



Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci

**INCLUSIVE MODULES
MOVING YOUNG PEOPLE ON**

MODULE

**TEST PHASE IN
GERMANY, BELGIUM, DENMARK,
GREECE, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA AND
UNITED KINGDOM**

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1 Introduction

The *Leonardo da Vinci* project “Approval of modules in prevocational education and training” focused on the use of modules in prevocational education and training in different European countries. The project was realised in a partnership that involved researchers from several countries: Germany, United Kingdom, Portugal, Denmark, Romania, Greece and Belgium.

It was the aim of the project to define a common basis for the work with modules that support disadvantaged young people and to develop a system that allows a common approach but still is flexible enough to be applied in different cultures and system specific frameworks.

In the course of this project, an interactive computer based tool has been developed on the basis of a survey period in all partner countries. It is the aim of the tool to support practitioners in designing and carrying out modules in prevocational education and training, and to support planners and decision-makers who create modules.

For these purposes relevant dimensions that should be taken into account in that context, have been analyzed. These included: integration of the target group, further training of teachers, trainers and social pedagogues, organisation, assessment and recognition, situated teaching and learning, acquisition of soft skills, cooperation and networks, reflection and evaluation.

In all dimensions, the examination of important subject areas takes place on three levels: on the system level of education planners and decision makers, on the institutional level of the institutions as well as on the individual level that deals with the individual work with young people.

Another category, “What is a module?” serves as a discussion basis for the different definitions of modules and modularisation. In this category, modules are analyzed as organisational and pedagogical-didactical units.

All dimensions mentioned above are available through a central page in the e-tool. After the choice of a dimension, a short introduction on the topic, all subject areas of the three levels of that dimension (system level, institutional level, individual level) as well as a bibliography are directly accessible. Every subject area first gives a short overview of the problems, followed by possible approaches and practical examples of the several partner countries. The users can then decide whether they are satisfied with the overview or rather would like to get further information. This is made possible, by deeper levels in the tool. Furthermore, it is possible to paste own commentaries into a free field which can be saved and made visible for the next user. Thus, an exchange of different subject areas can take place. Other features are a glossary and reference lists in all dimensions. The tool can be downloaded at <http://www.modules-for-europe.eu>.

In the module project, a detailed testing phase of the e-tool “Creating modules in prevocational education and training“ took place in all partner countries involved. Prior to the

start of the phase, the partner countries decided upon a common method for testing the tool: the experts should get an introduction to the tool, its functions and its aims. After that, a complete overview of the contents as well as the translation of two dimensions in their specific mother tongue should be handed out to them. It was up to the partners which of the dimensions they wanted to have translated. It was important to give the experts as much time as they needed to get familiar with the tool and its contents, since individual interviews or focus groups were planned in connection with it.

In spite of these agreements, there were differences in the pre-conditions: In Belgium, a full translation already existed in printed format. Since the prototype of the e-tool was created in English, the UK experts were able to test the whole tool in their mother tongue. As a consequence there were differences in the intensity of the testing phase. Specifically, in Portugal and in Germany, practitioners complained about the language difficulties and their inability to draw a complete picture of the tool.

This report discusses the test phase. Firstly, the individual countries' reports present the design of the test phase. It is explained (1) how the testing was organised; (2) who was involved; (3) where the testing was carried out; (4) how long the testing took; and (4) which method was used for testing the tool. Secondly, the country reports give a detailed description of the test results. This chapter focuses on the perceived practicability of electronic tools: electronic tools in general as well as the tool specifically. The reports also cover the experts' opinions on the structure and organisation of the tool and on the contents of the different dimensions of the tool. Thirdly, every country report presents conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of the tool.

2 Germany

2.1 Methodology and Context

Various methods were used for the testing phase in Germany. First, the tool and its functions have been introduced to the educational institutions involved: JAW Niebüll, JAW Süderbrarup, IFS Rendsburg, BeQua Flensburg und AGP Schleswig.

The employees (teachers, master craftsmen, social pedagogues) of these institutions were asked to test the tool in detail. To do so, they were given the electronic tool, a print version and a translation of two dimensions. Afterwards, they were interviewed about the testing results.

Besides, additional interviews were made in further educational institutions in Schleswig-Holstein. The education experts of the IHK Flensburg, of ZWH and of the DGB federal board who were involved in the project, also tested the tool and were interviewed about their results afterwards. On the occasion of the third expert circle of the project "Modules", the results were discussed with practitioners and education planners.

2.2 Results

2.2.1 Practicability of electronic tools

Concerning the implementation of the testing phase, the experts were asked about their approaches, their views on the application and their evaluation of the information given. In most cases the experts used the German translations as well as the English print out versions and, on a lesser scale, the application itself. The majority preferred a selective checking of the contents and the tool's application. A holistic approach was chosen only by one person.

All experts agreed that the e-tool "Creating modules in pre-vocational education and training" triggered a discussion in the institution on modularisation of the vocational education and training.

While education planners saw a big advantage in the tool, the occupational groups that work directly with disadvantaged young people had more heterogeneous opinions. Some interviewees would not use the tool within their jobs, but would classify it on supervisor levels within their institution.

The contents based on the exposure to the modules were positively evaluated. Anyway, the interviewees missed "recipes" for module construction, guidelines or examples of how modules are developed and helpful suggestions for the actual implementation. Thus, the question of the future application of the tool was negated by the practitioners who work directly with the disadvantaged young people, with a note to its lack of applicability.

Nevertheless, the interviewees also had the opinion that the tool is useful in the preparation of education offers. They think they would get valuable suggestions to create modular structures or to fill modules with contents. The actual use of the tool for this purpose is dependent on the specific structure of the institution: Employees of institutions with a flat hierarchical structure regarded it as positive and confirmed the adaptability of the tool. Employees of institutions with a rather common hierarchical structure stated that they could not use the tool on the level of practitioners but on the planning level, which in turn would come up to the actual target group of the tool.

2.2.2 Structure and organisation of the tool

The structure of the three application layers has been predominantly favoured by the experts. Additionally it has to be mentioned that many interviewees had problems to categorise themselves (system level, institutional level, individual level). In spite of the lack of experience in the classification of the single levels, the environment of the respective levels was described as interesting and helpful for their own work.

In the evaluation of the content-based levels, the education planners came to a clearly positive result, while the practitioners had different opinions. Some regard the information as inadequate; others, on the contrary, think there is too much information. Partly, the international information was seen as distracting.

The evaluation of the graphical design and the layout of the tool appeared to be rather negative. The matching of the font colour in regard to the background colour was emphasised as hardly readable in many sections of the tool. Also the choice of the colour of the logo was criticised. A weighting of the evaluation tendencies between practitioners and education planners could not be seen.

2.2.3 Content

The answers on the dimensions showed that the interviewees did not have enough time in their workday to explore every dimension in detail. To complicate matters further, there is the language barrier to be taken into account. It was also difficult to draw a conclusion on the contents, since the employees had different interests and knowledge of the single dimensions' topics, and thus, they have not been able to comment on all dimensions. By and large, the interviews on the dimensions led to a positive result. All people liked the division into dimensions and emphasised them as well structured. There was no lack of contents or a lack of dimensions detected. Anyway, some people suggested a better linkage of the contents of the dimensions.

It was also to prove whether the single dimensions cover all relevant working fields of the work with modules. All interviewees came to a clear positive result and regarded the contents as an ideal basis for their work. Also the linkages between the single dimensions were seen as positive.

Moreover, it should be proved whether the possible approaches introduced in the tool are useful for the handling of the problem fields described in the single dimensions and whether they are thought-provoking. In general, the evaluation was positive; restrictions of the evaluation result from the partly little valued national reference.

All interviewees had a positive opinion about the examples. There was a general agreement about, the comprehensibility and the clarity of the examples. Only one person of the education planners used the references implemented in the tool. To the other interviewees the references were not relevant and played a secondary role.

2.3 Conclusions and Consequences

Asked for the utility of the e-tool „Creating modules in pre-vocational education and training“, the expert groups came to different results: While the education planners stressed the advantages of the tool, the views of the practitioners, who work directly with the target group varied: Institutions with a flat hierarchical structure emphasise the tool as helpful, while institutions with a firm hierarchical structure only evaluate it with a limited applicability. It was stressed that the tool rather addresses upper hierarchical levels within an institution, respectively the planners.

The structure and the design of the tool predominantly got positive feedback since the separation in different levels was seen as helpful and clearly arranged, whereupon the

opinions were split with regard to the content-deepening levels. In contrast, the graphical design and the layout met with criticism.

By and large, the contents were appraised as positive; according to the experts all important areas were covered and the examples were helpful. Nevertheless, the experts missed the so called “cooking recipes” that should work as guidelines with specific support in the construction of modules.

The following ideas for improvement can be deduced from the German testing phase as a consequence:

- The target group of the tool should experience a shift in favour of the educational planners and the occupational groups that in first place refer to the training of occupational groups in the support of disadvantaged people. Additionally, it should be addressed to these teachers, who are involved in the development of modules.
- As a „long-term objective“, within a follow-up project, an additional dimension for practitioners could be created, including the favoured guidelines.
- Layout and graphical design of the tool should be revised.
- The structure of the tool proved as beneficial and should persist. Anyway, more links and interconnections between the dimensions should be included.

3 Belgium

3.1 Methodology and context

The test phase in Belgium was on the one hand conducted at the Dienst Beroepsopleiding (Service for Vocational Education (SVE)), a service from the Department of Education and Training, and on the other hand at a centre for part-time vocational education (CPE) of the KTA Heule (a secondary school).

The SVE is an institution in charge of vocational education. This service is a.o. coordinating specific projects of the European Social Fund and is commissioned to develop modular systems per study programme in secondary (compulsory) vocational education.

Part-time vocational secondary education is organised in a modular system in the centre for part-time education of the KTA Heule. The pupils follow courses during two days a week and they can work in a company or organisation during the other three days.

Two officials of the SVE and one professional of the CPE KTA Heule were interviewed. The two participants of the SVE are considered experts as they are former teachers and now work as project workers for the project modularisation in the SVE. The participant of the CPE of the KTA Heule is the co-ordinator of the centre for part-time education and knows modularisation from own practical experience.

Following means were made available to the participants so they could test the tool thoroughly and be prepared for the interview:

- the link to the English “beta version” of the tool on the internet. This would give the participants an idea of what the (Flemish) tool will finally look like and how it can be used;
- the translation of the content of the tool into Dutch (WORD documents);
- the list of topics that would be followed during the interview.

The interviewer first outlined the context of the project and then the questionnaire was offered.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Practicability of electronic tools

Electronic tools in particular

The SVE knows by experience that schools encounter many difficulties when working with electronic tools. Teachers already have full-time jobs at school and find it difficult to work, in addition, with tools without any guidance or coaching. Guidance at the school/teacher level is therefore necessary. Tools are efficient, but teachers often fall back on a paper document that can be consulted wherever and whenever. In addition to this, not every workplace or teachers’ room is equipped with a computer (or enough computers) or internet connection.

The CPE is favourable to user-friendly, electronic tools. Through these tools it is easy to follow up new applications or other changes.

According to the SVE, the use of the tool does fit in a working day of a practitioner if the practitioner uses it as a source of information. If the practitioners would pass through the complete tool, it is not achievable in one working day.

Electronic tools should nowadays be easily accessible. Nevertheless does the SVE notice that it is difficult in practice for teachers to have the necessary equipment all the time at their disposal. At higher level however (for instance pedagogical advisory services, schools advisory services, the directorate), the tools are more accessible.

Other tools that the SVE has at its disposal are: Internet sites, oral information, and telephone and e-mail communication. The CPE works with self-developed tools, especially excel-files, e.g. for the development of objectives and reports per trainee. They have not come across any official tool that is applicable for part-time education, especially to enumeration of competences, learning aims and acquired skills.

The interactive, electronic tool

The SVE says that the electronic tool in itself is a good reference work. It provides a good theoretical background and therefore it is certainly appropriate to reorganise courses in a modular way. The practical side of this reorganisation, i.e. how to implement modularisation

in reality, does hardly get a chance in the tool. Moreover, guidance and further explanations are necessary.

With regard to the workability of the tool to prepare teaching, the SVE states that teachers who are not acquainted with modular education or who are not working in the experimental schools or in adult education (where modular education has also been introduced) will meet difficulties while preparing their teaching with this tool when no support or guidance is provided. Furthermore there is a problem that vocational tutors have received less theoretic training than teachers who instruct general subjects. For instance, a bricklayer that teaches shall not prepare his lessons on the basis of this tool (without guidance or a practical tool). The CPE also says that it depends on the teacher whether or not they will work with the tool. The fact is that some teachers are not familiar with computers and they will not work with the tool.

The tool has not stimulated discussions in the SVE as their ideas and views are in line with the ones described in the tool. They think however that the tool will probably provoke discussions in the schools, as the schools are confronted with daily problems, for instance the difference between the younger and older generation, teachers who are not collaborating, etc., and could have a different point of view than the government. Moreover, the tool is an emotive subject for the educational networks and umbrella organisations. The educational networks would have a say in this matter once modularisation will be generally implemented, for instance regarding curricula, teaching materials, etc.

Some practitioners are not familiar with the modular idea and this tool will not bring about a revolutionary turnabout in their view, declares the SVE. For teachers who are acquainted with the modular system the tool can offer a surplus value.

The SVE thinks that interested practitioners will utilise the tool once it is available, but mainly as a source of information. They propose to implement the tool already in the teacher training, so that the teacher-to-be can evolve from a role of passing knowledge to a coaching, guiding and stimulating role.

Whether the tool will be used in group or on an individual basis will depend on whether or not the school will emphasise working in teams or not, says the SVE. The CPE thinks that a team of three teachers can work with the tool, because then there are still possibilities to enter into an agreement.

According to the SVE the tool can be used by every practitioner and not only at directorate level. Teachers will have no idea about modular education if the tool is only used by the directorate.

The SVE finds the tool an important source of information because it is theoretically well-founded. Nevertheless there is a need for a practical tool in addition to this tool. The practical tool should give some examples, e.g. how to draw up an assessment, a portfolio, etc. The schools can hereby give the modularisation a personal interpretation in an efficient and simple way and the schools can learn from each other. According to the CPE this tool does offer in

every way a surplus value. Whether other tools are needed shall become clear by the use of and the experience with the tool.

3.2.2 Structure and organisation of the tool

In the view of the SVE the tool is user-friendly, the three levels (system, institutional, individual level) make sense and the make-up/ structure of the tool is convenient. Also the presence of several deeper links make sense and should even go more deeply into the items by e.g. adding links that refer to practical and/or theoretic matters like internet sites with lists of books that deal with evaluations, portfolios, etc. The CPE does not fully share this opinion as they think that the individual level has to receive more attention. The individual level is the most important level in part-time education because everything is more personalised.

The tool is flexible. If you have a particular problem you do not have to pass through all the levels, but you can immediately go to the appropriate topic. A side effect however, is that it takes a while before you get the meaning of the system. A paper version is handy as a first introduction and is also more pleasant to read.

As to the language, some problems do arise according to the SVE. Especially as a first introduction to the concept of modularisation it is hard to understand. Certain concepts do not belong to the common parlance of teachers (among others portfolio, competences) and they can lose their motivation if no guidance is offered. The Flemish context and concepts are sometimes not taken into account. The terms should therefore be reproduced from the Royal decrees and the decrees wherein these concepts are described and defined.

The amount of information is complete, but there is a need for a practical part for teachers and a practical and a (more developed) theoretical part for teachers-to-be.

3.2.3 Content

Content per dimension

Every dimension has roughly the same positive and negative points. The content of the dimensions is relevant and useful for the participants of the SVE. They also notice that they are on the same track concerning modularisation. They have however some doubts about the practicability for the practitioners. The dimensions give solid theoretic background information, but are not immediately appropriate to implement modular education.

All dimensions are considered relevant or important by the SVE. However, practical topics should be present in the dimensions, such as a step-by-step plan for implementation, examples or references to a.o. evaluation models, portfolios, timetables for teachers/pupils, trajectory maps, modules, supporting general education, trajectory guidance for teachers/pupils, references to legislations. The possible answers that are proposed in the model are considered as eye-openers.

The examples are clear but not stimulating enough to search for more information. It is more stimulating if schools can visit other schools and learn from each other.

The SVE did not use the references and they suppose that practical teachers will not use them either. The CPE say that they will use the references, but that the documents from other countries will be difficult to access and to work with.

The SVE further notes that especially the disadvantaged young people are portrayed, while modular education applies also to other youngsters. This shows that it should be more clearly communicated that the project principally focuses on the modular education for disadvantaged young people.

Two definitions of modularisation are described in the dimension “Definition of modularisation: “What is a module?”, namely the fragmented and the continuous modularisation. The SVE states that neither of the definitions is appropriate in Flanders. Pupils have no large choice of freedom, nor is there a single trajectory. Modularisation in Flanders is rather a mixture of the two definitions.

The learning objectives are dealt with in the dimension “Collaboration between stakeholders” (point 2.2). The SVE notes that the example of Flanders is not entirely correct as they can read the following: “The government defines what pupils should have learned at each stage, but it is up to the educational networks to elaborate the curriculum and to decide upon the teaching methods used.” Pupils can however decide themselves which module to follow while the trajectories are traced out by the government. Beside that the learning objectives are formulated by the schools themselves on the basis of a tool of the SVE. These formulations are not done by the educational networks.

In certain dimensions the researchers quote specific problems, for instance that the employers think that they do not need to learn something to pupils. Yet in Flanders some projects have been built up to handle and to solve these problems.

All dimensions

The division in dimensions is, according to the SVE, considered useful and practicable. The dimensions used are furthermore sufficient.

The CPE states that the division is considered practicable, but some dimensions seem less relevant, among which “Situated learning”, “Soft skills and outcomes” and “Collaboration between stakeholders”. They suggest that a test phase has to take place, so that the tool can be used in practice once or twice and the shortcomings can be defined.

3.3 Conclusions and Consequences

The prototype of the instrument was tested thoroughly by the SVE, a service from the Department of Education and by the CPE of KTA Heule. The SVE and the CPE were interviewed later on to measure the usefulness and the applicability of the tool.

According to the participants of the interview, it is insufficiently clear that the project focuses on modules for disadvantaged young people. It should be clearly communicated that the tool should help practitioners to work with these young people.

The participants are favourable of the electronic tool, but notice some shortcomings. The tool is theoretically well-founded, but it is not motivating, stimulating and guiding enough. To make the tool more practicable for practitioners, some practical topics should be added to the tool or an additional practical tool should be developed.

Moreover it is noted that practitioners (and especially the ones who are not acquainted with modular education), without guidance, face difficulties to develop modules based on this instrument. Teachers-to-be will become familiar with modularisation as the tool will be introduced in the teacher training. This requires though an additional practical part and a further developed theoretical part, so teachers will become more and more conversant with the concept of modularisation.

The tool can only be fully utilised, if it will be fully adjusted to the Flemish context. Now several terms are mixed and besides that other definitions are often applied in Flanders than the ones used in the tool. This problem can be solved by using the Royal Decrees or decrees wherein these terms are defined.

Finally we conclude that, provided that some adjustments are made a.o. an addition of a practical part and the provision of guidance/support to use it, the tool is definitely practicable in Flanders.

4 Denmark

4.1 Methodology and context

The Danish testing phase took place in the Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers (DEL). The institute is responsible for the compulsory postgraduate pedagogical training of teachers at vocational colleges. The teachers at the institute have substantial experience with teacher training, development projects, and consultancy work. In various projects, the institute has been involved in developing tools for the Danish Ministry of Education to be implemented at the vocational colleges. So there is substantial knowledge on tools and how they work in practice to draw on. Furthermore, the postgraduate pedagogical training course is modularised, so the teachers also have experience themselves in how to plan and carry out modularised activities.

Contact to the institute was established through a former colleague, and a letter of invitation was sent to *all* teachers in DEL, inviting them to participate in the test of the tool. Only four teachers accepted the invitation and at the day of the test only two showed up.

The test phase took place at the premises of DEL.

Participants in the test were:

Jens Aaslyng Dall (associate professor)

Hans H. Kock (consultant)

Both have a background as teachers at a technical college and therefore know the challenges that vocational teachers confront in their daily practice. In a sense, they were able to represent both, the expert side and the practitioner side, however throughout the evaluation both had a clear focus on how the tool could be used by practitioners at the colleges.

The testing took 4 hours and was organised as follows:

- an introduction to the project (aims of project, partnership, main ideas behind the tool and aim of tool);
- next step was to go through the tool onto the nine dimensions together (the testing was done on-line);
- the element of “what is a module” was evaluated by both participants together;
- each participant was then asked to enter the tool through a specific dimension (as I had expected four participants, I had hoped to cover at least four dimensions) and evaluate the following features:
 - functionality
 - is the tool user-friendly;
 - is it easy to access and navigate in;
 - are there too many/too few level;
 - do the links work.
 - design
 - how do you rate the design in relation to functionality, contents and aesthetics;
 - contents
 - does the tool give you an overview of modularisation;
 - is the contents interesting to planners and practitioners about to introduce modularisation/ in a process of modularisation;
 - is the contents relevant to planners and practitioners about to introduce modularisation/ in a process of modularisation;
 - are the examples relevant;
 - are there topics which should have been covered;
 - concept
 - is a tool a good method for initiating a reflection process on modularisation;
 - can/will it be used in practice.
- a reflective process then followed where the participants wrote down their comments, where common issues were discussed and more general considerations on such tools were brought to the fore;
- the testing ended with a general discussion where the participants were asked to share their written comments and discuss these.

4.2 Results

As the testing ended up including only two test persons, it was not possible to go through all of the dimensions and consequently not all dimensions will be described in the following summary of test results.

4.2.1 Practicability of electronic tools

The idea of a tool targeted planners and teachers

- good idea, but it is important that the examples are better developed;
- the tool may be a good way of testing ideas and generating new ideas;
- the tool cannot „stand“ on its own. A thorough introduction is necessary and the tool has to be part of a development process;
- direct links to researchers and other practitioners would be valuable so that the practitioner could work beyond the tool.

4.2.2 Structure and organisation of the tool

Functionality

- access to the tool should be more transparent;
- the tool should automatically adapt to the screen (as it is now, it is simply too big for the screen);
- the different colours marking the different elements function fine as an indicator where on the site you are working;
- it is difficult to navigate on the website;
- the name of the website is misleading (www.modules-for-Europe.com);

Website „Elements in creating modules“

- was regarded as superfluous.

Sitemap

- does not work.

Search function

- is missing. It should be possible to search for key words and hereby be able to access information considered relevant to the user.

Layout/design

- the fonts are too small and too blurred;
- the logo is strange;
- the jigsaw puzzles should be named the entire title of the element i.e. not just “assessment” or “integration” as these titles are not meaningful in terms of the contents;
- the print version is a good feature;

- good idea that own examples can be added, however problems with the levels on which they may be added. Why not all levels?

4.2.3 Content

Element: „What is a module“:

- to imprecise and broad: all teaching activities may be defined as modules;
- we should take a stand on how we define a module and hereby invite the user to discuss and challenge this definition. The test persons wanted a tool which was sharp and clear, a tool which provoked practitioners/ made them react and reflect.

Element: „Collaboration“

- too many Flemish examples;
- the examples are too short.

Element: „Organisation“

- the issue of portfolio methods needs to be expanded;
- the description of national portfolio systems should be moved to macro level.

Terms/acronyms:

- what is a trainee? (need for a glossary to define key terms);
- be careful with the use of acronyms without writing what it stands for;
- a need for further consistency in the use of terms, e.g., „collaboration with appropriate bodies“ links to „collaboration with stakeholders“.

Examples:

- having examples from different countries is a good idea, however
 - the examples are not developed sufficiently;
 - the criteria for choosing specific examples should be described:

why is this a good case to reflect on? Does not need to be a case of „good“ or „best“ practice, but something to reflect on and learn from. However, it needs to tell the reader why the example has been chosen and the example has to be more developed, e.g., by providing links;
 - the examples need to be better defined, e.g., the example of „multi workshops“ is not to be presented as *the* answer to a problem, but as *one* answer;
 - the examples should be more consistent across countries (common criteria) and more consistently developed. Some examples are too long, most are too short.

Definition of target group:

- it is not clear that tool is aimed at disadvantaged young people. There are several reasons for this:

- at the first page entering the tool the most dominant elements are the logos of the institutions. These should be moved, and the page should stress that this is a tool targeted teachers and planners working with disadvantaged young people;
- The target group is „subordinated“ the structure i.e. modularisation. The tool was perceived to be about „modularisation“ not specifically for disadvantaged young people, but young people in vocational education and training in general.

Language

- too many toppings, should be more concise, precise and shorter.

4.3 Conclusions and Consequences

Intended target group

- the tool was not perceived as clearly targeting teachers/practitioners. It was perceived as a tool targeted to planners and policy makers since
 - the examples are too abstract;
 - the examples deal mostly with „national“ policies/projects;
 - the examples are not sufficiently described;
 - teachers want information which is easy to access and which is of immediate value in daily practice.

Functionality

- a navigation bar should be added so that it is possible always to know where on the site you are;
- introduction should be clearer and more focussed (move the logos to another site);
- the website indicating the different levels of an element and the questions addressed could be expanded so that main questions under each question could be clicked and the approaches and examples accessed immediately.

Contents

Target group

- the target group should be better described and decentred (in the sense that we in the tool have been too focused on young people lacking „social competences“). So we should describe different types of „disadvantaged young people“ and how teachers can work with these. The test persons also pointed to the fact that we might end up in “negatively defining” the target group although this clearly was not our intention (e.g. the general term: disadvantaged), a decentring may remedy this problem.

Examples

- should at the first level be short and concise, describing what can be learnt from the case, what is good, what is bad, and then on the next level be more fully developed and links supplied to relevant researchers and/or institutions;
- there should be better consistency in the examples from the different countries e.g.
 - what is this about;
 - who is the example targeted;
 - pro's;
 - con's.

Tool in general

- should provide short, concise information which is of value to a teacher or a planner.

5 Greece

5.1 Methodology and context

The testing phase included a wide range of social partners in the VET area, in order to assure the reliability of the results, and especially the social relevance of the tool. The participants were coming from educational institutions, policy-making authorities, unions, etc. In total we talked to 11 individuals drawn from the following institutions:

- EKEPIS: the National Accreditation Body for Vocational Training (2 persons)
- INE-GSEE: Employees Confederation (3 persons)
- 2 Centres for Vocational Training (KEK), which had long experience in developing training programmes for socially disadvantaged groups, and were aware of the concept of modularisation (1 and 2 persons)
- 3 professional trainers, who had long experience in teaching in VET programmes for socially disadvantaged groups

The institutions which participated in the testing phase were already involved in the project, since the first interview stage a year before, when we were mapping the VET area in Greece, and were chosen on the basis of their influence and experience in this field. Furthermore, we have added two experienced free-lance trainers to our sample, since they are in principle identified with our user-group.

We should add here that we have also approached the Enterprises and Industry Confederation (SEV), which had already participated in the initial interview stage of the project. However, they refused to comment on the tool.

All the participants were well educated and IT literate and at least familiar with the use of IT tools in supporting various aspects of VET, and generally positive towards the use of IT in

supporting VET trainers. In particular, one of the participants was a qualified IT trainer, and the second was responsible for developing tools to support e-learning in a VET centre. Therefore we gathered useful feed-back in improving the functionality of the e-tool. However, our preliminary study (First Country Report, 2006) highlighted that IT has not penetrated the Greek working culture yet, and furthermore, modules are still an alien concept at least to the VET programmes for disadvantaged young people.

Modules have been applied only by the private sector, and mainly for in-house training programmes. Lately modular programmes have been developed for the purpose of training and accrediting IT skills –but no other initiative has been noticed in implementing the concept in other subjects. Hence, the individuals who participated in piloting the tool were aware of the concept of modules; however they have never used it for teaching. Exemption here is one IT trainer, who participated in the testing phase, since IT skills are currently the only modular training programmes. Nevertheless, the concept of modules fell together with the debate about developing occupational profiles, where EKEPIS, SEV and INE-GSEE participate in order to determine the ‘bits of knowledge’ in which each occupation should consist.

The concern raised from the preliminary study challenged whether an electronic tool would be adequate in the Greek context. The sample of the pilot study was considered representative to record their reactions and answer this critical question, as it will be discussed further below.

Initially, the test phase was intended to take the form of a group discussion, where the participants would exchange their views not only regarding the use of the tool, but also the concepts on which the tool was constructed. However, this turned out to be impossible due to the participants’ tight time-schedule. Hence, we proceeded to separate meetings with each participant institution.

The testing phase lasted 3 weeks and was completed in three stages: a) an invitation to participate in the pilot-study, which was arranged via phone and confirmed via e-mail, when the website of the tool and other relevant info (project leaflet, print-outs and translation of one dimension) were sent to the participants; b) an initial meeting to introduce the tool to the participants; and c) a feed-back meeting.

The email aimed to a sensitisation of the participants regarding the possibilities of the tool, its use and potentials, however, in practice very few spent the time to play around with it before the initial meeting, when the tool was presented to them by the facilitator. During the initial meeting, which lasted approximately 2 hours, the participants’ perceptions and experiences regarding the electronic tools were first recorded, and then the tool was demonstrated and explained. The participants had the opportunity to try it out, and had the chance to give comments, which captured their first impressions regarding its usability, and its relevance for the targets of the group. After 1-2 weeks, a follow-up meeting was arranged –or alternatively a phone communication- where more specific comments were explored regarding the content and the usability of the tool.

The tool has been tested on the following criteria:

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- Conceptual Practicability, where the conceptual coherence and relevance have been tested;
 - Technical Usability, where the technical aspects of the tool, i.e. navigation, user-friendliness, lay-out, etc., have been tested;
 - Content, where the relevance and effectiveness of the developed material have been tested;
 - Relevance to social needs and to time, where we test the question whether an electronic tool for supporting the modularisation of VET programmes is relevant to the Greek context, and whether it ultimately succeeds in addressing actual needs of the target group effectively.

The idea behind this 3-step pilot study was first to intrigue and then give the participants some time to explore the possibilities of the tool. Had the participants not given the time to test the tool on their own, then we assumed that the tool failed to capture their interest.

We should add here that, the participants were fluent in the English language, hence they chose to test the full English version of the tool, giving limited feed-back to the Greek translated dimension.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Practicability of electronic tools

As mentioned above, all participants in the pilot phase were positively predisposed to the use of electronic tools, and had experience in using them. Some of them had participated themselves in developing tools, related to VET. Therefore, participants at large did not question the intention to develop an e-tool for supporting the creation of modular programmes. However, on this point, our group of participants was split into two:

- The policy-makers suggested that it would be a very useful tool; it was well developed and tackles the most the important issues and concepts related to the modules in VET programmes. They expressed their interest to use it once it is finalised for their own purposes.
- The trainers were also split into two groups; those who thought that the tool was important, and it was well-developed, and those who did not like it, because they could not relate to it at all, since they could not see the use of it. Nevertheless, all agreed that the tool was too theoretical, and it could not help them develop modules, since it provides no practical examples of how to create a modular course.

It is important however to stress another –political this time- role the trainers saw in the tool, i.e. the role of ‘glue’ in their effort to develop an occupational identity. The preliminary study has indicated that in Greece we cannot talk about a ‘profession’ of trainers, since it is a low-paid and highly insecure job, and people widely practice it as a secondary occupation. Nevertheless, there is a core of people, who identify themselves as ‘professionals’ and are in the process of institutionalising their existence and having their voices heard, by forming the Trainers Union. Two of the participants in the pilot phase represented that group and

expressed their interest in hosting the tool on their website, as a stimulating instrument to exchange viewpoints and communicate with other members.

No other detailed comment was mentioned regarding the concepts used in the tool, and we interpret this, as the tool was well-accepted in these terms.

5.2.2 Structure and organisation of the tool

The tool was overall well accepted in terms of the organisation of material. It was remarked that the three levels of organisation (social, institutional, individual) and the examples presented at each level were very useful.

However, the participants made few remarks for improving its lay-out and technical feature, which they thought were very ‘rough’ and not ‘user-friendly’.

- The tool does not qualify as an interactive one –the user can only browse existing material, and maybe write comments;
- The colours were thought to be very bright and the fonts were not always easy to read, due to the choice of colours;
- There were too many introductory pages until you actually start using the tool –this may lead potential users to give it up before they start
- There were no instructions on what the tool is precisely about, and how the users should take advantage of it;
- It is not always clear:
 - Where the user is;
 - Where the user has been;
 - Where the user could/should go next;
 - How can the user return to the homepage.
- The following features do not work:
 - The comment box (which was considered a very important feature of the tool, as it raises the questions of what will happen with the comments, which will be gathered);
 - The contact link;
 - The search engine.
- The lining of the web pages needs further adjustment.

In general, the technical development of the tool was considered raw and in need of considerable improvement.

Regarding the language of the tool, again the opinions were split between those who were involved in planning and policy-making and the trainers or directors of VET centres. The first thought the tool provided a coherent and well-articulated account of the issues it deals with; the latter thought the language is too ‘rigid’ and detached from the practitioners’ language and understanding.

Finally, the information provided by the tool, even though interesting, was considered ‘too much’, and the participants were put off from reading it all. This point will be elaborated further below, in relation to the testing of the content of the tool.

5.2.3 Content

All dimensions

Very few comments were made concerning the content of the tool; the reason for this is that very few people actually took the time and explored the questions. As mentioned before, people thought the tool was too broad and, even though they could not recommend editing any substantial part of it, still they could not commit the time to read it and give detailed feedback. We consider the fact that very few people took the time to test the content, as an indication of the limited potential of the tool to reach its target group –a point, which we will elaborate further below.

Further criticism related to the examples provided in the tool, for they seem generic and do not actually guide a person on how to create modules. We can interpret this comment as an incommensurability between the tool’s aims and the target-group’s interests; whereas the tool is intended as an instrument of supporting the stakeholders, practitioners, and specifically those who would be responsible for actually developing modular courses would prefer a ‘how-to’ guide.

Finally, few participants doubted that the tool has something new to offer; they argued that the proposed theories (e.g. situated learning) and the practices suggested (e.g. novel methodology for teaching and learning, collaboration schemes, etc.) are well-established, and the modular approach has nothing new to offer –apart from the possibility for assessing and certifying partial-qualifications.

5.3 Conclusions and Consequences

- Summary
- Conclusions
- Comments
- Advice for improving the tool
- Consequences

The electronic tool for creating modules in pre-vocational and vocational education was thoroughly tested with a group of 11 experts, which represented most of the important actors in the Greek VET area. The English version of the tool was tested for the following criteria:

- Conceptual Practicability
- Technical Usability
- Content
- Relevance to social needs and to time

The feed-back we gathered suggested ways of improving the tool, and most importantly it challenges the presuppositions we hold regarding the conceptual basis of this tool –and similar other tools.

Based on the comments the participants in the pilot study made regarding the tool, it appears that it is a useful tool developed on a sound conceptual framework, with certain technical limitations; most of the participants praised the tool for it dealt with new and important concepts (modules, situated learning, etc.). In this respect, few suggestions for improvement were made, mostly concerning the language used, which sometimes was perceived by the trainers as too ‘academic’. This issue can be amended with a thorough review and editing of the material, and a careful adaptation to own national languages by the project partners.

It seems that the most important comment, apart from the necessary technical adjustment of the tool lay-out (we have already presented these comments in detail above), is the question of the use of the comments contributed; the tool offers the option of inserting comments, but it was not clear how these comments would be visible and most importantly ‘what next’. This question seems that determines the role of the tool in the following way: trainers would rather see a tool, which would spark discussions among the users based on the material available.

Thus, a development of the comment-box as a discussion thread is suggested, which will present current comments / views in an aggregated way; the users will be able to browse current conversations and join the ones that they find interesting. It is also suggested that the users have options to browse the tool without having to log in. We should highlight here that the participants’ suggestions emerge from a different conceptual frame than the one used by the experts who develop the tool; notably, the practitioners’ suggestions focus on the actions taken after having read and reflect on the material. We suggest to follow the participants’ comments, and to extend the use of the tool to include this political role, since this would reflect the needs of the target group better.

It is a very significant observation that very few participants actually spent time to play around with the material provided in the tool. The pilot study was designed to include 3 stages, in order to give the participants some time before the presentation of the tool to explore it by themselves; however, most feed-back was gathered during the second stage of the presentation of the tool, and then short summaries of their points made were sent back by the participants. The tool failed to capture the participants interest, and to make them spent some of their time to ‘reflect’ upon the issues we proposed, even though, they stated that everything was very interesting. This situation raises a very important question, concerning the actual value of the tool, and its relevance to address specific needs of the target group (i.e. teachers and trainers).

This situation is further explained by a reference to two comments participants made: some participants stated that the tool does not reflect the trainers’ needs, because it is a tool developed by academics/consultants, and not by a group of trainers. In other words, they doubted in the adequacy of an external group to develop such a tool, having identified and precisely understood the needs of the target group. It was also stated that this fact would be enough to alienate the potential users from the tool.

This point relates to the following observation all participants made; the tool does not answer the ‘what next’ question, i.e. what happens after a person has contributed with a comment. Clearly trainers appeared more interested in tools which bring them together and challenge them to interact with each other, rather than an informative tool on modularisation. Also, they recommended the tool could be used as a register of views, which then could be elaborated and forwarded to the Authority of VET Accreditation. This would clearly attribute a political role to the tool, which could support policy-making and planning.

Our discussion with the trainers showed that they are quite informed regarding the concepts of modularisation, and what they would prefer in that respect, is a tool which would actually help them to create a modular course step by step. Trainers suggested including more practical examples in the tool; however, we would argue that such a decision would take the tool beyond the initial scope of the project, which was planned as conceptualising and constructing a tool for supporting practitioners, not as a how-to guide.

Therefore we would suggest a better description of the tool’s scope in the introduction and refining the target group to mainly reach policy-makers and planners; our pilot testing showed that this group of users would benefit more from this tool.

The same observation, i.e. that participants did not spend own time with the tool, lead to another question, which concerns the timeliness of the tool. We have already noted that the Greek VET system has very limited experience in using modules. The concept, even though it is familiar to the practitioners faces structural difficulties in being widely implemented (see Greece, First Country Report, 2006). Furthermore, even though all participants stated that they are familiar with IT tools and sometimes use them, this did not mean that participants do use IT tools to support their work, unless they are expected to do so. All participants were IT literate and used similar tools, but very few turned these tools to a part of their daily routine. This observation means that an electronic tool for supporting modules in PET and VET may be an unfamiliar novelty in the Greek context at this particular point in time, which may affect the extent in which the tool will penetrate the target-group.

6 Portugal

6.1 Methodology and context

The Institutions/entities chosen to test our tool and also the practitioners interviewed are related with prevocational education and training (PET) and vocational education and training (VET), and are experienced in teaching training courses for disadvantaged young people:

- CPJ- Justice Protocol Centre in Lisbon: This institution is responsible for training activities in the Educative Centres for disadvantaged young people and adults.
- Aliende Association to Local Development in Montoito - Évora district: The organisation works in the local scope for promotion of sustained and integrated development and is a non-profit organisation.

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- University of Évora: Department of vocational education.
 - PETI - Programme for prevention and Elimination of the Infantile Exploitation (and Scholarly abandonment).

The testing and the interviews took place in the practitioners' premises and our interviews were scheduled in advance in order to fit with their professional activities. The duration of our testing was between 1 hour 30 minutes and 2 hours, depending on the interviewees, since two of them (who belong to Aliende and PETI) needed more time to get familiar with the tool. Thus, we agreed upon another date with them to get a better feedback.

The procedure of the testing was as follows:

In a first step, the interviewees got an introduction to the tool, its aims and the expected outcomes. After that, the interviewees got the chance to handle or navigate the tool by themselves and explore it. In a second step, papers with two dimensions translated in Portuguese were distributed: What is a module?/ Assessment and Recognition of skills. These dimensions were then tested together with the practitioners/trainers. In a last step, the interviews took place (Practicability of the tool/Structure and layout/Tool content/Expectations regarding the use of the tool).

6.2 Results

The verified results were as expected, based on the opinions and comments made by our interviewees within their VET environment. Anyway, it would have been better if we had a wider range of interviewees, but that was not possible.

6.2.1 Practicability of electronic tools

As far as this kind of electronic tools is concerned, they are not suitable for this specific purpose. If they would exist, the practitioners/trainers would not have enough knowledge about them. They are seen as more valuable for the short term or even long term training guidance, and also for the clarification of the concept of modules.

The electronic tool "Creating Modules in Prevocational Education Training" was seen by the interviewees as:

- A tool which helps the professionals in PET and VET to design modules; it was well conceived;
- Allowing to reflect about modularisation issues, due to different points of view that we can find inside the tool;
- Possibility of knowing and being more aware of other situations, contexts and realities;
- Flexibility and its transversal structure are two characteristics of this tool, since it can be adapted to fit into the structures of the institution/entity, and it is transversal to all their levels.

However, to be not only an auxiliary but a permanent tool, some features should be improved. Although the tool focuses on the dimensions that are essential to create a module, the

interviewees think that they are too theoretical and that they miss a dimension that could help the practitioners in constructing a module, and more practical examples of how to create a module or a modular programme: the aspects that are considered to create it: the criteria, the methods, the techniques, the curriculum, the organisation among others.

Two interviewees suggested a button/icon/menu where they could find the modularisation characterisation of each country of the partnership, since some of them are more experienced in modularisation.

6.2.2 Structure and organisation of the tool

According to the interviewees, the idea of disintegrating each dimension into three levels (system, institutional and individual) will create a better perception of information. These three parts are essential for the understanding of the topic: (1) the part that rules and determines the system; (2) the role of the institution and its relation to the professionals; and at last, (3) the individual level, which is influenced by who process.

The deeper levels (underlined words) allow some freedom for the user of the tool because when the user wants to know more about a specific topic, he or she goes to a deeper level, searching for more information. That works in a similar way for possible approaches and the examples.

So, the interviewed VET and PET practitioners considered the structure as appropriate for this tool. Although, they affirmed that it is important to inform the users about the aims of the tool, to whom it is targeted and who will be the beneficiaries of it. When the tool will be available for others users, without a person who explains it to them or guide them, they might have doubts and reject the tool.

Concerning some specific aspects, the opinion about the layout is:

- attractive due to the design of puzzle pieces;
- the colours used or at least their gradation are not the most suitable;
- The puzzle piece corresponding to each dimension could be used as a background of it in pages where they appear.

The navigation inside the tool:

- Takes a while to get used to it, there are difficulties in navigation inside the dimensions and there is a need for orientation/guidance;
- As it advances in tool dimension→ topic→ possible approach→ example or deeper level, the interviewees felt lost, because they did not know where they were.

Other aspects:

- Some buttons like (sitemap, contact, search) were not working at the time of the testing;
- The need for more examples regarding the countries or more detailed information about them, some dimensions have a lot of examples and others have none, more consistency is necessary in all dimensions.

The interviewees were provided with a paper translation of two dimensions, which were considered as clear and understandable for them. Anyway, the text (sentences and vocabulary) is constituted mainly by theory (concepts and definitions) about modularisation.

The information amount perceived by interviewees diverged, two considered that it was enough, the other two did not. In relation to the latter ones, it was due to the fact that they see a need for more information and bases to create the modules. If they would have more information available, they could learn more about this issue that is truly important for their work.

6.2.3 Content

Regarding the content, the practitioners involved in the testing could only focus on two dimensions, because only these two had been translated. They had the opportunity to read them and they made very few remarks in relation to their content.

What is a module?

First of all, this dimension cannot be considered as a dimension, but as the background of the other dimensions. ‘What is a module?’ can be considered as the starting point of the dimensions; it gives different perspectives of the module concept; describes the characteristics that should compose it and systematises a series of contexts where it came up.

So, the module is constituted by the dimensions that are presented in the tool i.e., therefore we have to consider all these dimensions/elements which we can find in the tool to design a module. The interviewees pointed out a lack of examples, and they made a suggestion of having an example of a module, as well as the references to help in finding relevant information about modularisation.

Assessment and recognition

This dimension is important in the sense that it regularises all training and is critical in VET and in PET.

As all the interviewees are in some way involved in the training process, they have a number of relevant responsibilities. Some of them are trainers/teachers in their institutions. In the tool, all important topics were included. Nevertheless, the tool can describe in more detail the procedures in a modular assessment.

Once more, the interviewed practitioners affirmed the importance of examples of other countries, since it will help in finding similarities and differences between countries, and practices developed in each country. As a consequence, they could see the advantages and disadvantages of using them. So in this sense, more examples on each level of this dimension, especially on the individual level were required.

All dimensions

As already said in point 3, the practitioners only read two dimensions but still the general comment regarding the division of the dimensions was positive. However, they thought that

one dimension was missing- a practical dimension- of how to put the other dimensions into practice.

6.3 Conclusions and Consequences

Our testing involved only four practitioners/trainers who worked in institutions that had a fundamental role in the field of PET and VET and that developed modular training courses aimed at disadvantaged young people.

Two of the interviewees have already been involved in the project since the First Country Report, because these practitioners were interviewed regarding the modularisation characterisation in Portugal and the other two were already contacted before the construction of our tool.

Our testing included:

- Tool Practicability;
- Structure and layout;
- Tool Content (fundamentally the two dimensions);
- Expectations regarding the tool use.

The major consideration regarding the tool is that it should give a set of features that practitioners and teachers should consider when preparing and planning modules. The dimensions are the integrated aspects that should be taken into account when a module is created, but they are too theoretical. Practical examples or a practical dimension might be an improvement: what should be considered when a module is designed, like a referential, or a module guide.

The dimensions' examples should be reviewed in order to be consistent; some dimensions have a lot of examples others do not. In this respect, the interviewees asked for more examples about the theory that is introduced in the texts of the dimensions.

According to our testing results, the tool needs some changes or improvements: in the layout (to adjust the colours and puzzle pieces as background of each dimension), navigation (providing more information of localisation, where the user is in the tool); structure (putting - what is a module as the starting point of the dimensions/elements), another improvement could be a button that leads the user to the modularisation characterisation in other countries.

Pointed out by the practitioners, a better explanation in the initial page about the aims and outcomes is necessary for the target group, its beneficiaries and the users to be more clarified.

In general, the testing phase was positive, because all feedback was constructive, so the opinions expressed by the practitioners made it possible to withdraw some essential inferences and at the same time conduct the necessary changes.

As a conclusion, the need for this type of electronic tool is notorious among practitioners, teachers and trainers. A tool that helps them design modules enables them to reflect on modularisation, and the possibility to see what others are doing about this. Thus, the

practitioners referred to the importance of this tool for their preparation of modular courses, but still, the tool will need to be improved and adjusted to become more effective, and to be available to other users.

7 Romania

7.1 Methodology and context

The Romanian testing phase was organised by Centre Education 2000+, Bucharest. The Centre is one of the educational NGOs which functions as a think tank organisation and has introduced and piloted the Second Chance Programme in Romania as among other initiative in the reform phase the country goes through. The institutions and teachers the centre works with have an important grass route experience in implementing educational programmes for students at risk. The group of teachers interviewed have been involved in the Second Chance programme from the initial pilot phase till now. At present the programme has been taken over by the Ministry of Education and introduced in a large network of vocational schools. Although there is no substantial knowledge on tools and how they work in practice the fact that the teachers are reflective practitioners counted a lot. In terms technology, the educational system in Romania is in the stage of development, logistic insurance and human resource training, a process that is very much paced up. So, for the relevance of the data on the tool developed I selected students and practitioners who have experience themselves in planning and carrying out modularised activities.

The contact with the representatives of the economical agents, teachers, and students has been established through the Teacher Resource Centre in Galati county. In the first phase, a letter of invitation was sent to *all* stakeholders interviewed in the previous stage of the project. As they have been involved in the initial survey we invited them to participate in the testing of the tool. The invitation was accepted by:

- one representative of SC Galmopan S.A., the community partner of Dumitru Motoc Vocational High School, a food industry company with 600 employees among which there are working graduates of the Second Chance programme that is the head of the department where the students worked in the production practice stage involved in the certification process of the students.
- One representative of the regional training centre (the director of the marketing department), Centre for Social Trade that deal with the training of the unemployed from different zones (rural, urban, poor), company accredited by the National Council for Professional Development of Adults.
- The director of the Teacher Resource Centre responsible for different training and professional development courses in the region.

- 2 teachers practitioners who have been involved in the grass root pilot of the Second Chance programme and the Phare Programme “Access to Education of the Disadvantaged Groups” being both teacher practitioner and monitor in the programmes.
- 1 graduate of „the Second Chance – Educația 2000+”promotion 2006

In the second phase the group of people was given a summary of the tool presentation and the professional development dimension in English with main ideas translated into Romanian. They were asked to get familiarised with the tool and get prepared for:

- testing of the tool;
- group discussion on the tool and the professional development programme.

In two weeks the third phase that is the test phase and group discussion took place at the premises of the Teacher’s Resource Centre Galati. The meeting was organised as follows:

- a brief introduction to the project (Power Point presentation in Romanian about the project phases , partner organisations, dimensions);
- online testing;
- discussion on the concept of the tool and the professional development dimension;
- Final feedback one week later.

The main points of focus in the discussion about the tool were:

- Practicality of the tool.
- Design related to content, functions and its “readability”.
- Relevance of content and content coverage.

The main point of focus in terms of the Professional Development dimension was:

- Clarity of ideas;
- Relevance of content;
- Practicality.

7.2 Results

7.2.1 Practicability of electronic tools

The common understanding was that the tool is a good instrument for reflection, an excellent support for staff development but that it is still difficult to use it individually without any guidance and orientation. It was also stated that the tool is a useful platform for discussions in professional development programmes. The recommendation was that it should be localised in an interactive way with the in-pup of the different practitioners or trainers by means of using technical aids for this (links, etc).

7.2.2 Structure and organisation of the tool

Because of the lack of practice in using electronic teaching and training devices, the novelty of the process brought up certain difficulties. The group had a slow pace in using the tool and

understanding the concept of the tool. As consequence, the basic idea voiced was that the tool should have an easier access and that the users should be more explicitly guided through it. The discussions were basically around the issue of accessibility but because of the low level of readiness in using the tool the group could not decide if it were the lack of ability or shortcomings in terms of the tool design. The expectation was for the tool to be more interactive. Search around key words for instance was not possible. The design of the tool was generally appreciated. The only suggestion was on the readability of the font.

7.2.3 Content

The contents were considered very useful for the Romanian teachers and trainers as it is an excellent resource of international views and perspectives. It was considered to be presented in a highly academic way, a lot of information that needs analyses and discussion in professional groups. The dimensions were not analysed in detail, except the professional development.

It was suggested that there is a need to have a glossary of terms and a modality to highlight the main reflection points.

A glossary of terms was very much debated as there should be a common understanding on what the concepts such as *module*, *portfolio*, etc., mean. There might be slight differences in the understanding of the educational concepts in every country.

The examples were considered useful but not relevant as there is no clarifying statement on why would that particular example be relevant and not others. There was a suggestion to have an interactive way of working with the content in order to add examples from everyday activities so that the tool could grow and further develop in a European network.

The register in which the content has been written was found academic, dense but the participants agreed on the idea that the collection of data is a very useful source of professional development of the teachers and trainers. It has been recommended to have a short version of the content. It has also been noted that specific guidelines would strengthen the tool.

7.3 Conclusions and Consequences

The conclusion was that the tool is useful if used in a professional development context and at the same time if there is some interaction for localised examples. The recommendations refer to whether there is the possibility of having a simple version of the tool. This could have an interactive function so that the practitioners could add examples of their own and exchange everyday experience through the tool. Otherwise, it is an excellent tool for professional development meetings.

8 United Kingdom

8.1 Methodology and context

The testing of the tool was carried out with practitioners representing ASDAN, the London Region Post-14 Network and Cambridge Assessment.

ASDAN/London Region Post-14 Network

Within the project we are collaborating with the London Region Post-14 Network. The Network is based in the School of Lifelong Education and International Development at the Institute of Education, University of London. The Network was launched in 1989 to develop links between those concerned with post-16 education and, more recently, 14+ education and training. Network members include schools, colleges, universities, LEAs (local education authorities) and many other organisations in the London region, including the LSC (Learning and Skills Council), Connexions and the voluntary sector. Within this project we are collaborating with ASDAN.

ASDAN (Award Scheme Development & Accreditation Network) is a pioneering curriculum development organisation and an internationally recognised awarding body, which grew out of research work at the University of the West of England in the 1980s. ASDAN offers a wide range of curriculum programmes and qualifications for all abilities, mainly in the 11–25 age group. ASDAN is a successful initiative that has been developed and managed by teachers and lecturers, alongside a dedicated and highly efficient administrative team.

ASDAN was formally established as an educational charity in 1991. The stated purpose of the charity is “to promote the personal and social development of learners through the achievement of ASDAN Awards, so as to enhance their self esteem, their aspirations and their contribution to the community”.

ASDAN programmes and qualifications blend activity-based curriculum enrichment with a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of key skills and other personal and social skills, with emphasis on negotiation, co-operation and rewarding achievement. The programmes are learner-centred, offering opportunities for a negotiated curriculum, which is modular and activity based. ASDAN has extensive experience in developing and constructing modules for disadvantaged young people. All ASDAN programmes are modular.

Cambridge Assessment

Cambridge Assessment is a department of the University of Cambridge, and a not-for-profit organisation. It is an assessment agency which incorporates three major examination boards:

- OCR, one of the three UK-wide awarding bodies, offers qualifications including GCSEs, A Levels and a wide range of vocational qualifications to learners of all ages through 13,000 schools, colleges and other institutions.
- University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) offers qualifications including International GCSEs, A and AS Levels and business qualifications in discipline such as

ICT, management and office administration skills. CIE advises and works with a number of governments on education issues.

- University of Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (Cambridge ESOL) exams are the world's leading certificates for English language learners. Over 1.75 million people in 135 countries sit them every year.

Testing: background (organisation, methods, length etc.)

Practitioners involved in testing the tool proofed/worked with the tool. Prior to the final testing the practitioners had a chance to get acquainted with the content of the tool and to carry out preliminary testing.

The final testing was carried out by the practitioners in the presence of the researcher.

Interviews/discussions were the main method of recording practitioners' comments, views and perspectives. The following sections discuss the practitioners' feedback, suggestions and comments that have arisen as a result of testing the Modules tool.

8.2 Results

8.2.1 Practicability of electronic tools

- Opinion on this type of tool in general
 - What do the interviewed persons think of electronic tools in general?
 - Does the use of tools fit in the working day of practitioners?
 - Are tools easily accessible for practitioners? What other tools are used now?

The practitioners found the electronic tool straightforward and easy to use. It was emphasised that the accessibility and transparency of the tool are the important features that would encourage them to employ the tool in developing or improving modules. In the discussion that followed it was stressed that potentially, the tool could fit in the working day of a practitioner involved in developing modules for disadvantaged young people. However, it has been noted that it is not envisaged that it would be used/employed on a daily basis, but rather either at the beginning of the process of "module construction" or where there is a need to implement any changes (including re-organising courses) or re-think/revise of any issues, depending on many factors, such as:

- Target group requirements;
- Context;
- Labour market demands, etc.

Opinion concerning the tool

The tool could be a potentially helpful instrument to be used by those involved in the construction and improvement of modules. Practitioners found the tool to be especially helpful in facilitating a discussion on various aspects relevant to the process of constructing modules for disadvantaged young people. It was stressed that the tool could help to highlight

a number of issues that need to be taken into account by those involved in the construction/improvement of the modules. Examples of good practice and possible answers could be helpful in assisting practitioners to deal with a number of issues arising while constructing modules or teaching.

Practitioners noted that they would be interested in using the tool once it is available, providing there is time allocated for such an activity. They argued that the tool could be used either by an individual practitioner or by a group of practitioners depending on current context, demands or requirements. However, they feel that it would be particularly useful if the tool were used by a group of practitioners, as it would facilitate a meaningful discussion.

8.2.2 Structure and organisation of the tool

- During the test phase the practitioners found the structure of the tool convenient, straightforward and user friendly. However, it was noted that more explanation is needed on various terms and definitions. At the start of the test phase, the practitioners noted that it was not clear enough what exactly is meant by each level (system, institution, individual level). The relevance of a glossary was discussed.
- Deeper links were considered useful as they provide good clarification for a number of issues/statements. Links to a glossary were suggested.
- The tool could be used either in a flexible way (“jumping” from one topic to another) or as “a classic text”. It has been noted that the way of using the tool is up to individuals depending on their current priorities and targets.
- The tool was found to be user friendly. However, it was noted that the tool would benefit from a “search” feature.
- The test phase has shown that the question of language and vocabulary is considered by the practitioners to be of the utmost importance:

The thing is you want vocabulary that is going to engage people so they think, ‘Oh, right, I absolutely know what that is, and I could use that,’ whereas if they look at a word like that they might think ‘Does that affect... is that something to do with me and my learners?’ (Post-14 Network practitioner)

By and large the language of the tool was considered to be understandable. It was noted, however, that some definitions are not clear enough (e.g. could be open to debate and interpretations) and/or need to be better explained, for example:

- Situated learning. This term was not clear enough to the practitioners.
- Soft skills

I think ‘soft’ has a connotation not just within your context, but within the UK context. We are constantly being told these are soft skills [...] I mean I know what it all means and I understand why we have arrived at this language, but it doesn’t help actually. If you go back into the history books – there has been a whole series of terminologies used, including transferable skills...generic skills and in fact generic learning is now the preferred [...]. I quite like generic learning because it has in it the connotation of

transferable and all that stuff, whereas 'soft' sounds a bit squishy and you know, these aren't to be taken seriously, they are not the real things that people need, they are all the sort of, you know, the optional extras. (ASDAN's practitioner)

- The definitions “system”, “institution” and “individual” levels need to be better explained (see above).

8.2.3 Content

The following sections present practitioners' feedback/suggestions regarding the content of the tool. Each dimension's section will discuss the practitioners' views in the context of the following questions:

- Was the content of this dimension relevant enough for the interviewed person's specific situation? (If no, why not?) Was the information useful for them?
- Is this considered to be a relevant/important dimension?
- Do they think all important topics within this dimension are dealt with or would more topics need to be added (and which)?
- Are the possible answers considered “eye-openers”?
- Are the examples clear? Are they inspiring? Do they stimulate them to search more information themselves?
- Did they use the references?

What is a module?

- The practitioners found this dimension to be relevant and important for anyone who is involved in the construction and/or improvement of modules. It is important to gain insight into questions such as (1) what is a module? (2) what are the types of modularisations? (3) what shapes can modulations take? etc.
- It has been noted that, in the context of the tool, “What is a module?” is a central dimension as it clarifies the nature and basic features of modularisation.
- It has been argued that most of the important topics have been covered within this dimension. Possible topics suggested by the practitioners, to be discussed/highlighted within this dimension, include the following:
 - The modules seen from a participant's (learner's) perspective;
 - Modularisation and distance learning;
 - Modularisation and e-learning.
- The practitioners felt that this dimension would have benefited from examples of good practice/possible answers, although it is appreciated that a number of examples relevant to this dimension may be found within other dimensions. The relevant links may be useful to indicate any connections to other dimensions.
- References need to be added.

Integration of target group

- During the test phase the practitioners found this dimension to be useful for them as it discusses the important issues that are relevant to the aspects target group integration and social inclusion. ASDAN practitioners have long-standing experience of working with disadvantaged young people; therefore, the issues of their integration into the world of work are considered to be of utmost importance.
- They felt that the most important topics within this dimension have been highlighted. The following are some suggested areas to be added and/or discussed:
 - Self-recognition of skills/qualifications/achievements by the target groups;
 - Boosting confidence of the target groups.
- The examples were considered to be relevant and useful.
- The practitioners shared the view that it is very helpful to have a list of references where one can go for further information/research.

Professional development

- The practitioners found this dimension to be relevant and important for those involved in the construction and/or improvement of modules. For practitioners who are concerned with teaching disadvantaged young people, the issue of professional development is considered to be of crucial importance.
- The test phase has shown that this dimension is considered to be significant in the context of the development of modules for disadvantaged young people.
- It has been agreed that this dimension includes most important issues relevant to the professional development topic. Some suggested additions included, as follows:
 - Aspects of professional development related to on-the-job training.
 - Learning from others, situated learning, informal learning.
- The examples/possible answers were regarded as “good and helpful” in terms of clarifying the issue of professional development.
- The practitioners stressed that it is useful to have a list of references.

Organisation

- The practitioners who participated in the test phase are already fully involved with modularised programmes for disadvantaged young people. They feel that some parts of this dimension are more relevant for those institutions that are beginning to restructure their conventional training systems into modularised systems. However, they feel that it would still be useful for them to go through this dimension for examples of good practice, possible answers etc.
- In general, they shared the view that this dimension is important for those involved in the construction/improvement of modules.
- They shared the view that most of the relevant topics have been dealt with within this dimension.

- Possible answers/examples of good practice were considered very good and helpful both for practitioners who already had long-standing experience in modularisation and for those who are new to the process. The practitioners commented that it is very helpful to have a range of examples from different European countries:

We are always looking for examples of good practice. (ASDAN practitioner)

- The list of references was regarded as useful.

Assessment and recognition

- The practitioners considered this dimension to be of crucial importance within the construction and development of modules. For those looking to change/improve assessment procedures for disadvantaged young people, this tool provides an opportunity to highlight and reflect on a number of important issues and problems.
- Within this tool, the dimension “Assessment” occupies an important place.
- Practitioners felt that the important topics have been covered within this dimension. However, although they appreciate the fact that the focus of the project is on disadvantaged young people, they feel that it would be beneficial to make some statements more general:

A quote from the “Assessment” dimension:

The assessment and recognition of skills could help disadvantaged young people to...

Practitioner’s comment:

I realise that that is a focus of this project, disadvantaged young people. But...I think you should make the point more generically or generally, so if you said that the assessment and recognition of skills could help young people to enter the labour market effectively you wouldn’t be stigmatising a particular group; the effect of that sentence would then not be to stigmatise the disadvantaged because you would be making the point commonly to all people. Because presumably, you know, well I mean the spin is that education systems are supposed to support everybody into the labour market, although the labour market is not seen for those who go on post-16 to be quite the same sort of thing. It becomes filtered through this notion of going to university and then going on and doing something, graduate entry or something like that, but it’s the same labour market, it’s just a different part of it. So I think we should be saying the assessment and recognition of skills help all young people. I think you should make that plain. (ASDAN practitioner)

Quote from the “Assessment” dimension:

Crucial to the whole concept of modules is that those who are assessed experience success.

Practitioner’s comment:

I mean it is fundamental to the whole pedagogy, not just the disadvantaged. Of course it is particularly relevant to young people, but it needs saying that building on success, I mean the pedagogic generic point or general point here is that building on success is

significant for the motivation of all learners. And this is especially true for those who may have experienced problems because they have been disadvantaged by not having been provided with a learning style that suits them. (ASDAN practitioner)

Other comments drawn were related to clarifying the terms such as *summative, formative* and *continuous* types of assessment:

[...] formative and summative are purposes, and continuous is different. Continuous is actually a process. Formative and summative have different purposes. Formative is to provide feedback into the learning and summative is as you say a record and outcome for selection and so on. But you can have continuous formative assessment and you can have continuous summative assessment. They are kind of in different categories. (Cambridge Assessment practitioner)

- The examples and possible approaches were found to be very clear and helpful by the practitioners who took part in the testing.
- The list of references was considered useful.

Situated teaching and learning

- The practitioners found this dimension to be relevant for those involved in the construction and/or improvement of modules. A type of learning that happens not through teaching but through other (e.g. workplace) experiences has been considered of importance in the context of learning provision for disadvantaged young people. There was a discussion, however, about appropriate terminology that defines this type of learning. It has been argued that the term “situated learning” may not be clear enough for practitioners. Some suggestions included terms such as “experiential learning” or “informal learning”. However, it has been agreed that providing there will be a glossary explaining the term “situated learning” it may still be used in the tool.
- Situated learning has been regarded as an important dimension in the context of construction of modules. It has been argued that such a dimension would be helpful in the context of all three levels, namely system, institution and individual levels.
- It has been agreed that this dimension includes most important issues relevant to the situated learning topic.
- The examples/possible answers have been regarded as “relevant and important” in terms of clarifying the issue of situated learning.
- The practitioners stressed that it is useful to have a list of references.

Soft skills and outcomes

- “Soft skills” was regarded as a topic that has been considered to be significant for the practitioners’ current tasks and challenges. Practitioners argue that within their institutions they are constantly using (and developing further) various methods of evaluating soft skills and outcomes. The question of language/terminology was discussed again. Some suggestions included “wider skills” and “generic skills”. Once more, it has been noted that a glossary will be needed to clarify this.

- The practitioners emphasised the importance of “soft skills” as a dimension within the tool. It was argued that those involved in the construction and development of modules for young people, including disadvantaged young people, would need to take into account the issue of soft skills and outcomes.
- It was agreed that the dimension was sufficiently covered.
- The examples and the possible approaches were considered to have been very helpful. For those who are looking to develop and implement methods of evaluating soft outcomes, such examples/approaches will prove to be valuable.
- Websites and references would provide helpful links for looking for further information/examples.

Collaboration between stakeholders

- The practitioners who took part in testing the tool found the information provided with the dimension very helpful. The organisation of a meaningful teaching/learning process, including the development of modules, is not possible without collaboration of stakeholders such as institutions, employers, accreditation bodies and government. Within ASDAN there is a continuous collaboration with various stakeholders such as government agencies, employers, other institutions etc.
- Therefore the topic of collaboration of stakeholders takes an important place within the tool.
- The practitioners shared the view that the topic was covered sufficiently at each level.
- Examples of good practice were considered very helpful.
- There was no access to references at the time of testing. The practitioners argued that a list of references would be very helpful as a source of further information.

Reflection and evaluation

- This dimension was regarded as one of the most significant areas in the construction and development of modules for disadvantaged young people. Pros and cons of modularisation, reflections on evaluation and quality as well as on what a good module is are issues that the practitioners may face continuously while constructing or improving their modules.
- Therefore the dimension is both important and relevant in the context of the tool.
- The examples were considered to have been helpful and relevant.
- The list of references is useful.

All dimensions

- Is the division in dimensions considered useful?
- Do the dimensions make sense?
- Are there any missing dimensions or is the tool complete?

The overall feedback on the tool was positive and encouraging. The division of the dimensions was viewed as sensible and straightforward. All dimensions were regarded as

important and significant in the context of the process of the development and construction of modules. However, it has been pointed out that the area where the tool could be improved has to do with the introduction of a new dimension that would provide a “quick guide” on (1) how actually to construct a module and/or (2) where to start in the process of module construction. According to practitioners, those who would use the tool to construct or improve modules would initially look for such a guide.

The section or dimension [should be about] developing modules. It's between what is a module and these other elements. My worry is that without that there is the very general stuff, and then there are the descriptions of the country work, but I think that between those two areas, the very general description of the modules and the examples, there lies this very important area of 'How do you develop a module?' Do you have to employ a team of people to go into industry? Do you bring learners into a learning institution and actually talk to them about what is required? It's curriculum development and module development, really. (Cambridge Assessment practitioner)

And we are talking here about how do you decide how big a module should be, as well as the pragmatics of how big it should be, whether there should be mixed modes of learning, and then all of the issues that I have described in terms of the methodology you use for filling the modules, for getting the content. So I think that would really strengthen the tool hugely. And I don't think it is problematic. It is not a difficult adjustment. (Cambridge Assessment practitioner)

8.3 Conclusions and Consequences

The tool in general was considered to be a helpful instrument to support practitioners involved in the construction of modules.

The test phase has shown that for tutors and practitioners this tool could be potentially beneficial in terms of planning, constructing and implementing changes into the modular programmes:

I think that people coming to module design for the first time need a lot of support. It's much more complicated than people think. This can introduce them to some of the complexities, but in a manageable way. I think that's important. I think people who have already got modular programmes are very anxious to see what examples there are from other countries and the issues that other countries and other programmes have faced, and how they have responded to them. Although you don't give case studies of the full design process through to evaluation and so on, you give enough for people to think 'Oh, well, they are doing it like that' in respect of that kind of programme in Denmark. And so I think for both of those groups that this tool is really important and is very, very needed. (Cambridge Assessment practitioner)

The practitioners shared the view that the tool presents a flexible approach that would allow practitioners to undertake this exercise at their own pace, either on their own or within a group of experts. The tool's dimensions would allow them to address the target groups'

specific requirements and needs. The strengths of the tool, as emphasised by the practitioners, include those of availability, flexibility and adaptability.

The main comments regarding implementing changes in order to improve the tool included the following:

- Review the language/definitions/terminology used in the text of the tool to make it more explicit and understandable for practitioners. A glossary would be very helpful in this context.
- Consider incorporating a new dimension on “How to construct a module: a practical guide on where to start” (see also above). From the practitioner’s point of view such a section would strengthen the tool hugely:

I think the absence of this development section is critical. When we get that in that will be important. But if I was developing modules I would actually want to look at different examples, I'd want to see modules. Of course I would want to know in which kind of country context, or system context, they are located. (Cambridge Assessment practitioner)

- Consider including a library of examples of real modules from different countries:

But I think a library of modules [is important], so if I was working in engineering, for example, I would want to see some engineering examples. I'd want to see some modules from England. I'd want to see some modules from Germany [...] just get some examples in, in different areas like health and social care, leisure and tourism, engineering, art and design, retail distribution. So in developing a module here, a new one, you look at the principles, then you look at examples and you draw from examples and you develop your own, and then you look at the principles again. Is [the module] going to be too long? Have we divided up learning the right way? Is the assessment going to be biased towards one form of assessment? Then look at examples of assessment again to see how other people broke them up, and so on. I think that it would help the tool hugely to have this library. (Cambridge Assessment practitioner)

Potential opportunities for the tool are seen in a possible wider interest among practitioners that may result in the tool becoming a translational practical guide for those involved in the construction of modules. The practitioners shared the view that the tool could become a really important and helpful instrument for module construction. The tool’s value is emphasised by its international aspect, which would allow considering and taking into account examples of good practice and possible approaches from a number of European countries. The availability of the comments box within the tool would provide opportunities for both national and transnational cooperation and sharing expertise on issues of module construction.