

Research report

The mission and performance of Grundtvig and Comenius networks

EUROWEAVING

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Introduction

This research report accompanies the publication *The Art of Networking*, published in spring 2007. Both in the publication *The Art of Networking* and in this research report a particular type of educational network is dealt with: European networks in the framework of the EU funding programmes for education and training. It is addressed to professionals in education - teachers, trainers, programme developers, managers, researchers and evaluators - who are already involved in networks or may wish to be so in the future. While the publication has its main focus on adult and school education and their corresponding funding mechanisms in the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme – Grundtvig and Comenius – much of its content is relevant also for other strands of the programme – networks in vocational training, higher education and in the transversal sub-programmes for Languages and Information and Communication Technologies – and even in part for networking activities in other fields such as cultural or regional development.

The Art of Networking along with this research report is the result of *Euoweaving*, a project funded by the *Socrates/Accompanying Measures* programme. At the request of the European Commission a further document with recommendations on the implementation of networks in the new programme period was produced. All documents, as well as other language versions of the publication (French and German) can be downloaded from the project website www.euoweaving.com.

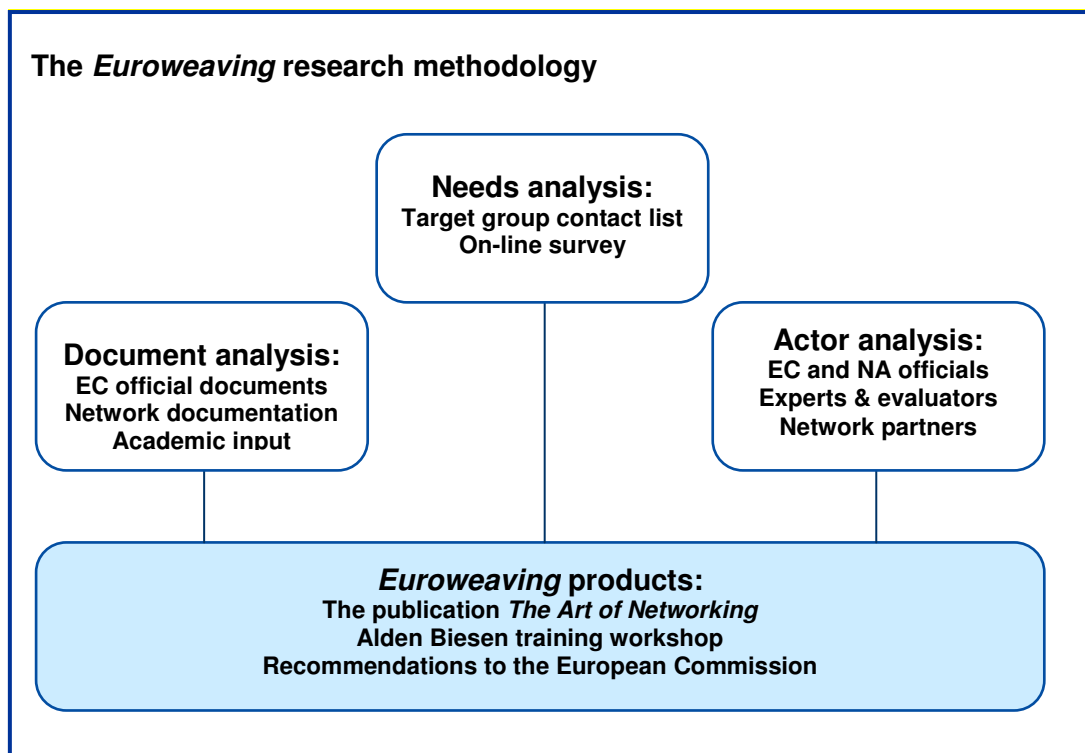
This project was conceived against the background that networks play a prominent role in European lifelong learning policies. In contrast to their growing importance, most actors in the field agree that the achievements of many funded networks have been below the high expectations hoped for. One of the reasons for this seems to be that many network coordinators and partners do not have a sufficiently clear picture of the concept of a network as a specific cooperation structure and of the specific activities and management processes necessary to make a network successful.

The report provides an analysis of a research phase that took place between December 2005 and May 2006. The report focuses on the current performance of European networks that have been co-funded under the Socrates Actions of Grundtvig (adult education) and Comenius (school education). More specifically, the report includes an overview of the intended role of European networks of education according to EU policies and programme action; the main achievements and challenges networks have faced according to network co-ordinators/partners, EC officials and external evaluators and experts; lessons to be learned from the process; and recommendations for future improvement.

Research methodology

Overview

The methodology used for the editing of this report focused on a document analysis, needs analysis and actor analysis. The research team followed preliminary research in order to establish a bibliography for the Euoweaving publication, a European survey, targeted interviews, informal conversations, and focus groups during a workshop held in Alden Biesen (Belgium) on 1 December 2006.



Document analysis

The first stage of the research methodology concentrated on a document analysis that consisted of preliminary research in order to establish a bibliography, online research of available resources relevant to European education networks, study of EC official documentation and academic input.

The type of resources that were consulted for the editing of this report were primary sources (publications on Comenius and Grundtvig networks and other European networks operating in the field of education or other relevant fields) and secondary sources (external evaluations, academic publications and practitioners' views in the field). The researchers consulted extensively network websites as well as other resources such as on-line newsletters and reports, video-conferences and virtual learning environments. The editing of this report would not have been possible without a substantial study of EC official documentation. The researchers consulted various calls for proposals, Socrates guidelines for networks, analysis reports of Comenius networks and interim evaluation reports. Academic input in the field of education networks was provided by Dr. Wolfgang Jütte from the Department for Continuing Education Research and Educational Management of Danube University Krems. A detailed list of the bibliography used for this report and for all other *Euoweaving* products is provided in the annexes of this report.

Needs analysis

Following the document analysis, researchers concentrated on a needs analysis, which was followed through the set up of a contact list of Grundtvig and Comenius networks and a European on-line survey.

The needs analysis began with the set up of a list of co-ordinators and partners, which was received from the European Commission. The list consisted of co-ordinators and partners of Grundtvig and Comenius networks from 2001 until 2005. Based on that list, the survey administrators created an email list for the survey, which was launched in mid-March 2006. A short questionnaire was

prepared for the survey (included in the annexes section). The survey was launched and monitored on-line. The questionnaire was made available from a project partner's webpage.¹

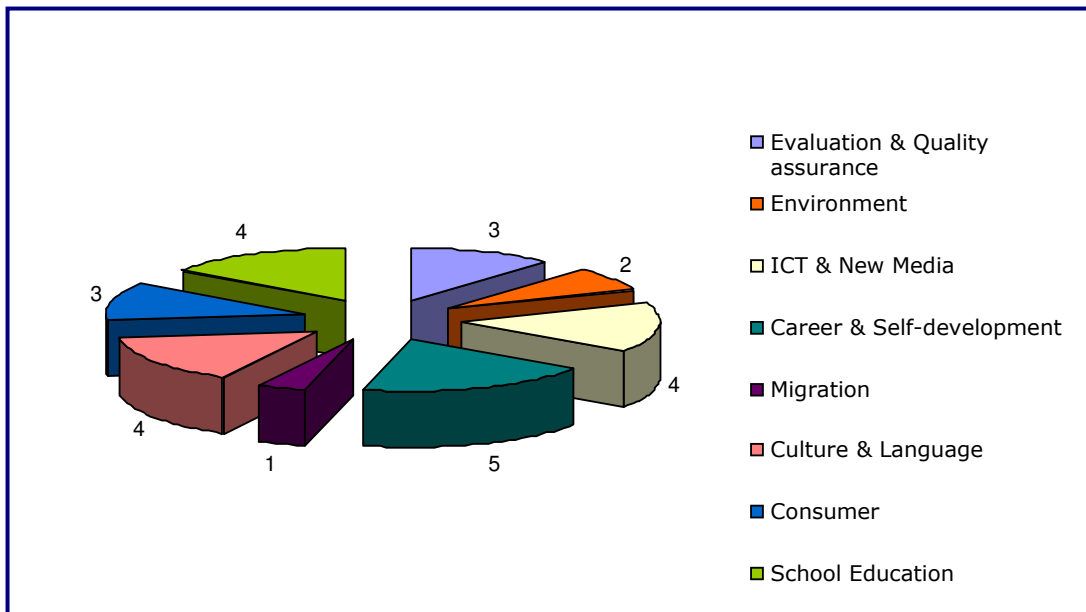
The questions, which were targeted both to Grundtvig and Comenius co-ordinators and partners, concentrated on:

- The main objectives of the network
- The network's activities and results
- The typology of the network's partnership (geographical representation and expertise)
- The strategy used to enlarge the partnership
- The fundraising methodology beyond the EC grant
- The network's main strengths and weaknesses

The reason why these specific questions were selected for the survey was mainly the need for the researchers to select examples of good practice and of the challenges networks faced with regard to their objectives and management. The researchers also needed to identify the strategy networks followed when it came to actual 'networking' (i.e. enlarging their partnership, involving more actors and getting more funding) and the challenges they faced during the entire network management process.

Between 18 March 2006 and 15 April 2006 32 network promoters responded to the survey. The majority of the respondents included co-ordinators and partners of the following network thematic fields: evaluation and quality assurance for education, environment, new technologies, ICT and new media, career guidance and self-development, migration, culture and language (including cultural heritage and the arts), consumer and school education. A variety of countries were represented in the survey since responses came from a variety of geographical areas and regions.

¹ www.eurointeractions.com/euoweaving.htm



Results of Euroweaving survey: network themes

The rather low response to the survey is not surprising if one takes into consideration the following parameters:

- Co-ordinators and partners are often overwhelmed with such surveys and are not keen to answer on-line
- Some countries' culture does not help with on-line surveys since personal contacts tend to be more important
- Some of the email addresses provided by the European Commission were wrong or no longer up-to date, which means that people had moved on to other activities and institutions.
- There were very limited resources for a longer and extensive survey.

For all the above reasons, the survey results can be used as hints rather than concrete findings on an overall impression of networks' performance. The research team decided to use the survey indicatively and concentrated instead on a series of targeted interviews. The survey had indeed an inclusive approach and satisfied the need to keep all networks informed on *Euroweaving*; it was used rather as an awareness raising activity for the project than a data collection method. However, it was the targeted interviews with the various actors that provided concrete data for the report and publication.

Actor analysis

Following the results of the needs analysis, the actor analysis involved a selection of the most relevant actors to be interviewed, the development of interview tools (including interview guidelines and report form, see the annexes section) and the follow up of targeted interviews with the selected actors.

By 'actors' the research team identified the following stakeholders: the European Commission/Executive Agency officials, representatives from the National Agencies, external experts who evaluate education networks for the European Commission and finally network co-ordinators and partners.

The European Commission/Executive Agency officials who were interviewed were mainly those working in the area of networks for Grundtvig and Comenius although officials from the Multilingualism unit, who showed particular interest in the study given the forthcoming networks for languages, were also interviewed. National Agency interviewees were selected on the basis of their professional experience with and commitment to the funding actions. Again the research team respected diversity in terms of geographical distribution. Experts and evaluators of education networks were selected on the basis of their experience (the team selected the most experienced experts to be interviewed) while respecting diversity in terms of geographical and educational/professional backgrounds. Following a quantitative (statistics based) and qualitative (content based) analysis of the survey results, the researchers selected the most useful network co-ordinators and partners to be interviewed and be used as case studies for the research report. Given the small sample of the survey, the researchers selected their network interviewees also after consultation with experts and evaluators of networks as well as recommendations provided by European Commission officials.

More specifically, the selection of the network interviewees was made on the basis of:

- Diversity in expertise, variety of thematic areas
- Geographical distribution
- Balance between Grundtvig and Comenius

- Balance between co-ordinators and partners
- Balance between 'old' and new networks (i.e. experienced versus newcomers)
- The quality and detail of their responses to the survey
- Recommendations from experts and European Commission officials

In some cases and where possible, the research team made the choice to interview both a co-ordinator and partner of the same network in order to compare their views and have a more complete picture of that particular network's performance.

Prior to the interviews the research team drafted two sets of documents, one for European Commission officials, National Agencies and experts and one for the interviews of the co-ordinators and partners (see the annexes section).

The interview form for experts and National Agency/European Commission officials requested the following information:

- The role of networks in EU policy
- The concept of networks in the action programmes
- Examples of good practice
- Networks overall performance and results
- Expectations of the European Commission and experts
- Recommendations for a better performance of the networks

Clearly the above questions were meant to reveal on the one hand the policy background, political objectives and expectations of the policy makers and experts while on the other hand they also provided a solid background for recommendations that would help improve networks' performance.

The interview form for co-ordinators and partners of networks requested the following information:

- The typology of the interviewee (name/surname, contact details, role in the network, network theme and previous experience)
- The origin of the network (including the main reasons why the partners decided to form a network)

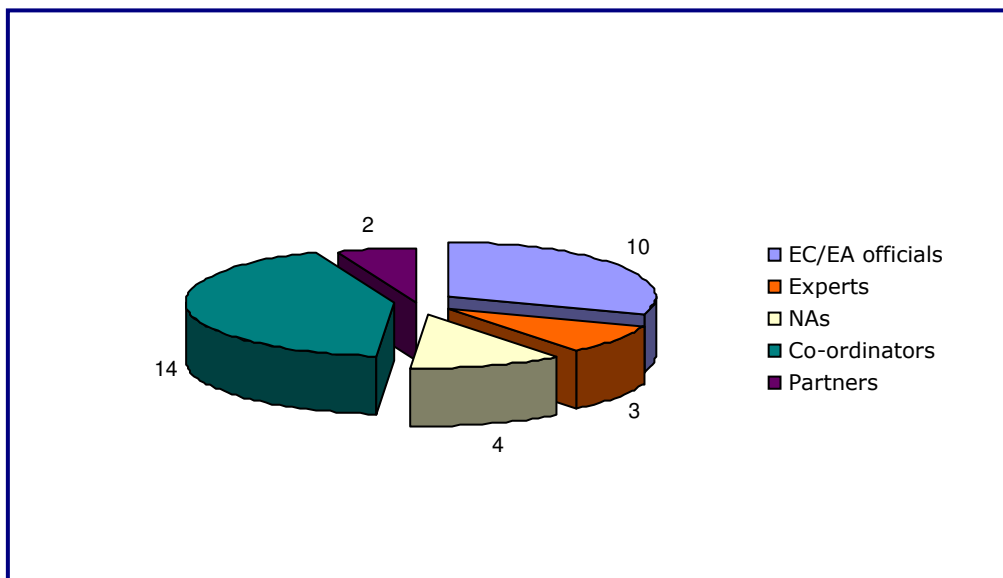
- The process of partner selection (the criteria and strategy on which the partnership was formed)
- The learning process in the network (sharing experience and knowledge)
- The management structure of the network
- The communication systems and information flow
- The typical aims and objectives of the network
- The evaluation methods of the network
- The sustainability of the network
- The European added value and impact the network had as a result of its formation

As it results from the above points of discussion, the main objective of these interviews was to have an understanding of the objectives, activities and results co-ordinators and partners expected from their networks. Moreover, the interviews sought to identify the main weaknesses and challenges networks had faced/were facing, their ways of internal communication, management and administration, as well as their partnership development, network evaluation, promotion and sustainability. Network co-ordinators and partners were asked during the interviews to self-evaluate their networks on the basis of their 'history' and background, their overall performance taking into consideration every single step of the network's life. In most cases, the interviews have been very useful for the co-ordinators and partners themselves since they helped realise and make explicit their main successes and failures.

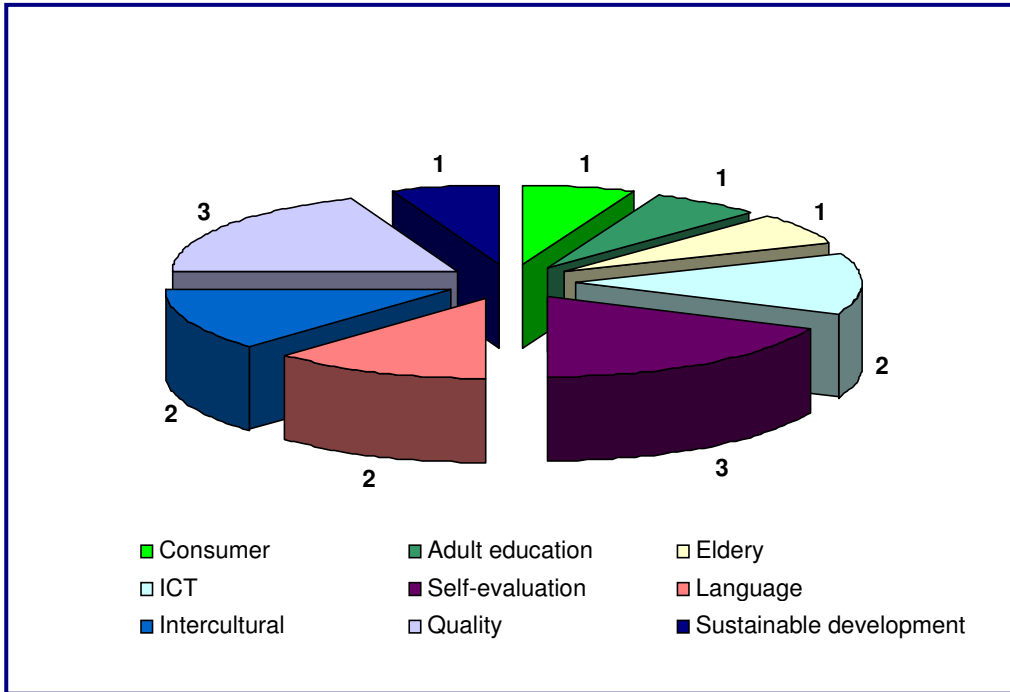
The European Commission and experts interviews were made through meetings while National Agencies' interviewees and network co-ordinators and partners were contacted over the phone. Where possible, the research team made the most out of their professional contacts in order to meet the interviewee (during partner meetings, at conferences and stakeholders meetings and any other event). It should be noted that the research team followed interviews with European Commission officials and experts first in order to better identify the network co-ordinators and partners that should definitely be contacted. This timing proved right since it provided a very thorough and useful understanding of the funding authority versus the funding receiver. The interviews were followed using the interview guidelines templates (see the annexes section). The template

was used as a check list or an indicative grid of questions; both the interviewer and the interviewee were free to ask/answer any of the questions they thought were most relevant to the particular network. It should be noted that most of these interviews were long and extensive and lasted over 2 hours each.

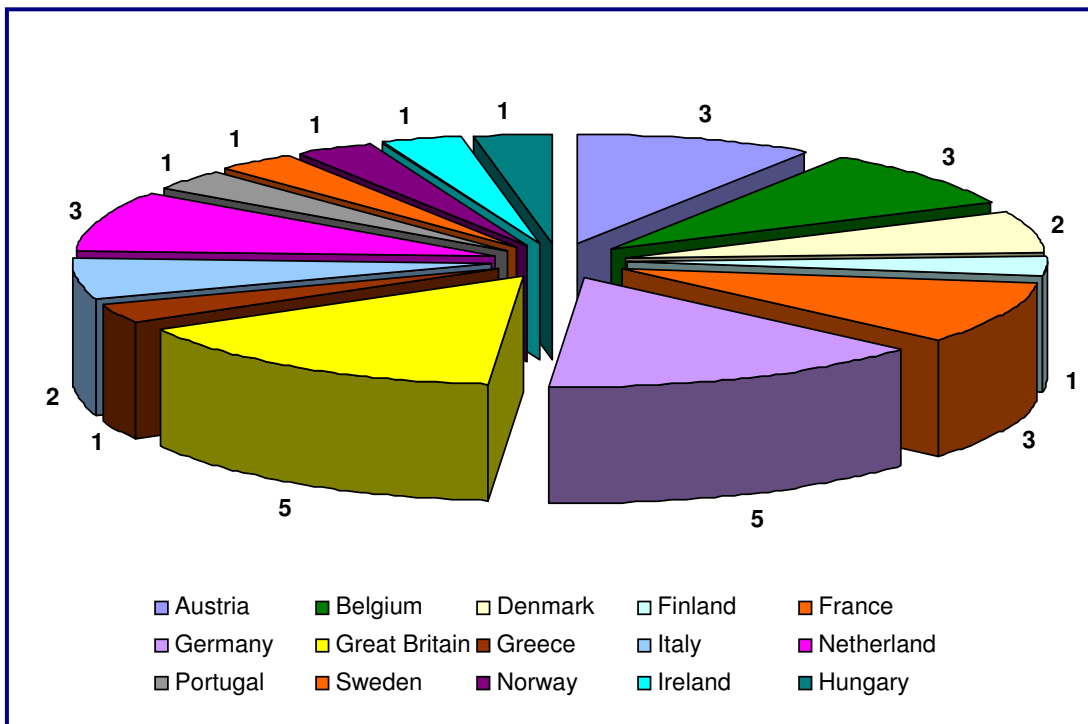
A total of 33 interviews were made out of which 10 were with European Commission and Executive Agency officials, 4 with National Agency officials, 3 with expert evaluators and 15 with co-ordinators and partners. The following images present the statistics of the interviews followed in terms of the type of interviewee and geographical distribution. The 15 interviews to co-ordinators and partners are also presented in terms of their network expertise and theme.



Euroweaving interviewees presented per expertise



Euoweaving interviewees presented per network theme



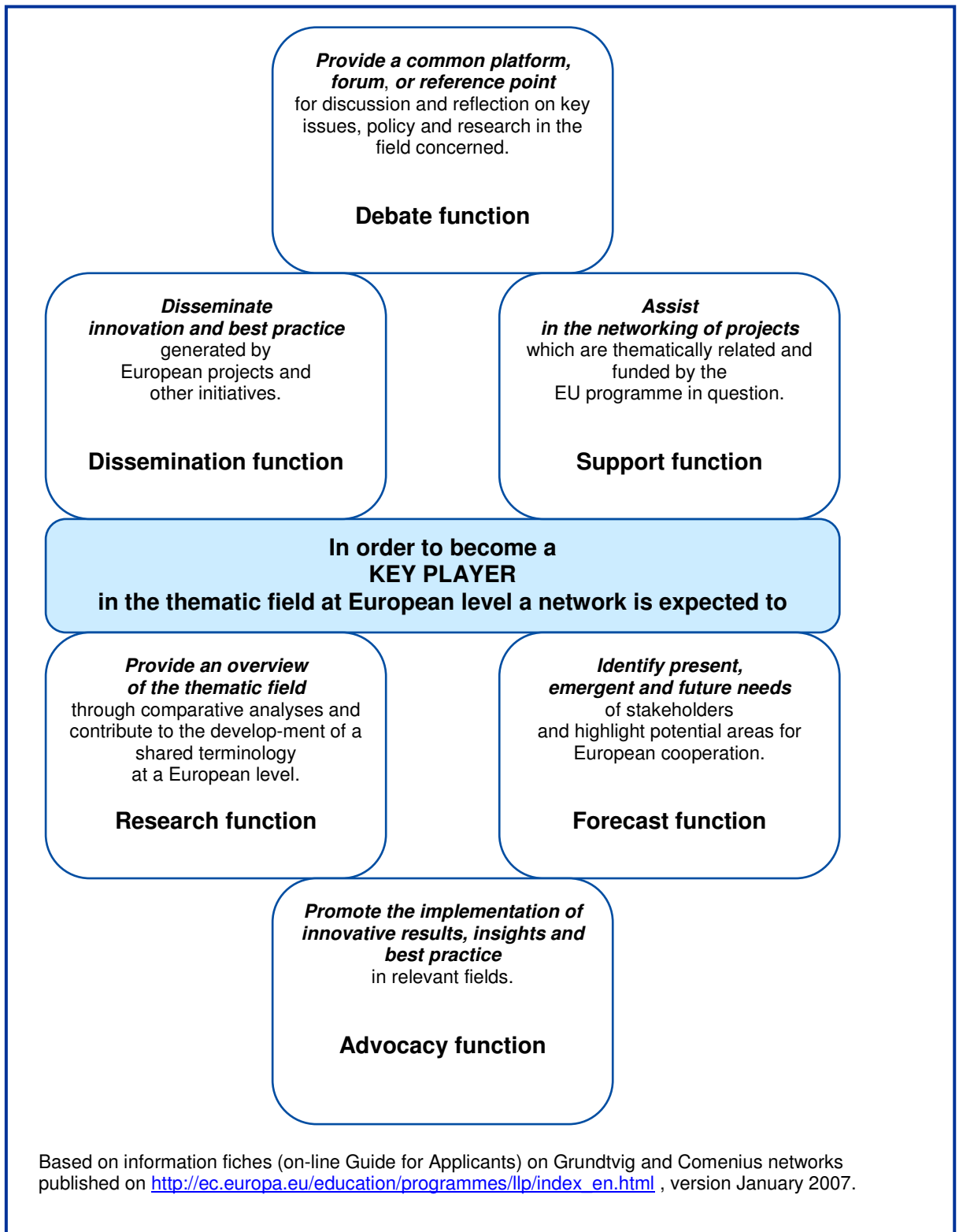
Euoweaving interviewees presented per country of origin of interviewee

Results

The EU programme view: The mission and performance of networks

The Euoweaving research phase provided very useful results for an understanding on the mission and performance networks have been undertaking as part of EU programmes and on the EC officials' expectations from European networks in education.

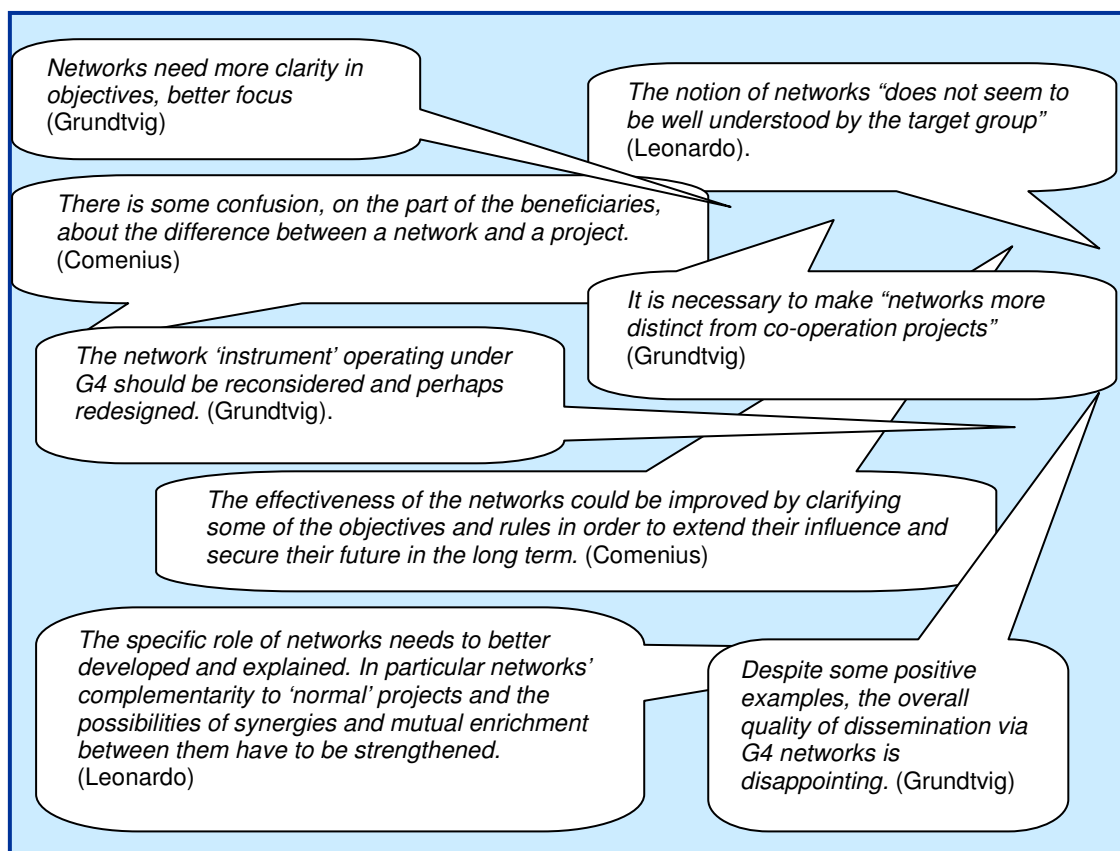
According to the European Commission, Grundtvig and Comenius networks are large-scale institutional platforms for discussion and exchange of information on key issues as well as policy-shaping and/or research in their respective area of adult/school education. Each network is expected to become a key player in the promotion of European co-operation in its specific field/sector. In the main EU funding instrument for education, the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, networks play a prominent role, which has been more emphasised than in previous years. One of the main reasons for this emphasis on networks is the fragmentation of European cooperation activities: European networks can be regarded as an attempt to overcome the prevalent thinking in terms of isolated projects. A network is expected to become a *key player* in its respective educational field at European level. Becoming such a key player involves a long list of tasks that a network should fulfil:



The mission of European networks in adult and school education according to Lifelong Learning Programme documents

In view of the rather fragile organisational basis of networks, and the limited financial and time resources the EU funding programmes grants to networks, it seems hardly possible that a network is able to fulfil all six potential network functions to the same extent.

Several external evaluation studies were carried out independently from each other to assess the performance of Grundtvig, Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci (1998-2006). Both groups of experts who carried out these studies and programmes external evaluators highlighted similar critical points:



Critical points according to programme evaluation reports

Three related problem areas can be distinguished from the results of external evaluation and these were confirmed in several interviews the Euroweaving research team conducted with EU programme managers and experts:

- There is an apparent lack of clarity about the mission of a network.
- Networks often need to be more focused on core aims and objectives.

- Many actors are not sufficiently clear about the difference between a network and a Transnational Cooperation Project (TCP).

The actors' view:

Network coordinators and partners about their experiences

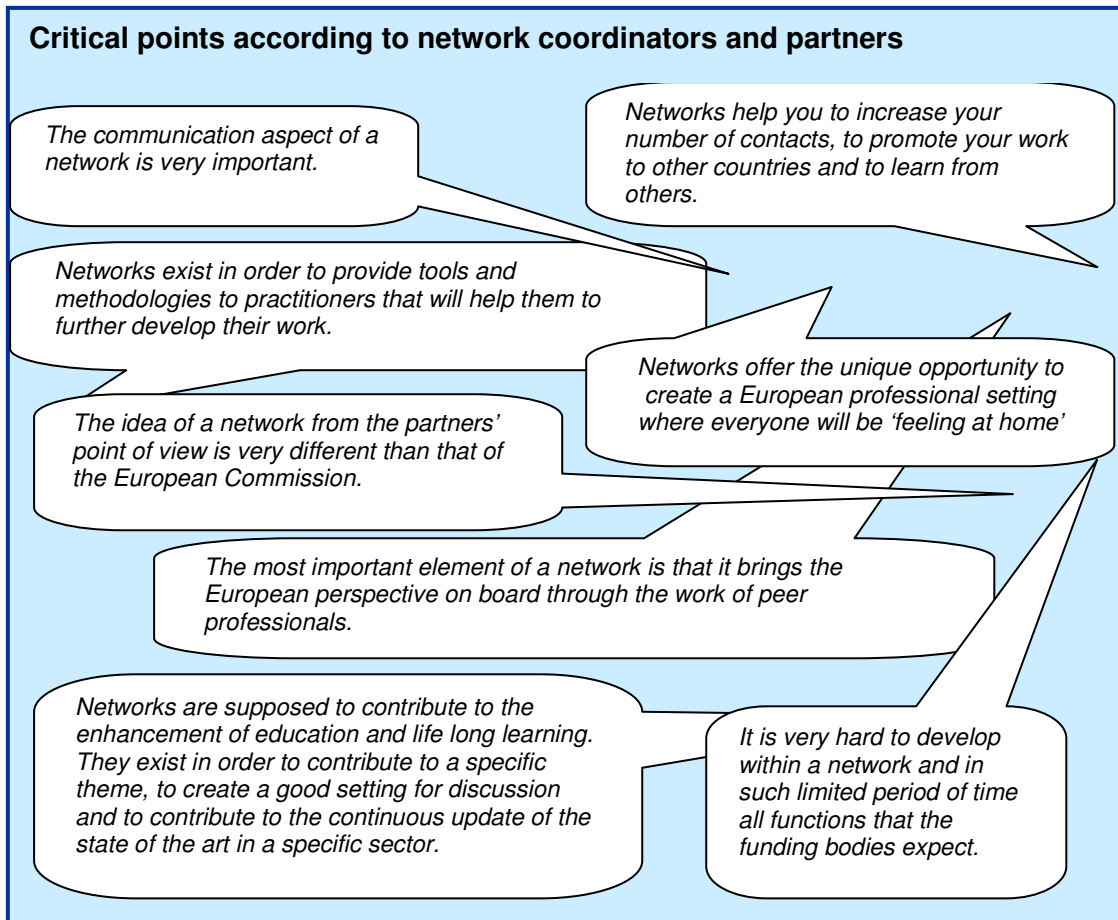
While the European funding programme emphasizes the strategic impact networks should have, the priorities of the network coordinators and partners we interviewed seem different:

In the first place they consider networks to be a platform for the exchange of good practice and a useful environment for learning jointly. According to them the most important element of a network is that through peer collaboration, network members gain professional practice at the European level. The network is thus a 'terrain' to learn about new strategies, to gain content knowledge and exchange expertise in a specific field.

For the players directly involved European networks are

- A platform to exchange and share knowledge
- An opportunity to take projects further
- An arena of contacts and a possibility to enlarge an already existing group of partners
- An open structure with a wide and diverse range of possibilities of action
- A laboratory where new ideas can be tested

In the interviews we conducted network coordinators and partners raised a number of critical points as well as specific assets:



The main benefits actors expect from participation in networks can be summarized as follows:

- National networking is 'upgraded' to European (a national network becomes a European network).
- European networking instigates national networking (being part of a European network induces the creation of national networks).
- Partners understand the importance of international orientation and perspective of their work.
- European networks provide a new approach to self-evaluation and learning through contributing and sharing.
- Partners become closer to European policy and practices, understanding how the processes work.

- Work with different type of institutions that education institutions do not normally liaise with (such as local authorities, media and press, interest groups, etc).

On the other hand four main problem areas of the present network action can be identified according to the survey:

Time

Creating appropriate environments and structures for effective networking and learning can be a process which requires considerable time and other resources. Network partners often feel they are not given this necessary time, because they are forced to implement an ambitious work plan at the same time. Several networks coordinators stressed that, if a network starts anew, more than one funding period is necessary and should be planned from the outset.

Concept

The survey clearly confirmed our initial hypothesis:

For many partners and even coordinators the concept of a network as opposed to a transnational cooperation project is not clear. Quite a few networks' starting point was not the wish for network-specific activities, but rather the number of partners or the desire to continue existing forms of cooperation.

Funding mechanism

Networks coordinators and partners stressed that (parts of) the funding mechanisms for networks were inappropriate. Due to the process-orientation and therefore potential open-endedness of a network a much greater flexibility in the administrative and financial regulations would be desirable. Particularly the inclusion of additional partners – though explicitly recommended in programme documents – and activities is often difficult because of the rather rigid regulations which require detailed prior planning.

Evaluation and sustainability

Only few networks seem to have a clear idea of the lasting impact they want to have, and of the quality management measures which could help to ensure that the objectives will be met.

Explicit sustainability plans seem to be exception rather than the rule. On the other hand, many informal forms of sustainability after the end of the funding period could be identified (follow-up conferences, projects, informal networks of contacts, joint publications, exchange of staff etc).

**The view of social science:
Messages from social network analysis**

According to social network analysts, networks are an organisational answer to the diversity and complexity of educational needs of the various stakeholder groups of lifelong learning. The more diversified and specific learning needs and provisions become, the more pressing also becomes the need for integration of the diverse experiences and approaches. To form and participate in inter-organisational and personal networks seems to be one answer to overcoming the fragmentation of the lifelong learning landscape.

Network science bridges among a variety of disciplines including computer science, mathematics, physics, biology and sociology. Network theory concerns itself with the study of graphs as representation of symmetric or asymmetric relations between discrete objects. The graphs of concern in network theory are complex networks including the World Wide Web, the Internet, social networks, epistemological networks, etc.

Socrates Grundtvig and Comenius networks would normally be defined by academics as being part of 'social' networks: these are structures made of individuals or organisations. Social network analysis (involving disciplines such as geography, sociology, anthropology, information science and organisational studies) involves the study of the network member relations.

Socrates Grundtvig and Comenius networks would fall under the category of inter-organisational networks (being part of social networks) that would be expected to:

- follow their activities over a longer period of time
- formulate aims jointly
- present added value for each of its members
- be communicative rather than hierarchical
- be regulated by trust, shared interest and appreciation rather than money or hierarchy
- have a low degree of organisation and thus be very participative and interactive
- provide professional value to its members
- be used as a learning process for both the institutions involved and the individuals

The analysis of such networks would rather focus on their relational aspects including the study of:

- weak versus strong ties
- formal versus informal ties
- the quality and content of the relations
- the communication, performance and exchange
- the support and trust
- the contacts and further contacts (networks of networks, meta-networking)
- access to knowledge and resources (ideas, money, decision-makers)

As it results from the above, the relational perspective is the particularly highlighted in academic social network analysis. Consequently, a social network can be defined as a structure of social relations of units and the linkages between these units.

Conclusions

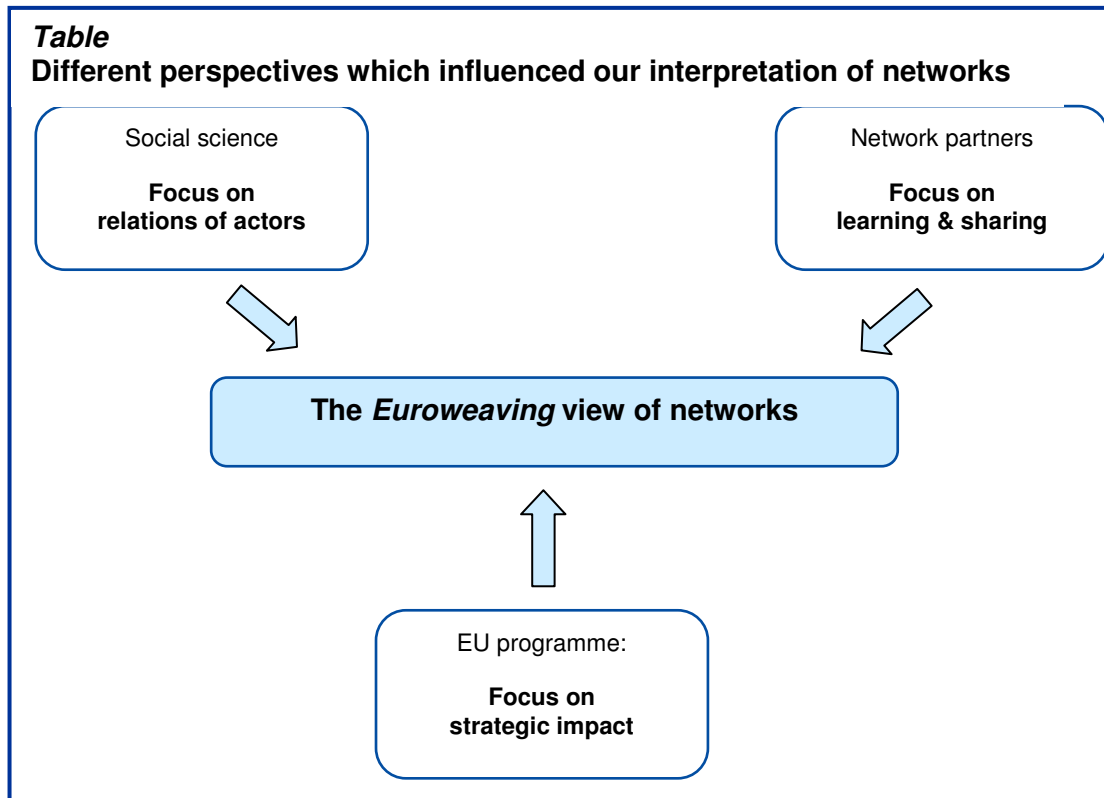
The survey provided useful results for the further work of the *Euoweaving* project:

1. The survey confirmed the initial assumption of the project that there is a clear gap between highly ambitious expectations of the funding programme on the one hand and the achievements of funded networks on the other hand. There are several reasons for this discrepancy:

- There is an apparent lack of clarity about the mission of a network.
- Many actors are not sufficiently clear about the difference between a network and a Transnational Cooperation Project (TCP).
- To create suitable mechanisms for networking and learning are often underestimated. They are core activities of a network and require a considerable proportion of the resources available.
- With a view of the limited time and budget networks often need to be more focused on a few core aims and objectives instead of trying to do everything at the same time.

2. The survey provided numerous examples of good practice for future coordinators and partners of networks: Recommendations, tools, experiences. They have been included in the publication *The Art of Networking* and are highlighted as practice examples there.

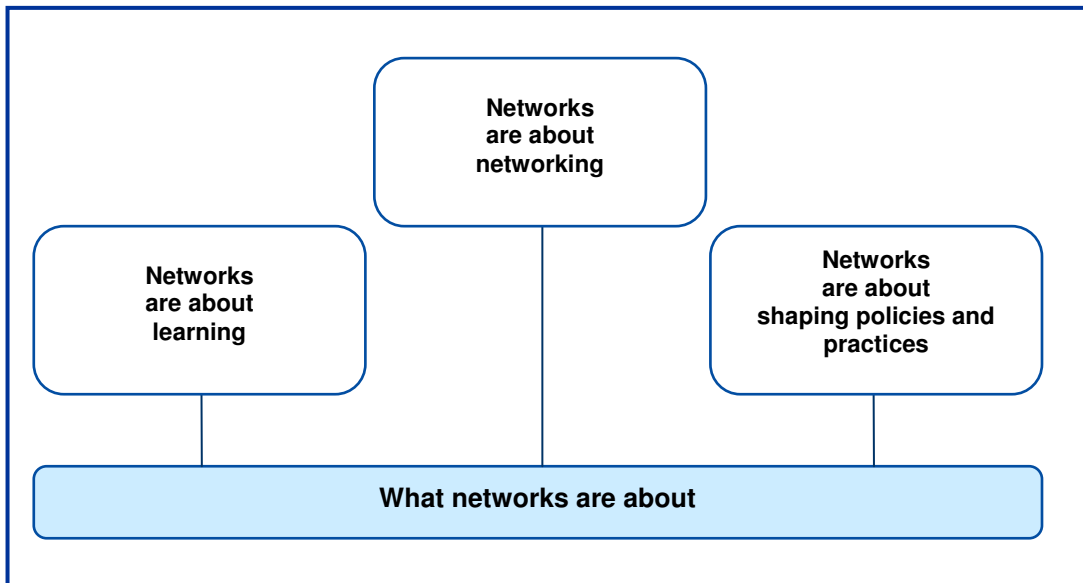
3. The survey helped us to come to a joint working definition of European networks in education. This view has been influenced by the main message we received from the three perspectives on networks we studied in the research phase:



Especially the different perspective of social networks analysis with its view of social networks as a largely autonomous system of relation between actors enriched our discussions. It coincided with the network partners' emphasis on networks as places of meeting colleagues and exchanging and sharing experiences.

These two inputs lead us to the conclusion that two primary functions of networks are networking and learning, and that these core functions need to be taken more seriously. If they receive the attention they deserve, it becomes clear that networks need to concentrate on very few aspects of strategic impact. Both networks coordinators and the funding programme should be realistic in what networks can achieve on top of creating a platform for intensive networking and learning.

Thus, networks have three core functions in our definition:



Our interpretation of the mission of European networks in education

4. The survey identified areas in which the funding programme should improve in order to better reflect the strategic mission and structural requirements of European networks in education.

These critical areas include:

- The network concept
- The duration of financial support
- The provisions for a growing strategy of networks
- The flexibility of financial and contractual regulations
- Selection criteria
- Requirements for network partnerships
- Sustainability
- Interaction with the European Commission and National Agencies

The crucial points are presented elsewhere: At the request of some European Commission officials a separate document has been produced by the *Euoweaving* team containing conclusions and advice for the further improvement of network actions in the new funding programme:

Preliminary recommendations to the European Commission on the implementation of Grundtvig Networks in the new Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Selected literature and links

Network theory

Barabasi, Albert-Laszlo (2002) *Linked: The New Science of Networks*. Cambridge, Mass: Perseus

Capra, Fritjof (2002): *The Hidden Connections*, London.

Castells, Manuel (2000): *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford.

Castells, Manuel (2002): *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*, Oxford.

International Network for Social Network Analysis

<http://www.insna.org>

McCarthy, Helen / Miller, Paul / Skidmore, Paul (eds.) (2004): *Network Logic. Who governs in an interconnected world?*, London.

Wikipedia: Social Network

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network

International network and project management

Bienzle, Holger / Kirtley, Ray / Ling, Sue / Purokuro, Vesa / Wiesinger, Silvia / Wilen, Eija (2004): *A Survival Kit for European Project Management. Advice for Coordinators of Centralised Socrates Projects*, Vienna:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/comenius/survival/survival04_en.pdf

CC Pace Systems (2003): *Agile Project Management*:

<http://www.ccpac.com/Resources/documents/AgileProjectManagement.pdf>

European Commission, EuropeAid Cooperation Office (2004): *Project Cycle Management Guidelines*, Brussels:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/gsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

IETM (2001): *How Networking Works. IETM Study on the Effects of Networking*:

<http://www.fitzcarraldo.it/en/research/IETM.pdf>

Leonardo UK National Agency (2003): *Transnational Partnership Guidance Note for Leonardo Projects*, Birmingham:

<http://www.leonardo.org.uk>

MMI Consulting (2000): *Input to Operational Guidelines. A Practical Guide on how to Set up, Run and Evaluate a Comenius Network*, Herford:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/comenius/activities/pilotnetworks_en.html

Network of Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) (2003): *Management and Animation of a Transnational Network – Selected experience from the IRE Thematic Networks*:

<http://www.innovating-regions.org/download/IRE%20TN%20report.PDF?CFID=111258&CFTOKEN=84897034>

Kastelein, Jan-Peter / Ross, Mathew (2004): *Handbook Virtual Teamwork. Making Cooperation Work in Leonardo da Vinci Projects. Information, Theory and Practical Tips*, 's-

Hertogenbosch:

www.leonardodavinci.nl

Network evaluation

Baumgartl, Bernd / Hughes, Jenny (2005): Project Manager's Guide to Evaluation, Vienna:
<http://www.navreme.net/publications/publications.html>

Leonardo UK National Agency (2002): Evaluation Guidance Note for Leonardo Projects, Birmingham:

<http://www.leonardo.org.uk>

External and internal evaluation reports of SEED, a Comenius network:

<http://seed.schule.at/webpage.php?url=evaluation>

Self-evaluation of school projects:

www.MICE-T.net

Self-evaluation in adult learning settings:

www.SEALLL.eu

Espinach, Maite / Feijen, Toos / Reubsaet, Theo (2000): Handbook on evaluation and dissemination strategies for Comenius 2 projects, Nijmegen:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/comenius/tools/manuel.pdf>

Dissemination and sustainability

European Commission, Directorate for Education and Culture (2006): Sustainability of international cooperation projects in the field of higher education and vocational training. Handbook on Sustainability, Luxembourg:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/doc/sustainhandbook.pdf>

European Commission, Directorate for Education and Training: Leonardo Da Vinci Valorisation Key Documents:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/leonardo/new/valorisation/doc_en.html

European Commission, Directorate for Education and Training: European Quality Kit. Striving for Better Quality in Grundtvig Projects:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/grundtvig/doc/kit.pdf>

European Commission, Directorate General for Education, Training and Youth (1997): Dissemination and Commercialisation of Training Products. Guidelines for Promoters of Training Projects

[http://www2.siu.no/vev.nsf/d48a0ecf27ae054dc1256f630063e8d7/cbe3efad1a051207c1256bd5004e1262/\\$FILE/Diss_comm.pdf](http://www2.siu.no/vev.nsf/d48a0ecf27ae054dc1256f630063e8d7/cbe3efad1a051207c1256bd5004e1262/$FILE/Diss_comm.pdf)

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<http://www.leonardo.org.uk>

Sustain project (2000): Socrates ODL/Minerva dissemination guide:

<http://www.sustain.odl.org/Guide-Gen2000.pdf>

Suurla, Riitta / Markkula, Markku & Finnish Leonardo Centre (1999): Methods and Tools for Effective Dissemination A Guide to the Dissemination of the Results of International Educational Projects. IACEE Report No 11/1999, Espoo:

<http://www.iacee.org/dissemination>

Annex 2: On-line questionnaire

***Euoweaving* Questionnaire** **Good practice for Networking in Grundtvig and Comenius**

You have been a Co-ordinator
 Partner

In a network co-funded under Comenius
 Grundtvig

Since (please insert year)

With a specific theme on

Which one (s) of the following have been the main objectives of your network?

- To promote the action (Grundtvig or Comenius) to newcomers
- To improve the quality of Grundtvig or Comenius products and results
- To increase visibility, dissemination and valorisation of Grundtvig or Comenius
- To create a 'space' for further co-operation and exchange of expertise within the action
- To raise awareness about the specific field

Any other please specify

Which of the following activities and results has your network followed and accomplished?

- Set up of website
- Events
- Annual report

Production of publications (please specify type)

Open seminars

Conference

Other (please specify)

What has been the typology of your network's partnership/membership?

Countries where partners are from

Types of organisations partners are from

If the partnership has grown during the duration of EU funding what was the strategy your network used to enlarge the partnership?

What types of funding have you used apart from EU funding?

Sponsorship

Partner contribution

Commercialisation of any of the products

Set up of association with membership fee

Any other means, please specify

What have been the main strengths and weaknesses of your network?

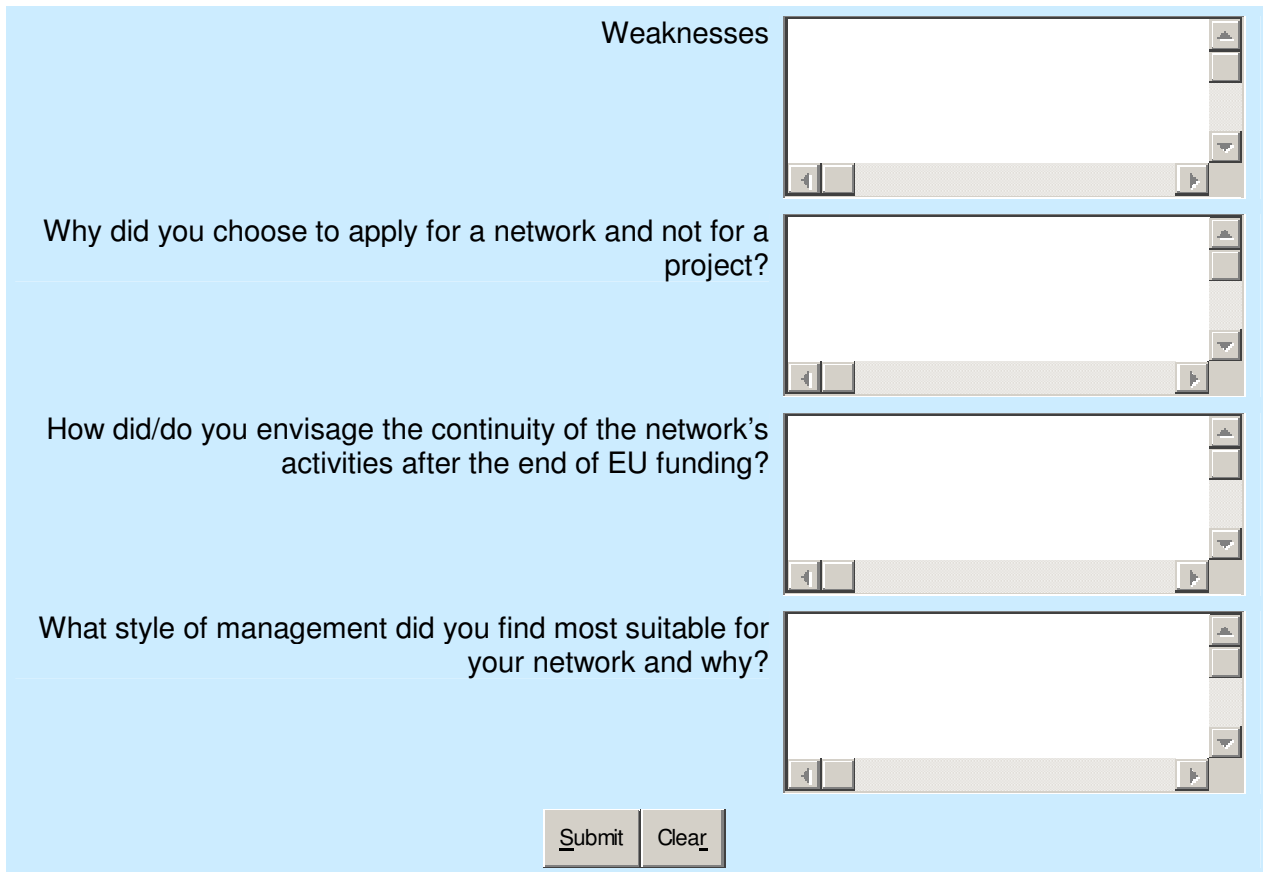
Strengths

Weaknesses

Why did you choose to apply for a network and not for a project?

How did/do you envisage the continuity of the network's activities after the end of EU funding?

What style of management did you find most suitable for your network and why?

The image shows a screenshot of a questionnaire form. It has a light blue background. At the top right, the word "Weaknesses" is written. Below it are four text input fields, each with a question. The first question is "Why did you choose to apply for a network and not for a project?". The second is "How did/do you envisage the continuity of the network's activities after the end of EU funding?". The third is "What style of management did you find most suitable for your network and why?". At the bottom center, there are two buttons: "Submit" and "Clear". Each text input field has a scroll bar on the right side.

*Thank you for filling in this questionnaire.
You will receive the results of our survey as well as a copy of the Euoweaving guide on
Grundtvig and Comenius networks.*

Annex 3: Guidelines for interviews of Comenius and Grundtvig promoters

Each member of the Euoweaving team will interview over the phone or during meetings (when possible) Comenius and Grundtvig promoters including both co-ordinators and partners.

Before the interview we should carefully study the network's web site. This will prevent us from asking unnecessary questions and perhaps give us an indication of the most interesting aspects of this particular network.

It is advisable to try to cover all of the areas below by getting answers for most of the questions included in the list. But feel free to change the questions and select on a few focal areas on which you spend more time than on the other ones. You can use the template below as a check list and add comments in the tables provided.

Please keep in mind that it is of vital importance for our publication that we receive some written evidence of good and bad practice (forms, templates, agendas, reports, promotion material etc.) So do ask the interviewee to send us such material evidence whenever you touch an interesting topic.

	Issues to be addressed	Tick																		
1.	<p>Typology of interviewee</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">Name</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Surname</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Organisation</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Action involved in</td> <td>Comenius <input type="checkbox"/> Grundtvig <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Participation in this network as</td> <td>Coordinator <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Network field/theme</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Network status</td> <td>Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Previous experience in...</td> <td>Comenius projects <input type="checkbox"/> Grundtvig projects <input type="checkbox"/> Comenius networks <input type="checkbox"/> Grundtvig networks <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Previous experience with other networks outside Socrates</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Name		Surname		Organisation		Action involved in	Comenius <input type="checkbox"/> Grundtvig <input type="checkbox"/>	Participation in this network as	Coordinator <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Network field/theme		Network status	Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Previous experience in...	Comenius projects <input type="checkbox"/> Grundtvig projects <input type="checkbox"/> Comenius networks <input type="checkbox"/> Grundtvig networks <input type="checkbox"/>	Previous experience with other networks outside Socrates		
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Previous experience with other networks outside Socrates																				
2.	<p>Network origin What is the origin of this network? What are the main steps that you made to develop this network previous to getting the funding?</p> <p>Network or project? <i>We need to identify here why the decided to apply for a network and not a</i></p>																			

	<p><i>project. Try to extract as much information as possible as to what they think a network is as opposed to a project and what is their definition of a network in their field.</i></p> <p>2a Why did you choose to apply for a network and not a project?</p> <p>2b in you opinion: What are the 3 most important aims of a network in your field?</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Partnership issues</p> <p><i>We are trying to identify here how a partnership works within a network. We need to know how they select their partners and how they deal with 'silent' partners and most importantly how they communicate and manage their partnership. We also need to ask in the end of an example of good AND bad practice from their partnership.</i></p> <p>Selection of partners</p> <p>3a. How did you select your partners? What were the criteria you used for selection?</p> <p>Expertise <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Dissemination potential <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Country diversity <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Power/influence <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Previous contacts <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>End-users <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3b. Were all the partners key players in the field? If not, why did you take less resourceful organisations on board?</p> <p>3c. Do the partners have good contacts to the target groups? Are they good networkers?</p> <p>3d. Have you worked with any of the partners before and with what capacity?</p> <p>3f. Give a recommendation on how to select partners How should future coordinators select their partners?</p> <p>Partnership management, team building</p> <p>How did you ensure that all partners were motivated and maintained a high level of motivation?</p> <p>What were the most/least successful team building actions?</p>	

	<p>3e. Were all your partners 'in the right place' (the right role and tasks) or did this evolve during the project period?</p> <p>4a. Did you have any conflicts? How did you solve them? Did you work out a conflict management strategy at the beginning of the project?</p> <p>Give a recommendation on team building in a network</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Learning process</p> <p><i>We need some indications here on how promoters learn to act as a European partnership and how they manage sharing expertise and knowledge. We also need to know what they learn from the process and how networking helped them in that respect.</i></p> <p>At what levels did learning take place in your network?</p> <p>Personal level <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Professional level <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Organisational level <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>In which areas did you learn most?</p> <p>New knowledge in the thematic field <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Management skills <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Promotion/dissemination expertise <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Intercultural understanding/skills <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Foreign languages <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4b. Can you give successful strategies of how to learn from each other in a network?</p> <p>4c. How did common understanding evolve and did it for all partners?</p> <p>6f. Do you and your partners use the same terms? Do you have the same understanding of concepts? (common understanding and speaking the 'same language')</p> <p>Give a recommendation on how to actively promote learning in a network</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Management structure</p> <p><i>This is a key issue of the publication and we need to understand what promoters think as network management. We also need to extract from them again examples of good AND bad practice and understand whether they had a management plan as part of their network.</i></p> <p>5a. Did/Do you have a management plan (template, form, software any</p>	

	<p>other tool)?</p> <p>5b. What makes a good coordinator?</p> <p>5c. How were roles defined?</p> <p>5d. How were tasks divided?</p> <p>5e. Did you use sub-groups, working groups?</p> <p>5f. How was the work of the sub-groups made coherent? Organising interaction and communication within the network</p> <p>5h. What changes did you have in your project and how did you manage to deal with them?</p> <p>5i. How do you deal with the collaboration with the EC?</p> <p>Give a recommendation on how to set up and implement an effective an efficient management system in a network</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Communication systems</p> <p>6a. What has been the Intensity and frequency of internal communication?</p> <p>6b. Give us some information about your meetings (frequency, type, participation rate)</p> <p>6c. What has been the role of ICT in your communication?</p> <p>What kind of technologies did you use in internal and external network communication? Good/bad experience with</p> <p>e-mail <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>collaborative platforms <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Internet telephoning (Skype...) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Video conference <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Social software <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Weblogs <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>6d. What tools have you used for communication? (such as newsletters, web sites)</p> <p>6e. What advice would you give to coordinators and partners on internal and external communication?</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Typical network aims and activities</p> <p>In which of the following activities has you network been involved (can</p>	

	<p>perhaps be identified by analysing the network web site):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising fora for sharing experience <input type="checkbox"/> Disseminate project results, good practice, innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Analysing the state of the art <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing annual reports <input type="checkbox"/> Producing comparative studies <input type="checkbox"/> Producing recommendations <input type="checkbox"/> Producing other publications <input type="checkbox"/> Analysing future requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting other Socrates projects <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in networking with each other <input type="checkbox"/> thematic/content support <input type="checkbox"/> organising training of project actors <input type="checkbox"/> promoting Grundtvig/Comenius training courses <input type="checkbox"/> initiating new projects (contact seminars) <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Influencing policy-makers <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a shared terminology at European level <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Please share with us positive and negative experiences with regard to these activities . implemented.</p> <p>Give recommendations on how to organise and implement such core network activities</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Evaluation of the network</p> <p>8a. What evaluation tools/methods have you used for your network?</p> <p>8b. How did you cooperate with your external evaluator?</p> <p>What advice would you give to coordinators and partners on evaluation?</p> <p>Have you got interesting evaluation tools (questionnaires, evaluation plans etc.) to pass on?</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Sustainability</p> <p>Did your network grow during the funding period? If it did, how did you do this?</p> <p>Did you manage to get additional funding from public authorities <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

	<p>private sponsors <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Can you give recommendations on how to get such a support?</p> <p>How did/do you envisage the continuity of the network's activities after the end of EU funding?</p> <p>Did you apply for a renewal of the network? <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>European added value and impact</p> <p>In your own words: What are the most important elements which create the "European Added Value" of your network?</p> <p>What do you consider as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the greatest achievement - the greatest shortcoming <p>of your network?</p> <p>How would you evaluate the impact of your network?</p> <p>In educational practice?</p> <p>End-user level?</p> <p>Policy-making?</p>	

Annex 4: Overall interview comments of Comenius and Grundtvig promoters

Network background

Network example 1

An EU officer of the COM encouraged the creation of the network.

Network example 2

The participation in the NOW network has been a very important experience in setting this network. The following conclusions have been very useful for future action:

- *Plenary sessions add little added value.*
- *A smaller approach to meetings is more effective (peer learning). Origin of the TRIO meetings approach*
- *It is critical that at least half of the partners know each other at the initial phase.*

Network example 3

- *Partners were part of the core group of a Comenius 2 project (MICE-T) on this theme. We decided to take the subject one step 'up' in order to have more impact.*
- *Didn't want to produce something new but we wanted to exchange knowledge and good practice.*
- *Did two projects on this topic, so it was a logical step to take it further in terms of impact, dissemination etc.*
- *Complementary measures project on project evaluation (MICE)*
- *Comenius 2 project on the same theme (MICE-T)*

These core groups started looking for more partners to start a network.

Network example 4

- *Already a network of volunteers*
- *The coordinator was the founder of ESP (European Schools Project), a Europe-wide network of teachers and schools working on applying ICT at school (early days, volunteer work). This ESP-network had national coordinators and these coordinators became the partners in the Ecole network*
- *Ecole lifted the ESP work out of the volunteers sector*

Network example 5

- *Right timing, a strategic move: the end of the lingua programme and a*

- need to bring expertise together and start networking in the sector*
- *Following EC policy agendas*
 - *The Commission was looking for such a network. It was a bottom up and top-down encounter*
- 4 people met at a conference; discussed the needs and then worked out the best way how to get it*

Network example 6

- *Wanted to exchange and share knowledge*
- *A project is more product oriented: already had a project in this field (CICERO) and we were advised to share and disseminate it in a network, so we wanted to take the project further*
- *Wanted to bring things together and have contacts; looked for possibilities to enlarge the group we had*

Network example 7

- *Projects are very narrow and you focus in order to have the application accepted. A network is more open, broader and more linked to what we do.*
- *Not all people have research tradition and do broader work*
- *In a project you usually develop one main idea and in a network you can deal with several parallel questions*
- *Applied in 2001 and failed the pre-proposal. Then asked the Commission to help with a meeting of six of the potential partners. Two of these partners joined another network and gained some experience. In 2002 applied again and were accepted.*

Network example 8

- *Already did some projects in this field, we wanted continuity and we wanted dissemination*
 - *There was a need for this*
 - *Wanted to find possible partners for future projects in this network*
 - *Were not product oriented. Produced books but they were more collections of examples and not a real common product (not development oriented)*
- Went to an information day in Brussels organised by the Commission*
Wrote to a lot of institutions in Europe (also used the compendium) and had a big preliminary meeting in Oostende
- *Had other projects in this field. Quality care has always been an issue for us.*

Network example 9

- *Did not have at all a clear picture of what a network was as opposed to a project.*
- *Actually applied for both: Grundtvig 1 and 4. The Commission wanted them to go for a network rather than a project probably because most partners are national umbrella associations of adult education.*
- *The description looks more like a project. The focus of the network is to promote a First Class Client based collaboration platform in adult education. On the other hand they also investigated the use of ICT and forms of flexible learning in adult education in the participating countries.*

Network example 10

- *The main purpose was to exploit and build on the results of a previous Socrates Adult education project. At the time of the Call (2001) this aspect of networks was very much emphasised by the Commission, not the other aspects like lobbying etc.*
- *EUCEN needed money for their members to work on the topic of quality.*
- *It became difficult when during the lifetime of the network the Commission further elaborated their concept of networks and all of a sudden expected things which were not mentioned in the work plan. The partnership had to “re-phrase” some of their activities in order to give the Commission what they wanted while still sticking to the original plan.*

Network example 11

It was actually designed as a project. But with a view of the number of partners (not of the intended aims and activities!) the European Commission (!) recommended to make a network out of it.

Network example 12

It was clear they wanted to do a network. They had contacts with the European commission as early as 2000 when the first Comenius pilot networks started.

- *SEED was an off-spring of ENSI, another international network on education for sustainable development which is based on an inter-governmental agreement in 1986 to promote this branch of education. So they more or less decided to temporarily make use of this new funding tool when it was available.*
- *Due to this pre-history they were only interested in network-type activities and were very clear what they were aiming at. There was no confusion of a network with a project.*

Network definition

Network example 13

The idea of what is a network in the field is different of what is a network for the European Commission. For instance, the Commission sees that networks should have 3 functions: Transfer of innovation, support to policy development and promotion of G1, In practice, identifying partners for the network and creating this mixed functions resulted that not all the partners where satisfied (each partner in general is primarily focused in 1 area), there was 1 partner that left because the network was not sufficiently focused in his area of interest.

Aims and objectives

Network example 14

The most important element of a network is that it brings the European perspective on board in professional practice, by getting to know the work of peer professionals. The communication aspect of a network is very important

Network example 15

- *To bring together information to the advantage of the partners and members*
- *To make members learn*
- *To contribute to the theme*
- *To enforce the impact of your findings and products from previous projects.*
- *To bring people into contact with each other*

Network example 16

- *Disseminate the results of other projects*
- *Bring coordinators together, give them the opportunity to promote their project*
- *To create a guide with recommendations on how to increase the impact of a project*

Network example 17

- *A network is a service operator for the thematic field and for new projects*
- *You have to work in different arenas: conferences, presentations, exhibitions*

Network example 18

- *Sharing*
- *Learn from each other*
- *Looking at the processes*
- *Contacts*
- *Cooperation and establishing structures for cooperation*
- *know what the mainstream was in this field*
- *Deliver quality in order to learn and gather know how in Europe.*

Network example 19

- *To bring the partner institutions together to discuss and compare the use of ICT in the participating countries in order to learn from each other*
- *Promotion of ICT and ODL in adult education*

Network example 20

- *to strengthen the under funded, often not sufficiently acknowledged "Cinderella" area of LLL at universities*
- *to provide information and tools to practitioners in order to "see how it works" somewhere else*
- *to support and promote Quality in LLL at universities, among the community, among policy makers*

Network example 21

- *to collect and bring together as many different views and experiences as possible*
- *to make recommendations for adult education practitioners and policy makers*
- *to provide a "professional home" for associations with a European view*

Network example 22

- *to use education for sustainable development as a vehicle for school development and to promote this approach among practitioners in Europe.*
- *to get teachers, school authorities and research/teacher training institutions involved in joint action research on education for sustainable development*

Partner selectionNetwork example 23

The goal is to set a structure that fits the requirements of the Commission and what follows can be good or bad luck!

Three important criteria to have present in mind:

- *Partner's diversity;*
- *Umbrella organisations;*
- *Assurance that the network will have a core of active members*

When designing a network, you have to be able to fill correctly a graph that consists of two concentric circles: One, consisting of the core partners, and the next, consisting of the supporters.

Network example 24

It was important in the partnership to select at least half of the partners that we had previously known. This is important to achieve efficiency.

Recommendations:

- *Important that at least the co-ordinator has experience of having worked with at least half of the partners, for efficiency reasons*
- *Importance of having on board a Research institution.*
- *How to select it is not easy at the application stage, as the dynamics of the network are not yet settled.*
- *The lessons learned from the first network are that at the end of this stage they are more aware of: "The complexity of the relationship of theory-practice", and they know better how to identify the "real" facts and findings that are relevant for their network.*
- *Many research institutions focus their approach on theoretical models, complex to apply in practice.*
- *The real question at stake in a network (our) is "What kind of practical*

research is possible, and what kind of research do I need? Once this question is correctly formulated it is possible to find the right research partner.

Network example 25

- *Ecole systematised work in ESP*
- *It helped to focus on in-service training, evaluation, collecting good practice, collecting tools.*
- *Partners were already key-players in the field but on a voluntary basis: they were teacher trainers, teachers, decision makers, networkers from the early days, selected through motivation for voluntary work*

Network example 26

- *No real key players, but one wants to have a variety*
- *One wants to use good contacts*
- *Sometimes it is difficult to find real good key-players*
- *One should not underestimate the opportunity to learn and give partners the opportunity to learn*
- *What is a key-player? Not all experts are good networkers*
- *Deliberately wanted some schools in it + a variety in countries and levels. Some of us new people and we contacted them*
- *Also worked via the NAs*
- *have the right levels on board (in terms of right institutions and 'functions')*
- *Working in an international partnership also requires the right personality and the right position in your own institution. It is not the 'degree' of a person that is decisive but more the personality.*

Recommendations:

- *Doing research in the thematic area*
- *You have to like each other (more than in a project) in order to be able to share (key activity in a network)*
- *You need thematic experts but also networkers and people with impact.*
- *It would be better to have two partners per country (one thematic expert and one networker) in order to have more impact*
- *Doing research in the thematic area.*
- *Schools must be partners as well. They are the real contacts with the field.*
- *One really needs preparatory visits or a preliminary meeting in order to contact and select partners.*

Network example 27

Good networkers, known in the field

Met them before but never worked with them before

Recommendation:

- *Use a questionnaire for the potential partners to fill in*
- *Follow preliminary research and needs analysis at application stage*

Network example 28

- *Previous contacts via other projects and conferences, contacts via contacts*
- *Strategic aspects (geographical spreading) and in function of the needs and functionality (like disseminators or linguists etc)*
- *Sometimes you are happy to have partners in a certain country, you can't always be too selective*
- *Had some of these partners as partners in previous projects*
- *Put forward "liability" as one of the most important criteria. You need ¾ reliable partners, people you know they will work.*
- *You also need to contact the right person in the institution. The right hierarchic level, someone who can make the right commitment for the partner institution. You need to know how your contact person is situated in the institution.*

Network example 29

- *You start with a group, not with the very best but you know them. This is their quality. The social element and the reliability are very important.*
- *Set up a typology of partners to be repeated in each partner country:*
 - *Local school*
 - *Teacher training inst.*
 - *Educational authority*
 - *Didactic researcher*
- *Set up some Comenius courses where we recruited teachers and other partners. Our core group were the course organisers and some participants were the other partners*
- *Partners were in the right place because of this national structure (4 institutions per country with one coordinator. They immediately could start working at local level*

Network example 30

- *Looked for institutions that could have an impact (whatsoever, "do some good") in their country*
- *Reliability*
- *Not all were key players, you have to give and take*
- *Geography played a role as well, especially because we wanted approaches from different 'schools' and cultures.*
- *Geography also has to do with quality: some countries are more advanced in certain topics than other countries*

Network example 31

- *Most partners were national (or regional) networks of adult education. This was an asset in terms of dissemination power, though not always.*
- *It is not only necessary to involve resourceful institutions with a multiplying effect, but also the right people in the institution. It is for instance not always helpful to cooperate with officials of national networks who do not have direct access to the target groups.*

Recommendation:

The success of a network depends very much on how active partners are.

Use personal acquaintance as a basis for forming the partnership. The core group should be partners you know.

Network example 32

This network is special as most partners are members of EUCEN, the European University Network for Continuing Education. So the partners know each other from the other EUCEN activities. When selecting the partners EUCEN members were asked first.

With a view of the restricted budget the partnership was limited to one partner per country. 1 possible members/representatives of national networks were selected, so that the Grundtvig network is a network of network. 14 national networks are represented. In the country where this was not possible institutions were selected which seemed to be most capable of building up such a national network.

Difficulty: Most of these national networks have a rather fragile organisational base, i.e. if at all only one full-time manager. So staff costs could not be fully accounted for in these networks. As there is no lump sum approach (unfortunately) this problem could only be solved by replacing the national network by a more resourceful member organisation.

Recommendation:

- *Concentrate on key players*
- *Choose partners who can mobilise at regional and national levels, as this is necessary with a view of limited budget*
- *Select national networks as partner where possible, as they guarantee the greatest multiplying effect and reduce administration costs.*
- *One resourceful partner per country is enough.*

Network example 33

The network(s) involved many key players like national umbrella associations of adult education.

But a few smaller partners were taken on board because of:

- *geographical spread (coordinator didn't know other institutions in that particular country)*
- *time economy (previous contacts to these organisations)*
- *these partners have direct access to the target groups*

Existing contacts have been used: cooperation in other projects, co-members of EAEA

Recommendation:

- *You should know the partners at least a bit: the way they work, their capacity...*
- *Partners must have enough resources to carry out the activities*
- *The entire partner institution must be dedicated to the project, even more so than in an ordinary project. A network is not a "play-ground" for individual project workers, but need to be in the interest of the organisation.*
- *Most partners should be very experienced in the field. You can take a few weaker partners ("learners") on board, but not too many.*
- *The key players should be part of the network, as they guarantee that the results will be disseminated and implemented.*

- *The partner needs to have a European perspective.*

Network example 34

Half of the 24 partners came from the existing network ENSI, half of them were new. The new ones were selected according to their expertise in the field and to recommendations by partners of ENSI.

- *Had a good mix of school authority – research – teacher training institution. Most partners were either ministries or higher education institutions.*
- *Schools were not considered as partners due to lacking multiplying effect. Schools were, however, so-called “members”, i.e. in this network they were targeted through the networks of the partners.*

Recommendation:

- *It is crucial to involve partners actively from the very beginning and to take enough time for that indispensable step. For SEED the preparatory phase was one year.*
- *90% of the partners first met on a contact seminar and then on a Preparatory Visit financed by Socrates. Active involvement even meant that partners formed sub-groups and shared the actual writing of the proposal at these meetings. Such involvement in an early phase pays off as it ensures a sense of shared ownership and motivation.*

Partnership management, team building

Network example 35

- *As it refers to the co-ordinator:*

Having a share vision and working and producing results within the framework of a network is appealing in itself. There is a high level of intellectual satisfaction for having produced something new with an important degree of freedom, without the pressure from colleagues and bosses.

The network is a white canvas, to be developed through a creative process, with complementary competences and points of view.

- *As it refers to partners:*

It becomes very stimulating to see how other peers work in their own countries, that is very motivating for some members

- *The Quality management work group is responsible for conflicts (and reports to co-ordinator). The profile is specific for that (Project manager, not an editor)*
- *It is essential to work under a structure of working groups*

Network example 36

- *Each partner was requested by the network (co-ordinator) to draw their “Education landscape”, in other words, how they will improve their organisation objectives by participating in the network. The Education landscape is different to each organisation. This tool has been very effective to assure the involvement of the partners.*

- Phase I: Application stage (3years)

Phase II: Demand for renewal stage (3years).

In each phase different instruments are used in place to make the network effective.

- Phase I:

Characterised by the Trio Meetings. Meetings take place in reduced groups of three, and specific outputs have to be produced from it.

The third year, there appear the figure of the co-ordinator to formally supervise the meeting, and assure quality control, specifically when it relates to the publication.

The initiative was very successful. To note that from the original trio meetings, the compositions changed (a quartet was formed instead) etc... With overall good results.

- Phase II:

As it is geared towards policy development it demands a different strategy based on a thematic approach and working groups.

Network example 37

- *In the ESP (voluntary) period they sometimes worked hard (e.g. organising things) and had a period of 'absence' afterwards. There was understanding for the 'volunteering' of things. In the Ecole period had to maintain a constant level of activeness. This could be hard and I really had to insist on things.*
- *Co-ordinator had to remind people that this was (partly) paid work, that there was a programme and that there were work packages and deadlines etc.; had to professionalise the cooperation*
- *Some partners didn't perform as I would have wished but there were no big conflicts*
- *You need a climate of appreciation of diversity (cultural diversity and diversity in national educational contexts)*
- *Tried to work from the principle of 'consensus and the co-construction of knowledge. We tried to agree on everything, even agree on the fact we don't agree.*

Network example 38

- *Good working conditions during meetings and nice social programme. Allocate tasks and responsibilities to everyone*
- *Some partners were not in the right place but there was an evolution. A lot of learning took place.*
- *You have to pick out the ones willing to take up responsibilities*
- *One needs freedom to do that.*
- *People should find their place within a common approach*
- *One should invest in people in a non-competitive atmosphere.*
- *Yes we had a conflict, we did not solve it, we were not prepared. A conflict management strategy definitely is needed. Never solve a conflict in a plenary. Try and find out the source of the conflict and resolve it between the TWO people involved. There are intercultural elements and there are professional elements leading to conflicts.*
- *It is almost inevitable. If they all agree from the start, then why create a network?*
- *There should be a lot of team building. You have to invest in people*
- *Allocate tasks and responsibilities to everyone*
- *Exchange information and knowledge does not mean you have to agree*

on everything.

- *Discussions should be constructive and not aggressive*
- *Spend a whole meeting on learning, sharing, coming to a common understanding of the topic*
- *Make sure everybody's opinion is respected*

Network example 39

- *The partners were able to choose their own tasks (and change tasks if this turned out to be better)*
- *We paid attention to social activities (not only food and drink) but real innovative activities (like learning Greek)*
- *We did simulations of project dissemination*
- *All e-mails went to everyone in order to keep contact and to keep everybody informed.*
- *Discrepancies yes but no conflicts (and very different management cultures)*

Network example 40

- *There were some small changes in tasks.*
- *In the beginning it was not clear what a network really is and so it was not always clear what tasks there were involved in networking*
- *People need tasks they feel comfortable with.*
- *You should also not stick to the application tasks in a strict way. Things can change, so tasks can change as well. Need to be flexible.*
- *We don't have any conflicts so far but we have some 'slow partners'. It really takes time to get this network up and running.*

Network example 41

- *It is difficult but one has to be strict during the project: if they don't produce I kick them out (this is also stipulated in the contract)*
- *Let this grow in an organic way*
- *This is about "flexible development"*
- *Let the groups work in an open structure and if some people don't work well together give them the opportunity to work on other things in another group*

Network example 42

Money is certainly not an incentive (low level of funding!)

- *Personal meetings are very motivating.*
- *Shared responsibility*

Problem: Due to the insufficient level of funding the coordinator does not have enough time for motivational work, i.e. to always stay in intensive contact to the partners.

- *The best example of a positive team-building activity was a joint (coordinator and some partners together!) presentation of the network results at a major conference.*
- *Every joint social activity adds to team building.*
- *Good experiences with team-building exercises (coordinator promised to send some)*

Learning process

Network example 43

The TRIO approach (3 participants) has proven to be very successful (formulated on the basis of the relevant needs of the participants).

Trio meeting approach:

Steps: 1. Exchange

Step 2: Local day (invitation/exchange interested parties field)

Step 3: Publication advancement

- *New knowledge in the thematic field*
(Comparative approach and European perspective to the subject)
- *Management skills*
(Network management skills, and how to define the most adequate network instruments for the renewal phase of the network, which will pursue other purposes, more policy oriented.
- *Intercultural understanding/skills*
(Networks allow for an important learning process in this area)

Network example 44

- *We created a very successful modular course and through creating it we learned a lot.*
- *The same goes e.g. for “The image of the other” module (in many languages) and the link with e-twinning.*
- *Our vision on collaborative learning and knowledge building evolved and so did our vision on the ICT translation of this vision.*

Network example 45

- *Work together on products*
- *You need similarities and differences you can cope with (differences big enough to learn but small enough to bridge)*
- *There still must be ‘recognisability’ in the differences*
- *Take out competition*
- *Contributions from outside as well*
- *We had three good conferences and each conference dealt with one aspect of self evaluation. Through the conferences we learned a lot and the general theme of each conference reflected our learning*
- *All partners definitely learned but not in the same way*
- *You need similarities and differences you can cope with (differences big enough to learn but small enough to bridge)*
- *Sharing and learning does not go smoothly. Everybody has to move a bit.*
- *Create the right composition of learning groups*
- *Found a clear difference between the “new” and “old” countries.*

Network example 46

- *We learned from each others' project (mini fair), present previous work (give them time for this!).*
- *You have to ask your partners the right questions*
- *Put learning on the agenda*
- *We became very EU, we were all very experienced. There is a danger to become very Eurocentric*

Network example 47

- *I learned a lot as a coordinator, it was a steep learning curve for me*
- *Special during the meetings we learned a lot professionally*
- *We learned to communicate*
- *We set up a special "learning meeting"; The aim is to learn from each other and to come to a common view on what is "innovative language learning"*
- *All meetings should have at least some specific learning elements in them.*
- *Content wise we also learned a lot but not all partners did so. We have a partnership with two speeds.*

Network example 48

- *Content learning took more place at the national level through national group work*
- *Each partner was able to organise one big event (conference or contact seminar) and these events were nationally based (also content wise). During these events a lot of learning took place.*
- *It did not so much take place at the international level*

Network example 49

- *Only a part of the partnership did really learn and took things up to a higher level. The others (mainly schools) only followed*
- *Still we created a common frame for learning*
- *Everybody learns starting from his/her own context and has his own rhythm for learning*
- *You have to take the own situation of the partner into account*
- *A common vision is not the same thing as a monolithic vision*

Network example 50

There was a danger that a successful Swedish model was to be imported to other countries. This was prevented by dedicating very much time to studying the national contexts:

- *face-to face discussions at meetings*
- *virtual conferences*
- *written national reports as a basis for discussions*

Recommendation:

- *Make sure to give a voice to everybody; Do not allow a few people to take over*
- *Be aware of intercultural differences*
- *It does take quite some time to get to the everyday activities in the pedagogic field in question*

Very interesting strategy: Study Circles on the internet platform:

- 8 weeks
- asynchronous and synchronous meetings
- moderated

Dedicate enough time to learning about each other's national educational contexts

Network example 51

No explicit strategies for learning were devised and implemented. Learning, however, occurs "automatically" by implementing the network activities like preparing presentations, developing case studies, editing a publication etc.

To develop a common understanding of intercultural learning was an explicit core aim of this particular network. They tried to come to a common definition of key terms. Due to the complexity and diversity of the field, however, they came to conclusion that no such common understanding exists. Instead, a diversity approach should be accepted. An important insight gained is that there are limits to mutual understanding.

Recommendation:

- *Well planned study visits as part of the network meetings. At least ½ day of carefully planned visits to institutions representative of the field. This is an essential counterpart to the theoretical approach of other network activities.*

Management structure

Network example 52

- *The co-ordinator should act as the engine of the project. One of the important roles is being the communication point for members. One of the challenges it to provide this/the requested information immediately.*
- *A network should have a vision. The challenge of the co-ordinator is to help to develop the "shared vision" to the network. It goes beyond the own vision of the co-ordinator, (the co-ordinator has to be open enough to be flexible), at the same time it should be strong enough to keep the work plan as proposed to the Commission, by pushing the chairpersons in their respective assignments. It is necessary, it has to be able to look and provide alternatives.*
- *A co-ordinator should also be capable of emergency-management. (and also to be able to be the boss, if for instance, there is a feeling that the goals are getting lost).*

Comments on the tasks of the co-ordinator:

It is important to fulfil the quality criteria, for that the co-ordinator works as a central point. Nothing goes out without the co-ordination support.

Concerning dedication:

The financial contribution of the coordinators is 45%. This means that the organisation pays 1 hour and the EU pays 1 hour. The co-ordinator only accepted

the job when the organisation committed itself to liberating a part time assistant. In reality the problems of the co-ordinator is that he has too jobs (part-time) and this is not always easy. Real dedication to the network: An average of 2 h. a day, plus the commission and partners meetings. It could be counted as a part-time job. The ideal scenario is a full time job.

the most important elements of the structure of InfoNet:

- *budget/administration: payments are only done by the coordinating institution, which developed valid forms for the refund of costs and proofs every transaction. Suggestion: EU could create standard forms for the refund of costs.*
- *partnership: Every partner signed agreement which documents the maximum number of working days (refund of staff costs) and the own contribution. The numbers of days depends on the function in the Network. Half of the members don't get any refund of staff costs.*
- *responsibilities: the tasks are delegated into working groups. The WG-leaders are responsible for the outcome. The coordinator supports every WG as far as possible.*
- *steering and control: steering committee (all WG-leaders, coordinator, applicant) Tasks: all matters concerning the coordination of the groups, discussion of main guidelines and decisions, representation of the network members*
- *advisory council (executive directors of the most important members + applicant + coordinator quarterly meeting, report by coordinator)*
- *evaluation/quality management: own working group for evaluation + external evaluator development of an quality handbook, own quality manger (claim system)*
- *Suggestion: EU could develop/implement quality handbook / quality system for projects*

The structure of the network consists in the following working groups, that take advantage of the expertise on board.. Each work group is managed by a chairperson:

- *Working group O: The mapping of magazines and news.*
- *Working group 1: Quality management and valorisation (Evaluation, external evaluation is linked to this working group). One of the outputs of this is the creation of a valorisation plan, on how the network will survive in the next 3 years. (This group has homework to do for next meetings)*
- *Work group 2: Content and quality criteria. It works as a brainstorming group. All work is done in the meeting, and the co-ordinator writes the report.*
- *Working group 3: Language classification and translation (Creating a glossary list in AE with different languages). Objective 100 key words in 11 languages. This group has universities and a UNESCO person involved.*
- *Working group 4: Relates with internet, data bases and exchange systems.*

The challenge: Has been at the level of identifying chair persons belonging from

different countries (EU diversity). To guarantee professionalism in all, the co-ordinator tries to be present in each of them

Budget management: It is highly recommended that the budget is managed centrally

Network example 53

*A good co-ordinator has to have to clear competences: Not only be an excellent organiser, but also be an expert and a leader in its field.
(Among its responsibilities will be to participate in strategic key events in the field, in representation of the network)*

Recommendations concerning the role of the Co-ordinator: The role and tasks of the co-ordinator at the first phase was underestimated at the application stage. For the renewal phase the responsibility of the co-ordinator will be shared. While there will be 1 single contractor with the Commission, responsibilities of the co-ordinator will be shared under a co-ordination committee.

Network example 54

What makes a good coordinator?

- *Being open for diversity*
- *Generosity*
- *Providing 'open source' working atmosphere*
- *Guardian of the contract and its conditions*
- *Inspiring*

Team

- *We had all types of people cooperating.*
- *In every group there were 'technicians', 'didactics' and 'researchers'*
- *We used the work packages as a management structure. Each package had a group of partners and a responsible coordinator.*
- *The coordinator and the big events made things coherent.*
- *We did more or less what the work plan said and we even did a bit more.*
- *Thanks to our previous work in ESP the work plan was a good plan and we didn't need to change a lot.*
- *Very good cooperation with EC and TAO*

Network example 55

What makes a good coordinator?

- *Leadership, intercultural understanding, patience, tolerance,*
- *Conflict management*
- *Team builder*
- *Good communication*
- *He/she should cultivate the network, invest people into the network, be able to cope with competition*
- *The coordinator should not be an expert in the thematic field (should not add to the 'expert' competition) but needs enough understanding of the subject to be able to coordinate*
- *Charismatic*
- *Experienced*
- *Partners need to trust him/her*

- *The coordinator should not be an expert in the thematic field (should not add to the 'expert' competition) but needs enough understanding of the subject to be able to coordinate*
- *Motivating*
- *Democratic but with authority*
- *Have the right contacts at the right level.*

How were roles defined?

- *Some academics and experts dealt with the definition and common view on the theme, schools were 'appliers' and testers.*
- *6 partners lived at a relatively short distance (BE and NL). They prepared the general meetings*
- *We had 1 general meeting per year and one meeting during the conference*
- *There was a special conference team (including the partner of the country in which the conference was to be hold*
- *During the first general meeting each partner institution was presented and each partner had to present their possible role and potential for the network.*
- *The work plan and allocation of tasks (in the application) was reviewed.*

Network example 56

What makes a good coordinator?

- *Good social skills*
- *Not so much about content but more about management*
- *Commitment to the theme*
- *Good psychological view is important as well*
- *Available*
- *More politician type of person*
- *Not an academic*

Partnership tasks

- *The partnership was subdivided along the chapters of the manual the network will be producing + 1 evaluator*
- *We have a close relationship with the Commission. This helps a lot.*
- *A coordinator should know what the Commission knows and wants. It is important to network with the Commission.*

Network example 57

- *We didn't use any special software but we had a clear partnership structure with clusters, special interest groups and partners responsible for the clusters. But it turned out that some partners were not fit for coordinating a cluster (e.g. a school is not a good disseminator or cluster coordinator)*

What makes a good coordinator?

- *Should keep an overview of things*
- *Must be able to listen to partners*
- *See to it that partners are happy*
- *Good communicator*
- *Must give space to partners but also needs 'steering skills'*
- *Every partner is different. A good coordinator must feel this and should address every partner separately.*

- *You need trust and openness*
- *Give the feeling that all partners are important. Improve the self esteem of the partners*
- *The partners have the content, the coordinator must get and keep them together*
- *He should keep an eye on the broad lines of the network but should not interfere too heavily if it comes to content.*

Roles and tasks:

- *We had linguists, disseminators, decision makers etc. from the start, they were selected that way.*
- *we were flexible. Partners need to feel good and see for themselves what they can handle*
- *Organising interaction and communication within the network*
- *The management structure did not work in the beginning. It all was too abstract in the beginning, not concrete enough*
- *Groups took shape during the project, in function of concrete work*
- *There is a more centralised coordination now.*

Network example 58

What makes a good coordinator?

- *He needs to be strong (how many do it?)*
- *Generous (also financially)*
- *Empowering the partners*
- *Must hold the group together (most important task)*

Roles and tasks:

- *In each of the 7 partner countries we had 4 partners with a defined profile (see above).*
- *Every national team had a coordinator*
- *The countries worked more or less independent*
- *They divided the tasks among the national group partners*

Organising interaction and communication within the network

- *This was one of the less positive things. There was not much international work.*
- *We, as a general coordinator worked with the 7 national coordinators*
- *Now (in our next network) we also work with transnational thematic groups.*

Recommendation:

We are quite happy with our national group system making sure that at national level all partner roles are available. We need however more international cooperation and in our new network we combine the national groups with international thematic groups.

Network example 59

- *We had a steering committee and we created clusters*
- *Partners could choose which cluster they would join*
- *In the clusters they worked together on some of the sub themes*
- *We looked if the clusters were productive, if not things were changed (composition, task etc.) it was a dynamic view on things*

- *We had two meetings per year, one for partners only and one in combination with the conference.*
- *We always made people work together (e.g. running workshops in pairs) so they had to cooperate and share.*
- *The EC has no clue about processes in projects and networks*
- *EC thinks in terms of AIMS – ACTION – PRODUCT but it doesn't work like that.*
- *The aims in the application (and contract) reflect the insight and experience at that moment*
- *But what do you do with the learning process? What if you find out that some things are not so relevant anymore and that you want to go in another direction?*
- *A project or network is a learning process. If you don't deviate in your activities it cannot have been a good network because it means you haven't learned anything that you didn't know from the start.*
- *The Commission looks at what you promised in the beginning and ticks the boxes.*
- *The report is usually not a vision on the implementation, not a description of the learning process.*

Network example 60

No rather simple structure, as the main aim was to further develop and disseminate products produced in a previous project

Cooperation with EC has been intensive, but informal. It was mainly due to the personal interest of the EC officials concerned. Now, with the strict division in the EC between policy and programme levels it will be much more difficult to cooperate. The Executive Agency is understaffed and will not have the time and mission for content work. Grundtvig is in danger of losing its human face at the Commission level.

- *Network director (strategic)*
Head of the coordinating institution
- *Network coordinator (operational)*
employed for the Grundtvig network
- *Financial administrator*
permanent member of staff

Steering Board of the coordinating institution:

- *meets 4 times a year*
- *Grundtvig network is always on the agenda of this meeting*
- *Progress is assessed against set aims*
- *Financial reporting*

Network management group

- *meets twice a year*
- *most active partners (not all 31!)*
- *partners who lead strands of activities*

Full partner meeting

- *once a year*
- *all partners*
- *part of the annual EUCEN autumn conference (saves money)*
- *two days reserved for network meetings*

This network is a good example for using existing staff and structures of a more stable organisation for the purposes of the network. This reduces costs.

What makes a good coordinator?

*It is not possible to be a good coordinator as the Socrates networks are hopelessly underfunded. To build up and maintain intensive contacts between network actors at least 1 ½ full time posts at the coordinating institution would be necessary:
Network coordinator: senior expert in the field (necessary in order to be taken seriously in the field and to be able to evaluate contributions) + good management skills + assistant*

Roles

In order to deal with the insufficient level of funding the coordinator was allocated only very small contribution to the network activities. He/she concentrated on the management aspect instead.

Cooperation with EC has been intensive, but informal. It was mainly due to the personal interest of the EC officials concerned. Now, with the strict division in the EC between policy and programme levels it will be much more difficult to cooperate. The Executive Agency is understaffed and will not have the time and mission for content work. Grundtvig is in danger of losing its human face at the Commission level.

Network example 61

No sophisticated management plan. As the network followed a rather simple track instead of several parallel strands of activity: To investigate at network meetings the situation of intercultural learning in the countries involved.

What makes a good coordinator?

- *Patience, tolerance towards frustration, hope*
- *sensitivity: to know when to act in a directive, even authoritarian way, and when to let things happen without intervention*
- *intercultural sensitivity*
- *multilingual proved to be an asset in dealing with (more silent or passive) partners*
- *expertise in the field. A coordinator must be able to assess the value of contributions*

Quite interestingly, in the first funding period the partners rejected the coordinator's suggestion to form sub-groups. They preferred to stay in the large group instead. They apparently needed the time for forming as a team. The only subdivision they accepted were small groups preparing different aspects of the network meetings. These tasks were allocated by the coordinator.

In the second funding period (renewal) there are thematic sub-groups.

Network example 62

Cooperation with the European Commission was very disappointing. The coordinator thinks this was partly due to a change of personnel, but also to an apparent lack of interest. The coordinator was never asked his opinion by the Commission. On the contrary he made an effort. He, for instance invited the Commission to a big conference organised by the network, but did not even get a response. Of 30 national Agencies addressed in order to point out Comenius 1 projects on sustainable development only 3 (!) responded.

Other international institutions seem to be more receptive. On the one hand network partners could not enter discussions with the European Commission. On the other hand 18 (!) people involved in the network were nominated by their national authorities to join UNECE, a UN expert board on education for sustainable development. Through this expert board they proposed a European conference on education for sustainable development.- This conference was actually held in March 2006 as part of the Austrian presidency, and one very interested participant was – Education Commissioner Figel!

Communication systems

Network example 63

An intranet system was initially set. The disadvantage is that partners don't consult it regularly. They have now set the "hp'bb platform" (check on the provider's name). There are e-groups set, the timing for discussion is one week. The partners are informed by email on the topic and timeframe.

There are also quarterly reports, covering the life of the networks.

Network example 64

- *The Web site/its role and its management:*

The most important challenge of a web site is to have it permanently updated. They have organised the website in such a way that each partner has the capacity to add and change contents. The Web site is a critical objective of the renewal phase: A Web site should be understood as an interactive instrument, serving all the people interested in the field. At the renewal phase, web site will play an important role, it will be managed though a co-ordination committee (2 partners and a technician). An objective and challenge posed is how to get useful materials of G1 and G2 into the web.

Network example 65

- *1 partner meeting + 1 conference including meeting per year*
- *WE used email (no VLE, never tried)*
- *3D virtual meeting*
- *Website was main publication and promotion tool.*
- *eMail lists*
- *a-synchronous voice mail board*
- *e-journals*

Network example 66

We used email. The VLE was not used. The website provided all the material.

- *One general meeting per year (all partners)*
- *One conference including general meeting*
- *One meeting per year of the 'Dutch speaking group' (6 partners)*
- *One meeting of the 'conference preparing' group*
- *One meeting of the newsletter editors (4 partners)*
- *One meeting per year of the 'Dutch speaking group' (6 partners)*

Network example 67

- *We use an on-line memo and an on-line place for documents (on-line document library)*
- *You have to keep these tools simple*

Network example 68

- *We don't use any special communication systems other than e-mail, the web site, telephone and meetings.*
- *Three to four meetings a year (2 x combined with conference) and 1 x with a limited group of people who live within a short distance.*

Network example 69

- *We established a web based data base and platform*
- *Every national group has its platform*
- *We had website news (no printed newsletter)*
- *Web site, platform (general and per country)*
- *All reports, and deliverables and monitoring reports were on that website*

Network example 70

- *Two meetings per year, one for partners only, one combined with the conference*
- *In the beginning we did a lot of things in plenary sessions but later we had mainly work in groups*
- *ICT is still a problem: compatibility, security*
- *We did use the platform but it wasn't so successful*

Network example 71

- *very high level of communication*
- *Precise tasks given at face-to-face meetings helps to intensify communication in between: Goal and tasks of communication need to be clear*
- *ICT was at the heart of the project. All partners used the collaborative platform and its various sub-conferences. All partners used the platform for national forums*

Network example 72

Within the management group: high intensity and frequency

Within the whole partnership: varying intensity and frequency; highest around the times of the annual full partner meetings.

The challenge is to keep it high in between.

- *For this more face-to-face meetings are crucial.*
- *Only e-mail was used as the partners are all very busy people who do not have the time to frequently look at collaborative platforms etc. An attempt*

- to introduce such a platform failed.*
- *Institution's newsletter: used for the network*
 - *Leaflets: distributed via national network*
 - *Powerpoint presentation: translated into languages of partner countries*
 - *Web site*
 - *Bilateral visits of meetings of national networks: Within the three years*
 - *every partner visits a meeting of another national network and reports to the coordinators*
 - *receives such a visit*

Recommendation:

Do not promote sophisticated communication tools if the partners are not prepared to use them. Good old e-mail is still most effective.

Typical activities

Network example 73

In relationship with the Commission requirements, in the first phase, promoting G1 projects was not so obvious, in terms of results accomplished. There is a more sharp approach to it for the renewal phase.

Network example 74

In this particular network lobbying was very important. This is to do with the nature of the coordinating institution, a national adult education association whose mission is to do lobbying.

Successful network conferences:

- *interactive format*
- *presentation of very practice-oriented case studies*

Network example 75

The network has been incredibly active and organised no less than 3 thematic conferences/workshops, 4 contact seminars and one ARION Study Visit. At the same time 2 major products were produced: a tool-box, a publication and a comparative study. This was only possible because of synergies with ENSI, the other network mentioned. They shared their tasks and made use of the existing core funding by national ministries.

To use ARION as "complementary funding is a good way to increase the travel budget and thus involve more people.

Evaluation

Network example 76

The current compromise has been the following: Each partner does an external evaluation, and the expert will do an evaluation on the self-evaluation of partners.

Network example 77

- *Mainly formative self-evaluation connected to the work packages*
- *Only summative evaluation when the reports had to be made*

Network example 78

- *Each year two different partners were responsible for the self-evaluation of the network. They created the instruments and did the analysis.*

Network example 79

- *We have 1 internal evaluator*
- *We have 1 external evaluator (looks after the management)*
- *One BBC person as a 'critical friend' with a lot of other input as well.*

Network example 80

- *We have an external evaluator (former network coordinator) who evaluates all organisational and management issues*
- *Two partners are responsible for the evaluation of content*
- *In the beginning it was one way evaluation: the evaluator did a lot of 'consultancy work' related to management and coordination.*
- *In a later phase the network coordinator has his say in the process of evaluation as well.*

Network example 81

- *We were not good at evaluation and got comments about it from the experts each time.*
- *We did a lot of 'monitoring' of the activities compared to the application*
- *We worked with peer evaluators but we never had an external evaluator*
- *There was some evaluation in the national groups and they were supposed to evaluate us but they were too nice for us.*

SustainabilityNetwork example 82

- *As it refers to continuity of the network, a renewal application has been submitted in the last selection round. In this phase the partners are committed to reflecting on how to change the current structure of network into an association, involving a participating fee.*
- *There is the idea to involve sponsors in the future, ICT sponsors, based on the digital divide problem as an argument.*

Network example 83

- *The learning communities that came out of ESP and Ecole are loose*

communities with temporary commitments of the members. So it is hard to measure the effect and impact.

- *ESP, Ecole and Com@ct (another Com3 on ICT) merged into an association (ESP) with board members from the previous three networks. They continue organising conferences.*

Network example 84

- *The network contacts are still there*
- *The products are still there and being used*
- *The ideas have spread because of the network*
- *The ideas are alive in a different project (G1)*
- *There still is the pool of speakers*

Network example 85

- *We want to move into a bigger network and get funding for it.*
- *We will bring in more coordinators (use events for that), raise the numbers*
- *We will increase the impact*

Recommendations

- *Go to as many strategic conferences as possible*
- *Use personal contacts*

Network example 86

- *Is very important*
- *From the beginning we had good contacts with decision makers and local authorities (not only for money but for better impact)*
- *Imbedding in other structures is important (in our case in the Euroregions)*
- *We took our local governor (of the Province of Limburg) to the meeting in Lapland. He gave a presentation there.*
- *Show local authorities how they can benefit politically from*

Network example 87

- *Sustainability was built into the structure of the network.*
- *The independency of the national groups empowered them from the start*
- *The overall aim is sustainability and it was in their contract from the start*
- *They had to create alliances and make subgroups at national level.*
- *They were not successful in all countries*
- *Some of them got into other project and other actions*

Network example 88

- *A Comenius 2.1 came out of it*
- *We still do conferences every year*
- *We did a contact seminar after the funding period*
- *One partner started his own network*
- *At the level of the partners we also see "sustainable improvement" so a sustainable effect*

- *The term sustainable development should be used as well and also applied in a broader context*
- *E.g. school are less dependent of external expertise for quality care*
- *If sustainability only means to hold on to the partnership then we did not succeed.*

Network example 89

- *Other (Nordic) projects*
- *Informal contacts*
- *Visits to and from former partners*

Network example 90

- *sustainable contacts: experience gained, lessons learnt, increased knowledge*
- *off-springs: Other projects etc.*
- *European perspective: learning from the others (moments when network partner exclaim: "Great how you are doing things")*

For this network the second funding period (renewal) was essential. Only through this it is possible:

- *to deepen the thematic work*
- *to take new partners on board and thus widen participation*
- *to build on and profit on the time and energy invested to build the network structure ("return on investment")*

The Commission often underestimates the time and resources needed for building the network, forming teams, developing trust, enhancing mutual understanding etc. This is, however, an essential part of networking.

Network example 91

Up to 180 schools involved as "members", i.e. participants at conferences and contact seminars

No sustainability of the network structure, but

- *network member initiated the high-level European conference on education for sustainable development after the funding period*
- *network partners became members of the UN expert group*
- *unofficial network subgroups still exist in the preceding ENSI network which in a way gave birth to the network and now swallowed it again*
- *cooperation with some national Agencies: Contact seminars and thematic conferences in Comenius 1*

European added value and impact

Network example 92

The network has an important mission, given that the media and publications play a critical role in defining opinions, and more concretely the European.

One of the difficulties is finding the best partners to work with. (And you know who is the best only working with them). In order to solve the possible weaknesses of

partners, the co-ordinator has set a parallel system: "The correspondents", to reach out with additional useful articles.

Network example 93

Side-effects of the network:

Several of the partners in the network have no tradition of building/participating in national networks in their countries. The European network has induced some (ES, GR) to create national networks.

the greatest achievement:

Providing a European perspective to the partner's view of their work. The network has provided one step further to organisations enlarging their local perspective. Partners have discovered the importance of an international orientation.

Network example 94

the greatest achievement

- *Sustainability through the new association*

the greatest shortcoming

- *What is the critical mass for real sustainability?*
- *How can schools remain the right place for education of youngsters and how can ICT support this? This main question is still there and things evolve. Teachers remain the key-players*
- *Sustained participation is the real sustainability*

Network example 95

the greatest achievement

- *A new approach to self-evaluation through contributing and sharing*
- *Good conferences and website*
- *One could see our evolution through the conferences*
- *Good conferences*
- *A common culture*

the greatest shortcoming of your network?

- *Not managing the conflict and not managing to get everybody involved.*
- *My own relation in my institution. I was free to work in the network but they were not interested in applying one bit of it.*
- *Local diffusion of the network theme (France)*

Network example 96

the greatest achievement

- *The fact that this network is already famous before the website is on line.*
- *Dissemination is already a big success*

the greatest shortcoming of your network?

- *The partnership is too Eurocentric (all very experienced and Euro-focussed, freaks). We have to find ways to open it up*

Network example 97

the greatest achievement

- *We have local politicians and decision makers on board*

the greatest shortcoming of your network?

- *It took too much time to get all partners really involved*

Network example 98

the greatest achievement

- *We established a European arena for this topic*
- *I like our sub-coordinators system*
- *It is a good theme for sustainability, it has a lot of angles in society*

the greatest shortcoming of your network?

- *There is not enough money to hire in a stable staff and this causes problems*
- *Our evaluation is not good*
- *There is sustainability but not equally balanced in the different partner countries*

Network example 99

the greatest achievement

- *The fact that we managed to get so many people and organisations sharing a common vision and tried to realise some aspects of this common vision*
- *The fact that we still do conferences two years later*

Network example 100

- *develop a common discussion and cooperation via ICT*
- *to try it out in practice*

the greatest shortcoming

- *impact at national levels implementation of the ICT strategies unclear*
- *The networks was perhaps not enough based on identifies national needs: Some countries had great interest in ICT strategies, others didn't.*

It takes time to implement new ways of thinking and to reach the actual practitioners in the field.

Impact and dissemination means much more than distributing leaflets.

Network example 101

the greatest achievement

- *to have formed a functioning large team and successfully worked together with so many other professionals from other countries*

the greatest shortcoming

- *Not really knowing about the network's impact. This impact cannot be measured.*

Network example 102

the greatest achievement

- *To bring together three levels which do not always cooperate. School authorities – research – teachers.*
- *to have reached 180 schools through contact seminars, workshops and conferences and to have got many involved in Comenius 1*

- *to have reached some sustainability*
the greatest shortcoming
- *lack of impact, clarity and interest at European level (Commission): "It's a pity they do not make more use of the networks"*

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Network example 103

- *The applicant is a private organisation. The reimbursement of staff costs is too small. The applicant has already searched systematically for additional funding at the federal and regional levels, and there is no money available for this.*
So underlying a network there can easily be a financial problem.
- *Would like further guidance concerning reporting and bookkeeping. As a first time applicant, further guidance is important.*
- *The amendments to change partners are too low.*
- *What we really miss: a useful and up-to-date homepage for running Grundtvig projects, where you can download standard forms, use an internal and an open forum, find a list of FAQ's, checklists, databases ... This would simplify the life of the coordinators and for the members of the executive agency very much. Besides that I would like to have once a year a short individual briefing in the Executive Agency to discuss the administrative and content-related questions.*

Network example 104

Additional comments: When setting up a network the presence of an initial barrier to overcome: cultural differences and prejudices has to be taken into consideration, as this is a factor that will play its part in the rhythm and development of the network.

- *To have more flexibility in accepting changes in the work plan, more particularly concerning the products. Content priorities might not be obvious at the formulation level, and the most appropriate direction might become very clear later once the partner is in operation.*
- *Would like to have further interaction with the policy department of the EC and to co-operate at the level of partnership with the COM (Invite to participate in events; get information on what are the issues at stake, to collect the corresponding data).*
- *They would like to be used by the Commission as a resource for policy development. For instance, to help the commission to jointly think how to influence national governments to foster innovative practices in AE.*
- *The Commission to create a pool of external evaluators of networks, available as reference for consultation*

Network example 105

Reserve some spontaneous travel money for small-scale travel in between official meetings.

Annex 5: Guidelines for interviews of European Commission officials, external experts and Representatives of National Agencies

Questionnaire to be addressed to:

- Grundtvig and Comenius officers of the Commission and Executive Agency
 - External network evaluators
- (Selected questions from this questionnaire will be addressed to the interviewees)
- Grundtvig NAs (only questions highlighted in these colours will be addressed to NAs)

The concept of network in the new Action programme:

1. What are the main differences that the Commission establishes between the Socrates II networks and the standard networks in the new Integrated Action Programme? *(Objectives, partnership and structure, activities, importance of valorisation, sustainability...)* Is there any note published at this respect? What specific advice should a guidance tool include in these areas?

Programme stakeholders in the new programme(optional question)

2. If networks in the new Action Programme have to have an impact in national educational systems and practices, the NAs will have to be more involved as interfaces. What mechanisms does the Commission envision (do you think are appropriate) to further involve NAs in the process during the next phase?

Networks and EU policy

3. What role could influential Grundtvig/Comenius networks play in I) shaping EU policy, in II) giving support to the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme? III) giving support to the implementation of the Open Co-ordination method? Can provide specific examples? What specific advice should a network guidance tool include in this area?

Examples of Socrates II Good practice:

4. In funding networks, the Commission states that the purpose is to provide support for the creation of “key player at the European level in the promotion of a specific thematic sector”. Can you list the most successful networks that have succeeded in playing a strategic role in their field? ¿Could you further justify with examples?
NAs: Are there any examples of successful strategic actions of networks in your country?
5. Is there any example of EU Comenius/Grundtvig funded network that has evolved to become a European association?

Socrates II network trends:**Overview of results of recent network (pre)selections and (full) selections:**

6. What trends have been identified in the previous pre-selection and full-selection of networks? ¿What are the specific weak areas identified that could be of interest to address in a network guidance tool? (Please address separately: network first applicants and network renewals).

Trends after network guidance, monitoring and on-site evaluation:

7. (Both for the Commission and the Executive Agency): After your experience in guidance, follow up of contracts and monitoring: What are the most recurrent challenges and difficulties that networks phase? What are “classic” strong/weak points that you have identified? What are the most important issues that a Network guidance tool should address? ¿Have you got specific examples?

Overview of results of recent networks final reports:

8. Could you make an assessment of “classic” strong points and weak points after assessing networks interim and final reports? What is your assessment concerning the network management process, including financing? ¿What are the main challenges they phase? Could you provide examples? ¿What is your assessment concerning reporting to the Commission?
¿Could you support us to identify network products that are used as reference material?
¿Could you support us to identify networks with successful strategies for valorisation and sustainability?

Specific recommendations for a Network guidance tool:

9. The purpose of the Euroweaving accompanying measures project is to provide guidance to networks for development of efficient and influential and sustainable educational networks. After your experience with EU funded networks, what are the most important areas/competences that a Network Guidance tool should address? Can you provide specific recommendations and examples for each of the following areas that relate to network building? (Provide a grading according to importance from 1 to 3).

Areas /Network tasks	Grading	Comments/ Recommendations/ Examples
1.A clear explanation of the concept and objectives of a network		
2.Partnership: Creation of an adequate core network group, with complementary multiplayer key actors, and final users		
3.Building a network rationale (including an analysis of the key issues and state of educational innovation in the relevant field)		
4.Making a realistic assessment of the potential impact of the thematic network in practice, in national education systems,		

and in policy making		
5. Building a network development/consolidation strategy		
6. Building a network “common ground” in the field concerned		
7. Designing network activities/versus transnational activities		
8. Design of activities that enable innovation and best practice to be encouraged		
9. Develop measures to promote partner synergies and to promote new EU projects		
10. Setting a efficient organizational framework, with working groups		
11. Setting an efficient communication, information and dissemination structure		
12. Development of a sound membership strategy		
13. Development of an advocacy strategy		
14. Design a valorisation strategy to identify, disseminate and valorize project results and best practices generated at EU, regional or local level.		
15. Producing useful learning outcomes and their dissemination		
16. Building the network sustainability potential		
17. Building reliable mechanisms for quality assurance and evaluation		

10. Do you think that EU school education (Comenius) and EU adult education networks (Grundtvig) pursue similar objectives as networks? If not, could you highlight the main differences? ¿Do you see the value of promoting Comenius and Grundtvig exchanges dealing with the same themes or similar target groups?

Other comments: