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# Intellectual Output 1

## Consolidated report on needs of student teacher professional learning and student teacher professional learning communities

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**TePinTeach:**

**Professional Learning Communities as a Means for Bringing Teacher Professionalization in Teacher Education**

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## Executive Summary

This consolidated report summarizes the current status and the assessment of the needs of student teacher professional learning in the context of internship/practicum from the partner countries in the project (Germany, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Spain and Cyprus). This report includes a list of needs to be addressed by the training programme that is being developed. The report also identifies chances and risks of possible future cooperation of student teachers and mentors in a PLC, since there is a chance of mutual learning which up to now has not been pursued at schools/during internship.

In this report, we refer to PLCs knowing empirically that a lot of those groups are not real PLCs or are not called that way.

### 1.1. Context

#### 1.1.1. Group work and cooperation in partner countries

Table 1: PLC in partner countries

	PLC in partner countries
Austria	1 Little or Something going on...
Cyprus	1 Little or Something going on...
Sweden	3 A lot going on...
Norway	2 A number of PLC activities is going on...
Spain	1 Little or Something going on...
Germany	1 Something going on...

#### 1.1.2. Teacher education and student teacher internships in partner countries

In all partner countries, student teachers spend an extensive amount of time in schools as part of an internship.

Table 2: Teacher education in partner countries

	Austria	Cyprus	Sweden	Norway	Spain	Germany
Year 1	1 day each week of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	N/A	20 weeks (100 days) of internship during their studies  The main internship is in the students last year of studies	Norway have different types of teacher education – the example is from teacher education for upper secondary school.  10 days	Internship in the Primary Education BA is a compulsory module, although the number of credit points may vary depending on the university; as an example, 44 credit points need to be completed by the students at the	because of the federal system and different teacher education systems according to different kind of schools there are slight differences but altogether student teachers pass an early internship of only few weeks and one



					Uni of Málaga.	of about 15 weeks at the end of the BA or beginning of MA studies
Year 2	Didactical seminars, seminars on professional and personal development, 1 day each week of semester (3 <sup>rd</sup> semester)	1 day each week of 3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> semester		15 days	3 weeks (15 days) in 1 <sup>st</sup> semester	
Year 3	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> semester 4 weeks each	5 <sup>th</sup> or 6 <sup>th</sup> semester total of 8 weeks (1 day per week for 6 weeks and at least 3 times per week for 2 weeks – 12-16 days total)		35 days	3 weeks (15 days) in 1 <sup>st</sup> semester	
Year 4	Planning seminar 8 <sup>th</sup> Semester performing a school project, 4 weeks or 1 day each week (depending on project)	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> semester total of 8 weeks, every day (40 days total)		40 days	15 weeks (75 days)	

### 1.1.3. PLC opportunities for student teachers in partner countries

Table 3: PLC opportunities for student teachers in partner countries

	PLC opportunities for student teachers in partner countries
Austria	No official PLC opportunities for student teachers in placement schools
Cyprus	No official PLC opportunities for student teachers but some participation on ad hoc basis
Sweden	No official PLC opportunities for student teachers but some participation on ad hoc basis
Norway	No official PLC opportunity, but some participation on ad hoc basis and a lot of group work arrangements – some even obligatory.
Spain	No official PLC opportunities for student teachers but some participation on ad hoc basis
Germany	No official PLC opportunities for student teachers but some participation on ad hoc basis and a lot of group work arrangements



## 1.2. Summary of the national reports: Practicing cooperation in group work in university studies and internships

### 1.2.1. From the perspective of student teachers

As data from all the partner countries indicate, student teachers are more or less familiar with various cooperation concepts related either to teaching approaches and strategies that they can use in their own teaching or to practices of collaboration with peers in the context of projects and assignments for their university courses. Most of their experiences in groups, if not all, are related to academic tasks within the context of their university, even during their school internship period. In Norway it is mandatory to work in groups on the obligatory R&D project in their last semester, and as a part of the R&D report the students have to evaluate their collaboration in the group (planning, implementing and evaluating the results). The R&D project constitutes 1/3 of the grade in both pedagogy and their main subject (e.g. science, maths).

National reports indicate that student teachers have experiences working in groups with peers in getting assignments and projects done. They also work in groups during preparation of exams. In some cases, student teachers are asked by instructors to form groups (mandatory), whereas in other cases the groups are made of friends (voluntary) to support each other and they are on a voluntary basis. In all cases, there is very limited support by the instructor for the function and the “everyday” business of the collaboration groups, especially during the meetings of the groups.

In some cases, such as in Austria, student collaborative groups stay together for 2 or 3 years of studies. In other cases, some student teachers work part-time in schools and they use the collaborative groups to help themselves in work-related issues. They also do when they are in internship. However, in none of the partner countries it has been reported that teachers participate in those student teachers’ collaborative groups. Only Sweden has reported some limited participation of student teachers in school-based PLC groups with school teachers. *(Recommendation: further look into the characteristics of these groups, in order to get insight on how things work)*

From data that we have collected from the partner countries, it is clear that there are specific characteristics of these collaborative student teacher groups that seem to constitute productive student teacher groups that could possibly be useful when implementing or designing PLC activities in schools that would include student teachers. *(Recommendation: Gather all these characteristics and use them in the PLC implementation for student teachers in IO2).* These include:

- the student teacher groups usually consist of 3-4 members *(e.g., what is the productive number of student teacher members)*
- there is a member who coordinates the team, divides the tasks and is responsible for the final form and delivery of the task *(e.g., the need for a facilitator that would handle various tasks in the group)*. In some cases we have experience that first they try not to have a leading person first but someone turns out to be more structured and target orientated and thus starts leading.
- they usually work in the university library or some other quiet place where they can work and discuss *(e.g., the importance of a space to meet)*
- there is interaction between all members of the group *(e.g., the importance of interaction and active participation of all)*
- joint decisions are taken *(e.g., the importance of collective decisions)*

- *length of meeting, distances between meeting, preliminary work*
- *sometimes they need an external facilitator to ensure that they work as a learning community*

All national reports highlight the fact that throughout student teachers' studies, there is an apparent lack of cultivating the idea of professionalism in terms of learning communities and learning for their profession together. There is a great need for providing ideas, structure and opportunities for these, as well as knowledge-how for their mentors and their teacher trainers.

Student teachers in most of the partner countries recognized the value of working together in groups with peers in the above contexts, having mostly positive experiences. This suggest two important things: (a) student teachers have experiences and resources for working with peers in common tasks and (b) they see the value of forming communities of learning even though they are not familiar with this concept of terminology from the literature. However in some cases (like German student teachers) they do not overall think that way. Some of them refer that they prefer to work individually and they don't like to work in groups, because it's time consuming and they don't find it very helpful.

Student teachers find their participation in collaborative groups important to get to know many each other in order to improve their teaching skills. They pointed out, that the most beneficial aspects are: working together, having success, sharing workload, finding different solutions, being more motivated, sharing experiences, and finding friends.

Student teachers believe that through their involvement in a learning community they can achieve a common goal through the exchange of views, creative conflicts, ideas, collaboration and understanding of different perspectives. They learn to coexist as a community, regardless of each other's differences, and learn to respect and to support each other so that they can gain from each other (e.g. from others' experiences, knowledge and skills). In addition, they acquire knowledge and skills that will help them meet various challenges in their later career.

On the other hand, student teachers have identified a number of obstacles they encounter during the work in student teacher collaborative groups. These are related to finding a place and a common date to perform the group work, time-consuming activities, unstructured work that makes it difficult to get easy progress, difficulties to bring many different point of views together, differently motivated participants, some benefit from others work, while participating only little. They also suggest the need for developing better or more communication and interpersonal skills to help their working with peers in collaborative groups. *(Recommendation: These suggest areas that IO2 might work towards in helping student teachers develop abilities to work in PLCs, but also makes their work in groups more productive)*

### *1.2.2. From the perspective of mentors (=teachers that have student teacher interns in their classroom)*

Although they seem to be somewhat familiar with the concept of PLC, mentors from our partner countries do not see participation of student teachers in school-based PLCs as a tool to help student teachers grow professional during their studies. *(Recommendation: It is possible that we need to further investigate their needs and to provide them with tools, strategies and ideas to help them productively involve student teachers in PLCs in their schools.* Nor do they seem to recognize (in most of the cases) that they would benefit from the participation of student teachers in their PLCs. *(Recommendation: It might be useful to help mentors see the mutual benefits for PLCs with student teachers)*

Some mentors have mentioned having informal short meetings with their student teachers indicated the usefulness of this collaboration and communication as well as the suggestion that

there is something going on and possibly would benefit from something more formal. But to invest in a fixed group over a longer period of time is not in their idea.

However, Cyprus mentors for instance, identified that both students and themselves have much to gain from their cooperation. Student teachers have the opportunity to gain examples and experiences from good classroom management practices, to interact with the school community (not just their mentor but the whole school environment), to be informed of the rules of operation of the schools, learn to organize and prepare their teaching and gain experiences from teaching in real classes (from theory to practice = realism). On the other hand, teachers also benefit from hosting student teachers in their classrooms. They learn about innovative methods and practices (which are linked to the new curriculum) and the implementation of new materials through the teachings of the student teachers. In one respect, this is probably an opportunity to link teachers and schools with the scholar and academic work and research done at the Universities, through the collaboration of teachers/mentors with student teachers.

Mentors also mentioned that they do not have enough time in their work schedule to incorporate student teachers into PLC groups, which possibly suggests that they would separate PLCs that would include student teachers. They ask for more help in involving student teachers in their schools group work and identification of tasks, topics or activities within PLCs that would be mutual beneficial for both.

### 1.2.3. From the perspective of teacher trainers

In some of the participant countries teacher trainers reported that they are familiar with the idea of PLC due to their participation to the HeadsUP project or they have learned about it by those activities. Most of them, however, were not familiar with the PLC idea or have not been very involved in PLC activities. *(Recommendation: It might be useful to provide teacher trainers tools and knowledge for PLCs in order to support their student teachers efforts to participate in PLCs in their internship schools)*

## 1.3. SWOT analysis based on the national reports: Practicing cooperation in group work in university studies and internships

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student teachers have a lot experiences (and abilities) in working in groups with peers in the context of their university courses</li> <li>- Majority thinks positively about group work and do see the weakness involved</li> <li>- Sometimes already the format PLCs takes place in partner countries, partly with knowledge from HeadsUP</li> <li>- Teacher trainers include group work often</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality of cooperation in the student teachers' group work is low</li> <li>- Cooperation is only practiced by chance if competent students engage in it</li> <li>- Teacher trainers do not accompany group work intensively</li> <li>- Teacher trainers do not know about the PLC model of teacher development</li> <li>- Some student teachers do not want to get involved in group work</li> <li>- No previous involvement of student teachers in school PLCs</li> <li>- Limited time for student teachers to participate in PLCs in their placement schools</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentors hesitate investing in PLCs with student teachers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professionalization on efficient group work early in the studies, preparation for later job</li> <li>- Development of personal development in schools, practicing PLCs more efficiently</li> <li>- Enhanced integration: practice – theory</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Missing time teachers investing in group work, being experienced in well cooperating themselves</li> <li>- Missing willingness of students to invest in practice at the same time as working on the content</li> <li>- Lack of understanding of PLC</li> </ul>

#### 1.4. Summary of recommendations for further investigation of student teacher PLCs

- Further look into the characteristics of these groups, in order to get insight on how things work.
- Gather all these characteristics (of collaborative student teacher groups) and use them in the PLC implementation for student teachers in IO2.
- These (obstacles that student teachers encounter during the work in student teacher collaborative groups) suggest areas that IO2 might work towards in helping student teachers develop abilities to work in PLCs, but also makes their work in groups more productive.
- It is possible that we need to further investigate mentors' needs and to provide them with tools, strategies and ideas to help them productively involve student teachers in PLCs in their schools.
- It might be useful to help mentors see the mutual benefits for PLCs with student teachers.
- It might be useful to provide teacher trainers tools and knowledge for PLCs in order to support their student teachers' efforts to participate in PLCs in their internship schools.

