**ERASMUS + Programme**

**Strategic partnerships (Key Action 2)**

**Agreement No. 2015-1-EL01-KA201-013937-SB01**

**ARCHEOSCHOOL- Second Interim Report October 2017**

This report is submitted in accordance with the contract between the project coordinator Kentro Perivalontikis Ekpaidefsis Kalamatas and Sean Feerick, external evaluator. The report is the second of 3 reports which will be submitted during the project lifecycle.

1. **Objectives of the external evaluation**

The objective of the 2nd interim report of the external evaluator is to examine progress since the beginning of the project with a view to commenting on:

1. project governance
2. efficacy of planning
3. coherence between work programme and implementation
4. impact of the various activities on participants.

This 2nd interim report continues the process of using external evaluation as an important element in supporting the ongoing quality assurance of the project. The analysis provided should contribute to improving the quality of the project and highlight areas which will be helpful in supporting its ongoing development. Effective quality assurance needs to be a central concern of all of the project partners at each stage of the project implementation. The 2nd interim report provides an external view of the measures taken to ensure ongoing quality assurance of the project activities and the internal evaluation of the project. Its aim is to contribute an external view on the ongoing implementation of the project and ensure that a concern for quality remains at the centre of every aspect of the implementation of the project work programme.

The report builds on the comprehensive ongoing self-assessment undertaken by the project partners and provides an objective view of progress which will support the coordination team in the continuing strategic development of the project and enable it to ensure that the project develops the materials planned and also its responses to the policy objectives of ERASMUS+ and the broader ET2020 policy context as outlined in the work programme submitted as part of the application for funding.

The 2nd interim evaluation also provides a timely opportunity to take stock of progress over the first 2 years of project implementation, to identify successes and areas that may require particular attention in year 3. It will also provide a snapshot of the project from an external perspective and enable the project team to benefit from an objective view of progress and the relevance of the project in terms of the development of learning material, teacher professionalism and innovative methodologies.

The interim evaluation should be seen as contributing an external view on progress and is not designed to deliver conclusive results relating to the achievement of the project’s objectives at this stage. It does however identify those areas where progress is made in attaining objectives and where necessary, provides advice on taking forward the work. The key areas targeted in the external evaluation proposal will provide a framework for examining implementation during year 2. These include:

* the degree of innovation of the project
* contribution of a European added value to the content of the materials developed for pupils and teachers
* sustainability of the materials developed
* dissemination of project results to teachers and pupils more generally in the participating countries.

In the 2nd interim evaluation particular emphasis will continue to be attached to the potential of the project activities to contribute to change in pupils and teachers’ professional development and learning experiences, the development of a European dimension in the ongoing activities, the responsiveness of the project management to emerging issues and unforeseen circumstances, and the potential for genuinely innovative end results.

The 2nd interim evaluation focuses on two levels:

Level 1: monitoring the quality of the ongoing communication between project partners, degree of advancement of the work programme, extent to which the milestones envisaged have been achieved, emerging results which are capable of having a lasting value in terms of the thematic content of the project

Level 2: monitoring the activities undertaken within the framework of the project and their impact in terms of the overall project objectives in particular the professional development opportunities provided for teachers and the learning activities provided for pupils.

1. **Source material**

The material used as a basis for this second report has been provided by the project coordinator in September 2017 and includes, minutes and reports of project meetings and seminars, reports of mobility activities, internal evaluation materials including analysis of learner and teacher questionnaires, reports of virtual meetings, and project group meetings and learning and professional development resources which have been developed during the period September 2016 to July 2017. The project website [www.archeoschool.eu](http://www.archeoschool.eu) which can be seen as the “shop window” of the project is of particular relevance in assessing the visibility the project, the relevance of the ongoing activities and the value of the intellectual outputs. The application form submitted to the national agency in March 2015 provides the reference against which the materials submitted have been reviewed.

1. **Progress in project implementation at the end of year 2**

**3.1 Quality of the cooperation between partners**

Since September 2016 ( date of submission of the 1st Interim Report) an effective level of collaborative work has been fostered in the project. The project team has continued to support the development of mutual confidence using a variety of methodologies including, physical team meetings, video based meetings, skype conversations and teacher and learner mobilities which have mobilised the coordinating partners from the three countries participating in the project. These have strengthened the personal and professional collaboration between the members of the coordinating teams from each country and provide a solid basis for advancing the work on implementing the work programme. The range of activities which has included transnational meetings, pupil exchanges, teacher conferences and participation in larger scale dissemination events is evidence of the effectiveness of a project management which ensures ongoing progress implementing the project objectives.

While this level of collaboration is important and creates a recognisable project dynamic in each of the participating schools, the challenge of mobilising staff more generally and engaging across school communities should not be underestimated. Genuine sustainability of the project will only be achieved if those teachers involved in the project in each of the participating schools manage to engage effectively across other disciplines and ensure ongoing senior management support for project activities. As those most directly involved in the project grow in confidence it is important that each of the participating institutions is capable of providing support to facilitate curricular innovation, time for project activities and recognition for the input of teachers in the project activities.

As highlighted in the 1st Interim report, follow-up between meetings is crucial if the momentum of the project is to be sustained and individual participants are to be supported to build on the increased motivation following meetings and other project events such as seminars. There continues to be some evidence ( particularly in the Italian schools) of a sense of conflicting priorities within schools and difficulty of finding time to participate and contribute to project activities. Ensuring the ongoing commitment of school management to the implementation of the project activities is essential if the project is to have longer term impact in schools. Failure to do this will result in a sense of isolation and eventual marginalisation which will have a serious negative impact on teachers, pupils and the project as a whole.

It is however recognised that both the EDMONDO and KF platforms are now more fully integrated into developing the content of the project. This is evidenced particularly in the quality of the thematic collaboration and the learning materials which have been produced. It is also important in ensuring more effective engagement of teachers across a broad range of disciplines in the project. The contribution of this collaborative work to the production of intellectual outputs is an important indicator of success and creates a basis for ensuring that the project contributes an added-value to the learning experience of pupils and the professional development of teachers. Effective use of IT has also enabled the development of effective responses to the administrative difficulties and financial difficulties limiting the recruitment of suitably qualified language teachers as evidenced in the decision to deliver language learning through MOOC technology.

Notwithstanding issues in relation to staff turnover and the systemic support for teachers participating in the project, it is clear that the meetings held during the second year have contributed to strengthening the culture of cooperation between the partner schools and have established the project as an important part of the ongoing work of the participating schools. They have ensured that significant advances have been made in terms of broadening the interest in the content of the project and in mobilising a variety of stakeholders across the participating countries in the ongoing development and implementation of the project.

 While it is evident that there is a significant amount of work relating to the project coordination, it is important that project meetings continue to be seen as important milestones in measuring progress in implementing objectives and ensuring that project objectives are attained. The materials provided in order to assist in the preparation of this interim report do not provide any evidence that the project coordinator is efficiently supported in ensuring the appropriate follow-up of decisions made during meetings. Effective management should enable appropriate levels of delegation of tasks to ensure that follow-up of meetings is task based and implemented within a clearly articulated time frame.

**3.2 Implementation of the project objectives**

There has been a continued strengthening of both the number and quality of the project activities during the second year of implementation. The number and range of activities envisaged in the work programme have been successfully implemented. The learner mobility, teacher professional development and the project activities undertaken in each of the participating schools have significantly contributed to the development of new content, methodologies and learning activities which not only create an enhanced awareness of common European cultural roots, but also provide an opportunity to consider their importance in the twenty-first century. The continued work on Greek and Roman sites in each of the participating school environments has created a strong basis for the development of pedagogical activities linked to archaeological awareness, role of science in supporting the development of new careers and the potential of these sites for creating new employment opportunities.

The challenge for the project is to ensure that the methodologies and the results of the project are mainstreamed across school curricula in order to capitalise on the potential the project provides as a platform for innovative work across a range of disciplines. In this respect the contribution of colleagues with expertise in working with archaeological sites, environmental science and entrepreneurship education will need continued strong coordination to ensure the production of innovative learning materials.

It is important to ensure that each of participating schools are appropriately resourced to ensure that they can use technical support platforms such as EdMondo and KF which the project envisages to experiment with and further develop the pedagogical aspects of the project. The progress so far in integrating IT into the fabric of the project creates a solid basis for continued work.

Administrative problems relating to the implementation of the project in year 1 have been effectively addressed and this has led to an effective working arrangement across all of the participating schools. While there continue to be some issues relating to payment of meeting expenses, these have not substantively impacted on the project. However it is unacceptable that teachers who are involved in such projects should be expected to finance their participation in meetings because of delays in payment of grants and/or overly burdensome administrative procedures. As the project develops in its final year it will be important to ensure that such administrative hurdles are minimised and that a clear focus remains on the production of learning resources that can be used across schools more generally. This is important in terms of ensuring continued motivation of teachers who are the linchpin in ensuring the effective implementation of the project across all of the participating schools.

Over the first two years of the project the website has developed as an important source of information relating to the implementation of the project. It serves as a base for locating a range of materials meeting reports, press briefing and accounts of a range of dissemination measures which have taken place. It will be important to ensure a wide dissemination of project material within and between schools to ensure that final intellectual outputs are meaningfully piloted and therefore capable of contributing measurable impacts on the learning experience of pupils and the professional development of teachers. The effective use of Social Media such as Facebook has also been important in developing the sense of a community linked to the development of the project.

The material produced to date in relation to the pedagogical exploitation of the archaeological sites and the resources to support learning and teacher professional development provide evidence of significant progress in the development of new content and its delivery which is an integral part of the project’s development. There is clearly a visible progress in relation to the production of the project deliverables referenced in the project application and in the period since the preparation of the 1st interim report. This current level of work should be sustained over the coming months to ensure that the full range of the materials produced are appropriately quality assured, published and disseminated. Successful implementation of this project deliverable will be a key success factor in the preparation of the final report which will be submitted to the national agency at the end of year 3.

**3.3 Ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms**

The measures envisaged for the ongoing quality management of the project implementation are well organised and have ensured a high level of feed-back on each aspect of the project’s implementation. On-going evaluation and review are well integrated into each stage of the projects implementation. Agendas for meetings and all project activities include appropriate methodologies designed to monitor progress and assess progress against project metrics. The effectiveness of the quality management approach is evidenced by the impact the internal evaluation and the external evaluation in 2016 have had in addressing potential areas of weakness relating to the use of EdMondo and the KF platforms. Both collaborative platforms have now been well integrated into the fabric of the project and have contributed to innovative results in terms of learning activities and materials. The effective use of communication technologies as a resource for both teachers and pupils creates a major added-value in terms of project results and has the potential to create new and innovative approaches to the development of content and pupils’ learning experiences.

The continued use of questionnaires targeted at pupils, parents and teaching staff is a means of ensuring a solid evidence base for the assessment of participant experiences and of progress in reaching the project milestones. They are also integrated into a structured review process which contributes to the ongoing pedagogical development of the project.

Measures initiated in year 1, which have mainstreamed ongoing evaluation of progress at each stage of the project’s implementation have also contributed to ensuring that a culture of quality management is at the centre of the project and permeates each of the activities ranging from coordination meetings to pupil exchanges, professional development opportunities of teachers, material development and links with the broader school community.

A key challenge in year 3 will be to continue to use the evidence provided by the ongoing internal evaluation to ensure continued responsiveness to participant needs in the implementation of the work programme. This is important in promoting the engagement of teachers, learners and other key stakeholders. It will also enable project teams within individual countries and schools to engage with colleagues in schools more generally and to ensure that the project materials bring a real added-value in terms of using the inspiration of the archaeological sites to create a spirit of entrepreneurship that will enlarge the learning and future employment perspectives of learners. This will be of particular significance in responding to the challenge of mainstreaming project results across schools more generally and in ensuring that the project makes a contribution to the development of policies of European cooperation, entrepreneurships in education and the use of new technologies at system level in each of the participating countries.

**3.4 Development of content of learning materials**

The second year of project activities has provided a framework for an intensive level of learning activities such as pupil exchanges, teacher mobility and enhanced collaborative work using the EdMondo and KF platforms. These activities have also played an important role in the development of the intellectual output of the project. In addition to establishing a strong culture of collaboration they have also ensured a high level of advancement in developing the range of pedagogical material and learning outcomes which are envisaged in the work programme. The inter-disciplinary work which has been built around the archaeological sites in Messinia, Tarragona and Verona has enabled a comprehensive level of progress in relation to those aspects of the project which focus on entrepreneurship skills, creation of employment and exploration of new pathways for work based learning.

The analysis of the learner questionnaires, in addition to the drafts of the materials which have been produced, highlight the innovative nature of the project and provide concrete evidence of new content and new methodologies for delivering new content. Of particular importance is the level of pupil engagement with the content of the project and their innovative work in using the archaeological sites as a platform for developing content and methodologies which contribute to a sense of learner responsibility for developing new and innovative career pathways. The engagement of learners with the historical importance of the monuments provides an exciting basis for exploiting the potential of the monuments to contribute to the social and employment fabric of the local communities. This is a key indicator of success in the development of the project.

With reference to teacher education, the staff training seminars and multiplier events have played an important role in supporting ongoing professional development of teachers. Issues raised in year 1 have been addressed, in particular the need to provide more explicit evidence of how the experience of the mobility and pedagogical insights developed through the study of the ancient sites contributes to developing appropriate topics in teacher education that coherently build on the interdisciplinary approaches which are at the basis of the methodology described in the work programme. The quality of the professional development materials provides evidence of a substantial level of joint work, linked to the thematic objectives of the project and the specific character of the sites studied. The materials have also built on the capacity of the IT platforms to shape content and its delivery, thereby contributing to the innovative nature of the materials developed.

The ongoing meetings of the coordination group during year 2 have played an important role in ensuring that materials developed have been tested in practical learning contexts and that they are coherent in terms of the objectives stated in the work programme, particularly in terms of interdisciplinarity and innovativeness. The use of simulations, the building of scenarios using the primary research undertaken in the study of the various sites and the effective integration of IT has also supported the process of developing high quality materials which create a basis for ongoing professional development of teachers.

The reports of the learning mobility activities and the evaluation of the teacher questionnaires have provided evidence of new areas of learning addressed across the learning activities which are integrated into the ongoing work with the archaeological sites. Issues raised in year 1 in relation to the testing of materials and new areas of learning have been addressed particularly to the increasingly successful use of both EDMONDO and the KF platforms have been addressed satisfactorily. This enables us to identify a pedagogical approach where the IT resources have helped to deliver not only new areas of content, but also new and innovative teaching and learning methodologies.

The work undertaken in conjunction with KPE in addition to the evaluation of both teacher and learner experiences have provided a basis for the development of course content which, in appropriate circumstances, will provide a sustainable means of ensuring the ongoing professional development of teachers more generally. The combination of new insights using the archaeological sites, the new forms of delivery and the high level of user feedback which is integrated into the development of the materials is a major indicator of the successful implementation of the project to date.

1. **Key findings of the second interim external evaluation report**

The material developed over the first two years of the project enable us to be confident that the implementation has been largely successful in achieving the objectives identified in the work programme and in laying the basis for its successful conclusion in year 3.

While the management of the project has been challenging because of the wider administrative contexts in the coordinating country and resource issues in the Italian partner schools, **the level of professionalism of the coordinating team, and in particular the ongoing commitment of the coordinator, have ensured that there has been no negative impact on the progression of the project.** There continues to be a strong nucleus of colleagues which has created a basis for ensuring that problems, once identified are discussed and resolved and that the focus is clearly maintained on the implementation of the project work programme.

This strong basis has ensured that there is measurable progress in terms of learning materials and initiatives linked to the professional development of teaching staff. **The development of effective learning partnerships with the specialist staff from the archaeological sites, the mobilisation of subject specialists from the partner schools and the effective integration of the IT resources has ensured a successful context of the ongoing implementation of the project**. This has entailed the production of new knowledge, wide raging awareness of the potential of the sites to create forms learning and employment and to act as a catalyst for the mobilisation of a range of labour market and broader societal stakeholders in each of the school environments represented in the project.

Continued building on this solid foundation will be important in order to capitalise on the significant innovative learning which the project represents. **The key challenge as the project enters its final year will be ensure that the added-value of the project is shared more widely within schools and that teachers and senior management more generally engage with the opportunities the project provides for improving the quality and relevance of learning for pupils,** particularly in relation to preparation for work and engagement with the broader environmental, social and cultural aspects which are inherent in the project content. The interdisciplinarity of the teaching resources to be developed and the professional development of the staff involved in the project are key performance areas in this respect.

The issues raised in year 1 in relation to the need to effectively use the EDMondo and KF resources have been well-addressed over the second year. It will be important to continue to work effectively with both platforms in order **to ensure that IT becomes more than a resource to support progress, and genuinely delivers on its potential to create new and transformative forms of learning and delivery of content.** This will be a key area for measuring the ultimate success of the project and its capacity provide new and innovative learning experiences for pupils and professional development opportunities for teachers.

The ongoing self-evaluation of the project has been fully integrated into the project and provided a basis for ensuring that teacher and learner experiences are used in designing and implementing the ongoing content of the project. **This emphasis on feedback loops is an important indicator of the project’s success in developing solutions to challenges which are identified as a result of the range of project activities which have been implemented.** These feedback mechanisms are very important in ensuring the relevance and appropriacy of materials and learning methodologies. It will be important to ensure that the results of the ingoing internal evaluation is used in project meetings and in planning the move to the concluding phase of the project.

Year 2 of the project has resulted in the development of learning materials, professional development resources and a range of dissemination materials. Some of these are still in interim stages of development. **It will be important to ensure that all the materials identified in the project work programme are finalised on time so that there is a discernible package of materials which can be used more generally across schools and education systems.** An key performance indicator in this respect will be the usability of materials by teachers and learners who have not been involved in the project during it 3 years of ERASMUS funding.

The meeting reports and the results of the various surveys of participants undertaken in the context of the internal evaluation are a useful basis for a consideration of more general progress in attaining project deliverables. It will be important to ensure that meeting results are made available in a timely manner so that the perspective of the external evaluator can help support the range of tasks which are necessary in bringing such a project to a satisfactory and timely conclusion.