable partners to reach the project objectives?
- Does each partner have a strategic role and responsibilities related to their role in the project? Are they committed to the project? Did they read and agree upon the project proposal?
- Do your partners have enough human, financial and organizational resources to implement the project efficiently, effectively and professionally?
- Did you agree upon financial arrangements with your partners? Did you describe that in the application (Application Form section F.1.)?
- Did you describe all the aspects of project management mechanism (effective communication, promotion, problem solving, monitoring, evaluation etc.)?
- If applicable: Have you provided convincing evidence to participation of a Partner Country organization?

Impact, dissemination and sustainability

- Have you read the dissemination part (Annex II) of the E+ Programme Guide?
- Did you define your target groups and do you have appropriate tools to reach them?
- Does your project have a substantial positive impact on all the stakeholders (on European, national, regional, organizational and individual levels)?
- Did you foresee methods (indicators and tools) to measure your outcomes/impacts (qualitative/quantitative)?
- Are your project results widely accessible?
- Will your project impact remain after the project is finished? Do you have a clear idea on how you will achieve it after the funding ends? Did you describe it?

- Does your proposal include a strategic dissemination plan (e.g. multiplier events, other events/seminars, networks, different channels, social media)?

Additional important questions

- What are the demands/needs that the proposal is based on?
- How have these needs been identified (background, pre-studies, needs analysis)?
- How does the project relate to your own organization's activities and to the activities of other organizations involved?
- What added value does transnational cooperation bring to the project?
- How does the project relate to national demands/needs (for all partners involved)?
- Implementation: How will the project solve the problems and the challenges identified?
- If applicable: what has been done in the past? Do you take advantage of previous achievements and know-how?

Important hints

Before submitting your application form, make sure all partners in the proposed project have read and agreed the content and budget of the project! We also recommend "experts" outside the consortium to read your project proposal and to give their opinion – is everything clear, concise and logical.

Preparation of a Project Management Plan

In order to write a good application and to ensure that a well-planned project management is visible already at application stage you should check if you have considered the following details:

- Do you have a clear plan on how you will implement your project?
- Have you described the activities that are to be implemented in order to achieve the outputs/results/goals?
- Did you define all the activities in different stages of the project (number of transnational meetings, travels, number of participants, partners and personnel involved, number of working days, subcontracting etc.)?
- Are the activities coherently presented in the GANTT Chart?
- Did you allocate enough time for implementing different activities?
- Did you define the partners involved with each activity and the partner leading the respective activity?

For this part please see application form sections *F. Project Management* and *G. Implementation*

Budget Modules - additional hints

Strategic Partnerships present a great flexibility in terms of activities that can be carried out, provided that the proposal demonstrates that these activities are the most appropriate to reach the objectives defined for the project.

You can combine the modules according to the needs of your project. It is not a must to apply for all budget categories. However please be aware that Intellectual Outputs and Multiplier Events are linked to each other. For a detailed explanation of each module please consult the Programme Guide (pp. 118 ff.)

The following modules are BASED ON UNIT COSTS:

Project Management and Implementation

- Nine partners and the coordinating institution can be funded in full (9+1). However, the partnership can contain more than 9 partner institutions. If so the amount for this budget module will be recalculated automatically according to the number of partner institutions.
- Nevertheless the grant of the project management and implementation per partner can be shared (has to be agreed on within the consortium) according to the distribution of tasks, workload or as the partners find it fair.

Transnational Project Meetings

- Can take place in a *partner* country AND a *programme* country that is part of the partnership
- The need to organize a Transnational Project Meeting in a *partner* country has to be clearly justified
- In general: number of participants and number of meetings must be justified
- Distance band: The unit cost is calculated on the basis of one way distance; however, the related grant is a contribution to the expenses for travelling in both directions
- A Transnational Project Meeting is a meeting of project partners which has to have a direct focus on issues of project management and implementation.

Intellectual Outputs

What is an Intellectual Output?

Intellectual Outputs are a very important part of a proposal for a Strategic Partnership, and they are especially crucial for a Higher Education application. Therefore, make sure you draft them very carefully. The following explanations are intended to make clear what can be an output and what it is not.

An Intellectual Output has to:

- Contribute to the general objective of the project
- Be proportional to the objectives of the project
- Include tangible deliverables and elaborated materials related to the project
- Be substantial in quality and quantity to qualify for this kind of grant support
- Be an output that goes beyond the results and deliverables regularly produced by the participating organisations, as part of their regular activities/business
- Contain the element of innovation
- Show potential impact within the organizations and if relevant within other sectors and levels (local, regional, national, etc.) in order to exploit and to disseminate it to a wider public
- have open access for the public: it has to be made freely available and promoted through open licences and not contain disproportionate limitations

Examples of an Intellectual Output

Definition of competences/language lexicon, (distance) learning module, creation/adaptation of a platform for sharing best practices or learning new skills within a network, assessment methodology and materials, joint curricula, digital modules/resources for learning/teaching/training, library of re-usable OER, qualitative and quantitative analysis of network interactions, methodological framework for improving career management skills, methodological approach, mobile applications, specific software, policy recommendations at different levels.

Results that are not considered Intellectual Outputs

Considering that an Intellectual Output must deliver results which go beyond the regular activities of the participating organisations, the following results are not considered Intellectual Outputs in the framework of Strategic Partnerships for higher education:

leaflet, website, needs analysis, blogs, wikis, newsletters, small scale learning/teaching/training materials, virtual cooperation and local project activities (e.g. (master) class-room project work with learners is a learning/teaching/training activity), organization and mentoring of embedded learning/training activities, etc., information, promotion and dissemination (e.g. brochures, , web information, etc.), comparative reports, surveys and guidelines

intended for internal use for the project, face-to-face trainings, organization of events/transnational meetings, any learning/training/teaching activities.

Important hints

- A "normal" project website must be funded through Project Management and Implementation budget! Publication material (leaflet, brochures, etc) related to the project can be funded through Project Management and Implementation budget. On the other hand, for instance, the creation/ adaptation of a collaborative platform can perfectly fit into Intellectual Outputs.

- You cannot apply for Multiplier Events, if they are not directly related to an Intellectual Outputs. If you fail to finalize the Intellectual Output then your Multiplier Events will not be funded.

- Not every single partner must be involved in every single Intellectual Output. However, the role of every single partner institution must be justified in a detailed way. (e-form: Field D.1.2 Background and experience compulsory for coordinator and all partner institutions!)

- You cannot apply for Multiplier Events, if they are not directly related to an Intellectual Outputs. If you fail to finalize the Intellectual Output then your Multiplier Events will not be funded.

- Not every single partner must be involved in every single Intellectual Output. However, the role of every single partner institution must be justified in a detailed way. (eForm: Field D.1.2 Background and experience compulsory for coordinator and all partner institutions!)

- The beneficiaries shall not subcontract any activities funded from the budget category Intellectual Outputs.

- The amount provided for intellectual outputs is based on the calculation of the human resources (i.e. staff per hour) needed to produce each output.

- There are four categories of staff: managers; teacher/trainer/researcher; technician; administrative staff. However, this grant item cannot be used to contribute to staff costs for activities already covered by the grant item "Project management and implementation", which will cover a wide variety of activities and smaller scale outputs of the project, including the tasks related to programme management. Therefore, additional staff costs for managers and administrative staff can only be applied for in the budget section for Intellectual Outputs in exceptional and duly justified cases. You have to justify in detail the special additional need of managers and administrative staff within the description of the concerned Intellectual Output, in order to be funded.

- e-form: There are 5.000 characters within the field "output description" → please use them and be as clear and detailed as possible! Describe the different stages of the output (e.g. preparation, implementation, follow-up including dissemination).

Multiplier Events

- Can take place in a *partner* country AND a *programme* country that is part of the partnership. The need to organize a Multiplier Event in a *partner* country has to be clearly justified
- Must be linked to an Intellectual Output.
- The grant amount for organising the Multiplier Event (catering, location, technical equipment, etc.) is based on unit costs calculated ONLY for external participants who are attending the event and not project partners.
- Members of the partnership can take part in the Multiplier Event, but receive no funding from this budget heading. However, they can combine their Transnational Project Meeting with a Multiplier Event or use Project Management and Implementation funds.

Learning/teaching/training activities

- In general: can only take place in *programme* countries
- They have to bring added value to the project
- Students from *partner* countries can participate but don't receive any funding
- Staff from *partner* countries teaching in Intensive Study Programmes can participate and receive funding
- Joint staff training events in *partner* countries or staff coming from *partner* countries attending to joint staff training events in *programme* countries can participate and receive funding
- Students and teachers from *programme* countries can participate and receive funding
- One day before and one day after the activity can be used for travelling (must be justified through activity programme)
- Intensive Study Programmes have to support the aims of the project
- Distance Band: the unit cost is calculated on the basis of one way distance; however, the related grant is a contribution to the expenses for travelling in both directions.

The following modules are BASED ON REAL COSTS

Exceptional costs

- Some examples: high quality translations of modules, translator for a Multiplier Event, sign language translator within an Intensive Study Programme, specific related project equipment, domain of a website;

- The following examples **are not** considered as exceptional costs: catering, staff for an Intellectual Output and Project Management and Implementation and in general the acquisition of any kind of basic equipment that cannot be provided directly by the participating organizations during the lifetime of the project and must contribute directly to the development to the project.

Special needs support

- Have a look at the footnote on page 119 (what is covered by the costs for special needs) and page 310 (definition of people with special needs) E+ Programme Guide.

Proportionality of activities and budget

Please be aware that there should be a congruency between activities and budget. The estimates should be realistic because the external evaluators will evaluate this aspect during their financial plausibility check. Make sure to check if you have considered the following details:

- Cost-effectiveness: Are all activities, partners necessary to achieve the goals of the project?
- Are all activities eligible in the category the applicant has chosen? – Assess the unit costs parallel with the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.
- Does each partner have an essential role in the project (justify partner's budget)?
- Take a minute and put yourself in the shoes of the external evaluator and try to assess: is the amount of money the applicant is asking for right in relation to the intellectual outcomes, planned impact, contributions to the chosen priorities? Would you support it?
- Have you prepared "a shadow budget" with the real costs in order to estimate the amount of co-financing?
- If applicable: Did you clearly justify and explain the exceptional costs?

Explanations for optimal use of e-form

The e-form is the most relevant document for convincing the external evaluators about your application. Therefore, make sure to be as concise and yet detailed as possible. Many fields will only pop up if you click + or choose 'yes' from the dropdown menu.

All technical details concerning the e-form can be found at www.siu.no.

Important hints

- Email address of contact person: it will be used for official communication between NA and coordinating unit (no general email address of the International Relation Office but the personal email address!). Later on, this email address will be used to log into Mobility Tool+ ;
- The Name of the Legal Representative: the President, the Rector of a University (not a professor who is in charge of international affairs) or CEO of an institution if not a university. The Legal Representative must sign the Declaration of Honour and the Mandates;
- You have to print and upload all the pages of the Declaration of Honour;
- You have to upload the Gantt Chart as timetable;
- Please try to provide the signed mandates together with the electronic application form at application stage (at the latest before contracting);
- All HEIs from *programme* Countries (partner or coordinator) must hold a valid ECHE; partners from *partner* countries do not
- Keep a saved copy of your application;
- In Strategic Partnerships the term 'Work packages' don't exist (like it did in other projects under LLP)

Contact Information

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