External Evaluation Report No.2

Annex to D13.2 v2.0

Author(s) / Organisation(s):

Bela Markus / Markinfo

Work Package / Task:

WP5 Quality Management / External Evaluation

References:

D1 Project Handbook

D5 Learning Material and Infrastructure Adaptation Plan (final version)

D7 Training Framework (first release)

D8 Training Framework Guide for Users

D9 Evaluation questionnaire for training actions

D10.1 Training sessions and workshops

D13.1 Quality Management Report (31st May 2014)

D13.2 Quality Management Reports (28th February 2015)

D15 LINKVIT Website (updated)

D19 Exploitation and Sustainability Plan (final version)

Meeting Minutes

Newsletter No.2

Periodic Progress Report No.2

Short Description:

This document is the result of the external quality evaluation of the above mentioned deliverables.

Keywords:

Quality management, procedures, external evaluation

Revision History:

Revision	Date	Author(s)	Status	Description
v1.0	05/06/14	Bela Markus	Draft	Learning Material and Infrastructure Adaptation Plan (final)
v1.1	12/06/14	Bela Markus	Draft	Exploitation and Sustainability Plan (final)
v1.2	02/02/15	Bela Markus	Draft	First editing
v1.3	15/02/15	Bela Markus	Final draft	Second editing
v1.4	25/02/15	Bela Markus		Website review added
V2.0	10/03/2015	Bela Markus	Final	Final version

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1 Introduction

The main aim of the LINKVIT project is to build a dynamic platform supporting people to take part in INSPIRE[1] related learning and share their experiences, as well as helping to develop the education and training across Europe, exchanging best practices.

Specific objectives are to:

- update and upgrade existing training material, harmonize and adapt it to national and/or regional needs;
- set-up the tools (infrastructure and contents) for training initiatives, with guided access for different users;
- exploit all of it for further curricular actions after the project period, in MSc programs and through the promotion of an INSPIRE driver's license.

INSPIRE in public and private sector, also needs an easy access to training (standardized and validated at EU level). The LINKVIT project's goal is to share already existing results with INSPIRE Community (EU and National level), to enable a better skills development and to support the practical implementation of the Directive.

There are two Target groups addressed by the project in all the sectors, on which the project expects to have an impact:

1. decision makers / technicians in Public administrations and SMEs, already employed and to be re-qualified on the new competences required by INSPIRE.
2. postgraduate students, aiming to enter the GI labour market with a more focused post-degree specialization.

The acquisition of new ICT-based competencies necessary to fulfil the INSPIRE obligations will have short term impacts on target groups and will be of both direct type, addressing the trainees, and of indirect type, addressing the organizations of the trainees.

[1] Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE). See http://inspire.ec.europa.eu/

Expected short term Impact on target group(s) and/or sectors

Target Group 1

- The employees will better accomplish their tasks.
- The employees will strengthen their position within their organizations.
- The Public Authorities implementing INSPIRE will start to fulfil the Directive obligations.
- The SMEs will increase their market opportunities, providing new / better services related to the INSPIRE implementation processes. The creation of new VET curricula better matching with the GI labour market needs as a result of the INSPIRE implementation processes will have a short term direct impact.

Target Group 2

- The postgraduate students will have more job opportunities, thanks to the more specialized VET curricula.

Long term Impacts on Target group(s) and/or sectors

- The employees will strengthen even in the long term their position within their organizations.
- Increased productivity of the Public Administrations and SMEs, thanks to an increased efficiency of the workflows related to the INSPIRE implementation processes and of the effectiveness of the organizations in fulfilling the INSPIRE obligations.
- An increase of the number of jobs created in the services sector, particularly in the GI sector, with as consequence the reduction of the weaknesses of the European labour market.
- More partnerships between different types of VET stakeholders in the GI domain, in order to ensure a better transfer of information on labour market needs and to provide a better match between those needs and the development of knowledge, skills and competences.

The LINKVIT general aim and specific objectives are fitting very well to the mainstream of geoinformation industry and taking into account the general tendencies of geoinformation technologies. There is a strong need from both public and private sector for standardized and internationally validated training (and education) materials, and learning infrastructure. One of the main barriers in INSPIRE implementation is the lack of human resources.

The objectives are time-bound in case of Target Group 1, could be external accreditation problems regarding Target Group 2, but hopefully “Università Iuav di Venezia” is pro-active in this issue.

The External Evaluation Reports (EERs) aim to assess the external effectiveness of the project and to suggest necessary improvements. The assessment baseline in the report is based on quality criteria defined in D12 Quality Management Plan (QMP). The project procedures examined against D1 Project Handbook (PH).

The objectives of this EER2 are

- to give an independent feedback on the quality of the following deliverables
  - D1 Project Handbook
  - D5 Learning Material and Infrastructure Adaptation Plan (final version)
  - D7 Training Framework (first release)
  - D8 Training Framework Guide for Users
  - D9 Evaluation questionnaire for training actions
  - D10.1 Training sessions and workshops
  - D13.1 Quality Management Report (31st May 2014)
  - D13.2 Quality Management Reports (28th February 2015)
  - D15 LINKVIT Web site (updated)
  - D19 Exploitation and Sustainability Plan (final version)
  - Meeting Minutes
  - Newsletter No.2
  - Periodic Progress Report No.2
- to assess externally the project plans, processes and documents.

The EER2 is structured into 7 chapters. After the Introduction, Project management and procedures are assessed in Chapter 2 through QMP 3.9. Chapter 3 is evaluating project documents, plans and reports as indicated in QMP 3.3. Chapter 4 is dealing with Learning Material and Infrastructure Adaptation Plan. Chapter 5 examines the implemented elements of Training Framework (its first release, the user's guide and evaluation form). The dissemination materials, website and 2nd Newsletter are reviewed in Chapter 6 based on by QMP 3.4. Comments and recommendations are summarized in Chapter 7.

Comments: As a general comment I would like to mention that from the beginning of the LINKVIT project, there were continuous email and SKYPE communications with project leaders and relevant team leaders. I have had intensive interactions with the WP5 Leader along the evaluation process.

2 Project Management and Procedures

The aim of this chapter is to provide an assessment of the implemented LINKVIT procedures.

Objectives: To ensure that monitoring and management procedures put in place are suitable to:

- guarantee the achievement of project objectives in accordance with the foreseen schedule and budget;
- ensure that possible deviations from the original plan are properly addressed and corrective solutions adopted;
- avoid conflicts among Project Partners and, in case, start a negotiation suitable to solve any disputes.

Scope (items to be tested):

- quality of the management routines and procedures;
- quality of communication and cooperation among partners.

2.1 Meeting Minutes and Proceedings

2.2.1 LINKVIT Progress Meeting (Rome, 2014)

The Meeting was held in Rome (IT), 9-10 October 2014. The LINKVIT website contains the Meeting Minutes together with the Proceedings in the following order:

- WP6 - Dissemination and Exploitation
- Meeting Agenda
- Participants List
- WP2 - Analysis & Adaptation Plan
- WP3 - Infrastructure technical specifications
- WP3 - Adaptation of the Training Material
- WP3 - Adaptation of contents and infrastructure
- WP4 -Training Actions and Testing
- WP5 - Quality Assurance
- WP1 - Management - GISIG

Comments: Minutes and all presentations are available at the website. Both presentations and documents are standardized and reflect the LINKVIT image. The minutes are focused, easy to

understand. The progress and necessary changes are clearly written. Quality criteria of the management routines and procedures; and quality of communication and cooperation among partners well supported by the Progress Meeting.

The link of “WP6 - Dissemination and Exploitation” in the above list should be moved after WP5 to fit to the agenda. All the links are clickable in the “Kick-off Meeting Minutes and Proceedings” PDF document except WP6.

Recommendations: Use the PDF version of “Minutes” only, making available all the documents through clickable links. At the end of minutes a “List of Actions” would be useful.

3 Review of Project Documents, Plans, Reports

Quality assessment of the documents, plans and reports involves the following procedure.
Objectives:

- To ensure the quality of the produced documents and reports.

Scope (items to be tested):

- document layout,
- structure,
- content (test and appendixes),
- sequence.

Table 1 – Quality Assessment Procedure for Project Documents, Plans, Reports

External review	**External Expert (EE)**
input	Awareness and Dissemination Plan, Exploitation and Sustainability Plan, Periodic Progress Report
method	review
quality criteria	form according to project rules: o numeration o table of contents o standard template used o corporate design used

	o metadata contents: o objectives achieved o clarity of presentation o coverage of the topics o compliance with the Project work plan and time-table o compliance with the EU and international standards
Output	o quality evaluation report

3.1 Exploitation and Sustainability Plan

The D19 document outlines the Exploitation and Sustainability Plan of the LINKVIT project. It is a key deliverable of WP6 together with D14 LINKVIT Awareness and Dissemination Plan. The aim of the plan is to define the conditions for the successful exploitation of the project results not only during the project lifetime but likewise after the project has ended. The main focus is set by the "open source and open licence" policies adopted by the consortium to enable a maximum spread of and access to the results of the project.

The document is organised into seven chapters as follows:

1. Introduction
2. LINKVIT expected results
3. SWOT analysis
4. Relevant Target Groups of the Project Results
5. Exploitation at partners and national level
6. Exploitation actions
7. Sustainability plan

The plan analyses suitable activities for exploiting the project results, in particular the LINKVIT Training Framework. The exploitation plan has stepwise mature as the project progresses, activities planned to be developed on the basis of the progress and in close contact with the main stakeholders and potential alliances. The plan will be updated after 12 months and another time at the end of the second year, when the final version will be issued to be used as the basis for the partners' sustainability actions beyond the project period.

The exploitation plan is using for distribution the Common Creative Licence (CC BY-SA) model for the training modules and an open source eLearning platform. From the other side exploitation actions use a community driven model, based on the creation of a community of practice, possibly including a revenue model for generating the necessary funding to support the community.

The Sustainability plan takes in consideration the long-term aim of all exploitation activities within the Consortium partnership to guarantee the sustainability of the project outputs arising from the LINKVIT learning paths and to become a reference point for the INSPIRE Directive implementation along the national programme, building and animating a community of practice open to all the possible stakeholders.

Comments: An intermediate draft version was available for EER1 (31st May 2014). Detailed comments were sent to the authors. I fully agree with refined concepts and new structure of the final version. The well planned exploitation is essential in order to achieve long term sustainability of the LINKVIT results.

I confirm that the training package of 21 modules covers the necessary context, technical and application knowledge. The technological trends and innovative solution models are also introduced.

The selected eLearning platform (Moodle) is an Open Source Learning Management System, which assures a training experience without spatial or temporal constraints; supports to standards and compatibility with popular authoring tools; guarantees the easy access of trainees to the modules. This system has the advantage of being supported by a large community, ensuring regular updates and offering additional functions based on an open-source solution.

Recommendations: The SWOT analyses is a correct assessment; what I miss here, the consequences, summary of conclusions and strategic directions based on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. I recommend to link SWOT results with 7.3 Final critical analysis in the next revision.

3.2 Periodic Progress Report No. 2

The report describes the status of LINKVIT project activities both Partners and WPs, including the overview of resources used in the second project period (M7 – M12). The figures are cumulative since the beginning of the project. Corrective actions envisaged by the project leaders to overcome these issues.

Comments: The report has a clear structure. It contains relevant actions to repair deviations from the work plan.

3.3 Quality Management Report – QMR1

The Quality Management Plan (QMP) defines three Quality Management Reports (QMRs). The aim of the QMRs is to promote the project design with the help of an external evaluator (EE), monitoring and testing the activities led by the Steering Committee (SC).

The quality assessment of defined deliverables comprises of a brief comment, the filling of a template by QMP and short recommendations.

Comments: The first Quality Management Report (13.1 QMR1) reflects deep analysis of project processes and outcomes. The authors critically search for potential quality problems. Their detailed comments and recommendations should be discussed and if possible taken into account by LINKVIT partners. In my opinion the expectations in QMR1 are often over-ambitious (like certification and accreditation within the project lifetime, or website issues). I fully agree with recommendations regarding SWOT analysis and its use.

3.4 Summary of comments

Comments: In general the documents fulfil the quality criteria listed in Table 1. They cover the topics of the targeted issues well. The clarity of presentation is good. It complies with the LINKVIT work plan and with the EU and international standards.

Recommendations: In case of printing separate pages the identification is difficult. The insertion of the title and version of the document in the header or footer is recommended.

4 Learning Material and Infrastructure Adaptation Plan

The LINKVIT Project is focused on the harmonization and adaptation of training approaches, applying e-Learning methodologies and techniques to improve skills, knowledge and awareness of professionals in the field of Geographical Information (GI).

The scope of this plan is to describe the adaptation to be made to the existing training material based on the analysis of the existing training modules and related material, the gaps detected and improvements to be made in order to cover the INSPIRE and national training requirements following optimal learning paths.

The deliverable (D5) is the result of the analysis of the state of the art of the available training material and it is matching with the specific needs of the target beneficiaries, from content, methodological as well as didactic point of view. The changes to be made in the existing modules are described from the content as well as the didactic point of view.

D5 is organized into four chapters and annexes. After the introduction, Chapter 2 delivers a summary of the analysis of the existing training material detailed in “D4 - Learning Paths Specifications“. Chapter 3 describes the adaptations to be made in different steps including the addition of missing modules, the integration of others, the modifications to be made to the existing material based on a standard template and the final streamlining of the updated versions. Chapter 4 draws conclusions. The Annex contains the template with a detailed description of the adaptations.

The adaptation plan defines clearly how the method and formats will be adapted in order to come up with standard training packages for each module (from eliminating gaps and overlaps, through revisions proposed by authors, streamlining and adaptation to the national context, finally adaptation to the method and format).

The quality criteria are the same as in Chapter 3 of this report.

Comments: By the Project Handbook D5 (as outcome of WP2) should deal with “Definition of the guidelines for the adaptation of the learning material and the supporting infrastructure”. D5 is dealing with the adaptation of learning material only. The latter aim is partly fulfilled by D6.

There are some formatting errors in the document (e.g. Table of Contents and numbering of Chapter 3 and Annexes). These errors can be easily eliminated.

Recommendations: Clarifications or modifications are needed, because of the conflict between the Handbook and D5.

5 Training Framework

Quality assessment of the training framework and e-Learning tools is based on the QMP (p. 17).

Objectives:

- to ensure the quality training framework and related infrastructures, including the e-Learning tools.

Scope (items to be tested):

- start-up (structure, content, audience profile),
- updating (structure, content, audience profile),
- usability / accessibility (delivery modes, instructional style, delivery style).

Table 2 – Quality Assessment Procedure for Training Framework

External evaluation	**External Expert (EE), Users (US)**
input	o infrastructure technical specifications o learning paths specifications o training framework guide for users o e-Learning platform
method	o review o testing o customer satisfaction analysis - CSA (by each target group) o feedback assessment
quality criteria	o usability o accessibility o clarity o operational guidance o availability of documentation/instructions availability of a knowledge map (test of self-learning) o achievement of project objectives

output	o quality evaluation report

5.1 Training Framework First Release

LINKVIT is based upon the results of several European initiatives in the field of Geographical Information and the implementation of the INSPIRE Directive. The training content have been developed by well recognized European Universities and companies. The LINKVIT project is focused on harmonization and adaptation of training material to answer the needs and demands of the professionals of geoinformation about the new EU legal framework defined principally by INSPIRE and by other Directives for regulation of GI and environment.

Within the LINKVIT project there are currently 21 modules available. The specific modules are listed in the following:

A. Context knowledge for INSPIRE

1 Data Harmonisation

2 Data Quality

3 Basics of INSPIRE Data Specifications

4 Basics of Network Services

5 Introduction to INSPIRE

6 Basic concepts of XML and GML

7 Basics of Data and Service Sharing

8 European Geospatial Portals as SDI User Interfaces

B. Advanced technical Modules

9 INSPIRE Network Services advanced

10 INSPIRE Advanced

11 Procedures for Data and Metadata Harmonization

12 Examples of Data Transformation

13 Metadata and Data validation for INSPIRE

14 Metadata and Catalogue Services

C. Modules addressed to the stakeholders of Nature Conservation

15 Nature Conservation & Natura 2000 Network

16 Nature Conservation & INSPIRE

D. Module addressed to the stakeholders of Geology and Civil Protection

17 Risk Management

18 Geological data harmonization

E. Technological trends and innovative solutions

19 Introduction to Linked data

20 Introduction to Sensor Web Enablement

21 How to publish and use Linked Data

The access to the learning materials is possible via the LINKVIT homepage (http://www.linkvit.eu/en/) and the GISIG platform (http://www.gisig.eu/platform). All the modules are managed by Moodle, a free, online Learning Management System. A direct link to the Moodle platform is in progress and will be available in the final stage of the project.

The modules are listed in the above order at http://www.linkvit.eu/training-modules/ homepage (Fig. 1), however the structure of GISIG platform is different (see Fig. 2).

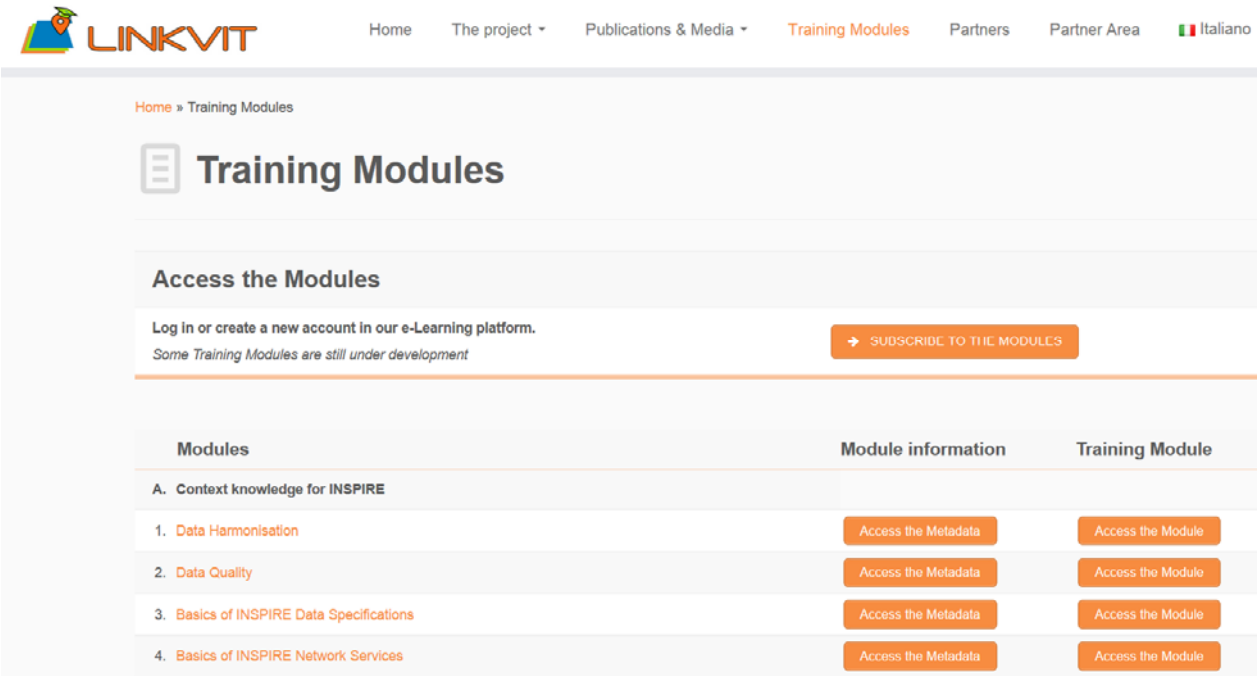

Fig. 1. LINKVIT training modules

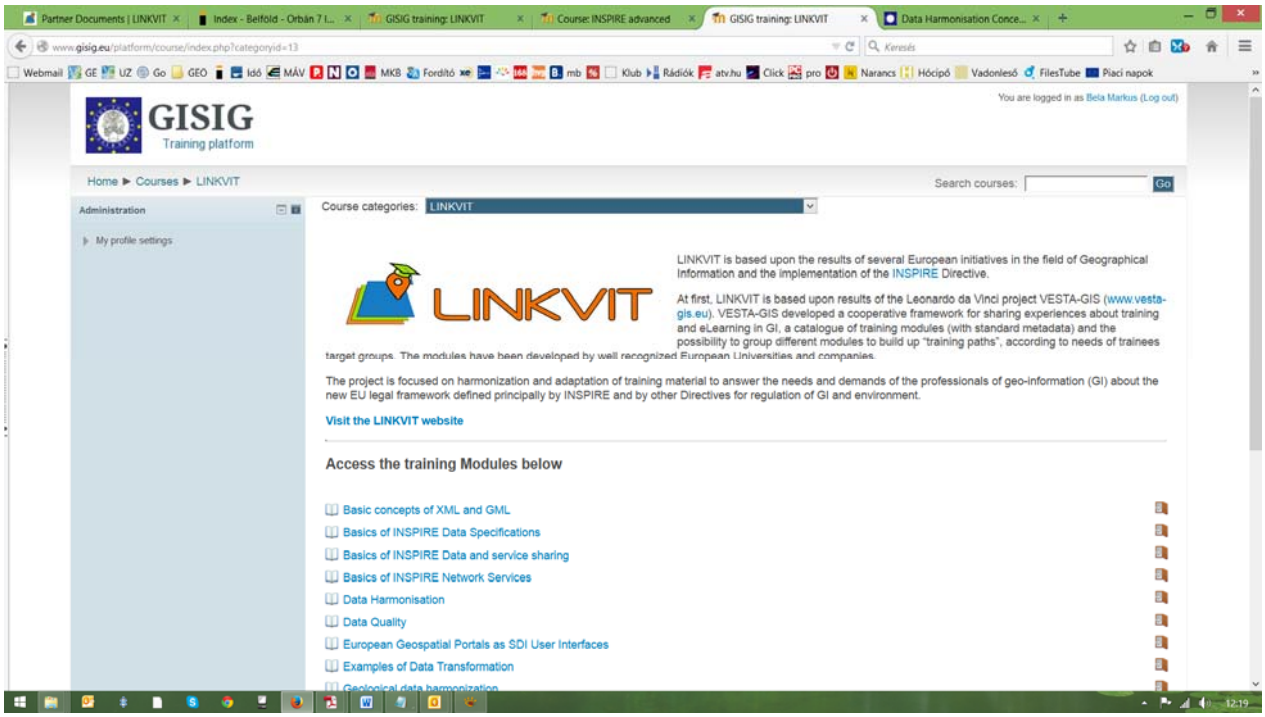

Fig.2. Modules listed by GISIG platform

The module metadata include the following components:

- Source
- Ownership
- Abstract
- Structure
- Learning outcomes
- Intended audience
- Pre-requisites
- Language
- Format
- Expected workload

The module metadata are available in English and Italian.

The registration to the platforms and enrolment to modules are working smoothly.

At the end of modules the learners are asked for using the "Module evaluation" feedback form.

Comments: Accessing the modules the navigation moves the user to the GISIG platform. The differences between the two lists are embarrassing.

At the final phase of this report (28 February 2015), the modules reflect various stages of streamlining (see D5, Chapter 3). Some modules contain detailed learning path, guiding the learners through web lectures, power point slides with sound, PDF documents, reading instructions of open resources and self-test. In other modules only the content is streamlined.

5.2 Training Framework Guide for Users

The training framework guide for users (D8) explains the structure of the training framework and the guidelines for its use and will detail step by step actions to be done to access the LINKVIT training offer.

The clear content of the guide helps usability of training platforms. It gives simple, easy-to-understand operational guidance for trainees, supports well the achievement of project objectives.

5.3 Evaluation questionnaire for training actions

D9 is a questionnaire to be submitted to the participants in training actions which will be studied in such a way to allow a detailed feedback on the quality of training itself, in terms of material, methodology, tutoring and didactic approach.

The questionnaire identifies the trainee first and then asks for comments on

- what has been learnt;
- the use of the e-learning platform (Use of the platform, navigation, Organization of the platform and of the material within, organization of the learning paths, Considerations on the use of training material and e-learning tools);
- relevance with working tasks and use of the learnt contents (for workers);
- usefulness and complementarity with the curricula study (for students).

At the end of the questionnaire there is place for specific comments on training material.

5.4 Training sessions and workshops

D10.1 is a report of the LINKVIT Workshop organized at Florence (IT), 14-16 October 2014. It contains the announcement of the event, the list of participants and their affiliations, the proceedings with the indications on where to find the relevant presentation on the project website. The report is also complemented by an analysis of self-assessment made by trainees and of the results of the evaluation questionnaire.

6 Review of Dissemination Material and of Website

Quality assessment of the dissemination material and website involves the following procedure.

Objectives:

- to assess the layout, content, readability/attractiveness as well as usability and accessibility of the project's promotional materials and website;
- to assess interaction between the project's progress and its website content.

Scope (items to be tested):

- layout design,
- readability/attractiveness,
- usability/accessibility,
- updating,
- texts for printed materials and for web presentation.

Table 3 – Quality Assessment Procedure for Dissemination materials and website

External review	**External expert (EE)**
Input	draft, version 1.x
Method	review
Quality criteria	form according to project rules: o frame o design and o graphics contents: o clarity o accessibility for professional public o usability o attractiveness o effectiveness o updating
Output	o statements of proposed changes o quality evaluation report

6.1 Website

The LINKVIT website (available at www.linkvit.eu) is based on the Content Management System (CMS). CMS is installed on a web server to facilitate management of the site. All the resources are deployed using free and open source software hosted in a Linux-based dedicated cloud server.

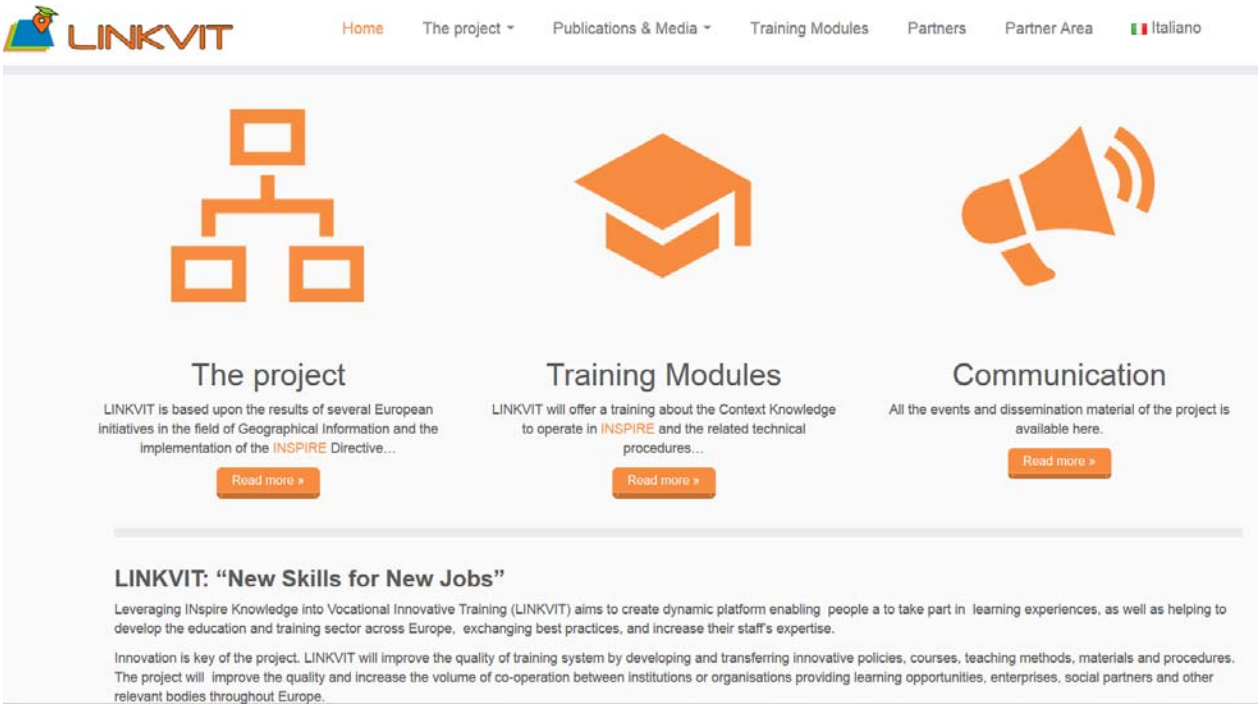

Fig. 3. Project website for general public (28 February 2015)

The LINKVIT website is designed to raise awareness and for dissemination purposes. The website is a communication channel, describes the goals of the project in simple, jargon-free language. It represents a 'community resource' for interested parties (stakeholders, simple users, developers) in the European Community and abroad.

The website contains the following specific information:

- Brief introduction to LINKVIT project aims, objectives and work packages.
- Communication of project progress is made using several channels, like professional social network, events and dissemination materials.
- List of Training Modules (link to access the modules).
- Short description of Partners working in the project, with their role and link to the partners' website.
- Link to access the Partner Area (restricted for project partners, helping the collaboration and project management).

The above mentioned content is also available in Italian.

The restricted Partner Area contains all the latest versions of

- Deliverables
- Templates
- Information about meetings
- Contract
- Documents of all work packages.

Comments: The “Deliverables” and “WPx” contain the same documents. It can result some misunderstanding. The initial page is quite simple, a graphical user interface is recommended in the next phase for better navigation, when the number of necessary documents will increase. It would help usability, improve attractiveness and effectiveness. “D15 LINKVIT Web site” should be completed; the recent version encloses only a log-in screenshot.

The form of website is in accordance to project rules and relevant plans defined in D14. The contents are written in clear, easy-to-understand language. The website needs continuous updating.

Recommendations: For quality improvement purposes a “Feedback” link and a standard feedback form would be useful.

6.2 Newsletter No. 2

The second newsletter is a special issue for the INSPIRE Conference 2014 (Aalborg, 2014). It contains the objectives, activities and partners involved in the LINKVIT project especially through the summary of LINKVIT presentations in the conference and through interviews with key poject partners.

Comments: The newsletter No. 2 fits very well to the awareness building, communication and dissemination plan. It is professionally designed.

7 Summary

The main task of external reviewer was to control the quality of the LINKVIT key deliverables:

D1 Project Handbook
D5 Learning Material and Infrastructure Adaptation Plan (final version)
D7 Training Framework (first release)
D8 Training Framework Guide for Users
D9 Evaluation questionnaire for training actions
D10.1 Training sessions and workshops
D13.1 Quality Management Report (31st May 2014)
D13.2 Quality Management Reports (28th February 2015)
D15 LINKVIT Web site (updated)
D19 Exploitation and Sustainability Plan (final version)

and some additional project documents and dissemination materials. These are often connected to other activities; therefore some of the relevant processes and deliverables were also monitored, commented and evaluated.

The guidelines of the review are given by the Quality Management Plan (D12).

As a general comment I would like to mention that from the beginning of the LINKVIT project, there were continuous email and SKYPE communications with project leaders and relevant team leaders; especially the interactions I had with the WP5 Leader along the evaluation process was really intensive. The recommendations were taken into account in the refined versions.

The external expert performed the following activities:

- Evaluation of the internal reports and intermediate results. This type of evaluations communicated mainly by email to the project co-ordinator, a summary of quality evaluation submitted to the project consortium in 28 February 2015.
- Evaluation of the project progress at special quality management meetings and through communication by email, SKYPE or telephone meetings.
- Evaluation of the key project processes, suggestions for improvements.

Conclusions:

- Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE). One of the main barriers in INSPIRE implementation is the lack of human resources. The general aim and specific objectives on capacity building are fitting very well to the needs of geoinformation industry and taking into account the main tendencies of geoinformation technologies. There is a strong need from both public and private sector for standardized and internationally validated training (and education) materials, and supporting learning infrastructure.
- As it can be seen in the meeting minutes, the LINKVIT activities have been implemented within the planned deadlines in general, the delays are controlled by the management.
- The LINKVIT project consortium has produced valuable results built on the achievements of various GI & INSPIRE European initiatives. The new achievements are clearly documented in the key deliverables. The present status of Training Framework is fitting to D19 Exploitation plan. The plan is a good foundation for the partners' sustainability actions. The learning materials and learning infrastructure need further actions as defined in D5.
- LINKVIT partners are in close contact with the main stakeholders and potential alliances.
- Comments and recommendations mentioned in this report do not diminish the value of reviewed outcomes.