

Proposal

Towards a common exchange and training programme (ERT+)

I Introduction

Changes within the EU structure due to enlargement, the continuation of the accession process, the new constitution, and the discussion on the Commissions HR development and lifelong learning will have an impact on the school within their national and EU position.

As directors of the European Nationals Schools and institutes for Public Administration we share a common objective: improving capacity of the national civil servants ensuring enhanced capacity of their civil servants in the Brussels arena.

As a preparation to the conference a small survey has been conducted as to 'Who are we and what do we want?'. The survey (response rate: 19 out of 25) shows that all of the 19 institutes, in new member countries as well as in the old member countries, are willing to increase their involvement in international and cross-national co-operation. Their expectations in this field concentrate upon: exchange of good practices, bench-marking, networking and exchange between experts and trainers, common curriculum development and development of innovative programmes.

The challenge for us now is to come up with concrete projects, where we meet and deliver these expected results in the EU of 25. The underlying paper offers you a proposal to be discussed at the conference on **October 16th**.

The overall objective of the proposal: *to increase the effectiveness of national training institutes and schools for public administration in the European Union.*

The specific objective: *to increase the efficiency and synergies of training programmes offered by the national institutes and schools for public administration.*

The expected result is a common exchange and training programme (ERT+).

II. What is 'ERT'?

The 'European Reciprocal Training programme' (ERT) is a **study visit** for officials and civil servants from the different EU countries that offers participants the chance to gain unique insights into the governing cultures and attitudes to the EU in other member states. Civil servants who want to understand how Europe works and how their own country can make the most impact in the EU need to develop and strengthen contacts with their partners.

For more than 10 years, study visits of 3-5 days in the EU member states have been offered to civil servants of the EU-member states. The institutes and schools of the following countries have been

participating: United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and The Netherlands. Members of these institutes as well as members from Slovenia and Italy have been meeting once a year to discuss the content of the programme, the planning and the marketing strategy.

Recently, the ERT-group has reflected upon the programme and concluded that there has been a **decrease of interest over the last few years**. One of the reasons behind this is that public departments do not have clear what the return on investment of the programme in its present form, is (and could be). During the annual meeting in The Hague in April last an ‘ERT-project group’ was set up, consisting of: the institutes from Portugal, UK, Slovenia, France, Germany and The Netherlands, **to develop an innovative and effective programme** on a e-learning/blended basis in order to meet the emerging needs and expectations mentioned above. The ideas of the ERT-project group have been discussed in Paris in June and commented on by the rest of the ERT-group. It was agreed upon that the ideas are to be presented to the directors of the institutes at the October Conference in The Hague.

The ERT-project group formulated four possible scenarios for a renewed ERT-programme:

- A. To carry on with the ERT programme in the present form and to make changes with regard to the content of the programme
- B. To carry on with the ERT programme in the present form and at the same time support the renewal of the programme (blended), however not as a member of a pilot group.
- C. To carry on with the ERT programme in the present form and at the same time support the renewal of the programme (blended) and to play a leading role in a pilot group.
- D. To discontinue with the ERT programme in the present form and to participate in organising a new ERT as part of a pilot group e.g.

The present position of the members of the ERT-group is as follows:

- The French support the new initiative, but state that they will not play a leading role now (category A and B). They will continue their present ERT programme and see if they can organise and fund a second programme organised with some counterparts from other countries.
- Germany supports the scenario’s mentioned under category A and B.
- Slovenia is very interested in a new ERT programme but due to other priorities they choose not to play a leading role in a pilot group (category B).
- The UK supports the scenario as propose in category C.
- Sweden and Portugal are also in favour of a renewal of the programme and are willing to play a leading role in a pilot group (category C).
- The Netherlands has decided to discontinue organizing their own study visit, but are willing to play a leading role in the renewal of an innovative programme (category D).
- Denmark supports category A.
- Spain supports category A and B.

III What is next?

The activities proposed by the ERT-group are:

1. To further develop the ERT-programme (ROI and ERT-project group);
 2. To raise funds for the re-newed ERT-programme (ERT-project group);
 3. To introduce the ERT-programme in the new member states (ERT-project group)
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- 4.To link the objectives of the ERT-programme to those of the directors of the Schools and vice versa.

Added value of a new ERT-programme

To be better equipped to meet the specific training needs of the public servants of today (and tomorrow) and to make clear the return of investment of the training, extra dimensions should be added to the current offer of the ERT-programme. Public servants from different countries are to produce concrete outputs on relevant topic and sharing opinions and experiences. The programme could be implemented by a group of schools, and no longer a single school, without increasing the fee in a significant way.

The new programme, ERT+, offers the participants:

- concrete, tangible outputs;
- preparation and follow-up of the training by e-mail;
- studying at their own given time.

Outline of a possible programme

- preliminary online work (3 weeks) involving autonomous individual work. Access to documents, case studies, other resources with reflection questions to answer. Participants could have access to a facilitator and could also send mails to individual participants or to the group, although this would not be mandatory at this stage;
- f2f gathering at one of the partner schools (3 days perhaps);
- further online work (extra 2 weeks) with access to further material and involving exchange mails and participating in forum between members of sub-groups and the global group in order to produce a final document.

The results of the participants' works could be made available through the common portal along some room for comments from visitors.

The e-learning component could be carried through an existing platform at almost no cost. INA (Portugal) has offered its own Blackboard, which is available in English.

The ERT+-programme in practice, an example:

The schools involved could agree on a key topic, its pedagogic objectives and work on a content programme with its guidelines following an instructional design approach. The contents could be mostly text but it could also involve video presentations by one or more speakers along with power points on key issues of the programme. The latter could be mailed to the participants in CD-R's. INA has a template of such CD-R's available, which provides the video presentation (max. around 80/90") along with a synchronised power point, and includes readings, reflection questions and could be linked to the e-learning platform. This would be a solution to involve lecturers/guest speakers from the various schools, which are not receiving the f2f component.

There wouldn't be relevant technological costs for the schools. The production of contents shouldn't be also too expensive: it involves selecting readings available in English, but specially devising activities. Each of the partners could handle the development of part of the programme under the coordination of a single expert in the area and with the support of experts in instructional design for e-learning.

IV Organisation of the ERT+ programme

An ERT Task Force could be set up to undertake the activities mentioned under III. Furthermore the ERT-Task Force will report on an annual basis to the directors' meeting. In coordination with the directors of Schools the topics will be decided, the countries that will participate in the present and new ERT will make themselves known and the dates and prices for the programmes will be set.

The marketing of the ERT programme will be the prime responsibility of the Schools. The common website will play an important role and can be provided with input through the ERT-Task Force.

V Estimated budget

Estimated costs of an ERT+-programme are subdivided in developing costs (once only) and organisation and running costs. Please note, that the staff expenses are not included in the budget as these costs are considered to be contributed by the participating institutes.

I Developing costs (in EUR): 25.000

- Out of pocket costs: 5.000
- Publicity and materials: 10.000
- Staff: 7-10 working days per member of the Task Force: P.M.
- Travel expenses: 10.000

II Organisation and running costs of the programme (in EUR): 9.000

Fees: 8.000

Materials: 1.000

Staff: P.M.

Venue: P.M.

VI Agenda for October 16th

The following topics are to be discussed:

- Background and philosophy of ERT
- Proposal ERT+-programme
- The linking of the objectives of the ERT-programme to those of the directors of the Schools and vice versa.
- Link of ERT programme with the proposed Internet portal of the Training institute

Decisions are to be made during the coming Directors' meeting in October in The Hague on the following:

- The further development of the ERT+
- The introduction of the ERT-programme in the new member states
- The participation of the respective countries in the ERT programme
- The installation of the ERT Task Force
- The funding of the development of the programme (by the Schools and/or external funding)
- The choice of working themes and methodology of ERT
- A plan of action/follow up of October 16th.