

August 2024

PEP Newsletter

We are very excited to share some news and events from the PEP project!

The PEP project started in 2023 and is in fact running at full speed. We already had two successful meetings in November 2023 and in March 2024, where the members had the opportunity to get to know each other and where most aspects of the projects were decided and planned.

In this first PEP newsletter, we will talk about the first two meetings in Uppsala and Côte d'Ivoire. PEP members could experience a few rainy autumn days at our very pleasant and fruitful Kick-off meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, in November, as well as some tropical weather during the second very interesting meeting in Côte d'Ivoire.

The next event will be held in Uppsala again, where the teachers will gather at the beginning of September 2024 to start to build the pilot course of oral English!



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PEP kick-off meeting

The PEP kick-off meeting took place on November 6-9, 2023 at Uppsala University, Sweden. The meeting was held in the Segerstedt Building, the administrative headquarters of Uppsala University, very close to the centre of Uppsala.

The structure of the meeting included different moments with different tasks and goals. The first day gave the opportunity to get to know each other, we learned more in detail about the PEP project on the second day and planned the PEP project on the third day. The last day was dedicated to summarizing and to looking forward. We also got the opportunity to have our first Steering Committee meeting, and the Design Thinking workshop. On the last day, we also conducted an evaluation, where we asked our partners what they thought of the meeting. We got a very positive response, which fully corresponds with our feelings as organizers.



Figure 1: The participants to the PEP kick-off meeting in Uppsala.

All partners, except for two, were able to take part in our meetings. The two persons who could not join, had been appointed by their universities to higher positions and were assigned new duties, hence had to down-prioritize their participation in the PEP kick-off meeting. We also had an additional meeting participant who joined us via Zoom on the third meeting day.

Uppsala kick-off meeting was the first time when all the PEP project members met IRL (in real life), and it was great to start building the PEP-team together. We had deep discussions about the state of the art in English teaching at our partner universities and dedicated a significant amount of time to understanding the constraints our African partners face in their teaching.

One of the main conclusions of the meeting was that there is an urgent need for these types of projects. The partners from the African countries are really looking forward to using the course curricula and materials that we will develop together.

Over the course of the meeting, there was also a lot of conversation about how we want to organize, manage, and communicate within this project, and detailed plans were laid out. We also agreed that the success of the project depends on the dedication and work of the partners, and that to achieve the desired results, we have to work as a dedicated team.

There were some changes concerning the original plan laid out in the PEP original proposal. According to the PEP proposal, the kick-off meeting was supposed to be held in September 2023 in Côte d'Ivoire. However, after consultations with our partners and colleagues, we decided that it was better to start the PEP project with a meeting in Uppsala. The rationale behind this decision was that our Côte d'Ivoire partners had never participated in an Erasmus+ project before and they needed to get acquainted with the organization's requirements and other issues specific to Erasmus+ project meetings. The structure and outputs of the first meeting at Uppsala University could then be used as a model for the successive PEP meetings organized by the other PEP partners.

Another change to the original plan was to move the kick-off meeting from September to early November. The reason was that all the participants from Africa had to apply for visas, and it was impossible to manage that by September. Actually, it was challenging for them to get visas in time even for the November meeting. Some of the partners from Côte d'Ivoire who applied at the Belgium embassy in Abidjan could finally get their visas only two days before their departure even applying within the recommended time.

Despite the rainy and grey autumn weather, the Uppsala meeting was characterized by a cheerful and highly collaborative atmosphere, and it was a very fruitful and enjoyable starting point for the PEP project!



PEP Meeting March 2024 in Côte d'Ivoire

From 18th to 22nd of March PEP held its second meeting in Côte d'Ivoire in the cities of San Pedro and Yamoussoukro. The meeting was organized by Professor Jeremie Zoueu, Vice President of the University of San Pedro and Professor at the National Polytechnic Institute Felix Houphouet Boigny in Yamoussoukro.

The PEP members from Europe (Uppsala University and University of Galway), from Mali (Université des Sciences, des Techniques et des Technologies de Bamako and Université des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Bamako), Burkina Faso (Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo and Université Nazi Boni) and Côte d'Ivoire (Institut National Polytechnique Felix Houphouet-Boigny and University of San Pedro) traveled to San Pedro from Abidjan on the 17th of March. The journey took place along a road close to the Ivorian coast, where it was possible to see the amazing, kilometer-long plantations of palm trees.

San Pedro is an important Ivorian harbor, located about 350 km from Abidjan, and it is the second economic center of Côte d'Ivoire. It has an intense port activity, cocoa industry, and several factories in the sectors of flour and cement industries. The coast of San Pedro boasts also beautiful sandy beaches. Once in San Pedro, the participants met in the evening where they could enjoy a nice Ivorian banquet with fish and meat specialties.

The first part of the meeting was hosted by the recently established University of San Pedro. Founded in 2021 it has about 20,000 students, distributed in several faculties. The complex

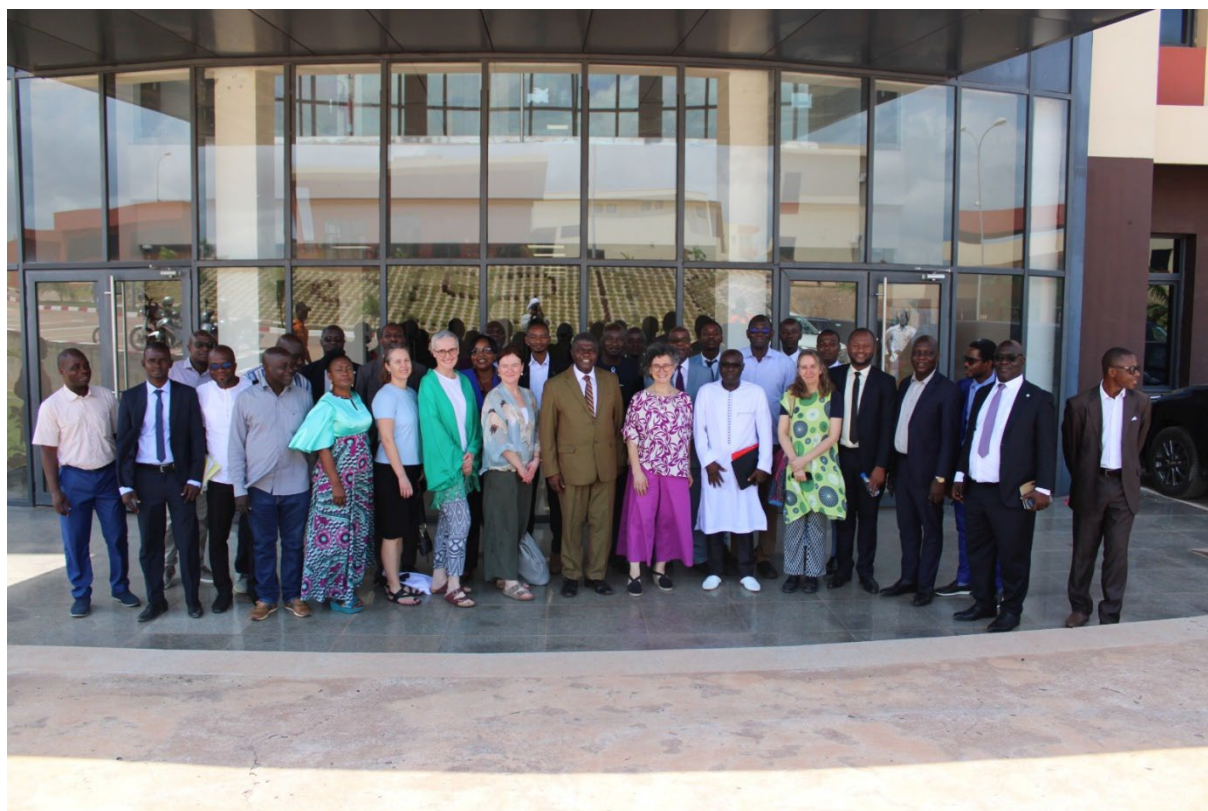


Figure 2. PEP meeting at University of San Pedro.

consists of several modern buildings located in a hilly area. The PEP partners visited several buildings and Faculties during their stay.

On the first day, the PEP members were welcomed by the President of the University of San Pedro (USP), Professor Méké Meïté, who discussed the importance for Ivorian students to achieve mastery of the English language, and the strong contribution that the PEP project will make to reach this goal. The commitment to PEP of the University of San Pedro is shown by the “English Wednesday”, an initiative that will introduce one day per week when all teaching and work at USP will be in English. The meeting had a tight agenda. The calendar included teachers’ team (TT) meetings, to plan the core of the PEP project. The meetings focused on defining the framework for the PEP courses, by drafting a general outline and program of the coming teachers’ training and pilot courses in written English. This part of the project is coordinated by Dr Christine Mackay Tircomnicu from Uppsala University with the help of Dr Paul Wilson from University of Galway.

During the PEP meeting, the colleagues at USP also organized a Language Day when the PEP partners



Figure 3: Meeting the students at University of San Pedro.

met students of several faculties, offering the opportunity to practice their English with the foreign guests.

On March 18 the second meeting of the Steering Committee together with the Quality and Communication Team was held in San Pedro.

The PEP members left San Pedro on Wednesday March 20 heading to Yamoussoukro, which is the capital of Côte d'Ivoire, and is situated about 350 km inland from San Pedro.

In Yamoussoukro the meeting was hosted by the Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny (INP-HB), one of the top technical universities in Côte d'Ivoire, built in 1996. INP-HB was born by merging some previously existing institutions into a single polytechnic institute. It has at present

between 5 and 7 thousand students and the education is focused on engineering, technology, and applied sciences.

The impressive institute was designed and built in a modernistic style by the Italian architect Olindo Guerrini and is characterized by many open spaces merging with the surrounding environment.



Figure 4: Christine discussing the planning of the English courses.

In Yamoussoukro the Teachers' Team continued with the planning meetings and one more Language day was held, this time led by the English teachers. The PEP Steering Committee, Quality and Communication teams had a second and third encounter at the end of the PEP meeting, where they also discussed with the Teachers Team in order to best support their activities.

During the last meeting the plans for the future activities were thoroughly discussed. In particular, the selections of the students for the pilot courses of oral English were planned in detail, as well as the visit to Uppsala by the English teachers from the West African institutions in September 2024. A call for a PEP pilot oral course directed to students at the West African partners will be announced in June and 15 selected students per partner university will be able to take the course in autumn 2024.

During the last day the hosts organized a cultural visit to the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace (Basilique Notre-Dame de la Paix) one of the most famous landmarks in Yamoussoukro. The Basilica is one of the largest churches in the world with the possibility to accommodate thousands of people, and was modeled after St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. It has a huge dome and colorful stained-glass windows.

The meeting in Côte d'Ivoire was extremely successful in several ways. The PEP members had in fact time to sit down and discuss and plan in detail the fundamental phases of the PEP project. They got to know each other better, and could directly discuss their expectations from the project, as well as talk about the conditions and their institutions and compare teaching methods. The whole structure



Figure 5: View of the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace.

and successive steps of the project were decided and programmed together, according to the wishes and suggestions of all the members.

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