Tips from some of our experienced applicants
As given during the online information sessions about the Comenius programme (on June 22 and 24, 2022)

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• Don’t underestimate how much support is available within your own institution to help you with an application.

• Be proactive. It is a good idea to speak with a subsidy adviser at an early stage. This can be about what support they can offer you with the application process, but can also be about practical issues. Think, for example, of converting a temporary contract, so that you meet the requirements for an applicant.

• Make sure you are conscious of the deadlines in your specific Comenius subsidy round.

• At an early stage (before the pre-proposal phase), think about how you want to build your application and find the right people. Involve them in the content of the project proposal. Then you can shift gears quickly when you are filling out the (preliminary) application form.

• Think carefully about who to ask for your project team. You can of course think of teachers, but it is also good to actively involve the educational support staff. This also creates a sense of ownership and they often have a good sense of possible risks. Pay attention to the diversity of your team; also involve people from outside your own circle in the project.

• Actively involve students in the project (proposal). They often have a different view on the project and have useful insights and ideas. You can have them brainstorm at the beginning, student assistants can participate in the project, or they can provide feedback as a focus group or help with testing during the project. Co-creation with students is very important.

• Ensure that you obtain the correct signatures (mandates) from all relevant managers, department heads, etc. in good time. It seems bureaucratic, but it is a good idea to inform them on time and it is good to know that you have their support to carry out the project. This also shines through in the application.

• Don’t be discouraged by the large numbers of letters of intent and/or preliminary applications.

• Writing project proposals is not everyone’s cup of tea. Make sure you present a clear and convincing proposal; one that outsiders can also understand. What is the problem, and what will the proposed project bring to students?
• The innovative character of the proposal is an important criterion. The assessment committee consists of people from different backgrounds. Clearly show in the application what your educational context looks like, and make it clear how you know that your proposed project is innovative within that. Use literature, clarify what has already been done in that area and how the proposed project contributes to it.

• Avoid the use of jargon.

• Use visualizations in your application.

• Contact people who have already received a Comenius grant. Let them read your application and ask for feedback; they know what the committee is looking for. If there are no Comenius grant recipients in your own institution: you can also search for grants at other institutions via the Comenius programme website. Don’t be shy to contact grant recipients at other institutions. Also take a look at the website of the Comenius Network.

• In your application, also state what research you have previously done on the subject of your proposal, and/or use data from those studies. For example, refer to subsidies that you have received or surveys that you have conducted. Previous experience supports your application.

• It can help to think of writing the application as the first step in executing your project. From the very beginning of the application process, think about how you would implement the project.

• Also think carefully about how you will measure the success of your innovation.

• When writing the final application, also look back at the preliminary application. That can help clarify your story.

• Don’t be shy when writing the ‘Professional Statement of the applicant(s)’. Explain how receiving a Comenius grant will help you develop your career. Describe your educational vision, not just why you are a good teacher.

• If you receive feedback from the committee in the form of preliminary assessments or advice about your preliminary application, do not set it aside. Look at what they point you to: they are hints to improve your application or project.

• It is a good idea from the start to meet regularly with the project team, for example once every two months, to see how things are going.

• Once the grant has been awarded, it is a good idea to be actively involved in the Comenius Network. It is useful to connect with like-minded people, but contact with the network can also help if the implementation of the project proves to be difficult.