



Brussels,
EACEA/A1

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Programme	Erasmus+
Action	KA - Knowledge Alliances
Proposal	EAC/A02/2019
Application No	621580-EPP-1-2020-1-DE-EPPKA2-KA
Title	Systematic Innovation Methodology
Decision	REJECTED

Dear Applicant,

You have submitted an application to the Erasmus + Programme 2020 call for proposals for the action specified above. The call for proposals closed on 26 February 2020. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) received 217 applications for this call.

I am writing to inform you about the selection decision taken by the Head of Department of the Agency, acting in her capacity as authorising officer, based on the recommendations of an Evaluation Committee.

I regret to inform you that your application has not been selected for EU co-funding.

It received 42/100 points however given the available budget only applications with a score of 81/100 points and above could be selected for funding.

For your information, out of the 216 eligible applications, 30 have been selected for funding and 2 have been placed on a reserve list.

Attached to this letter (annex1), you will find an evaluation report by the Evaluation Committee. Please take into account that most of the evaluation reports were written by non-native speakers.

We thank you for the interest you have shown in the programme and the time and effort you have invested in preparing your application. This decision is in no way a negative reflection on the value and importance of your project.

Yours sincerely,

José-Lorenzo VALLÉS

Head of Unit

Contact: EACEA-KNOWLEDGE-ALLIANCES@ec.europa.eu

Enclosure: Annex 1 - Evaluation Report



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Department A: Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps

Erasmus+ A1: European Higher Education

Information on legal remedies

You will find information on the available means of redress for challenging this decision under the following link:

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/legal-remedies-0_en

Should you experience problems accessing the link, please contact the Agency at EACEA-REDRESS@ec.europa.eu



Annex 1

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	Award Criteria	Experts' comments	Score	Max Score
1	Relevance of the proposal	<p>The main objective of the proposal is to raise awareness on the use of Systematic Innovation Methodologies (SIM) as transversal skills supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, and spread SIM through their inclusion in HEIs' educational offers. To achieve this purpose an alliance between universities and businesses with SIM experience is proposed, which claims to address the aims of the KA Action, in particular, boosting innovation, developing new approaches to teaching and learning, stimulating entrepreneurship and facilitating knowledge exchange between academia and industry. However, the project is very academic and little attention is paid to business engagement and practical side of the skills and networking. Relevance to the Knowledge Alliance aims is limited since the proposal does not substantiate the claim that it addresses the mismatch between future skills and promoting excellence in skills development.</p> <p>The rationale for proposing the project is only partially clear. The needs analysis is based on a few studies related to the application of the TRIZ methodology especially in teaching, but the linkage of TRIZ to SIM is not properly explained. The background information is very generic and does not include basic details on the challenges and needs for SIM competences in Europe and in particular in the participating countries. The proposal does not fully convince in demonstrating that there is a demand from industry for graduates having SIM-related transversal skills. Also, not much information is available on the successful application of SIM in innovation and entrepreneurship. The fact that Asian universities are applying these methodologies in training is encouraging but the proposal lacks data to assess the success of implementing SIM in other contexts.</p> <p>The definition of the set objectives is not well elaborated, and the definition of outputs and results is poor and unfocused. In particular, there is a lack of clarity with reference to the relevance of the aims of the project for the business partners and to the integration of the proposed alliance with the larger alliance established by the European TRIZ association; synergies with this existing initiative are of course valuable but it is not explained to what extent coordination will be ensured.</p> <p>The innovative aspects of the proposed project are not convincingly outlined. The description focuses on promoting and transferring existing academic knowledge rather than actively addressing gaps and developing innovative skills. The proposal claims that innovative teaching methods and materials will be developed but little information is offered on what the content of the new courses will be and how they will build on and complement the existing offer. From the description provided no aspects arise that make the approach distinctive and that can lead to innovative results, apart from the data teaching infrastructure in the field of SIM training and the collection of use cases.</p> <p>While the proposal argues that there is added value in consolidating SIM training activities at a European level, little evidence is presented to show how the project will be able to address skills gaps in the participating countries. The fact that the project outcome has the potential to be transferred to other HEIs wishing to enrich their teaching offer can only be deduced, as the section related to demonstrating the EU added value is not very explanatory in this regard.</p>	9	25



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2	Quality of the project design and implementation	<p>The organisation of the work is based on the application of the SCRUM methodology which in itself is an innovative way of designing the project around epics to which WPs are linked. The work programme includes 6 sprints, 6 months each, which will allow progressing the work at a pace. However, due to the fact that the needs and objective of the project lack basic definition, it is not possible to assess the efficiency and implementation arrangements of the project. The content of the respective work packages is generic and does not provide the necessary details on how the objectives will be achieved through the planned work streams. The description of outputs is scarce. The proposal fails to convince that the SCRUM approach is going to provide a comprehensive implementation framework given that the descriptions are chaotic and lack basic details and consistency.</p> <p>The preparatory work discusses analysis of the existing offers and digital tools of the partners, but it is not clear what will be the specific outcome of the work, other than to set up the digital, communication and organisational project infrastructure. The SIM Semantic Social Network (SSN) will be developed based on existing structures at the partner organisation in Germany but it is not evident to what extent that work is simply using the current system. The train the trainer sessions lack details and the necessary justification – moreover, the project will be charging participants a training workshop fee and only use the mobility budget as a travel grant. This fee-based approach weakens the justification for the project. Moreover, industry involvement is treated as a separate work package to be incorporated into the other work packages: this is not acceptable and undermines the key assumption of the KA approach of close collaborative effort in implementing the project. Project outputs will be separately assessed by industry, rather than involve business partners from the onset to design and shape the activities and deliverables. Practically all the implementation activities run in parallel and are not really interconnected. In WP2 a misalignment is noted between the purpose of the WP and its development into concrete tasks. An experimental WP10 is added, consisting of only one task, which is not effective.</p> <p>Learning mobilities are planned with reference to the train-the-trainers workshops; they will be an opportunity for exchange of knowledge and best practices which is well integrated in the project plan and can bring an added value for the achievement of the project objectives.</p> <p>The envisaged timelines are consistent with the project activities but reflect the lack of connectedness among the implementation WPs. The distribution of tasks and responsibilities is clearly described. The allocation of the work load into WPs presents an overestimation of resources to WP6 (project management) and, more in general, of administrative resources that do not correspond to the composition of the project teams involved.</p> <p>Quality assurance and evaluation are based on self-assessment and internal review under the ultimate responsibility of the coordinator. This is an agile system, that is certainly in line with the SCRUM methodology, but doubts arise that it represents an effective way of ensuring quality of processes and deliverables. The proposed self-assessment reports produced by the partners assessing their own work are a rather odd approach given that evaluation and monitoring should take account of the overall consortium and project rather than separately of each partner and their work. The lead partner will then use the individual reports to produce public reports, but it will not conduct its own analysis instead using the self-assessment reports as the source of information. This is likely to produce reporting that is not objective. Evaluation of the outcomes is not adequate, as it will focus on measuring the satisfaction of participants only. Recognition is not considered and instead of following a common approach some partners will establish their own certification, but details or explanation of how this will be prepared is missing.</p> <p>The budget has been allocated to the partners with a top-down approach but it is balanced between academic and business partners. The proposal does not sufficiently demonstrate that cost-effectiveness is appropriately considered; the principal issue of value for money, given the generic, limited scope of the project, and fee-charging for taking part in train the trainer session is questionable.</p>	10	25



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	Award Criteria	Experts' comments	Score	Max Score
3	Quality of the project team and the cooperation arrangements	<p>The project involves a balanced mix of universities and businesses which meets the requirements of the KA Call. Both the HEIs and the companies have experience in applying SIM (except for P7) and are therefore suitable to implement the proposed project. The demonstration that the proposed configuration has the required skills and expertise to implement the project aims is convincing. However, the description of the project coordinator does not indicate any project management experience, and it is not clear what competences are available for the financial and administrative management of the project.</p> <p>Most HEIs have the required capacity and qualifications, both at institutional and at project team level, to implement the project. However, for P7 and P8 the description of the project team is very synthetic and, especially for P7, it is not possible to assess its commitment in the project. For the rest of the partnership the allocation of tasks is consistent with the specific competences available.</p> <p>The contributions of HEIs and business partners are clearly identified, pertinent to the achievement of the project's objectives and complementary. Overall, the business partners, especially the industrial companies, play a less relevant role, but still a complementary one with respect to universities.</p> <p>Cooperation arrangements are described only briefly and there is no evidence that the consortium will adopt an inclusive and collaborative approach, encompassing all partners. The decision-making and conflict resolution mechanisms described are not fully appropriate for a collaborative project of this type. On the other hand, the presented SCRUM instruments are suitable for reporting and communication within the consortium, but it is not justified how the absence of a project coordination body will allow for an effective management.</p> <p>The benefits that the proposed project is expected to bring to the partners are clearly demonstrated both for the universities and the consultancy companies, that will be able to enrich their training offer, thanks to the exchange of best practices and development of common tools for SIM teaching. The proposal is less convincing in demonstrating the reward for the industrial companies involved.</p> <p>The involvement of a business partner from Belarus is explained, as the company has knowledge and experience in consultancy and training related to SIM, also at the international level. It is therefore expected that the partner would bring added value to the project activities.</p>	15	30



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4	Impact and dissemination	<p>The proposal adequately identifies the target groups reached by the alliance. They are divided into primary and secondary; the former includes HEIs and companies already active within the SIM training and users of SIM, and the latter include students, graduates, trainers, secondary education providers, political decision makers, regional development structures and business support organisations such as chambers of commerce. However, a proper exploitation strategy is absent, nor are dedicated exploitation tasks included in the plan of activities. The major efforts are directed at the enlargement of the network of organizations interested in applying SIM in terms of raising awareness. Overall, it is clear how universities and consultancy companies will use the project outcome, but this is less evident for the other types of companies that are still included in the primary target group.</p> <p>Dissemination will be done via the already existing websites, GitHub and social media. The dissemination strategy is based on synergies with existing initiatives such as the larger alliance coordinated by ETRIA, for which however insufficient information is provided. While using existing websites and platforms may seem like an efficient and cost effective approach, it is also rather risky or limiting in terms of reaching only the existing audience and stakeholders who are aware of or subscribe to the websites. The proposal does not make a conscious effort to mitigate that risk and explain its approach. Also, the proposal only briefly describes the envisaged dissemination tools and channels, including social media, and lacks information on the project branding and communication.</p> <p>The societal and economic impact that is expected to be generated by the proposed project is not fully demonstrated and is unbalanced towards the HEI side of the alliance. Given the poor needs analysis, limited relevance of activities and inappropriate approach to exploitation and dissemination, a limited impact will be achieved. This is also due to the fact that the link to increasing innovation capability and capacity of industry is never established. The measures to reach and engage with primary target groups are overestimated and based on an assumption that more organisations will be joining the project and will be prepared to pay a fee to take part in the train-the-trainer sessions. This is highly unrealistic given the lack of focus of the training, and is not fully explained in the proposal. An assumption that the project will be able to communicate with secondary target groups, primarily via the chambers is only valid for a small proportion of the groups. The identified indicators are realistic but reflect a lack of differentiation between short- and long-term impact which is not appropriate, also considering the choice to stratify the target groups to be reached by the project.</p> <p>The partnership is committed to make educational resources and materials developed within the project freely available. Appropriate tools and licenses are identified and no restrictions are envisaged.</p> <p>Although the issue of sustainability is a constitutive element, integrated in the design of the project, the planned sustainability measures are not fully realistic. The project assumes that the ongoing interest of primary and secondary groups will be sufficient for the project to continue after its end. However, there is no evidence of the actual level of interest of those groups in the proposal and no adequate activities are proposed to stimulate any further engagement.</p>	8	20
	TOTAL		42	100