

The FESC Training Toolkit

FESC – Framework for Erasmus Staff Competences

(Erasmus+ KA2-Project)

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1. What is the FESC Training Toolkit?

This FESC Training Toolkit provides you capacity building on a strategic level and will help you to understand the connection between staff competences and quality student mobility in Higher Education Institutions. Furthermore, it will show you how to bridge the gap between the internationalisation strategy of your institution and the human resource development strategy. Independently from available financial support or organizational (infra-) structure you can translate our project results in actual practice at your institution. We will present you examples for physical and virtual formats of training elements which address all staff members who are dealing with incoming and outgoing students on faculty level or in International Relation Offices. The Training Toolkit aims to improve the skills and competences of staff and helps with tackling the concrete issue of the competencies gap identified throughout our project but also gives you an explanation on how to use the FESC framework.

2. About the FESC Project

a. Main Objectives and the Target Groups of the Project

The internationalisation strategies of Higher Education Institutions involve, among many other, in particular the importance of a qualified performance of staff working in the field of international student mobility. As the requirements for the administration of mobility programmes increase in complexity, the need for clearly structured, comprehensive guidelines, as well as practical toolkits for training and peer-group learning for staff members is rapidly increasing. Thus, the Erasmus+ KA2 project “Framework for Erasmus+ Staff Competences” aims to assist higher education institutions in improving the quantity and quality of student mobility by creating a competence framework for staff members working with student mobility and by developing tools and guidelines for (self-) assessment purposes and professional development. The main purposes of the FESC project are as follows:

- Identify relevant skills, know-how and processes to acquire the necessary competencies for Higher Education staff working with student mobility;
- Create a framework which defines quality criteria for staff members working with student mobility that serves self-auditing purposes for institutions;
- Analyse how HEIs ensure relevant training for those staff members;
- Create tools and guidelines that enable staff members to understand and improve their competencies;
- Analyse how the current accreditation process for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education compares to the ESCAF, and make a policy proposal regarding the pertinence of establishing a European professional certification framework for staff members working on student mobility in the context of Erasmus+.

b. Approach and development of the project activities

to go one step further, gathering feedback on the draft Framework for Erasmus Staff Competences and intensifying the discussion with relevant stakeholders at the institutions.

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, the planned blended training session which had been foreseen as part of the project activities could not be implemented as planned, as all physical mobility was cancelled for the time being. Accordingly the concept and organization of the training activities had to be reconsidered and adapted to the new requirements. We designed four online training sessions for staff of different working fields. This new format had the advantage that we were able to invite more than 300 participants to our event. The participants could actively engage in live online polls during the sessions and gave important Input during the sessions as well as in the evaluation process.

In the final stage of the project, we were able to present the project Outputs and test all results of the project in the final conferences' online workshop with a small exclusive group what allowed for an intensive group work and differentiated feedback.

In addition to presentations by experts on the relevant topics, the main products of the FESC project, the [FESC Framework](#) and the [FESC Guidelines](#), were present and tested with the participants during both activities, the online sessions and the online conferences' workshop.

3. Training Toolkit

a. Physical Training Sessions Outline during the study visits (November 2019 – February 2020)

As part of the project, we organised six on-site study visits to gather qualitative data during individual interviews, small group interview sessions and workshops, in order to help refine the Erasmus+ Staff Competences Framework. Overall, 90 participants from six Higher Education Institutions across Europe took part in this study:

Marburg, Germany (hosting partner – University of Marburg)

Ghent, Belgium (hosting partner – Ghent University)

Groningen, Netherlands (hosting partner – Hanze University of Applied Sciences)

Warsaw, Poland (hosting partner – University of Warsaw)

Riga, Latvia (hosting partner – University of Latvia)

Saint Petersburg, Russia (hosting partner – Saint Petersburg State University)

The main objectives we pursued with the integrated workshops are as follows:

- Test the usability of the Framework by conducting individual and small-groups sessions and gathering qualitative data from the university staff members (international relations officers, departmental and institutional Erasmus coordinators, HR professionals, administrative staff and leadership);

- Collect feedback and identify key elements and aspects related to competence development;
- Improve the usability of the Framework;
- Conclude whether the above-mentioned goals were achieved.

Each workshop session had a pre-defined structure. The system followed the same step-by-step structure:

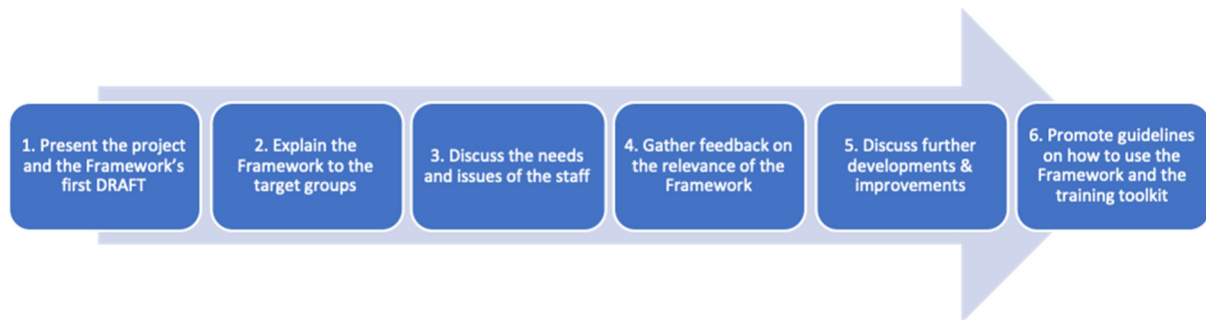


Figure 2 Step-by-step structure of the workshops

The information gathered during these study visits informed the further development of the Erasmus+ Staff Competences Framework, which was deemed a useful supporting tool for mobility staff who desire to self-assess their competences, as well as a relevant utensil for decision- and policy-makers who want to identify more clearly the tasks and competences related to mobility staff. These visits and workshops clearly showed that it is possible to improve the skills and well-being of mobility staff through the kind of analysis and planning that the FESC framework intends to support.

The whole structure of the study visits and the workshop sessions as well as the relevant outcomes are described in more detail in the [FESC Study Visits Global Report](#).

Due to the Covid10-Pandemic, these workshops proofed to be the only training activities, which were held in person, which heightened their relevance for the further analysis of the content and methodology of the training activities. In contrast to the virtual training scenarios, the physical training on-site allowed for a much more inter-active, intense group work and a more personal face-to-face discussion among the participants.

- b. Virtual Training sessions in December 2020/ January 2021
 - i. Concept and Content of the Sessions

The first multiplier event of the FESC project was intended to be a consultation meeting with the Higher education sector in Brussels in summer 2020. A one day conference with the aim to present the outcomes of the Desk-Research and the surveys (O1 & O2), as well as the first draft of the Erasmus+ staff competencies & auditing framework (O3). Furthermore, the experiences of the study visits (O4) were to be shared.

As the global covid-19 pandemic did not allow us to host any in-person workshops after March 2020, we designed an online series of workshops. Participants could access from anywhere in

the world as long as they had a stable internet connection. We designed the online series in four workshops, two hours each over four weeks in December 2020 and January 2021. Participants who attended at least three of the four workshops received a confirmation of participation. Participants had the option to attend only particular workshops as well. Overall, the participants of the workshops belonged to different HEI sectors. While a majority of c. 76% was IRO staff, more than 13% represented leadership. Approx. 5% identified themselves more general as administrative staff, with only 4% representing teaching staff.

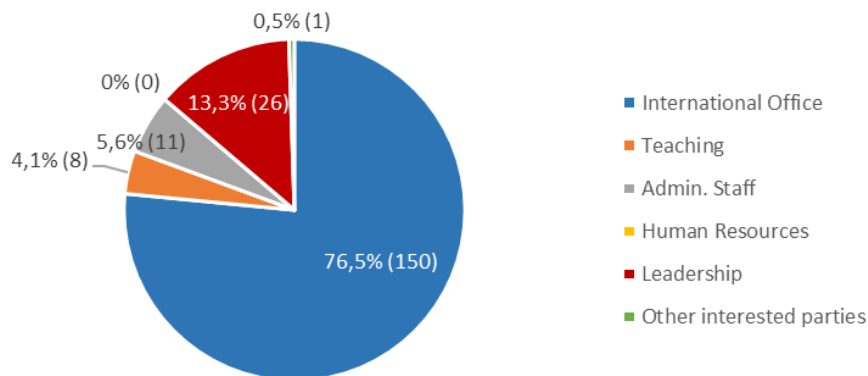


Figure 3 Working fields of the participants of the workshops

Most of the participants came from Erasmus+ program countries, but there was also a number of attending staff from Erasmus+ partner countries.

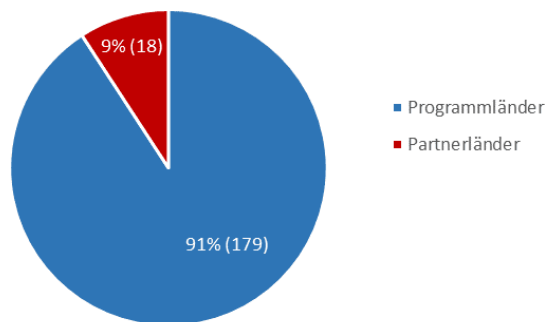


Figure 4 Origin of the participants

The online series was structured into 4 session, each with its own focus topic, which had been designed based on the core topics identified and prioritized during the project research activities:

Online seminar #1 | Setting the Scene: Introducing a Framework for Erasmus+ Staff Competences – offering a tool to ensure the qualification of IRO staff

Online seminar #2 | Learning fast: a transition from Change to Crisis Management

Online seminar #3 | Reaching Out: How to communicate and perform effectively at work?

Online seminar #4 | Getting On: Career development and soft skills

ii. Preparation of the event

The preparation of the online trainings was quite intense and required timely communication and personnel resources. In addition to the online meetings within the consortium to structure the online series, we conducted individual online meetings with the panelists. During these meetings, all presenters had the opportunity to test the technical requirements and the platform itself. A template of the Power Point presentation was given to every panelist, thus ensuring that the project corporate design was used, supporting the visibility and dissemination of the project.

All partners were involved in the dissemination strategy for the activities, using existing partner networks as well as internal communication channels for each institution. Application was done via Google forms, to ensure easy access to the information and a smooth administration of the applications. We collected all relevant information via the registration form (Name, institution, position at the institution) for documentation purposes as well as communication. These data were also used to issue the confirmations of participation for all participants who attended at least 75% (three sessions) of the online series.

iii. Technical requirements for the implementation

For participating in the online workshop series, every participant needed a stable internet connection.

We decided to conduct the online series via Zoom. All panelists and consortium members were invited as “panelists” to the Zoom-meeting and could therefore turn on their cameras, access their microphones individually and see the list of participants. Participants were invited as “audience”. An administrator has to give the rights of turning on a camera or microphone to a participant in the audience, therefore unwanted sounds or camera activities can be avoided as this might interfere with the workshop performance.

Invitations to the single Zoom-meetings were sent out one day before the workshop, by email. Occasionally registered participants do not receive their invitation, e.g. because it ends up in the spam-filter. It is helpful to give an email-address to the participants beforehand, e.g. together with a confirmation of registration, so participants can contact somebody from the team in case there are questions or technical difficulties. This additional support service for the participants before and during the event has to be taken into account when planning the schedule and personnel requirements for the activity.

The sessions were being recorded for documentation and dissemination purposes, so the sessions could be made available open source on the project website later on.

iv. Methodology

As the audience was quite large (400 registrations, around 200 participants per session) the best way to conduct the workshops was to give presentations by different experts, coordinated and moderated by a moderator. Interactive workshops with discussions between the participants were not possible with a group that large. To include some interactive elements nevertheless, we included the polling system mentimeter.com in our sessions. Our questions could either be answered by multiple choice or the questions could be answered by words or short sentences. This usage of some basic interactive element in the sessions is relatively simple, but very important to keep the audience engaged. The feedback in our sessions was very positive as regards these interactive mentimeter questions. However, it is a very time-consuming element in the online workshop, which should be reflected in the overall schedule for the event.

v. Follow-up of the Event

The sessions were recorded and made available on the [project website](#) shortly after each session. Additional material, e.g. the slides from the presentations, are available on the website as well in form of downloads for all website visitors.

vi. Evaluation by the Participants

An evaluation form was created for each session and sent to the participants soon after the event. The evaluation forms were created in Google Forms as this is the easiest way for participants to access and for the organization team to download and assess the results.

As an example you can find the evaluation results of the 4th online session here:

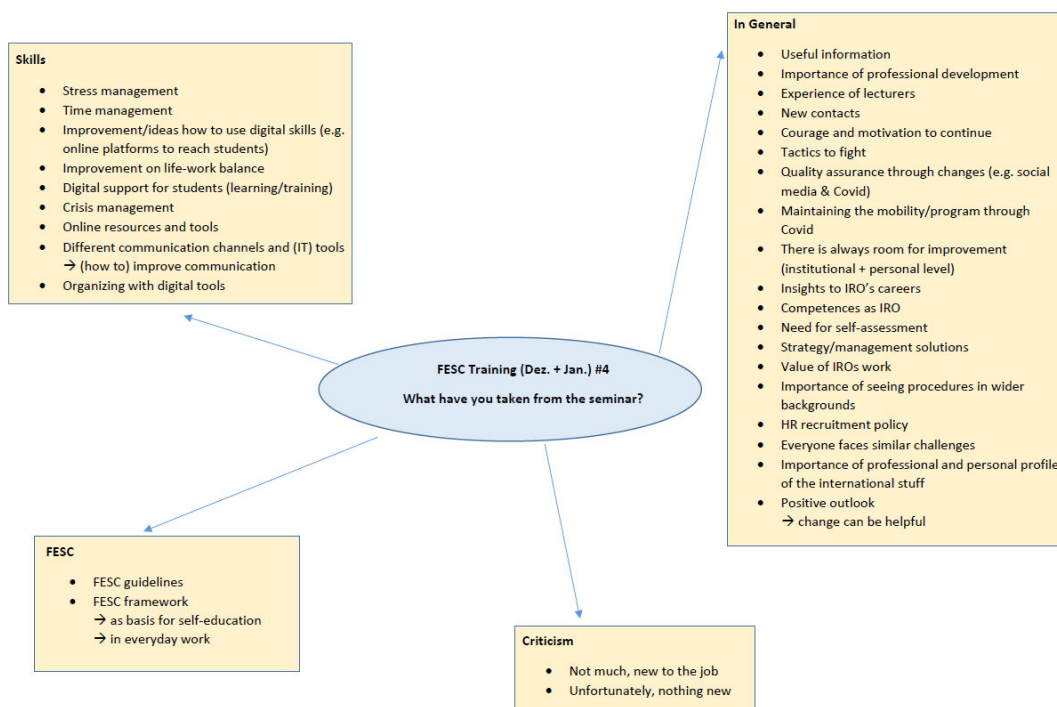


Figure 5 Evaluation of the 4th online training session

c. Example for further Dissemination: Marburg International Staff Training Week
i. Concept and Content of the Week

The University of Marburg usually offers a five-day International Staff Training Week in-person each summer. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic since the spring of 2020 the in-person Staff Training Week 2020 had to be canceled. The organizational team of University of Marburg decided to offer an alternative, to address the administrative staff of the partner institutions in spite of the continuing travel restrictions. Thus, a virtual Staff Training Week within the FESC project was designed and held in January 2021 - the “Virtual Staff Training Week at Philipps-Universität Marburg“ This Virtual Staff Training Week consisted of seven live online sessions (Monday - Friday morning plus Tuesday and Thursday afternoon). The session on Thursday morning was actually the integrated 4th session of the FESC online series session.

The distribution of the working fields the participants came from is quite similar to the results of the FESC training sessions, though the percentage of leadership is with more than 20% significantly higher. In the much smaller total of participants, this of course equals only a total of 18 staff from leadership positions:

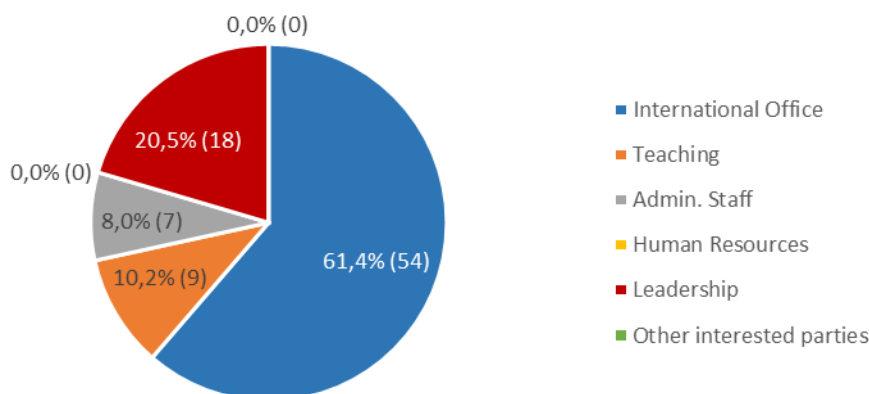


Figure 6 Working fields of the participants of the Staff Training Week

Despite the different time zones it was possible to invite more participants from partner countries in this event. 25% of the participants came from institutions located in Erasmus partner countries:

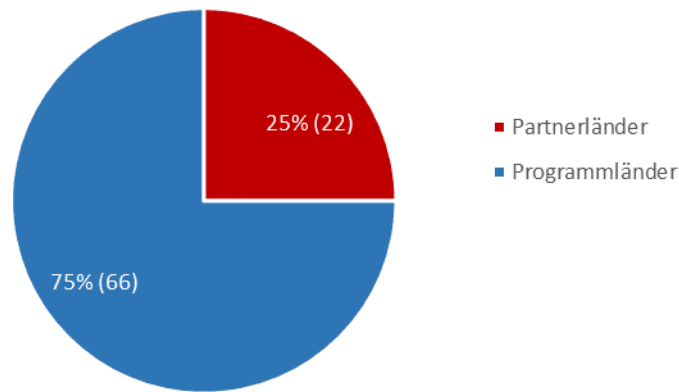


Figure 7 Origin of the participants

As the working fields of the participants covered a wide range of professions, the content of the daily sessions aimed to reach as many people as possible working within the field of international mobility:

- What's new in Erasmus+ Getting ready for the new program
- Inside Erasmus: Erasmus Language
- Introducing the „Framework for Erasmus Staff Competences“
- Project Management in Times of Crisis
- Digitalization in Erasmus: E-Learning / digital program administration
- Framework for Erasmus Staff Competences: Career development and soft skills
- Staff Mobility: Chances & Challenges for the institution
- Student Mobility in the new Erasmus+ Program
- Inclusion & Diversity: Putting politics into practice

The one-week program aimed to deepen the topics of the FESC Training Sessions with the advantage of a smaller group of participants. This enabled the organizers to offer interactive work in breakout rooms, with a small group size. This received very positive feedback from the participants who were eager to actively engage and share their expertise and questions with the group.

In addition to the main program, an optional virtual culture program was offered at the end of each session. Here we showed videos about different aspects of German life and German culture and used the chat for a more personal exchange with the participants. This virtual culture program was a test with success: Most of the participants remained online after the workshop sessions, engaged actively in the discussion, and were thankful for discovering a new culture and new places at least virtually in times of quarantine.

ii. Preparation of the event

For promoting the Virtual Staff Training Week we invited all staff members of our partner institutions from Erasmus program and partner countries. We also promoted the event on the

platform iMOTION Erasmus Staff Training <http://staffmobility.eu> in order to reach a broader target group.



Figure 8 Flyer of the Virtual Staff Training Week Marburg

The applicants could register via an online registration form. The personal information gathered during registration (Name, institution, position at the institution, motivation) was used for organizational purposes, and to issue the confirmations of participation for those participants who attended at least 75% of the Staff Training Week.

iii. Technical requirements for the implementation of the event

Each participant needed a stable internet connection. The sessions were held live on the platform Big Blue Button, hosted by the UMR. The virtual conference room was used all week long, so participants could use the same link every day. The big advantage of Big Blue Button is that participants do not have to register or give personal data to enter the platform.

iv. Methodology

Around 100 participants attended each session. The sessions consisted of presentations given by various speakers, surveys on <http://mentimeter.com> and <http://surveymonkey.de>, and group discussions in break-out-rooms with approximate 10-15 participants in each group. In addition, on <http://tricider.com> a survey was open all week long where participants could fill in their opinions and advise to a leading question: “How can we ensure Quality Student Mobility in the future of Erasmus?”. This tool allowed all participants to add ideas to the relevant topic, which the other participants could comment on with arguments. All, in turn, could rate these arguments. This “question for the week” offered a thematic frame, while the individual sessions enabled more in-depth discussions on selected topics.

For documentation, we created a google drive folder accessible to all participants to download the presentations and additional information material. The participants also were able to

download information about their institution or short presentations for the others. Thus, additional content and informal exchange opportunities were available for the group.

v. Evaluation

An evaluation form was created to assess the whole week's program as well as the organizational aspects and design of the event, and sent to the participants. This evaluation was a very relevant instrument for the use, to assess the quality and effect of this first virtual one-week program we had organized, and to enable a re-assessment and improvements for possible activities in the future.

The evaluation forms were created again in Google Forms.

The feedback of the participants showed that the interests and the output of the sessions is very varied:

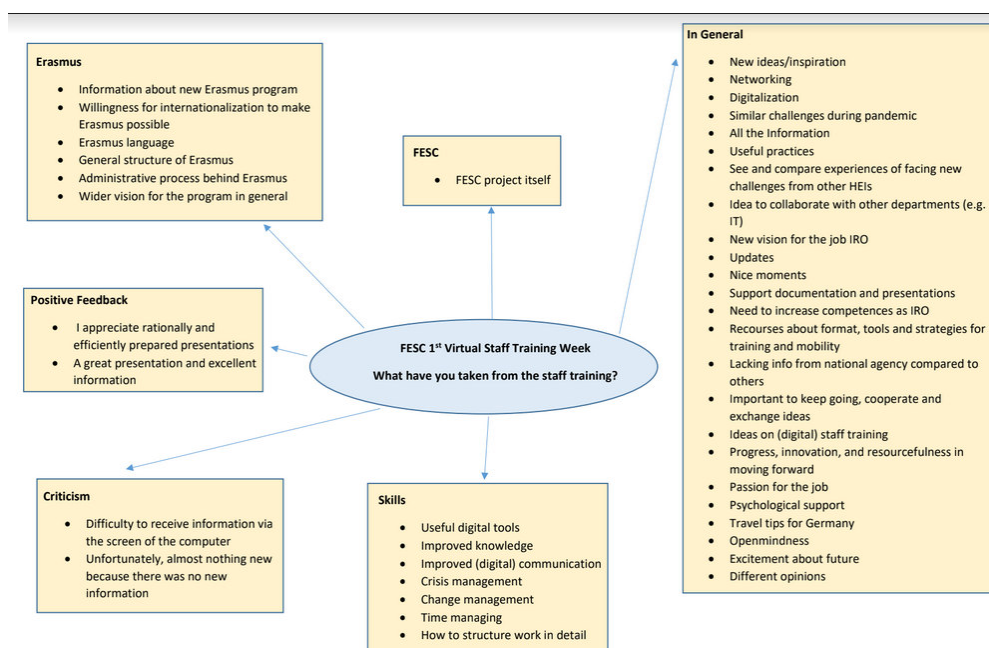


Figure 9 Evaluation of the Virtual Staff Training Week

d. FESC Post-Conference Online Workshop

i. Concept and Content of the Workshop

Under usual circumstances, the final conference would have been hosted at the University of Marburg, but due to the pandemic we had to switch again to an online format for the final conference and the post-conference workshop.

The aim of the final conference was to present the final project results and to focus the discussions on the policy recommendations for European and national stakeholders, as well as to discuss the framework in greater detail with the Higher Education sector. Additionally,

the EUF and University of Marburg decided to facilitate a workshop on the following day to ensure a more targeted discussion for practitioners and decision makers on how to implement the framework effectively as professional development tool and institutional leverage respectively.

So finally we created a two days online event: On the first afternoon we presented the projects results and the main products (the framework and the guidelines) of the project by our consortium members. Additionally we invited stakeholders to discuss how to integrate staff professional development to boost the quality of student mobility and we also invited guest speaker from two other Erasmus+ KA203 Strategic Partnerships, the SUCTI and the REALISE projects, to discuss in a virtual round table about how to ensure the sustainability of project-based activities.

These presentations and discussions served as preparation for a selected group of 15 stakeholders and staff of Higher Education Institutions to attend the post-conference workshop for a more in-depth, interactive exchange the next morning.

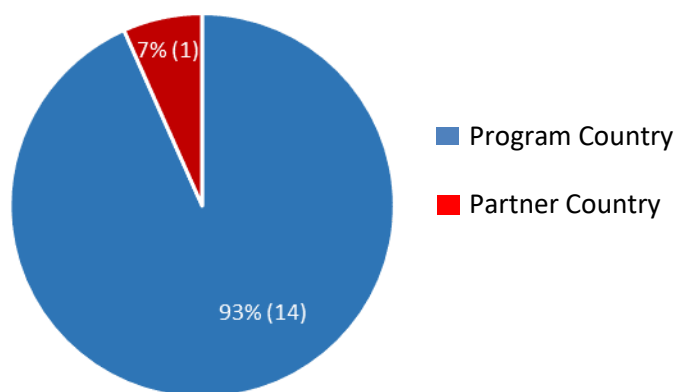


Figure 10 Origin of the Participants of the Post-Conference Workshop

Workspace of participants

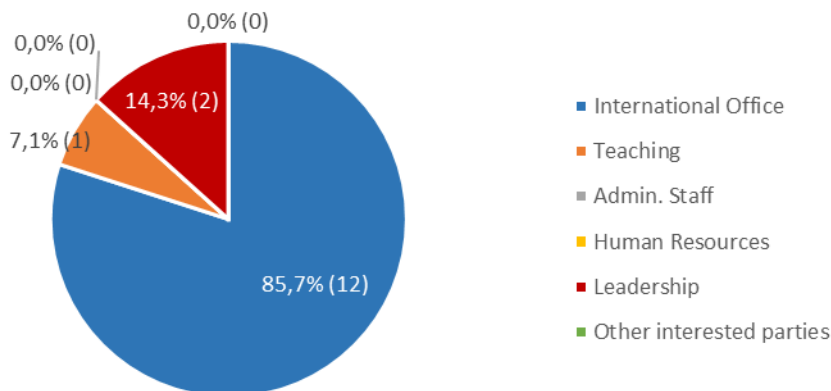


Figure 11 Working Fields of the Participants of the Post-Conference Workshop

The workshop started with the whole group, and then the participants were transferred into breakout rooms for the parallel sessions into two groups of approximate 7-8 people, which allowed a more interactive work scenario and intensive discussion within each group. In the first round of parallel sessions of the workshop, the participants got an introduction to the FESC Guidelines and a practical guidance for self – assessment, to figure out how to implement the FESC tools by themselves to see where their strengths are and in what areas of competence they need to improve. The second half of the workshop consisted of two parallel sessions, which covered the two important topics, which had been prioritized by participants in earlier project activities: change management and stress management.

ii. Preparation of the Workshop

For promoting the Workshop all consortium members invited the staff from their own institution as well as the staff from their partner institutions from Erasmus+ program – and partner countries. EUF also promoted the event in their monthly email newsletter and on Social Media.

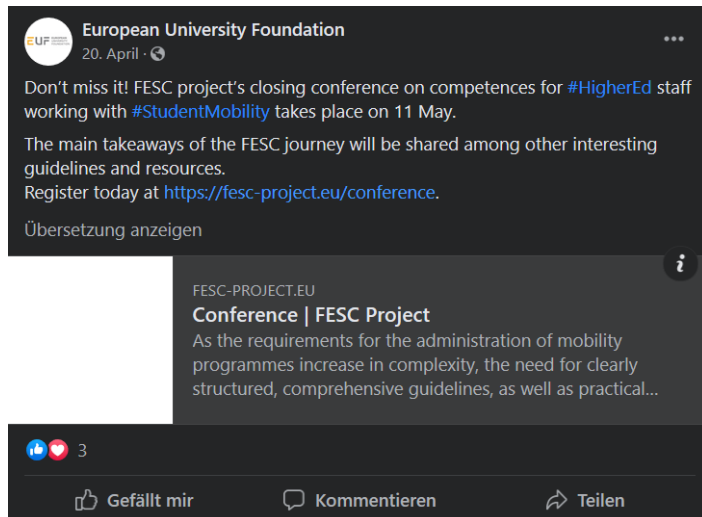


Figure 12 Facebook Promotion of the FESC Final Conference

The applicants could register online via a google form. We collected all important information this way (Name, institution, position at the institution, motivation for the participation of the workshop).

iii. Technical requirements for the implementation of the Workshop

Each participant needed a stable internet connection. The sessions were held live on zoom as in the FESC training sessions. To ensure an intensive group work we used the break-out room function on zoom. This functionality allowed the moderator team to assign the participants and the speakers to individual rooms. During the sessions the speakers worked with <http://mentimeter.com> for polls and open questions. This tool supported one more time the interactivity within the group.

iv. Methodology

The workshop was divided in two sections with two parallel break-out-room sessions. Each group session consisted of very interactive presentations given by various speakers, representatives of the project consortium as well as guest speakers. Again, questions and polls on <http://mentimeter.com> were integrated to actively involve all participants, and thanks to the small group size, the participants could turn on their cameras and microphones to discuss actively with the speaker and the other participants.

v. Evaluation

An evaluation form was distributed, created via Google Forms, among the participants of the conference and the post-conference workshop.

The feedback of the participants showed that nearly half of the participants (who took part in the evaluation) already participated in one or more of the previous FESC activities. This is an indicator for the relevance of the topics addressed in the FESC project, and the need among

staff working in Higher Education Institutions for tools to assess and improve their profile of skills and competences.

Which activities of our FESC project did you participate in?

22 Antworten

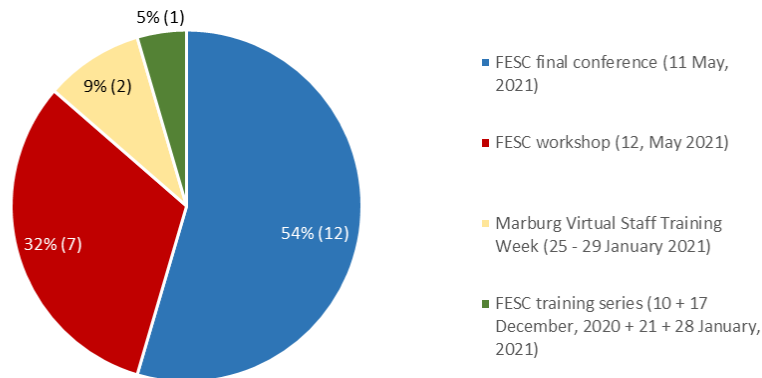


Figure 13 Participants' activity in all FESC events

Based on the evaluation of all dissemination and training activities implemented within the FESC project, culminating in the final conference & post-conference Workshop in May 2021, one aspect that proved central was the virtual format. Transferring the training activities in a virtual format required specific adaptations not only in the organization and in design of the training structures, but as well in the content and the methodology applied. For the purpose of the project, we can identify the virtual format as one of the most important advantages in all events as it allowed for a far higher participation rate and removed barriers for participation that physical trainings and physical mobility might pose. Thus, the products of the FESC project reached far more people than expected. The quality and the usability of the workshop was rated very high, leading to the presumption that the quality of the content and implementation was still ensured and transferred successfully into a virtual format. The need to provide more workshops for Erasmus+ staff competencies was confirmed, as well as the potential advantages of establishing the FESC framework as a general tool for competence evaluation and for identification of skills and competences gaps.

How would you rate the quality and usability of the workshop?

14 Antworten

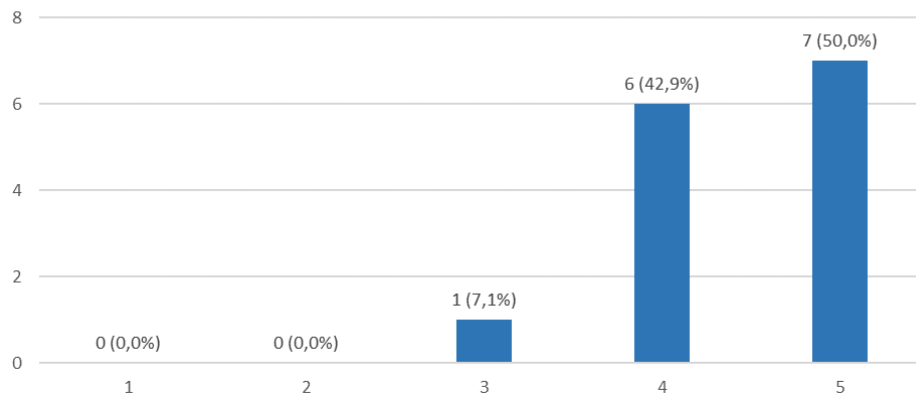


Figure 14 Rate of the Quality and Usability of the Workshop

4. Conclusion

For Higher Education Institutions, esp. for leadership and HR, understanding of the correlation between staff competencies and the quality of student mobility is essential to ensure successful mobility programs, and internationalisation of the institution in general. The tools developed in the context of the FESC project, funded by the Erasmus+ Program, offer the chance to ensure quality, staff satisfaction, and successful staff development and process management at the institution, on an individual as well as a structural level.

The FESC framework and its guidelines have to be understood as tools that can be applied and adapted to the specific needs of the individual or institution, offering different approaches and starting points for improving the actual competences of work processes with international students. On an institutional level, the responsible units using the project tools can re-assess and develop the structure on institutional level through implementing potential new elements in their internationalisation and human resource strategies. On an individual level, staff can reflect on existing processes and responsibilities, potential change, or other priorities identified as relevant, e.g. effectivity, visibility, recognition, or job satisfaction. In total, we can provide two different ways of hands-on recommendation for staff working in HEI – one for decision makers and staff in leadership positions and one for staff working directly with student mobility:

1. On leadership level the training toolkit can be seen as a manual to create target-group-specific training opportunities. To identify the lack of competencies and skills of the staff working in the field of student mobility the FESC framework and the guidelines will help. The results can be used to evaluate the needs of units' responsible staff working with international students. For planning a specific training session for staff it is useful to start in-time with the preparation of the event to identify effective, fit-for-

purpose formats. The implementation of such sessions has to be well organised and the following questions should be considered in designing the training opportunities:

- What is the target group of the training?
- What is the intention of the training session?
- Which skills and competences are relevant/prioritized? What is the aim of the session?
- Which format will be used for the implementation? Virtual or in-person? Should the focus be more on information/knowledge transfer, or interactive learning?
- Which elements of training should be covered (Presentations, discussion, roundtables, peer-to-peer, interviews)?
- What Input is needed? What (external) experts should be involved?

These questions have to be answered in advance to create a clear structure and to organise the event target-group oriented and to the point.

2. The staff who is directly working with student mobility can use the FESC framework and the guidelines to identify and evaluate the status-quo of the own competences and to compare the own profile with the competences asked for the job profile. If there is a lack of skills and competences about the tools can help identify relevant training formats to improve them. Having applied the tools for self-assessment, staff will be able to choose from a broad variety of training opportunities, either at the own institution (offer at the IRO or HR), at the training academies of the national agencies, at other institutions abroad (Staff Mobility for Training) or at external institutions such as language schools or adult education centres. One relevant aspect to ensure access to training opportunities is communication internally, towards the leadership and HR, to enhance the visibility and acceptance of the specific Needs and the (institutional and possibly financial) support to gain access to training opportunities.

The training activities implemented in the course of the FESC project offered a very intense, diverse testing ground for the dissemination and implementation of the FESC tools and methodology. At the time of the training sessions in Dec. 2020/Jan. 2021, virtual training formats were still not widely established in the context of IRO staff training and staff mobility. Thus, the FESC trainings were a relevant experience to assess the chances of online learning for staff, the advantages as well as the limitations in the virtual format. The Handbook has presented a detailed insight into the relevant aspects that have to be considered to plan, organize and evaluate online trainings, and presented the results as well as the participants' experience.

To ensure high-quality trainings in a virtual format, we have to be careful to adapt not only formally, but to reflect the online format in the methodology and content as well, and to define the expected outcomes accordingly.

In the FESC trainings, we noticed that the outreach of virtual trainings can be much increased as compared to physical trainings, and access to the trainings is more inclusive as regards mobility, financing, time, and distance. On the other hand, the virtual format posed limitations regarding interactivity, participation, and personal/non-formal exchange. In planning in-house or external training opportunities, defining the target group as well as the intended outcomes is thus the first step to make informed decisions as concerns design, content and outreach of the planned activities.

Consortium Partners



Associated Partners



- ○ International Relations
- ○ Offices
- ○ Forum

European Network of Erasmus Coordinators
in Political Science, International Relations, Public Administration and Management