

EPIC: 2013-1-PL1-LEO05- 37888
EPIC - Enhancing and Promoting International Business Communication

EPIC PROJECT

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VALIDATION SUMMARY REPORT: EPIC

1. Products/Outcomes for Internal and/or External Validation amongst the partners in Poland, Italy, Lithuania, Spain

- Feasibility and Implementation Report
- European Summary of Implementation Report
- Auditor's Training Syllabus
- Auditor's Training Manual
- Resource Document
- Project website with On-line Tools
- Scheme Manager's Training Manual
- Company Audit Reports
- List of Trained Auditors.

2. The key objectives of the *Language and Communication Audit Scheme (LCA)* were to:

- assist Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in each of the partner countries overcome their actual and potential language and cultural barriers in their trade by providing practical consultancy on methods of improving their business communications by means of (*inter alia*) developing Language Management Strategies (LMS),
- increase the SMEs' market competitiveness and trade performance by helping them to identify and measure their particular export communication barriers, address any weaknesses and achieve a market advantage in their international communication by providing them with a range of possible solutions for their identified problems.

The means of achieving these objectives was by:

- implementing a programme (including an e-learning component) for the training of a core of specialist language auditors in Poland, Italy, Spain (Basque Country) and Lithuania,
- Adopting and localizing language audit materials for use with the LCA scheme in each of the main 4 partner countries,
- Select and train up to 10 language auditors in each of the 4 main partner countries,
- Pilot the LCA in up to 20 SMEs in each country,
- Produce reports as part of the WPs,

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- Validate and disseminate the project and its outcomes widely within each of the 4 partner countries,
- Disseminate project information on the partners' websites,
- Lay the foundation for an ongoing LCA scheme in each of the 4 partner countries.

3. Summary of Validation Results

Many of the validation templates used in the project's evaluation were provided by the Project Coordinator (Semantica Ltd) on the basis of many years' practice in developing Language Audit Schemes in a range of European Countries, most notably in the UK where the *Export Communication Review Scheme* (ECR) has successfully operated for over 10 years as a nationwide export service for SMEs.

In Poland each deliverable was checked to make sure it met its specifications. All questions received a positive answer and this showed that the deliverables met all necessary requirements for a satisfactory standard and no further action was required. The project documentation, which was completed, was clear and understandable. The quality of the prepared audit reports was high and the structure of the reports was internally coherent. The web-tools, which were prepared, were assessed as generally easy to use and user-friendly.

The partners used a range of professional evaluators to validate the project's deliverables. In Italy, the Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo "Danilo Dolci" carried out the internal and external validation as indicated in the original Validation Plan. The internal validation was implemented by Dario Ferrante, Alessandro Leto, En Dolci and Alberto Biondo who assessed the coherence of the final products by CSC with the templates provided by the project coordinator. The external validation results were very positive and provided by Alberto Provenzano (CESIE) and Carmelo Pollichino (Libera Palermo).

Alberto Provenzano from CESIE is an expert in International Communications and an ICT manager with many years' experience of using in foreign languages in a business context and notably via web and digital tools. Carmelo Pollichino is a free-lance advisor for start-up companies and helps business grow offering consultancy services for exporting goods to overseas markets. He is a specialist in Communication and Marketing methods in international markets, especially in the field of organic products. Carmelo Pollichino analysed the content of teaching manuals for auditors and Scheme Managers, also assessing the validity of the adaptation of final educational products for the Italian setting.

The only products which were adapted to the Italian context were the Auditor's Training Manual and the case study for the Auditor's manual. Also, the two training materials were designed and printed in a paper version, more suitable for the students. Some of the contents were modified to adapt the materials and, especially, case studies to the Italian situation and local economic environment.

Kaunas CCIC carried out internal and external validation as foreseen in the Validation Plan. The

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internal validation was implemented by Rita Baidokaite, Aivaras Knieža, Eglė Dorelaitė and Edmundas Cylikas who assessed the coherence of the final products by Kaunas CCIC with the templates provided by the project coordinator. The external validation was very positive and undertaken by Vytautas Tutlys, Head of Centre for Vocational Education of Vytautas Magnus University and Osvaldas Stripeikis, Director of the Enterprise Practices of Vytautas Magnus University. The only products which were adapted to the Lithuanian context were the Resource Document and the case study for the Auditor's manual.

In Basques Country, the external validation was conducted by *Langune* (Language industry Association in the Basque Country) and *Orkestra* (the Basque Institute for Competitiveness). The issues that were revealed to need careful attention were the adaptation and localisation of the training manuals. The evaluators stressed the need to include the scheme of the Basque Language Audit, carried on by *Euskalit* (Basque Foundation for Quality and called *Bikain*) in the Auditor's Training Manual. This was meant to base the process on the Standard Reference Framework (known by its Basque acronym, *EME*), which was created by the Basque Government to implement language plans in organisations and business.

As for the internal validation, it was carried on by a number of selected internal validators from Elhuyar-Zubize. Each deliverable was checked to make sure it met its specifications. Every issue raised received a positive answer which showed that the deliverables met all necessary requirements to meet a satisfactory standard and no further action was required.

The final versions of the manuals were ready only after the training of auditors and scheme managers had taken place. Potential auditors made recommendations about localisation of content, which is a vital part of the validation process. In that way they became part of the external validation team. Suggestions made by the auditors were implemented in the new and final versions of the localised manuals.

The most insightful method for understanding the evaluation of the project's results came from the Company Audit Reports, which identified all errors, shortcomings and suggestions for change. Without implementing the recommendations highlighted in these reports, it would have been impossible to have achieved a positive result. The conclusion is that the main objective of the validation process met its goal and ensured an overall positive outcome for the project.

Finally, it is important to highlight that special attention was given to ensuring gender equality in all the documents, since this is one of the project's principles. Some of the examples given in the manuals thus needed to be reviewed to align with these principles.