T3.1

Institutional learning at policy level bodies

InnoSchool

Output	T3.1 Institutional learning at policy level bodies
Work Package	WP5 -Policy Sustainability
WP Responsible partner	Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency
Type:	Report
Responsible Partner:	Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency
Author:	István Hegedűs

Content

Introduction

The InnoSchool project aims to foster a change of mindset in the currently weak areas of entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and social innovation. The project primarily targets students in secondary education, for whom the highly innovative InnoSchool Learning System is the main output of the project. Secondary school students, identified as the primary target group, are at a stage in their lives when they are highly receptive to their environment, open-minded, interested in everything and have a strong sense of justice. They are therefore highly sensitive to the social challenges in their environment. The project will build on this to change their awareness of the issues and help them to become social entrepreneurs and social innovators, while acquiring the right entrepreneurial skills.

The project is, of course, a learning and experiential opportunity for others in addition to the main target group. Obviously, teachers working with students are also part of a serious learning process. Social entrepreneurship and social innovation, although no longer entirely unknown concepts, are still elusive and nebulous ideas for many. Teachers are no exception. During the implementation of the project, almost all partners were confronted with the fact that teachers do not have sufficient background information on this subject. They were in dire need of the right guides and background materials to enable them to face their students with confidence and participate in the project.

Taking the learning process to an even higher level, the learning process is extended to the institutional level as well, of course. At the institutional level, we also mean the participating schools themselves, but it is very important that through these schools, or beyond them, the maintainers, the policy bodies, have also been part of this process. In terms of the long-term outcome of the project and the sustainability of the project, it is clear that reaching and involving these levels is essential.

The planned methodology

Institutional learning at policy level bodies (PPs or ASPs) scaled up individual gained knowledge on ILS, its Pilot and impact to other relevant employees of policy bodies and supported internal knowledge transfer and cooperation for Action Plan developments. 2 Half-day workshops in each territory (1st based on ILS, 2nd based on ILS Pilot results and introducing planned sustainability measures) thus supported both SO2 (stakeholder knowledge) and SO3 (implementation to curriculum).

Each workshop was half-day long, on which 5 additional relevant policy employees or school employees increased their knowledge about the ILS. Another aim was to get relevant employees who will participate in action plan development.

1st workshop transferred knowledge of ILS itself by presenting and discussing its 4 elements, the Serious Game, the Guidance for teachers on using ILS, the Training materials for teachers and the Impact questionnaire for students.

2nd workshop transferred knowledge of ILS Pilot by presenting and discussing territorial Impact and Evaluation Report, Case studies, Brochure, the 10min video of ILS and other relevant videos + interviews from media visits at schools during ILS Pilot. The 2nd workshop also acted as a kick-off event for the Action Plan development process.

EUB, RDE and CJRAE, as policy PPs organized internal institutional learning workshops with the support of BIGD and ACTA. While DEXIC, TUKE, RADEI, CTRIA, PREDA and FACLIA organized both workshops with their territorial policy ASP partners.

Objective

The main goal of the learning workshops was to transfer knowledge to relevant policy makers in partners' territories. Therefore, the partners main task was to ensure that policy representatives

- have a structured concept of what is ILS,
- have a positively changed attitude towards it,
- support the implementation and the action plan development.

What should not have been missing on the workshops?

- Partners' personal experience from the pilot (stories, feedbacks from teachers)
- Results and summary of the pilot (nr. of schools and students involved, changed attitudes of teachers and students, results of impact questionnaires)
- Present case studies
- Distribute the brochures and show 10 min video
- Presentation of ILS structure and summary of its content (ensure that they understand what kind of materials are included in the ILS package and what do they contain)
- Our aim to develop an action plan and implement ILS to territorial curriculums

Tips for getting policy representatives on board

- Identify their needs: Identify the need of the policy institutions that we could address through the implementation of ILS. Or just simply show them what is in it for them.
- Stick to Facts: Use the facts from the pilot implementation or the evaluation report to present them convincing stories or results. You can also use these facts to capture attention from the beginnings.
- Speak their language: Use language that is close to the policy representatives, avoid the use of technical terms. Make it easy to understand what you say.

- Know the obstacles: You may believe fully in InnoSchool but policy representatives can be less enthusiastic. Think through in advance what can be their hard questions and prepare with answers.
- Lean on someone: You may introduce your idea of implementing ILS to curriculums in advance to key stakeholders. If you reach his/her support, they can back you up when hard questions come.
- Call for action: Tell them what you need them to do. Let them know specifically what steps you are taking to achieve the implementation of ILS.

How to deal with the difficult ones?

- Understand why they are on the opposite side: You must step back for a little and evaluate why they are opposing your idea. Acknowledge their opinion and ensure them that you can jointly work out the obstacle.
- Ask for advices: If they highlight the obstacles, just ask them what they would do to tackle the challenges or how they would solve the issues. This might bring some valuable ideas for implementation.
- Implement their suggestions: If you are just agreeing with them but no action follows, they will keep continue being difficult ones. If you implement their suggestions, they might become a little more supportive.
- Have bilateral discussion: An additional meeting to resolve issues can be useful as well.

Implementation of the planned workshops

Challenges and difficulties

The entire project was affected by the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and this part of the project was no exception. Organising workshops in itself during the pandemic was a major challenge. The partners implemented the workshops in different ways, depending on the epidemiological requirements in the country at the time. In a few cases, face-to-face meetings were possible, but in the vast majority of cases these meetings were conducted online.

Surprisingly, in many cases it was a major challenge **to find a specific workshop date**. It is important to underline that the participants involved in the workshops work in the education system, spend their daily lives there, many of them are teachers. For them, the vast majority of their working time is spent in the company of students. In addition to their teaching commitments, it was extremely difficult to find a time that was still within working hours and did not conflict with any teaching hours. The working hours of participants who are not directly involved in teaching have proved to be somewhat more flexible, but the pandemic has also significantly increased their administrative burden and they too have experienced a shortage of available working time. The workshops thus required much more intensive and lengthy preparation than usual.

Disinterest or reservations on the part of the institutions and participants contacted were also observed in several countries. Obviously, in most cases it was up to the person approached to decide how open they were to cooperation. Unfortunately, it has to be said that in many cases we were confronted with a negative attitude. The reasons for this were extremely wide-ranging. However, similarities were observed between the reasons in several cases. In countries with a highly centralised education system and limited competences, it was often the case that the institution or person approached was not entitled to respond to such a request independently. To do so, it needs a specific supervisor's authorisation, which was very often a

very cumbersome and time-consuming task. Another factor which acted as a deterrent was that the institutions contacted felt that this was an additional task on top of their already heavy daily workload and preferred to stay away. Some had doubts about this type of project. They had been approached about many EU projects which had not lived up to their expectations. To overcome these reservations, there was no single good solution formula. Each case required a response appropriate to the circumstances. In the case of centralised training systems, it was necessary to go to the superior body, which gave permission or, in worse cases, obliged the organisation to participate (in which case the participant was not necessarily enthusiastic). In the case of other resistance, it was necessary to find the root cause and convince the participant that this was indeed a viable project with real results and real benefits. They had to be reassured that we would keep the burden on them to a minimum, that we would not ask for extra administration, that they would not have to make any commitments and that they would not have to perform in the workshops, but only to share their thoughts and opinions with us.

Outcomes and lessons learned

The aim of the workshops was twofold, one was to present and accept the InnoSchool Learning System with the participating institutions, the other was to provide all partners with the necessary information and input for the development of the action plan.

The first target was achieved by all partners. Using the methodology developed, the elements of the InnSchool Learning System were presented in detail to the institutions involved. Participants were shown in detail, through video and practical demonstrations, how the online, interactive "Serious Game" works in practice. They were also able to see this through the teachers' as well as the students' interface. The registration interface was also demonstrated, as well as the ways and conditions under which the game can be used. Participants were also shown the teacher's guide, which was of course made available to them in the national languages, as the event was not suitable for a full presentation of the more than 100 pages of the document.

In addition, the results of the pilot activities carried out in each country and the feedback from the students and teachers involved in the pilot were presented. It is very important to underline that the workshops also provided an opportunity for the participants to get general information on social entrepreneurship and social innovation as a growing phenomenon in our daily lives.

As regards the second objective, the partners were able to gather information from the most authentic persons and institutions possible to prepare their action plans. The main aim of the Action Plans is to provide guidance and define concrete activities to integrate the InnoSchool Leraning System into the curricula of the countries concerned, and to reach as many schools and students as possible. In this way, teachers and policy bodies were able to provide direct input to the development of the action plan, on the process of implementation, the available frameworks, the main challenges and possible solutions to overcome them. Since the project expects the action plan to be formally adopted by a competent body, it was useful to involve this institution in this learning process, because it is much easier to get a document adopted if the institution concerned has input, is involved in the development of the document and has a detailed knowledge of the document itself and the background to its creation.

Conclusion

The final conclusion is that institutional learning at policy level and the workshops for this purpose have been successfully implemented by all partners. Despite organisational difficulties (pandemic, tight timeframes, possible lack of interest), the workshops were carried out in the planned format and number. Competent organisations and educational institutions were reached in all countries. Through the events, these institutions were able to gain a broad knowledge of the most relevant and usable results of the project, as well as an understanding of the role of social entrepreneurship in today's challenges and social innovation. This learning process can form the basis for the wider exploitation of the project's results and its long-term sustainability. Some countries have recognised the results of the project at a very high level and this may lead to easier integration into curricula, while other countries, where autonomy is given, have found a place in current curricula for the use of the InnoSchool Learning System.

It can be said that the process has been a two-way process, because not only the institutions involved but also the project partners have been able to learn a lot through these workshops about the education system in their country, the challenges and opportunities of the system, the methods that will allow the project to be sustainable in the long term. Opportunities for cooperation have been identified which would have been much more difficult, lengthy or even impossible to achieve without this project activity. We consider it extremely important that these types of activities are undertaken during the project implementation phase, as they are much more efficient than having to face these headaches after the project has been completed.