

TEMPUS III: Trans-European cooperation scheme for higher education, 3rd phase 2000-2006

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The Commission presents its annual report on the operation of the third phase of the Tempus Programme in 2006. In that year, Tempus was funded through three external cooperation regional programmes: CARDS (Western Balkans); MEDA (Eastern and Southern Mediterranean) and Tacis (Eastern Europe and Central Asia). The Tempus budget in 2006 amounted to € 53.45 million broken down as follows between the three regions: Tacis: € 18.25 million, CARDS: € 17.2 million, MEDA: € 18 million.

The implementation of the programme in 2006 was guided by the following priorities:

-Reinforcing the dissemination and exploitation of project results: the Commission discusses the activities undertaken under this heading, and states that, for the vast majority of people interviewed for impact studies, Tempus is seen as an essential door to the European academic world that has greatly helped building cooperation with European universities. Tempus has provided opportunities to work with more than one EU country and to strengthen regional cooperation. Tempus is the only programme that deals with all aspects of higher education, while other donors usually cover only single element of the system.

-Strengthening field monitoring activities: a total of 44 projects covering all regions were visited during the 2005-06 monitoring campaign by desk officers in DG EAC/ETF. 80 projects were visited by National Tempus Offices. The overall findings about the areas of investigation are positive despite some marginal weaknesses. Many projects are sound with good results. However, there are still a number of less successful projects. Limited involvement of wider target groups or end users which affects sustainability, lack of internal monitoring of changing needs and assumptions as well as lack of staff capacity building can be considered as examples of weaknesses. These issues have started to be addressed more intensively. The launch of field monitoring by National Tempus Offices is a positive development which provides a new opportunity to enrich the Tempus monitoring system, but also represents a challenge in terms of harmonisation of practices and overall coordination.

Consolidating the role of National Tempus Offices: the efforts to consolidate the role of National Tempus Offices (NTOs) continued in 2006, through a number of key initiatives, such as their active involvement in field monitoring activities. After the development of a strategy for the involvement of NTOs in field monitoring, and a specific training session delivered to them in October 2005, all NTOs started to monitor Tempus projects in their countries. The NTO of Tajikistan was temporarily closed down.

With regard to **programme management**, five selection procedures were concluded during 2006. The number of applications per selection round has remained consistently high, which means that the programme continues to attract the interest of the academic community. In particular, the number of applications for Structural and Complementary Measures is increasing and their content is more strongly focusing on horizontal issues which are of importance for the reform and modernisation of higher education in the partner countries. Globally speaking, it can be observed that the submitted projects are increasingly in line with the national priorities established by the partner countries. Almost all selected projects adhere to national priorities.

At a general level, during 2006, commitments and payments under Tempus proceeded in line with the established planning. Other financial commitments in 2006 included:

-grants to National Tempus Offices: 5 amounting to € 0.31 million;

-grant to the European Training Foundation's Tempus Department that provides technical assistance to DG EAC: € 0.87 million;

-conferences and seminars: € 0.63 million.

Work on the elimination of the Tempus litigation files has progressed consistently throughout 2006. A total amount of € 1.1 million was recovered in 2006 either through direct reimbursement or through the offsetting procedure.

Conclusion: the implementation of the Tempus programme in 2006 was guided by a number of strategic objectives which have all been satisfactorily achieved. The continuous dialogue with national authorities and their close involvement in the definition of priorities and the selection of projects ensures that funded activities are relevant to the country's needs and in line with national reform objectives. This ensures ownership by national governments and increases the impact of the programme's interventions. National Tempus Offices in the partner countries have been further reinforced and play an important role in liaising with national authorities and other stakeholders. Feedback from national authorities and the results of the field monitoring have confirmed that Tempus continues to be a highly relevant programme for assisting partner countries in reforming and modernising their higher education systems.