

NEWSLETTER ISSUE#2

- May 2020



Highlights in Issue #2

- Management issues
- Study visit news
- Covid-19 update
- What has happened since the release of Newsletter Issue #1?

STAIRS 2019-2022

The purpose of our newsletter is to collect and publish project-related events and developments as well as to share new materials for a certain period of time to keep the partnership well-informed and up-to-date. It is important for us that the status of our common project is transparent for the whole partnership.



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MANAGEMENT ISSUES

2nd PM (26-27 September 2019, Varaždin, Croatia) with 23 participants – Project partners expressed general satisfaction with meeting. Mixed feelings were expressed regarding working atmosphere, which highlighted the complexity of working with others across cultures, expectations, and management styles.

Change in Management – Marianna Szűcs resigned as project coordinator, Adél Csernovitz took her place (effective 1 January 2020).

1st financial reports – successfully submitted by all partners.

Study Visits in spring 2020 – cancelled due to Covid-19 situation. Details see below.

CANVAS course – created, shared with and approved by partnership as platform for preparation for study visits and collaboration afterwards.

3rd PM (7 May 2020, online with Zoom) with 20 participants successfully delivered.

Interim report – Agency approved postponement. New due date is 31 October 2020. Partners are to submit their contribution to TPF by 30 September 2020.

All current tasks have been **assigned** and updated at [Teamwork](#).

STUDY VISIT NEWS

Preparations for study visits to Ireland and Portugal as well as 4th PM (originally 3rd) put on hold until further notice due to Covid-19 situation. Scenarios concerning impact of Covid-19 situation on project tasks and due dates currently being drafted and soon to be sent to partners by TPF.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Agency launched [COVID-19 information page](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/coronavirus-impact_en) (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/coronavirus-impact_en) announcing two measures to apply:

1) Eligibility of costs in ongoing actions or contracts

Where individuals who were to take part in mobilities, meetings or events are prevented from doing so, for example owing to their recent contact with someone suffering from the virus or their presence in an area considered to be at high risk, EACEA may consider as eligible expenses of travel or accommodation that could not be cancelled and which are not reimbursed from other sources provided that the beneficiaries/contractors/experts submit relevant supporting documents in this sense (in particular that they have claimed reimbursement and that it was denied).*

2) Where COVID-19 prevents implementation of action or contract

Where the execution of contracts is impeded because of COVID-19 (for example due to unavailability of key staff, the impossibility of carrying on work in a zone affected by the virus or any other case which can be regarded as force majeure), EACEA may accept replacement activities or delayed performance. This could be done following a justified request by the beneficiary/contractor/expert to amend the contract including by extending the period of its implementation/ performance.

What has happened since the release of Newsletter Issue #1?

We believe that regular reporting regarding partnership progress creates transparency and supports trust building. We asked each partner to summarise their last few months as well as their status quo in a few sentences.

- **P1 Tempus Public Foundation (TPF) --- Budapest, HU**

The second half of the year of 2019 and the first two months of the year 2020 were quite busy for the TPF. We managed to finalise country reports, produce the Methodology that helps all partners prepare for study visits, upload case studies created by the Irish and Portuguese partners to the ESLPlus portal, create and publish the STAIRS leaflet, organise two engaging and successful workshops (Apple on the Tree) for stakeholders (teachers, school principals, etc.), a prep workshop for the experts we are working together with, and create a course in Canvas to smoothen the work of all experts working along with partners in the project.

Due to Covid-19 situation, most of us still work remotely. Schools and kindergartens are shut down, too. This is a challenging situation because our roles are colliding; we are teachers, mothers, project team members, and it is hard to separate our personal and professional lives. We understand that we are living epic times and there might be useful things to be learnt.

The Tempus Public Foundation is stable and its operation has been reorganised to carry out the majority of tasks online. Since 16 March, we are working remotely and all conditions have been secured.

Our project team is operational. As for distribution of tasks within our team, Berci is Head of Unit, Adél is project coordinator, Erika deals with dissemination activities, Emőke with administrative and financial tasks. Marianna has returned to team and works full time again.

There is a change in the Hungarian experts team. We continue to work with two of our original experts, Eszter Szegedi and Enikő Gönczöl, but replace Ferenc Arató with a new expert, Petra Földes.

- **P2 Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias (CeIED) --- Lisbon, PT**

We started to get prepared for study visits, plan our trip to Ireland, and draft study visit schedule to Portugal. We also started to sign up our experts, make contacts, etc. As a result of Covid-19 situation, work from home started on 25 March. Face to face activities are possible from September only. Travels abroad not yet confirmed. Consequences regarding cancellation of study trips needed to be dealt with at least to not lose money.

We prepared our participation in 3rd PM. Following meeting, we published project news in our Newsletter#168.

We are about to start work on Change Management Toolkit, due date of draft version is November 2020.

- **P3 Mary Immaculate College (MIC) --- Limerick, IE**

This period has been a time of great contrast. We returned from Varaždin, full of enthusiasm for the project. From September to December we met Irish experts involved with the five Irish case studies and firmed up ideas about the Irish study visit originally planned for March 2020. We also finalised the study visit schedule. Prior to January although there were the normal amount of fits and starts, re-thinking amendments and refinement of plans and work, looking back with hindsight, everything went more or less to plan and with acceptable timing. Since January – thanks to the pandemic –

every aspect of life has been turned upside down, and intention has been the hallmark rather than actuality. We have had to cancel the study meeting due in March 2020. A course that was coming together well, and taken together with the visit planned by Lisbon, addressed the majority of the objectives and all foreseeable identified in all the work and outputs produced by the STAIRS team as a whole. Fine tuning and added insights should have followed. A comprehensive team of experts, premises and materials was in fruition. Luckily, this team and the materials can with good fortune follow in the future when the restrictions we are all suffering (lockdowns, travel restrictions and curbs on multiple gatherings, etc.) have been raised across our STAIRS project countries. (MIC campus planned to open on 28 September 2020.)

Whilst the most recent online PM clarified some moves forward, it can never replace the quality of interaction and understanding produced by being together for some time in a common physical place.

- **P4 Varaždinska županija (VC) --- Varazdin, HR**

As mentioned earlier, Romana left the project and Silvija is taking care of her tasks, too.

During the past few months, we started to sign up and prepare experts for study visits to Limerick (Ireland) and Lisbon (Portugal). For the purposes of public contracts a procurement procedure was conducted and experts were selected to participate in study visits and other activities within the project. Two workshops were held with experts where they were introduced to project activities. Travel and accommodation was organised to Limerick, due to COVID-19 situation, trip was cancelled. After cancellation, we booked new tickets for agreed study visit dates in the autumn. We also participated in two webinars and 3rd online PM organised by lead partner. All experts are instructed regarding use of CANVAS. Despite sudden and unpredictable situation, we managed to carry out planned activities.

- **P5 Centrum aplikovaného výzkumu a dalšího vzdělávání (CAVDV) --- Písek, CZ**

The situation is steady but changes are very unpredictable. Universities only open for final exams. Schools will open soon, but just for grades 1-4 and only for 15 kids per classroom. Parents can decide whether they want to send their kids or not.

We got prepared for meeting in Varaždin, attended by Glynn Kirkham, and external evaluator, Josef Huber. After the meeting, project team members were informed regarding results of meeting. We managed to sign up experts to participate in study visits and work afterwards. In cooperation with experts, we prepared dissemination plan and finalised country report as well as managed to set further tasks for period.

At his own request, extra evaluator Josef Huber resigned and was replaced and actively involved by Ing. Jana Marková, who has many years of experience with national and international projects funded by the EU.

Since March, due to impact of Covid-19 situation, cooperation can only take place electronically.

- **P6 Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje (CPI) --- Ljubljana, SI**

Since October 2019, CPI project team has changed. Barbara Bauman, Alenka Turičnik, Vedran Jakačič and Jure Šuligoj are now involved in project activities. In recent months, we have prepared a national report in which, among other things, we formulated our needs in the field of inclusive education. We divided the focus into students with low socio-economic status and students with special education needs enrolled in vocational education.

We signed up 3 external experts altogether. We have already started preparations for study visits with all SLO experts (including external experts selected by ERI). We first held a preparation workshop for them at the CPI, and then, based on the Hungarian example, we prepared matrix/map of local values, evidence-based challenges and mutual learning needs according to the country report. The matrix will enable us to prepare for study visits and elaborate our national adaptation plan as well as contribute to European Adaptation Guidelines.

Due to Covid-19 situation, all CPI staff work from home. All educational institutions were closed, which means that all of our children stay home. Nevertheless, we have managed to realise all planned tasks so far.

We intend to motivate our experts to actively participate in CANVAS course as preparation for study visits.

- **P7 Pedagoški inštitut (ERI) --- Ljubljana, SI**

Urška is being replaced by Igor. She will be on maternity leave in a few weeks, and Igor is going to be project coordinator on behalf of the ERI in the STAIRS project.

Since last summer, ERI has remained an active partner in the project. Tempus Public Foundation's effective leadership contributed to all project tasks being performed well. We actively participated in 2nd PM in Varaždin and 3rd PM held online. Furthermore, we have successfully coordinated project activities with our colleagues from CPI at the national level. We have finalised our country report and started preparations for study visits, including an introductory workshop with our experts to complete the Matrix of Challenges based on our country report for Ireland and Portugal. We have encountered several challenges in terms of staff turnover and COVID-19 pandemic, but we remain positive. Thus, by adding new forces we are energised and looking forward to successful continuation of project.

Varaždin (2nd) and ZOOM (3rd) PARTNER MEETINGS (26-27 September 2019 and 7 May 2020)

