

Erasmus+ Mobilitätsprojekt

BLUE – Blended Learning Usability Experience



Project summary

Bavarian Adult Education Centres (referred to as vhs) are confronted with the constantly growing challenges caused by continuously evolving digitalisation. For this reason, their umbrella organisation, the Bavarian Association of Adult Education (referred to as bvv) created a mobility project in collaboration with Erasmus+ called 'BLUE – Blended Learning Usability Experience', which is being supported by the European Commission. This project enabled 97 members of staff of the Bavarian Adult Education Centres to participate in further education abroad between October 1st, 2016 and September 30th, 2018.

Within those two years, the project BLUE organised 10 programmes, which included one guest visit and the arrangement of nine trainings abroad at educational institutions in Estonia, Ireland, Greece and Cyprus. In those trainings, the participants were taught how to work successfully with online-based means of education and had the opportunity to learn how other European countries rather than Germany deal with the ever-growing and evolving digitalisation. It was evident, that all demand caused by digitalisation was perfectly satisfied by open mindedness and technical know-how, which considerably increased the participants' motivation to use more digital elements in their own courses back in Germany.

Owing to the project BLUE, the participating adult education centres are aware of what is going to come with the progress in technology and digitalisation as well as how they need to react, develop and cope with these changes. Besides the umbrella organisation (bvv), 40 of its associated member institutions benefited from the European support. From 97 available mobilities around 45% were used by freelancers, 35% by permanently employed personnel of vhs (management, administration and pedagogical staff) and around 20% by the umbrella organisation. Each of the organised trainings was designed for a group consisting of at most 12 persons and within those groups, the participants travelled to one of the five partner institutions in one of the four countries mentioned above.

Each staff member of the Bavarian Adult Education Centres, who was interested in participating, was given the opportunity to write a motivational letter as part of the application process, which ensured that the groups were composed of a mix of managerial, planning and educating personnel. Therefore, the mobilities provided the possibility for all members of staff of the participating Bavarian Adult Education Centres to get to know each other away from constraints and internal hierarchy as a joint and coequal group in a different cultural environment. Within the online-based concept, framing the educational visits, two webinars were designed, one before and one after each training abroad to resolve all organisational questions and prepare the participants for the chosen online-platforms.

The mobility project effectively helped advancing and transferring digital expertise within Bavaria as well as within the partner institutions. All participants were introduced to a variety of different media- and online-based concepts for teaching as well as learning, that either could be adopted directly or could influence their educational programmes in the future. Some of the vhs started to question their own course offer immediately after the training and introduced new concepts and tools within their institution. BLUE used the electronic portfolio platform called Mahara during the entire time span, which linked all participants. By means of this platform, the participants can even create competence groups for future projects.

The mobility project BLUE established many advantages. Some of them are intercultural exchange, learning another language, working with new unknown digital tools and most importantly experiencing a variety of different teaching and learning cultures. The teachers are now obligated to be sensitised for different learner groups in order to identify and illustrate means of intercultural understanding. For a successful combination of classroom teaching and online-based self-learning phases, a learner autonomy is required. Learner autonomy implies the fact that students are encouraged to identify their own responsibility to reach certain learning targets and to help shape the learning process. During the training, all participants had the chance to change their perspective from teacher to student, which enabled them to identify their competences as learners and intensified their learning experience. Each of the trainings created a variety of methods and tools, which were handed to the participants for support.

The Erasmus+ mobility project BLUE managed to give thought-provoking impulses concerning digitalisation in education and therefore has succeeded in motivating the participants to initiate change on their own accord.