



FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Unified System for transparency and transfer of LOs
Unified System for transparency and transfer of learning
outcomes

WP 7 – Monitoring and evaluation of the project

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1. Adopted evaluation model

As established by the Evaluation and Monitoring Plan of the Uni.System.LO project, monitoring and evaluation activities represented two closely connected processes, aimed at analysing the work carried out by the project stakeholders and guide them in its implementation.

In particular the monitoring and evaluation of the project were seen as two processes which would allow for a participated evaluation of the activities by the project partners, by making available useful feedbacks for the accomplishment of a project as complex as Uni.System.LO, characterized by a thick network of interactions of different partners, within equally different territorial settings.

The monitoring activities were developed during the course of the project in order to highlight any deviations between what was planned and accomplished, and favour any adjustments of the actions to improve the management of project activities. The monitoring generated such useful data and information as to understand the reasons for the deviations between the planned activities and the activities in progress, and suggest possible adjustments.

The first stage of the evaluation - the so-called **internal evaluation** of the project - was based on the data generated by the project monitoring, in order to make sure that the planned activities and the accomplished activities would actually match. That evaluation had the objective to reconstruct the accomplished activities and to understand if the changes made during the performance of the project were due to deficits in the initial planning or in the subsequent performance, or to those adjustments under way which are necessary for such complex projects as Uni.System.LO.

In other words, the internal evaluation evaluated the efficiency of the project in terms of *governance* of the processes by the people responsible for the individual WPs, by adopting a multi-dimensional vision which would allow us to analyse the data concerning the institutional framework and the partner relationships.

The evaluation of process-related aspects paid attention to the aspect of the change of direction that the project stakeholders placed on the actions under way, and the conditions of the organizational contexts which made those changes possible.

That attention to change, or changes, is typical of the evaluation which concerns articulated projects, in particular those projects which include training and development actions, in which individuals who are part of dynamic relational processes participate, and aimed at learning new knowledge and tools.

The uncertain connection between intentions and actions was claimed by many partners¹, because actions never are the automatic translation of initial intentions, but they change over time and are reformulated as we go, because of the variability of the contexts in which they are accomplished, the changing preferences of the stakeholders, the cumulative effects of the actions.

¹ Vergani 2004, Lipari 2002, Palumbo 2001, Lichtener 1999

In order to reconcile such awareness with the evaluation, it was extremely important: to make the process of translation from the approved project to actions the core of the evaluation activity (Vergani 2004, p.35); to use monitoring as the method of evaluation of the implementation process (Palumbo, 2001, 336); to adopt research as the driving method of the evaluation of the Uni.System.LO. project since the project is open to different outcomes.

The evaluation was performed by combining an evaluation method which uses pre-set reference such as criteria or standards, and the dimension of the unexpected in terms of process, by adopting²a constructivist approach. The development of the evaluation process followed an inductive reasoning, within a research process to reconstruct the changes which took place within the Uni.System.LO. project, by using the techniques of qualitative social research.

Because of the reference to such evaluation approach, the opinions that are expressed in the report were not only formulated in summary and numerical terms, but adopting multiple approaches and in particular as stories, which were co-constructed during the interaction between the reference people for the monitoring and the evaluation and the project stakeholders.

As concerns the evaluation of the changes which took place during the Uni.System.LO project, it also considered the dimension of the project outputs, which represented an additional field of evaluation: namely **external evaluation**.

In this respect, a check was made of the quality level of the accomplished outputs, to assess the efficacy of the outcomes and the sustainability of the competences validation model that was adopted and then transferred within the project, in order to improve and transfer the outputs to other contexts in the future.

In the case of outputs as well, the evaluation considered different dimensions and different types of representative data, in order to understand the phenomena which favoured or hindered the transfer of the validation model to the territories under consideration and find the right adjustments to favour the future sustainability of the model.

The external evaluation, and in particular the analysis of the model sustainability, took place by actively involving direct and indirect beneficiaries, in order to co-construct the evaluation process which considers them as active protagonists of the project they are involved in as well as of the evaluation activities, with the aim to elevate knowledge and empowerment.

²Vergani, 2004, page 17

2. Method

Below, we will describe the various actions which allowed us to perform the activities of verification and evaluation of the processes and the outcomes within the Uni.System.LO project.

Following some exploratory meetings with the reference person of Associazione TECLA, the responsible partner for the WP7 Project monitoring and evaluation, the evaluation questions that had been outlined in the Project evaluation and monitoring plan were asked and the different activities to be performed in order to get answers to the evaluation questions were shared.

As concerns **data-collection tools**, from an evaluation perspective we used the monitoring tools that had been prepared, validated and used during the course of the monitoring of the project activities, and in particular for the monitoring of training activities (workshops) and for the monitoring of the experimentation.

Said tools have allowed us to gather periodically useful materials for the evaluation of the process and the outcomes. The detailed list of the tools used for monitoring and evaluation data gathering follows.

The following tools were used for the monitoring and evaluation of the outputs of WP1, WP2 and WP8, and in particular for the evaluation of the **process governance**:

1. approved project,
2. shared and validated work plan,
3. shared and validated monitoring and evaluation plan,
4. shared and validated media plan,
5. shared and validated interim project report,
6. shared and validated project meeting minutes,
7. outputs,
8. sustainability plan.

We used the following tools for the monitoring and evaluation of the outputs of the **training activities** of operators (workshops in WP3):

1. report of the workshop on formal competences validation in Lecce (22, 23/10/2013),
2. report of the workshop on informal competences validation in Lecce (1, 2, 3/10/2013),
3. feedback from the operators attending the Lecce workshop on formal competences (6/11/2013),
4. report of the workshop on informal competences validation in Turin (6, 7/02/2014),

5. report of the workshop on informal competences validation in Turin (10, 11/10/2013),
6. feedback from the operators attending the workshop held in Berlin by ABU (16/10/2013),
7. two questionnaires completed by the trainers at the end of the workshop held in Berlin,
8. two questionnaires completed by the trainers at the end of the workshop held in Turin on 10 and 11 October 2013,
9. a questionnaire completed by the trainer at the end of the workshops held in Lecce.

The following tools were used for the monitoring and evaluation of the outputs of the **experimentation of the competences** validation model (WP4, WP5 and WP6):

1. monitoring dashboard,
2. experimentation report,
3. experimentation monitoring report,
4. sustainability plan.

The following paragraphs summarily outline the gathered data and the data analysis in order to evaluate the above-mentioned materials and the evidences.

3. The evaluation of the outcomes and the process *governance*

3.1 Evaluation of the 'management and dissemination' WP

In order to verify and evaluate the methods of management of the activities by the Uni.System.LO project partners, all those documents which would allow us to check the efficiency of the project management compared to the approved project were analysed.

As a consequence, for each of the Work Packages that in short may be defined as of 'management and dissemination' (WP1, WP2, WP8), the activities, outputs, expected outcomes will be initially compared with the completed activities and the outcomes obtained during the project completion.

The results of that check will be illustrated through a table which will describe the reference WP, the tools used for data gathering during monitoring and the set indicators. Table no.1 illustrates the indicators used to verify the management of the processes which concern WP1 of management and coordination of the Uni.System.LO. project

Table no.1

WP: 1 management and coordination		Package leader: Province of Treviso	
Indicator	Verification		Notes
	Yes	No	
Establishment of the Management Committee	x		
Establishment of the Technical Committee	x		
Preparation of the Work Plan	x		Document as per approved project
Sharing and approval of the work plan by all partners	x		
Performance of the administrative and financial monitoring through <i>Cahier de bord</i>	x		Document as per approved project

Performance of the monitoring through interim report	X	Document as per approved project
Performance of the It-Eng-It interpreting activities during the Kick off meeting	X	
Performance of the It-Eng-It interpreting activities during the final partnership conference and meeting	X	
Project translation	X	

As it emerges from table no.1, the management and coordination took place in accordance with the deadlines and the approved project **outputs**: in fact the establishment of the Management Committee and of the Technical Committee, the preparation of the Work Plan and its sharing and approval by all partners, the performance of the administrative and financial monitoring through *Cahier de bord* and interim report took place in the established manners and terms. That is also true for the management of the interpreting activities during the meetings and the final conference, and for the translation activities as established by the project.

As concerns the **methods** of project management and coordination, from the analysis of the meeting minutes an effective and efficient management emerges, read to deal with the different partner requirements, as well as the need to replace one of the institutional partners (Apulia Region) with another partner of equal importance, which was identified in the Piedmont Region, immediately after the Apulia Region reported that it wanted 'out' of the partnership³.

The only aspect which requires special attention is the objective specified in the Work Plan concerning: 'the sharing of the processing and the solutions identified in terms of sustainability with other Southern Regions (Sicily and Basilicata) which will be involved in dedicated meetings within WP6. The involvement of those Regions did not result in the desired outcomes in the activity planning phase.

Table no. 2 outlines the **outputs** concerning the sharing of the transfer methods of the competences validation model among the project partners. The analysis of the monitoring data mentioned in paragraph 2 allowed us to realise that the analysis of the contexts where the model shall be transferred, and the development of the catalogue of transferable outputs took place with the manners and within the times

³ See Treviso meeting minutes 18/3/13

established by the approved project and by the work plan, showing - also in the case of WP2 - an effective and efficient management.

Table no. 2

WP: 2 sharing of the transfer methods among partners		Package leader: Italia Forma	
Indicator	Verification		Notes
	Yes	No	
Development of the analysis of the Lecce context where the model will be transferred	x		Document as per approved project
Development of the analysis of the Turin context where the model will be transferred	x		Document as per approved project
Development of the analysis of the Berlin context where the model will be transferred	x		Document as per approved project
Preparation of the catalogue of the outputs to be transferred	x		Document as per approved project
Preparation of the model transfer plan	x		Document as per approved project

The evaluation of the reports of the analysis of the three contexts where the model will be transferred allowed us to show the countless differences that the partnership had to face in order to **effectively manage** the transfer of the validation model. For example, the differences referred to: the involved institutional and organizational levels (Employment Centres in Italy vs ABU in Germany, an agency dealing with training and redeployment); the characteristics of the operators who would have taken part in the training and experimentation (operators of Employment Centres in Italy vs expert trainers in Germany); the labour market sectors for which informal competences of users were analysed (Tourism, Local Craftsmanship, Renewable Energies in Apulia vs warehouseman in Germany); the type of certificate which would have been issued to the users of the service (certificate of participation in Lecce, certificate issued by ABU in Germany).

As concerns the Lecce and Berlin context, those aspects were discovered through the collection of information on the different conditions which would have been useful to

favour the acceptance of the competences validation model subject to transfer, in particular reference was made to operational, institutional and technical feasibility conditions, and to conditions for the building of social consensus . Against a report as synthetic as that of the Apulian territory, the analysis of the Piedmont context is considerably more articulated and prompt, also due to the specific situation in which the model will be transferred⁴.

The management - by the partnership - of the complexity described so far occurred effectively through the Treviso⁵ meeting on the sharing of the possible contents of the plan of model transfer activities, or the sharing of the useful methods and tools for the creation of the subsequent WPs of training of operators and experimentation.

The Treviso meeting was also the time when the key issue of the involvement of the local stakeholders started to become more important for partners, in order to facilitate the acceptance of the validation model by those institutions that are not directly involved in the experimentation. That involvement was one of the objectives to be pursued within the WP8 concerning the dissemination of the project outcomes, as shown in the following table no.3.

Table no.3

WP: 8 dissemination and involvement of local stakeholders		Package leader: Province of Treviso and Veneto Region	
Indicator	Verification		Notes
	Yes	No	
Development of It-En media plan	x		Document as per approved project
Creation and feeding of the website with reserved area for repositories	x		Website as per approved project
Preparation of information materials in It, En, De, Dutch	x		Materials as per approved project

If from the perspective of **outputs**, there are no deviations from the specifications of the approved project, there is still a partial involvement of stakeholders in the process of transfer development, such involvement was one of the objectives that had been specified by the project.

⁴ In the Piedmont Region the Uni.System.LO experimentation took place within the broader Ri.Attivo project.

⁵ 18 and 19 March 2013

In particular, the individual partners had been entrusted with organizing useful activities to raise the awareness of the institutions, the businesses and all the partners interested in the competences validation; in this respect, for example, the Transfer Plan specifies that: *'Each receiving partner has to provide right activities (meeting, conferences, communications etc.) to assure the involvement of stakeholders'*⁶.

Professor Duvekot, one of the technical partners, during the meetings kept mentioning the importance of involving all the stakeholders to increase the impact of the project on the citizenship. As a whole, the disseminations seminar were organized by the Provinces of Lecce and of Treviso.

⁶ R6, Transfer Plan available on the project website, page. 7.

3.2 Evaluation of the WPs of 'transfer and experimentation'

In order to verify and evaluate the outcomes obtained in the transfer of the validation model and the experimentation thereof, as well as to evaluate the *governance* of the processes which allowed for these outcomes to be obtained, attention was focused on the monitoring data concerning the WP3, for the operators training activities (workshops), and on WP4, WP5 and WP6 as concerns the experimentation of the model and its possible sustainability following the end of the Uni.System.LO project.

As for the analysis of the WP 'of management of the activities', in this case as well, the accomplishment of the **outputs** established by the approved project, by the Work Plan and by the Transfer plan as amended by the partners was verified first, as illustrated in the following tables.

Table no.4

WP: 3 Workshops of adaptation of the models to the identified settings and sectors		Package leader: Italia Forma and ECAP
Indicator	Verificati on	Notes
	Y No es	
Development of a set of tools for the development, evaluation and certification of learning outcomes in formal settings	x	as per approved project
Development of a set of tools for the identification, validation and evaluation of learning outcomes acquired in informal and non-formal learning settings.	x	as per approved project
Guidelines for the recognition of settings and completion of certificates.	x	Document as per approved project

As concerns the project outcomes, WP3 outputs fully meet expected outputs, as shown in table no.4: these tools are necessary to perform the evaluation of formal,

non-formal and informal competences of the users who would have participated the following experimentation.

The evaluation of the **methods** of management of the workshops⁷ of adaptation of the model, which were held in Turin, Lecce and Berlin (WP3), highlighted some aspects which are important to show.

The trainers who managed the workshops all agree that they are very or quite pleased with the activities performed, and that they have noticed much interest from the workshop participants in the topics dealt with; in this respect, the trainers claimed that the participants asked how they could learn more on their own on the topics dealt with during the workshops.

As concerns the disagreements between the trainers, it is worth mentioning that in Piedmont the planning was considered excellent by one of the trainers, but partly satisfactory by another; while in Berlin the main disagreement concerns the atmosphere in the class, that one of the trainers deemed not very interactive. As concerns the Lecce workshop, only one trainer completed the questionnaire which highlighted that - at various times - the group of operators who attended the workshop on the validation of informal competences required further information than what had been dealt with in class. That could be explained by the fact that the validation of competences is a process in which the institutions recently invested in the Lecce area, unlike what happens in Germany or in Piedmont, where on the contrary such process was addressed before the Uni.System.LO project.

The feedbacks on the outcome of the workshop was collected approximately 3 weeks after the workshops, for two out of the three receiving partners (Lecce and Berlin). In the document concerning the Province of Lecce the representative expressed her satisfaction with the outcome of the workshops, specifying that the one concerning the evaluation of the formal competences of students '*included the participation of approximately 30 teachers from different technical and vocational schools of the province, who expressed their interest in taking part in the experimentation*'. Likewise the representative expressed satisfaction on the workshop on the validation of informal competences stating that: '*the participants expressed their satisfaction for what they learned during the three days. All the local trade associations which expressed their interest in the experimentation were involved since locally great attention is paid to unemployed and redundant people*'.

The feedback from the representative of ABU, the German partner, was the right chance to brainstorm with the Italian partners on the methods of adaptation of the

⁷As mentioned in the paragraph on method, that evaluation was performed through: the analysis of the monitoring data gathered through the supply of questionnaires to the trainers who managed the workshops; the analysis of the workshops reports; the analysis of the feedback of the operators who attended the workshops.

validation model of the Veneto Region that is subject to the transfer under Uni.System.LO.

The representative initially illustrated that non-formal/informal competences are recognized by the German Chambers of Commerce only after passing an exam, and submitting a set of technical-professional evidences supporting the competences that one intends to have recognised, while the social competences are not taken into consideration. The representative proposed that ABU, as vocational training centre whose job is to support the candidate from the collection of documents to their submission to the Chamber of Commerce which shall evaluate them, *'also submits to the Chamber of Commerce, together with the necessary technical-professional documentation, additional and new material to proceed to the recognition of some social competences, which are also important for the job of warehouseman, but that to date have not yet been analysed and are not considered during the exam'*. Such suggestion was accepted by the Italian partners and allowed us to effectively proceed to the transfer of the validation model in such a context - as is the German one - that has very different characteristics from the Veneto one where the model had been developed.

Table no.5

WP: 4 Experimentation of the adapted model in the identified services and sectors		Package leader: Province of Lecce and Associazione TECLA	
Indicator	Verification		Notes
	Yes	No	
Preparation of the experimentation report	x		Document as per approved project

As concerns the evaluation of the experimentation, tables no. 5 and 6 show that the outputs were produced in the manners as established by the approved project and by the work plan as amended by the project partners.

Table no.6

WP: WP5 - Follow up of the experimentation and model	Package leader: Province of Treviso and Veneto Region
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improvement			
Indicator	Verification		Notes
	Yes	No	
Development of monitoring dashboard	x		Materials as per approved project
Preparation of the experimentation monitoring report	x		Document as per approved project

In order to evaluate the management of WPs 4 and 5 concerning the experimentation, reference will be made to the data that is outlined in the Experimentation report and the Experimentation monitoring report.

To compare some elements of the experimentation, one of the tables entered in the experimentation report was included (see table no.7), which clearly illustrates the differences of the target groups and the involved parties in the three territories, the different labour market sectors, as well as the different numbers of dossiers and the time taken to prepare them.

Table no. 7 – Comparative experimentation data

	PIEDMONT REGION	PROVINCE OF LECCE	ABU BERLIN
TARGET	WORKERS EXPELLED FROM SECTORS IN DISTRESS (WELFARE TO WORK SYSTEM-LEVEL ACTION) – ACTIONS OF EMPLOYMENT CENTRES IN FAVOUR OF DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE	WORKERS UNDER REDUNDANCY FUND OR EXCEPTIONAL MOBILITY	POORLY QUALIFIED WORKERS WITH AT LEAST 5 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE LOGISTIC SECTOR INTERESTED IN AQUIRING A PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION
COMPLETED DOSSIERS	50 ANALYSED WITHIN THE UNISYSTEM LO PROJECT 2216 COMPLETED UNDER THE EXPERIMENTATION STARTED AT A REGIONAL LEVEL	7	10
IDENTIFIED SECTORS	ICT, TEXTILE, MECHANICAL	TAILORING, BUILDING AND INSTALLATION, LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORTS, ICT, TRADE	LOGISTICS
INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITALIA LAVORO OPERATORS (FOR METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT) EMPLOYMENT CENTRES AS PROVIDERS OF REDEPLOYMENT NETWORK OF PRIVATE PARTIES QUALIFIED BY THE REGION FOR THE SUPPLY OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMPLOYMENT CENTRES OPERATORS EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATIONS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS TEACHERS AND TRAINERS KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE LOGISTICS SECTOR

AVERAGE TIME FOR DOSSIER CREATION

MAX. 9 HOURS OF WHICH 3 OF BACK OFFICE (AS PER RI.ATTIVO MEASURE CALL FOR PROPOSALS)

7 HOURS WITH THE BENEFICIARY + 3-4 BACK OFFICE

12 HOURS

The experimentation monitoring data - which will be taken into consideration later - was collected through the tools of the Monitoring dashboard, one of the outputs of WP5, one of which is made up of the “Dossier check list” which allowed us to analyse the set of competences and evidences entered in the 55 completed dossiers of the partners involved in the experimentation. The following criteria were considered in the *Check list*:

1. the criterion of **accuracy** allowed us to evaluate that the dossier had been completed in all the fields and make sure that all the information had been entered correctly;
2. the criterion of **completeness** referred to the amount of entered information, the motivations used to justify the chosen evidences that had been outlined in the dossier;
3. the criterion of **relevance** to verify the representativeness of the evidence entered in the dossier, or the relationship between the attached evidence and the competence that was indicated as achieved by the user.

The analysis performed through those criteria highlighted that almost all the dossiers had been completed correctly, that 31 dossiers out of 55, the evidences used to justify the competences that were deemed acquired extensively covered competent acting. On the contrary, the information on **significance** (context and quality) of the evidences which were entered for competent acting is poor, as well as the **relevance** of the chosen evidences was not always adequate.

That critical aspect concerning dossier evidences could be understood in the light of the feedback from the operators - in particular the Piedmont ones - on the issues concerning the management of validation activities: the **time required to create a dossier rich in evidences, and the freedom of the user to decide whether or not to create his/her own dossier.**

In both cases these factors are critical and affect respectively the quality of the evidences that the user of the competences validation service retraces or creates, in order to prove what he/she has learned to do in non-formal and informal learning settings; and the motivation of the user to engage him/herself and put him/herself on the spot in the selection and production of evidences, including outside of the meetings which are held at the competent organization during the process of validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings.

These factors were especially critical on the experimentation which took place in Turin⁸ where 50 out of the 55 analysed dossiers were completed, and where some of the interviewed operators claimed that different people involved in the experimentation

⁸ For more information on the context in which the experimentation was conducted and the involved individuals, reference is made to the Experimentation Report.

complained that they felt forced to prepare the dossier, because the preparation of the Evidence Dossier was mandatory for all the beneficiaries who were part of the Ri.Attivo project for the redeployment of the workers expelled from sectors in distress, within which the experimentation was conducted in Piedmont. The same operators also mentioned that many users were not able to easily understand the purposes of the validation and the methods of completion of the documents.

Next to those weaknesses there are also some strengths:

- the increase in the **redemption** rate of the people who took part in the experimentation;
- a significant number of people directed towards vocational **training** courses;
- the start of a synergistic relationship between the public and the private sector in employment policies, for the first time ever thank to the recent accreditation of employment services of private agencies in Piedmont, which favoured the creation of a **common language** between the Employment and Training sectors and contributing to the definition of a unique reference method for operators from different fields (public and private sector);
- the Evidence Dossier was not just used to favour the redeployment of workers, but also for guidance purposes, to support the citizen's "**motivation**" and allow him/her to take back his/her **competent acting**, pending the definition and implementation of the competences validation and certification process by the region;
- the **involvement of the production** and entrepreneurial **system** through the promotion by the Province of Turin of two *focus groups* with twelve companies and groups of companies, during which a positive *feedback* was received on the use of the Dossier to support the CV, in order to increase the competences possessed by a worker.

The involvement of the entrepreneurial world also became important in the Lecce experience, where the employers' associations were invited to directly participate in the experimentation through their experts, also drawing attention to the value in use of the process of competences assessment.

In particular, at the end of the creation of the Dossiers, in the Province of Lecce a meeting was held with the contact people from the employers' associations, who are experienced in two professional sectors included in the experimentation which, *even if it cannot be in anyway considered as a simulation of Local validation Commission, was very useful to draw the attention on the complex issue of evaluation and validation, which was the ultimate goal of the entire process, of "what" I evaluate and "how" I evaluate it, of the prerequisites which are considered necessary by the experts of the*

*individual professions to assess the competences, of the type and quality of the evidences to be documented*⁹.

In Apulia the creation of the Evidence Dossier, both during the collection of evidences and during their reasoning, was directed to the **redeployment** of the beneficiaries, with the ultimate objective to allow the person to obtain marketable recognitions, since the model target was made up of workers under redundancy fund or exceptional mobility.

The collected monitoring data showed that the tool which were used for the validation of the competences in the considered context facilitated the **empowerment** of the individual by becoming conscious of his/her competences, and facilitated the rethinking and re-construction of his/her profession, according to the perspective of competent acting. The service user in fact often seemed to shift from an emotional status of frustration, anxiety, rage to a more rational and pro-active status that is focused on “what I can do to change”.

That *empowerment* process was made even more significant thanks to its connection with the Framework of Job Titles published by the Apulia Region during the period in which the experimentation was conducted: the framework in fact allowed the user to retrace the competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, and to have those competences formally recognised by the Employment Centre, with a resulting improvement of **self-esteem** and of the drive to the right attitude of “doing something”.

Symmetrically, from the point of view of operators, the management of **communication** with the user during the validation process, and the centrality of the **operator-user relationship** were very important. As concerns the former aspect, the operators claimed that it is necessary to **invest in the training of the operator** to support him/her in acquiring specific communication and interview management competences, in order to be able to adopt an adequate language for the users of the Employment Centres, which allow them to clearly and simply explain the different methodological aspects of the validation process of informal and non-formal competences. In this respect, even if it was not clearly expressed, it is possible that a more consistent shadow training than the one offered during the UNI.System.LO. project may be necessary for the operators of the Employment Centres who learn for the first time the tools for the validation of competences, however they are acquired, in particular during the preparation of the dossiers, so that they are able to better manage that process.

Next to the validation of the competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, the Province of Lecce also encouraged on its territory the

⁹ See Experimentation Report page 14.

Uni.System.LO model of recognition of the competences in formal settings. In fact, following the Agreement of 2012 between the Regional School Department of Apulia and the Region, the state vocational schools were allowed to take, under a supplementary subsidiarity regime, the vocational education and training processes for the obtainment, on the 3rd school year, of vocational qualification titles corresponding to the 22 triennial qualifications under the State-Regions-Autonomous Provinces Agreements.

That is why Istituto Agrario De Pace referred to the method and the tools which were perfected within the Uni.System.LO project, to experiment, during school year 2013-2014, with reference to the issue of the vocational qualification on the 3rd school year the planning of training courses on competences and the verification and evaluation of technical-vocational competences in terms of certification at the end of the third school year.

In particular, Istituto De Pace worked on 5 out of the 22 qualifications, since they meet their technical-vocational specializations and, for each, one learning unit was designed, using the models proposed by Uni.System.LO. For the first time ever also the expert exam was tested, according to the indications of Uni.System.LO.

As concerns, eventually, the experimentation which took place in Berlin, in this case only some of the instruments that had been developed within the evaluation model of the Veneto Region were used, because of the special characteristics of the German context compared to the Italian one¹⁰.

The initial comparison of reference professional profiles for the job of 'logistics expert' that are used in Germany and in the Veneto Region, highlighted many similarities in terms of competences, knowledge and requested skills. As a consequence, ABU borrowed the levels of competence and the indicators of mastery as assessment tools for the interviews with the service users.

In particular the use of the indicators of mastery of each competence was considered by ABU operators as extremely useful in making interviews with users, since they allowed them to **reinforce the “guidance” dimension of the process**, placing attention on the acted competence based on the situation, instead of the competence that is described in inevitably more general terms in the professional profile.

The attention on the dimension of the **acted competence based on the situation**, which was made possible by the tools proposed by Uni.System.LO, was also considered useful by the operators and the representatives of ABU because of the responsibility of ABU, as training body, to recognise “credits” to the service users thus allowing them to

¹⁰ For more information on the details on how the experimentation was conducted in Germany, reference is made to the Experimentation Report

shorten the training course that they should attend at ABU, and be admitted to the final exam at the Chamber of Commerce to obtain a specific professional title.

Before moving on to the analysis of the sustainability of the validation process that had been planned within Uni.System.LO, it is necessary to mention an additional set of data which emerged from the experimentation report, which concerns the purposes of the services managed by the three receiving partners of the model which was subject to transfer.

As highlighted in different contexts¹¹, the process of validation of competences acquired in different settings may have different purposes: from the recognition of credits, to the acquisition of a title or a qualification, or to support *placement* or professional re-inclusion projects, or ultimately to facilitate individual processes of professional development. In other words, based on the purposes that are purported to be achieved by starting a specific validation process, both the focus and the stakeholders of the process change.

In this respect, from the monitoring data concerning the experimentation that was conducted by the three receiving partner of the Uni.System.LO. model of validation of informal and non-formal competences, also because of the context-specific conditions described thus far, it emerged that such experimentation was approached differently.

In fact, in the case of the German partner ABU, the main goal of the experimentation was to recognise useful credits to be admitted to customized training courses in order to obtain a professional qualification; in the case of the Province of Lecce priority was given to the recognition of marketable acquired competences; in the case of the Piedmont Region, ultimately, the promotion of the *empowerment* of the individual and the planning of his/her training and employment process was favoured.

In general, additionally, it is possible to retrace the following recurring aspects in the three above-mentioned experimentations:

- having time flexibility was an essential need to motivate the individual and to create complete dossiers, allowing him/her to reach the evaluation and certification stage with the highest number of consistent and relevant evidences as regards the competences to be validated;
- on one hand the mandatory creation of the Evidence Dossier allowed a very high number of users to be reached, on the other hand it made the users feel forced to do it which does not help a positive rethinking of the professional experience, as a consequence it would look like this type of process should be based on a voluntary acceptance by the participating citizen;
- the active involvement of the labour market and of employers' associations was extensive and allowed us to prove that the offered service is considered effective in

¹¹ See for example ISFOL 2012, 2008, 2007

- order to improve inclusion and redeployment opportunities of people with employment problems;
- the different status of regulatory evolution of the contexts in which the experimentation took place affected the overall development of the supplied service, in particular it made difficult the set-up of an actual evaluation commission following whose judgement it would have been possible to issue an official certification of competences;
- the diversification of the offered service, based on the plurality of the objectives to be reached in the different receiving contexts, showed that the model transferred within the Uni.System.LO project is sufficiently flexible and adjustable to the characteristics of the individual territories.

The last part of the analysis of the monitoring data concerns the WP6 concerning the preparation of the sustainability plan of the model of validation of the competences subject to transfer within the Uni.System.LO. project.

As it emerges from table no.8, the outputs of WP6 were produced in the manners and within the terms that had been established by the project, therefore the following part of the analysis will focus on one product of the WP in particular, or on the sustainability analysis of the operational model.

Table no.8

WP: 6 Definition of the sustainability plan		Package leader: Province of Treviso and Veneto Region	
Indicator	Verification		Notes
	Yes	No	
Preparation of the sustainability plan	x		Document as per approved project
Preparation of the memoranda of understanding	x		Documents as per approved
Development of the negotiation plan for the preparation of memoranda of understanding	x		Document as per approved project

The sustainability analysis was understood as the possibility to use the validation model in the Veneto Region beyond the experimental stage, and as the possibility to use the operational model in other Italian regional contexts.

To this end some semi-structured interviews were made to the representatives of the receiving partners within the project - Piedmont Region, Province of Lecce and ABU - and to the technical partner ECAP.

In the interviews the representatives were asked to give their opinion on the suitability to adopt the distinguishing elements of the model in their contexts, and on the significance of the qualifying elements of the model, in terms of method, innovation, contribution to the validation and certification procedures.

The attention of researchers was especially focused on the following constituents of the considered validation model: the division of the procedure into two different services (the creation of the Evidence Dossier and the Validation of competences), the project stakeholders (public and private employment services and the validation commission), the involved professional, the used tools, the duration and finally the outputs.

With regards to each of the above-listed elements, the interviewees were asked to express an opinion by choosing from four alternative answers, both as concerns the suitability to adopt and the significance of the element itself.

The aspects of the model which were considered almost by all the interviewees as **adoptable and significant**, were the tools that had been used throughout the entire validation process and the outputs at the end of the process.

As concerns the **tools**, the interviewees were asked to give an opinion on: the reference framework of job titles, the training standards, the evidence dossier, the grids for the management of the interview, the techniques to facilitate the description of life experiences in which the non-formal and informal competences were acquired, the structured tests, the format of the validation report. Another aspect they were asked to express their opinion on was that in the Veneto region model the user of the tools meets the criterion by which the validation process focuses on the person applying for the service.

All the receiving partners gave the tools the best score, considering them both innovative and interesting for the validation procedures as they are organized in their reference territories, and fully consistent with the organizational and legislative situation of those same territories.

The Swiss partner on the other hand could not assign a score to the suitability to adopt that element, even if it appreciated the contents of the tools, because of the fact that in Canton Ticino the development of the tools so far is under the responsibility of the numerous and different professional sectors which participate in the issue of final qualifications.

As concerns the **outputs** resulting from the validation process, the interviewees considered the suitability to adopt and the significance of: the individual evidence

dossier, the *check list* of competences and related evidences, the individual dossier of validated competences, the record of personal achievement containing the recording of the competences based on the reasoning of learning accompanied by evidences, the documentation by reasoning which, in the cases in which it is considered effective, is sufficient and does not make the final exam necessary.

For those aspects of the operational model as well, the partners expressed a remarkable interest and claimed the suitability to adopt because it is in line with the characteristics of the validation processes as they are organized -or are being organized- within their contexts.

The opinion of the technical partner is especially interesting, because it claims how it is important that the registration of the competences in a record of personal achievement allows a person to keep track of the obtained validations, even if at the end of the validation he/she cannot obtain the final qualification, since it is not yet possible in Switzerland (the credits that are obtained at the end of validation in Switzerland have a five-year validity).

Moving on to the items of the validation model which were less suitable to adopt, as concerns the distinction of the process into **two dedicated services**, please note that in the Piedmont Region, in which some institutional decisions have already been formalized, the parameter of the suitability to adopt obtained the highest score, while as concerns Apulia, in which the validation system is yet to be formalized, trying to offer two different services was considered as problematic by the representatives. Likewise, the German partner claimed that such a distinction of services was actually already existing in Germany, while the Swiss partner expressed a mitigated consent because of such aspects as the legislative and costs ones which it is necessary to bear in order to keep two distinct services operational.

Despite the difficulties expressed by some of the interviewees, the significance and the innovative character of the services such as they were organized and experimented within the Uni.System.LO. project was appreciated by all. In this respect, it is important to quote the comment by one of the representatives of the Piedmont Region, who stated that: *"As concerns innovation we asked our network of operators from the public and private sector to narrate their experiences, we created a sort of professional community which shares a reference email address to be used for suggestions on the adopted innovative solutions, for example for the evidences of some non-formal settings, perhaps not so immediate as to be easily found, we asked to network them and share them."*

The **total duration of the process** of validation, for which a maximum time of 10.5 hours is set, albeit being considered as significant by all interviewees, it was also considered as only partly consistent and adaptable to the Piedmont context, whereas

for the Swiss and German partner there are enough aspects of consistency with their local legislative procedures.

The representatives of the Province of Lecce, to conclude, despite recognising the significance of such an aspect, claimed that they could not give a score to the suitability to adopt the duration of the process in relation to the progress of the regulatory process in their reference context.

In order to develop the sustainability plan of the transferred operational model, the interviewees were asked to rank two additional aspects: the stakeholders and the professionals involved in the process.

As concerns the **stakeholders**, the model provides for the involvement of the qualified public and private employment services, and the set-up of an ad-hoc body referred to as “validation commission” which is responsible for the management of the interview, any tests, and the final validation of competences.

From the interviews it emerged that, aside from the Piedmont Region, which considered as adoptable the different categories of stakeholders (if you exclude the validation commission that in the Piedmont Region is only set up to issue the certification), the other partners claim that there are several contradictory aspects which would make the adoption of such item of the model in their territories as difficult.

Finally, the **professionals** that are involved in the model transfer (from the validation expert, to the methodologist, to the trade expert and the training expert), were considered as consistent with their context for the Piedmont Region and the German partner, who think they are not difficult to adopt.

The opinion of the Apulia Region and Canton Ticino are diverging, because the differences of the reference contexts due to the current system implementation phase in the Apulia region case and to the presence of specific job titles in the Swiss case, made the item difficult to adopt.

In this respect, it is important to stress the fact that the interviewees highlight the importance of the implementation of different functions for the guidance process and for the validation/certification process respectively, which require specific vocational competences at an expert level.

In conclusion, the gathered data for the development of the sustainability plan is consistent with what we found during the experimentation monitoring and shows a very homogeneous and positive level of interest by the partners, unlike the opinion expressed on the suitability to adopt the model in the reference contexts.

The latter in fact received more frequently criticism from the interviewees, because of the regulatory and organizational conditions which characterize the individual contexts, and which hinder the adoption of some of the model items, even if they are considered innovative and significant by the interviewees.

As shown in the sustainability plan, **the weaknesses are not part of the model, but of the conditions of the contexts**, the regulatory differences of the contexts, to which the model should be transferred.

Starting from that observation, the sustainability plan suggested some strategies to strengthen those aspects of the validation model which were recognised as significant, and to deal with those aspects which appeared more critical. Those strategies will be shortly described in the following paragraph; to learn more about them, reference should be made to the Sustainability plan.

4. Conclusions

This report describes the actions which allowed us to perform the verification and evaluation activities of the processes and outcomes within the Uni.System.LO. project. In particular the management of the *governance* of the processes and the development of the outputs were evaluated.

The evaluation of the monitoring data and the evidences allowed us to highlight the substantial correspondence of the *outputs* of each project WP with the provisions of the approved project.

Therefore, to conclude, it would appear appropriate to recap the important aspects which emerged from the evaluation of the methods of project management and in particular the transfer management of the validation model, through the evidences which were subject to the report analysis, and highlight some recommendations, also in order to favour the model sustainability.

As concerns the management methods of the **processes governance**, an effective and efficient management emerged, which was able to deal with the partners requests, as well as the replacement of one of the institutional partners (the Apulia Region) with another equally representative one, i.e. the Piedmont Region.

Likewise, the partnership was faced with many diversities in order to effectively manage the **transfer of the** validation model. That management was based on recurring partner meetings, which allowed for deciding the exact content of the plan of the transfer activities, and also the methods and useful tools to complete the WPs of training of the operators and experimentation, which represented the core of the Uni.System.LO. project.

As concerns the training of operators, a preparatory activity to the performance of the experimentation, great satisfaction was expressed for the outcomes achieved, both from the trainers who managed the workshops and from the representatives and the operators who attended the workshops.

Within the evaluation of the experimentation, the analysis of the competences validation dossiers which were created by the operators in the receiving territories (Piedmont Region, Province of Lecce, ABU-Berlin), allowed us to highlight that they were completed in the right way, and that in most cases the evidences which were used to justify the competences that are deemed to be acquired extensively cover the indicated acting.

The weakness that was found concerns, on the contrary, the information concerning the significance of the evidences which are entered in the dossiers on the competences which were supposed to be validated, since the evidences are not

sufficiently articulated, as well as the relevance of the chosen evidences which was not always adequate.

Those aspects may be understood if they are considered in the light of the remarks of the operators on two issues which concern the validation process, and which concern respectively the necessary **time** to create a dossier rich of evidences and the user's **freedom** to decide whether to create or not his/her dossier.

For both their influence was stressed on the **quality of evidences** that the user of the competences validation service retraces and creates to prove the competences he/she has acquired and on the **motivation** of the user on exposing him/herself to choose and produce evidences, also outside the meetings which are held at the public or private employment service which accompanies him/her during the validation process of non-formal and informal competences.

The experimentations which were conducted in the Province of Lecce and in the Piedmont Region have also in common the positive **involvement of the production and entrepreneurial system**, through the promotion of specific meetings during which positive *feedback* was received on the use of the Dossier as a supporting tool of the CV, in order to examine the possessed competences of a worker, and more in general on the experimented competences validation process.

Additional positive elements which were found in the monitoring data on the three receiving territories concerned: the increase in the redeployment rate of the people who took part in the experimentation; a significant number of people is directed towards vocational **training** courses; the improvement of the **self-esteem** and the **empowerment** of the users, who felt more motivated to question themselves and look inside themselves to find the resources to rethink and rebuild their profession, shifting from a state of frustration and rage, to a more proactive state, directed to a remote future they felt to be active protagonists of.

Closely linked to the aspect of the *empowerment* of the citizen who uses the validation service, is the ability to be able to manage at best the **communication** and the **relationship** with the user during the validation process that the operators should possess. The same operators of the Employment Centres stressed that, in order to better develop these services, it is necessary to **additionally invest in the training of the operator** to support him/her in acquiring specific communication and interview management competences, so that he/she can clearly and simply explain the different methodological aspects of the competences validation process, and is able to better direct the user in the creation of the proofs of the competences, which shall be evaluated by experts or by a validation commission. As it was mentioned by another scholar (Belardi, 2012), the analysis of the competences from experience, on which the service user does not have sufficient proofs, is characterized by a process of research

and discovery both for the operator and for the user, who is not always aware of what he/she has learned outside institutional training settings. It is therefore necessary that the operator behaves like an anthropologist in a new world (Furth, 1980) and sets aside any prejudice, in order to investigate all the knowledge and the competences acquired by the candidate for certification, without neglecting any detail, and that he/she first recognizes the competences acquired by the candidate (Belardi, 2007). At a later stage, he/she will support the candidate in recognizing in turn those competences, highlighting any attitudes of trivialization of his/her attitudes, allowing his/her to reflect on them¹².

Finally, it would be appropriate to highlight that the different stage of evolution at a regulatory level of the contexts in which the experimentation was conducted, despite having affected the general development of the supplied service, pushed the receiving partners to diversify the offered service, using in any case the same methods, to prove the fact that model that was transferred within the Uni.System.LO project is **sufficiently flexible and adaptable** to the characteristics of the individual territories.

As we mentioned previously, in fact, the experimentation was directed to the receiving territories in different ways, since in the case of the German partner ABU the objective was to recognise individual credits which would be useful for admission to customized training processes, in order to obtain a professional qualification; in the Province of Lecce priority was attached to the recognition of marketable acquired competences; in the Piedmont Region, ultimately, the promotion of the *empowerment* of the individual and the planning of his/her training and employment process was favoured.

However, that aspect shows the flexibility of the tools and the methods on which the model that is being transferred under Uni.System.LO. is based, which, against a changed context, and changed legislative regulations and stakeholders, are 'bent' in order to obtain specific objectives of valuing, evaluation or certification of competences.

In line with the evidences which had been collected on the experimentation, the gathered data to develop the sustainability plan of the transferred operational model, confirm what has been described so far, starting from the aspect of the flexibility of the tools and methods of the model.

In fact, the model items which were considered almost unanimously by the interviewees as easily adoptable, in addition to significant and innovative, were the used tools during the entire validation process, and the outputs at the end of the process.

¹² Reference here is made to the fact that the idea that learning which matters is only such learning that is acquired in institutional settings induces individuals expressly to downplay what they have learned outside those settings, as it was possible to realise during the creation of digital portfolios of disadvantaged individuals (Belardi, 2004).

The greatest problems that the interviewed partners mentioned on the suitability to adopt concerned such items which more than the others are influenced by legislative references and by the manners in which -in the different contexts under consideration - the processes of users guidance and redeployment in the labour market were organized, i.e.: the specific phases in which the model is divided, the stakeholders and the involved professionals.

Those characteristics of the contexts, reference to which was made time and time again in this report, and which represent the real challenge for the development of the national competences certification system, which hinder the adoption of some of the model items, even if they were in any case deemed innovative and significant by the interviewees.

As shown in the sustainability plan, **the weaknesses are not part of the model, but of the conditions of the contexts** in which the model should be transferred.

It appears important, in this respect, to end the evaluation report of the Uni.System.LO project with reference to the strategies suggested by the sustainability plan to reinforce those aspects of the validation model which were recognized as significant, and deal with those aspects which were deemed more critical¹³.

The first recommendation concerns the importance to strengthen the validity of the qualifying items of the model which make it feasible, valuing them with the decision-makers *'because the appreciation of the significance of the model is an essential condition for its sustainability and circulation'*.

Another aspect that was mentioned concerns the importance of informing, raising awareness and promoting the validation and certification procedures in order to develop the citizens and the *stakeholders* consensus on the issues of recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings. In order to be effective, it is important that those actions are intentional, constant and structured.

It is also suggested to favour the adoption of the validation logics and procedures within similar processes, matching those procedures with actions and services of adult education, lifelong learning, work guidance and tutoring. In this case, we would also be able to achieve the positive effect of reducing validation and certification services costs, which supplement and complements started processes. Likewise, it would be appropriate that the recognition of adult competences allows them to return to such training and education processes as university course, through a credit recognition system.

As mentioned time and time again in the evaluation report, it is essential to invest in the training of the operators who manage the validation processes, the way it happens in all systems where said processes have been implemented for some time. It would

¹³ In italics sentences taken from the Sustainability plan, chapter 4.

also be important that said training would take into account the competences acquired by operators, recognizing their credits, and making them responsible drivers of their training processes. As was the case in the model experimentation in the Piedmont Region, it would be equally important to favour the set-up of common practices for the operators who are involved in the validation, in order to allow for the sharing of strategies, techniques, problem-solving, in order to effectively improve the validation practices.

From an institutional point of view it is important to start memoranda of understanding at a local, provincial and regional level, with all the players involved in the validation process, as well as to adopt procedures monitoring and evaluation system, in order to make informed decisions on the system development.

To conclude, it is essential to adopt a reference framework of the competences of the different professions, on which it is possible to base the necessary portfolios and frameworks to validate competences acquired in different settings, and that is sufficiently flexible and dynamic as to allow for constant updates and expansions. From this point of view an essential condition will be the availability of the National qualification framework of education and training titles and professional qualifications, on which an inter-institutional technical group made up of the Regions and the Ministry for Employment with the support of Isfol and Tecnostruttura is working under legislative decree 13/2013; it is supposed to be issued shortly.

That aspect should be analysed in the light of the awareness of the remarkable importance that the competence standards have in the processes of evaluation and certification of the competences from experience, because of their influence on the credibility of those processes in the eyes of the citizens who can use them (Cedefop 2009; Belardi 2012). The confidence of citizens towards the evaluation and certification, in fact, increases when standards that are shared and approved by the highest number of *stakeholders* (employers, trade unions, institutions etc.) are used.

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