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## INVOLVING THE STUDENTS IN THE EUROPEAN PROJECTS THROUGH THE FOCUS GROUP DYNAMIC: THE CASE OF AIMED – AIMING TO EDUCATE BY PROMOTING THE ACADEMIC DIMENSION OF ERASMUS+

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AIMED is an Erasmus+ project within the framework of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 “Strategic Partnerships” programme. The main goal of the project is to create an online platform that will provide an educational offer for international students presented in an attractive and friendly way. In particular, AIMED consortium includes 9 partners from seven different countries; 7 Higher Education Institutions (University of Lodz, Vytauto Didziojo Universitetas, Universidad de Cadiz, Universidad de Granada, Univerza na Primorskem Universita del Litorale, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela and European Humanities University), one student network (Erasmus Student Network) and a network of Universities (European University Foundation). At the end of the project, the students will count with AIMED on-line platform where they could look for the academic offer from the different Universities.

In order to have the student’s point of view about the platform contents, a series of questionnaires and focus groups were carried out at the Higher Education Institutions. In the case of the European University Foundation and Erasmus Student Network, they organised a questionnaire and performed interviews to international mobility and to students enrolled on an international exchange program. In particular, two different student’s backgrounds were considered; students that they have already participate in an international exchange program and students that they have never participate in a mobility program.

Cadiz University team was in charge of preparing the Focus Group Guideline that was used at every Focus Group meeting. Furthermore, they collected and analysed all the material produced by the different partners, a crucial parameter in order to define the information and functionalities to be included in Platform design.

Concerning the Focus Group Meetings, in most of the cases, the atmosphere was friendly and relaxed and the students felt comfortable giving their opinion. The participation and involvement of the attendees was very satisfactory. The atmosphere was very friendly and relaxed and all the participants were involved in the discussions. The students actively participated and readily shared their experiences. However, sometimes it was necessary to address direct questions to those who did not say too much.

Summarising the Focus Group results; the idea of having one unified platform for universities providing key information for exchange students were welcomed and everybody agreed that the information included in the platform should be accurate and update. Some form of quality assurance would be indispensable. Concerning the academic offer, among the mandatory items for the students; general information about the host institution, academic calendar, study program including the list of subjects and description, ECTS for the different courses and contact information. Additionally, the students also requested some non-academic information as accommodation offer, general information about the city including living cost, transportation offer and campus maps.

As a conclusion, this type of dynamics becomes very useful to involve students in projects that try to develop products or tools focused on them. In this way, we guarantee the students’ point of view throughout the process and their consensus with the results obtained.

Keywords: Mobility, Erasmus+, Cooperation, Platform, Focus Group