

Workshop 4

Language training activities and intercultural learning

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This workshop has been held twice, both groups of participants were quite international.

The main topic of the workshop was: “Language training and intercultural learning are important aims of staff training activities. Sometimes they are the core of staff training mobility but more often they are seen as important side effects of mobility.”

To begin with, the participants were asked to discuss the needs or challenges with their neighbour. Each participant wrote the most important point on a moderation card and explained it to the audience.

After this brief brainstorming, the two thematic inputs of Susanne Wille, Bauhaus University Weimar and Nicolai Sawczynski, FH Technikum Wien University of Applied Sciences were held with a focus on how their higher education institutions use Erasmus+ and other funding schemes to enhance language and intercultural competencies among their staff.

The moderation cards and the presentations were the basis of the following discussions how staff could truly improve competences by means of staff training activities. Both groups had lively discussions and very constructive suggestions.

To summarize three recommendations can be presented:

1. **Structural integration:** The staff training activities to enhance language and intercultural competencies should not only be written down in the Internationalisation Strategy of each higher education institution but should also be realized. For this the active support of the management is needed. On one hand the financial support is an important aspect, on the other hand the recognition by the Human Resource (HR) department is essential, such as career prospects, certificates or a final event after the training and / or mobility activities.
2. **Communication:** Especially the internal services like HR departments, financial departments or administration departments are not (fully) informed about the possibilities and the benefits of language and intercultural trainings. For convincing these departments it is important to use the “right” language for the different target groups, e.g. when talking with the financial department mentioning the Return of Investment or the opportunity costs.
3. **Motivation:** Not everybody likes to go abroad or feels comfortable using another language than their mother tongue. It is important to reduce fear, for instance by having ambassadors who can report about their positive international experiences or allowing pair or group travels to avoid being abroad alone.