

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

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This evaluation report is presented pursuant to article 12 of Council decision 1999/311/EC establishing the third phase of the Tempus programme (Tempus III (2000-2006)). It puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations.

Background: the first phase of Tempus, adopted in 1990 and initially covering the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC), sought to contribute to socio-economic reform through cooperation between higher education institutions in the EU and in the Partner Countries. The 2nd phase of the programme extended the geographical coverage of the programme and also increased its ambition and expectation levels. Specific national priorities were introduced which complemented the original «bottom-up» approach whereby initiative rested exclusively with Universities. Two innovative aspects were then introduced to the third phase of Tempus (Tempus III) in 2000. In addition to the tried-and-tested country-specific approaches, particular emphasis was placed on the programme's capacity to encourage regional co-operation and more explicit reference was made to the need to ensure consistency and complementarity with other Community programmes, and also to create synergies with other forms of assistance to the partner countries. With the extension of Tempus III to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, the programme also sought to promote inter-cultural dialogue and understanding as a means to secure sustainable growth, peace and stability and reinforce the intercultural and civil society dimension of the programme.

Tempus III came to an end in December 2006. The fourth phase of the programme began in 2007 and has been managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency since April 2009.

External ex-post evaluation and recommendations: the external ex-post evaluation aimed to gain more insight in the Tempus III programme, to provide conclusions and concrete recommendations on how the current phase could be managed to better address any identified weaknesses and to maximise its relevance and impact, as well as exploit examples of good practice. The evaluation report makes a series of recommendations, which are listed below together with the Commission comments:

- **Recommendation 1 - Strengthen strategic programme orientation:** the Commission agrees that policy dialogue can certainly be reinforced. In Tempus IV, a lot of effort has been deployed to strengthen the dialogue with ministries.
- **Recommendation 2 - Improve effective synergy with Erasmus Mundus and other Community actions and encourage links with research:** the Commission has undertaken a considerable effort to conceive TEMPUS IV and Erasmus Mundus in a complementary perspective. Encouraging links with research policies and programmes, and especially to the Marie Curie Actions, that aim at the international mobility of researchers and the development of their careers, is also one of the Commission's priorities. A specific theme of activities in Tempus IV is to support the development of the knowledge triangle in partner countries and a study has just been launched to take stock of doctoral studies in neighbouring countries, which includes also elements linked to research policies and programmes. In fact, the recommendation regarding complementarity should not be limited to Erasmus Mundus and Research but should also cover the other bilateral support in higher education that the Commission is making available in many partner countries through the Delegations mainly (budget support, sector programme). Linking existing regional initiatives to country based policy dialogue in the area of education should be part of the recommendation.

- **Recommendation 3 - Reconsider level of funding in view of TEMPUS objectives:** the Commission recalls that individual project budgets have increased in TEMPUS IV. It may be useful to investigate whether all the project funds have been spent and to eventually reconsider the individual project budgets in the light of future financial perspectives for the programme. It would also be important to reflect on the idea that increased funding could also be considered at the level of all involved regions in order to avoid large imbalances between countries (such as the Russian Federation) and regions (for instance the Mediterranean countries).
- **Recommendation 4 - Enrich quality of project proposals:** over recent years, the Commission has been investing heavily in the training of national training officers (NTOs) and national contact points (NCPs).
- **Recommendation 5 - Improve the effectiveness of field monitoring:** an updated field monitoring approach has been developed for Tempus IV. Three objectives of monitoring have been defined: preventative (early stages of project), advisory (mid-term) and control (ex-post). Quantitative targets have been fixed with a strong accent on the preventative function. In addition to these instruments, Result Oriented Monitoring visits are also undertaken to projects in many of the countries.
- **Recommendation 6 - Give greater support to the NCPs in New Member States:** the most important actors in the new Member States, in terms of sharing their experience of recent beneficiaries of the programme, are the universities. Considering funding opportunities for the NCPs, who are the Information Points in the Member States, is not possible.
- **Recommendation 7 - Better define the involvement of the EU Delegations to improve the (structural) dialogue with the national authorities on higher education:** the involvement of the EU Delegations is probably the area where there has been the most improvement over the last years. They are the prime interlocutor for the contacts with Ministries and are also involved in the group of Higher Education Reform Experts and are associated to their activities.
- **Recommendation 8 - Continuation of TEMPUS-like projects after accession to the EU:** the Commission is investing many efforts in preparing the candidate countries for their participation in the Lifelong Learning programme.
- **Recommendation 9 - More emphasis on best practices – information on linkages with the labour market and civil society:** University-enterprise cooperation is one of the priority themes under Tempus IV. More and more projects are taking place in this area and the involvement of business is encouraged in the call for proposals (multi-actor partnerships).
- **Recommendation 10 - Give more priority to management reform projects:** governance reform is one of the explicit priority themes under Tempus IV and more and more projects are tackling this issue. In 2010, three policy seminars will take place in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Morocco, engaging experts and policy makers in discussions on how to make university governance more transparent and efficient.
- **Recommendation 11 - Give more attention to accessibility (equal opportunities) of the projects:** equal opportunities are mentioned explicitly as a quality criterion in the Tempus IV call for proposals and can be mentioned more clearly during the Tempus Information Days.
- **Recommendation 12 - Support additional ambitions of projects such as in the case of joint degrees or double diplomas:** the Commission will explore the kind of additional ambitions and investigate the problems that projects might encounter.
- **Recommendation 13 - Improve both dissemination and use of project results:** dissemination is a quality criterion for the assessment of proposals and is also a major point of consideration during project monitoring. A lot has been done in this area in recent years. Thematic studies on university-enterprise cooperation, quality assurance and governance have been carried out and followed up by thematic seminars with a wide range of stakeholders attending.

Conclusion: the TEMPUS Programme remains highly relevant with respect to its main objective of **promoting reform and modernisation of higher education at institutional level**. The activities have at various levels contributed to reforms that otherwise would probably not have been carried out, or gained momentum at a much slower pace. At the same time it is clear that in many countries further progress in

reforming the higher education sector is still needed and that important challenges in reforming higher education structures are still ahead or have just started. Tempus represents, for quite a number of partner countries, the **sole window for cooperation** with other institutions in other countries and it is the only working cooperation programme that the EU (and Member States) can offer to some of the countries.

The originality and the success of the programme lies very much in the "**bottom-up**", demand driven approach where the higher education institutions undertake their own initiatives within a call for proposals with a large framework of possibilities, as well as the strong focus on institutional cooperation. The high level of people-to-people contact has helped to promote understanding between and rapprochement of cultures. These characteristics should be kept. Tempus, through its multilateral nature, the project approach and its management mechanisms, has proven to be a very cost-effective policy instrument, in particular compared to other classical technical assistance interventions.

Lastly, the Commission notes that Tempus is an identifiable and quality brand within the partner countries. It is also a highly respected programme within the EU and the Member States institutions. The Commission could consider the **possibility of increasing the funding for all the regions covered by the programme** as far as the financial framework permits and without prejudice of other cooperation priorities, in order to fully support the very ambitious objectives and challenges in higher education and the significant developments underway in the international academic community.