

S-TEAM News No.7

Science-Teacher Education Advanced Methods

A phase change in European
Science Education

November 2008



The waiting game (part 3)...but not for much longer

Welcome to newsletter 8.

The news is...there is no news, except that we are assured by Brussels (as of yesterday, 27th November) that we will be informed by mid-December. The wording of the response indicates that there are other bids in the process as well as ours.

This does not mean we have been unsuccessful, we just don't know where we stand.

New Call

As you may know there is another Call in Framework Programme 7, Science-in-Society with a similar theme to the previous call. I have reproduced the text of this call at the end of the newsletter. It has a deadline of 13 January 2009. We have to act now if we are to submit a back-up proposal.

A meeting of WP team leaders has therefore been called for 9th December in Oslo. We are very sorry for the short notice, forced on us by the delays in hearing about S-TEAM. This meeting will be a forum for discussion of a possible second proposal.

The wording of the call is very similar to the last one, although discourse analysis might detect

subtle changes to the wording, for example in the way it refers to gender. The proposal therefore has to retain much of the substance of the previous S-TEAM plan, whilst being sufficiently different to answer any possible criticisms.

So, if you have any ideas, now is the time...

My view is that we need to think about these aspects of the proposal:

1. Coherence of the work packages: how do they fit together and do they serve the overall objectives of the project?
2. Do training packages and related activities have a lasting effect? How could we demonstrate that we have caused a sustainable change in science education?
3. How can we engage with teacher networks and other stakeholder groups without creating yet another network? Or, at least, how might we make such a network work?
4. What is the best way to get maximum geographical and numerical coverage, i.e. how can we reach the maximum number of science teachers and pupils?

5. Why should this be done at European level - isn't it enough to have national initiatives? I'm sure you all have plenty of these.

I will be eagerly awaiting your emails, please feel free to be controversial and critical, time is of the essence.

Next actions

Over the next few days we will be revising the existing proposal in order to have a draft for discussion at Oslo on the 9th. This will be circulated to everyone on the S-TEAM mailing list.

It is probable that we will need to repeat the procedure for generating Memoranda of Understanding (the famous MoUs) in relation to the new call, as the previous MoUs only apply to S-TEAM, and in any case are only valid for 6 months after the closing date (24/07/08).

Also, several colleagues have changed their institutional affiliation and may need to obtain new consent for participation.

Finally, we thank you for your patience and would like to say that we still have huge amounts of confidence, both in the original proposal and in the S-TEAM partners. Good luck!

Text of the new call

Activity 5.2.2. Young people and science
Indicative budget amount for calls for proposals: EUR 9.50 million, available for topics SiS-2009-2.2.3.1 Supporting and coordinating actions on innovation in the classroom: Dissemination and use of inquiry based teaching methods on a large scale in Europe, and SiS2009-2.2.3.2 International dimension of research on science education.

Area 5.2.2.1 Supporting formal and informal science education in schools as well as through science centres and museums and other relevant means Proposals sought under the 2008 work programme.

Area 5.2.2.2 Reinforcing links between science education and science careers

Proposals sought under the 2008 work programme.

Area 5.2.2.3 Research and coordination actions on new methods in science education
SiS-2009-2.2.3.1 Supporting and coordinating actions on innovation in the classroom: Dissemination and use of inquiry based teaching methods on a large scale in Europe
Description of topic: Falling interest in key science topics and mathematics has been linked to the way they are taught from the earliest age. Therefore, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the development of more effective forms of pedagogy; on the development of analytical skills; and, on techniques for stimulating intrinsic motivation for learning science, taking into account various pre-conditions and cultural differences. This topic will support actions to promote the more widespread use of problem and inquirybased science teaching techniques in primary and/or secondary schools as well as actions to bridge the gap between the science education research community, science teachers and local actors in order to facilitate the uptake of inquiry-based science teaching. The actions are intended to complement school science curricula and must include teacher training activities and promote teachers' networks. In addition, the consortia must be open to the participation of entities seeking to gain experience in problem- and inquiry-based science education techniques. Actions in this area must contribute towards the following: securing basic knowledge, developing a task culture, learning from mistakes, cumulative learning, autonomous learning, experiencing subject boundaries and interdisciplinary approaches and promoting student cooperation. Proposals must also demonstrate that the chosen teaching and education methods are equally appropriate to girls and boys and that they contribute to reducing gender stereotypes. The actions aimed at here shall already have proven their efficiency and efficacy. The aim is therefore not only to promote the uptake of proven inquiry-based methods at the local, regional and national level but also to encourage a better sharing of experience among

practitioners across Europe. In consequence proposals must provide a convincing plan for the regular dissemination of progress and know-how to special interest groups (e.g. parents' associations, teachers' networks, curricula developers, and policy-makers). Furthermore, projects are expected to have the broadest coverage of EU Member States and Associated countries - in order to generate a European impact (see under 'Funding Scheme' below, as well as the Call fiche). In addition to this during contract negotiation links will be established between funded projects and a central information provider (see next section) to ensure the widest possible adaptation (eg linguistic) and dissemination of best practice, methods and tools. Such two-way transfer of know-how will be made on an open access non-commercial basis. Projects selected for funding must agree to these conditions. The actions must include an element of independent evaluation. A central information provider will be set up in 2008 or 2009 to centralise and disseminate best practices in science education. Projects selected for funding will contribute content to this central information provider (on a non commercial basis). The grant agreements signed will not support activities that increase fragmentation such as competing web portals. Funding Scheme: Coordination and Support Actions (Supporting Action). Please note: for the purposes of this topic, the minimum participation condition for the Coordination and Support Action (Supporting Action) is at least 10 independent legal entities, established in at least 10 different Member States or Associated countries. Each proposed activity will have a minimum overall budget of EUR 2 000 000 and a minimum duration of 36 months. These are eligibility criteria. See also the Call Fiche. Expected Impact: To bring about a change in the way that science is taught in schools through European collaborative activities that use techniques that have been successfully piloted, adapting and applying them on a European scale. The long-term impact looked for is a significant increase in the numbers of young people in Europe taking up scientific careers and a generally increased knowledge in science in the younger generations.

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