



VOIP Project 2009-1-PL1-LEO05-05045
VET for Over 50 Employees through Multi-Feature Platform

The external evaluation Report

**For the project.: „VET for Over 50
Employees through Multi-Feature
Platform”**



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Introduction

BD Center as an external subject – in regards of partnership that realises VOIP project – was responsible for external evaluation. The partnership set an aim to assess the prepared e-learning tool, its functionality and usefulness together with the level of adequacy of its content towards needs and potential of potential recipients.

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Having in mind the transparency of the whole undertaking, objectivism of the assessment and professionalism, BD Center involved external experts. Long-term vocational and didactic experience was the criteria upon which the experts were chosen. Moreover, they had to know the specificity of e-learning platforms and widely understood remote learning. Their qualifications are justified by their CV.

The list of experts is presented below:

No.	Expert	Course
1.	Marcin Jędrzejczak	Software and hardware for older persons;
2.	Małgorzata Żydło	Teleworking; and Collaborative learning in ICT;
3.	Beata Kiersnowka	English language;
4.	Helena Leja	French language;
5.	Justyna Biskup	German language.
6.	Sławomir Gawroński	VOIP platform

Description of the external evaluation process

Subject of evaluation

External evaluation process relates to the main product of the project, which is a multimedia e-learning platform, which includes the following courses: Strona | 3

- Collaborative learning in ICT;
- Software and hardware for older persons;
- Teleworking;
- English language;
- French language;
- German language.

Each course includes several sessions called, due to internal platform nomenclature, paths of science. Each session consists of eight phases. The course has an assigned tutor who can help you understand the lesson or coping with problems with the platform. The form of training used on the platform-based on a training model transferred from the RAVT project, which used modern technology and multimedia in the form of e-learning, promoting cooperation between the participants.

The courses are implemented in accordance with eight phases of Collaborative Learning model.

VOIP TRAINING MODEL:

Phase 1 – work in large groups

Phase 2 – individual work

Phase 3 – work in pairs

Phase 4 – collective work

Phase 5 – presentation of work of each group

Phase 6 – activities of teacher – feedback

Phase 7 – common discussion on the problem and its solution

Phase 8 – presentation of work – teacher collects solutions, participants present results of their work

The platform also includes a space for interaction between users, beyond the official content of courses and it can be distinguished:

- 50+ social area;
- SME Employers Area;
- Competencies Market Area.



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Methodology of external evaluation process

Quantitative (individual questionnaire) and qualitative (structured expert opinions) methods were used in the external evaluation process. Triangulation i.e. diversity of analysis techniques and information collection allows better understanding of the target object and makes comparisons and references possible.

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Six experts from different fields (however related with the field covered by the courses and the e-learning platform itself) were asked to assess the VOIP project. Experts were chosen by the agreement of the whole partnership basing on their CV. The assessment was carried out twice – firstly during the testing phase (a questionnaire collecting quantitative opinions and suggestions) and secondly the final version of the platform was again assessed for its functionality, accuracy of the courses content and adequacy in relation to the target group.

Results

Results of data analysis

We present quantitative and qualitative analysis of external expert opinions regarding particular courses below. Questionnaire was filled in by the experts during the testing phase (first stage of evaluation), therefore the results are not related to the final version of the platform at all.

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Do you think that the VOIP project was tailored to the needs of the target group?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	6	100
No	0	0
Hard to say	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

All the experts stated that the assumptions of the VOIP project were matching the needs of the target group regarding the areas that are covered by the courses. Lack of knowledge in IT and foreign languages is a significant problem in the 50+ age group.

In your opinion, the support given to the target group using the e-learning platform (main product) is effective?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	5	83
No	0	0
Hard to say	1	17
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

Majority of experts thinks that the support for 50+ employees through the e-learning platform is effective. Representatives of the target group get, thanks to the platform, basic scope of knowledge in the field of chosen issues.

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Do you think e-learning platform for VOIP project is part of the idea of the Lifelong Learning?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	6	100
No	0	0
Hard to say	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

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Source: Own research

Experts agree that the VOIP e-learning platform and the choice of the target group (50+) fit into the idea of LLP. The platform stimulates activity of the target group in the sphere of the Internet and through innovative education method it encourages lifelong learning. Remote education formula gives better availability of education as it does not generate such expenses as stationary education.

How do you assess the vocational usefulness of content of the course on the scale from 1 (very low) to 10 (very high)

Experts asked about vocational usefulness of the courses assessed it with a high score – average 8,3 points in 10-point scale (the lowest mark is 7, the highest is 9).

Do you think that the implementation of training on VOIP platform will increase the professional competence of the target group?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Definitely yes	4	67
Rather yes	2	33
Hard to say	0	0
Rather no	0	0
Definitely no	0	0
General	0	100,0 %

Source: Own research

Positive answers mean that the training through VOIP platform will improve vocational competences of the target group.

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Do you think that knowledge transferred during the course has been

	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Hard to say	Rather no	Definitely no
Concrete	33%	64%	0%	0%	0%
New	17%	64%	17%	0%	0%
Useful	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Interesting	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Given in accessible way	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%

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Source: Own research

Obvious predominance of positive answers leads to a finding that the knowledge transferred during the courses was focused and clear, new to beneficiaries thus useful and interesting.

How do you assess the usefulness of consultation with the tutor during the training?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Very useful	6	100%
Rather useful	0	0
Hard to say	0	0
Rather useless	0	0
Completely useless	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

It is obvious, from the above, that the tutor played a significant role in the process and his presence was necessary.

What issues were missing in the course evaluated?

Experts did not indicate any significant thematic lacks in the assessed courses – taking the planned thematic scope and time spent on each course. Content seems adequate to the needs of the target group (courses consist of large number of thematic sessions).

Do you consider that the distribution of elements on the platform and method of navigation were appropriate (tailored to the specific target group)?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	6	100
No	0	0
Hard to say	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

Course navigation and layout is adequate. Frame model makes navigation easier. Some topics presented via Flash elements improve the graphic attractiveness of the course. Graphic elements, HD pictures and font size are adequate as well.

Taking into account the methodology used, do you think that the structure of the course is in accordance with the model transferred?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	6	100
No	0	0
Hard to say	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

Course structure and exercises in individual phases are compatible with the transferred model. Division into phases, group work, pair work and IT utilisation foster experience and views sharing and depict diversity of work forms which therefore motivates and encourages to education.

Do you think that the course contains methodological errors?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	6	100
Hard to say	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

Experts did not find any methodological mistakes in the courses. All the important elements of learning process were taken under consideration (verification, asking questions, discussion, experience sharing, feedback, etc.).

How do you assess the social functionality of the platform, consisting of three types of forums on a scale from 1 (very low) to 10 (very high)?

Functionality of the social part of the platform got very high scores from the experts: average 8,8pt in 10-point scale (the lowest is 7, the highest is 10).

Do you think that information about the project have been sufficiently disseminated among the people employed in small and medium-sized enterprises?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Definitely yes	2	33
Rather yes	4	67
Hard to say	0	0
Rather no	0	0
Definitely no	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

Experts considered that the scale of information regarding project and its main product (multimedia platform) is adequate. Project information were disseminated in efficient way among SME employees.

Do you think that the implementation of these projects will contribute to the popularization of e-learning?

General results:

	Frequencies	Percentage
Definitely yes	6	100
Rather yes	0	0
Hard to say	0	0
Rather no	0	0
Definitely no	0	0
General	6	100,0 %

Source: Own research

In the opinion of external experts, who assessed individual courses and the VOIP platform itself, realisation of such project will obviously foster the popularisation of e-learning which makes the project successful.



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The opinions of experts

Opinions and reviews of the platform prepared by the experts are presented below:

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Review

OF THE VOIP MULTI-FEATURE E-LEARNING PLATFORM

I declare that I do not know of any circumstances that may show a conflict between the interests in relation to the reviewed e-learning platform. At the same moment I declare that the field of the reviewed product is in the scope of my didactic interests as I am an academic teacher who deals with the issues of increasing the effectiveness of education in the field of social aspects. Moreover I published several publications in this field and I am an author of many plans, teaching programmes and e-learning courses. Furthermore I conduct didactic evaluation. At this moment I am a Dean of Social Sciences and Administration at University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow.

The reviewed materials were prepared on the basis of Italian training model RAVT which utilized e-learning method together with active cooperation between trainees. The VOIP e-learning multi-feature platform fully fits into the conception of Collaborative Learning (CL) method which activates the trainees and simulates the didactic effectiveness through creation of cooperative groups.

The platform has a clear innovative character and fits into modern trends of development and constant improvement of remote education methods. E-learning as a form of remote learning is used in almost every areas of educational activities both in relation to school/academic education and technical training and courses. Moreover it is a great tool for self-education and up-skilling. Previous e-learning method was treated as a supplementary form of education which was secondary to traditional methods based on physical presence and cooperation of trainer and trainee. Now it is clear that it becomes a primal method of education. It is cheaper and more flexible method which is good particularly in case of thematic and technical training where it is important to pass each single bit of knowledge which, therefore, allows its adaptation in practice. Development of the classic e-learning methodology towards CL formula is very innovative. It is based on eight

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elements indicated in the “Multi-feature Platform Manual” (p. 5). The presented platform gives the opportunity to fully implement the CL education model mainly through included functionalities that go beyond independent work of a trainee. Use of synchronic and asynchronous techniques of communication between attendees of courses that are realised with the use of the VOIP platform allows work in pairs, small and bigger groups as well as improves effectiveness of consultation with a tutor. Social areas are important innovation from the point of view of the didactic aims. These areas are virtual meeting points of platform users. This functionality may improve elicitation of the trainees and help to overcome language and cultural barriers.

The reviewed part of the platform consists of four separate courses divided into smaller didactic units. The volume of the materials may seem not extensive, however it is unjustified assessment as the multimedia nature of the course includes connection between the didactic material in form of presentations with audio-video and group work part. Synergy in the field of the used didactic methods and effectiveness of education is guaranteed by the methodology. From the methodological point of view the e-filling method was correctly chosen as a dominative, however in the case of knowledge verification and up-skilling some other techniques are in use that stimulate activation and team work. The authors of the courses, having in mind the hierarchy of educational aims, planned the structure of the course in a way that allows to realise easier aims (remembering) and then complex aims which result from those already achieved (analysis and synthesis). It fits into commonly used typology of the Dublin descriptors, which clearly separate elements of knowledge acquisition from up-skilling. This assumption is methodologically correct and logically justified. Relatively simple nature of visualisation and multimedia applications is presumably forced by the restrictions ascribable to the end users.

Target group of the platform users was set as: SME employees over 50 years of age. Its definition was imposed by the requirements of the project in framework of which the platform was created, however, whatever the reasons, such targeting seems right especially in Polish circumstances where representatives of the target group need particular involvement in increasing didactic mobility and activation in the field of self-development and retraining. Definition of the target group concerns the courses elaborated with the use of the VOIP platform, not the tool itself which may be used in



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other groups as well. The visual transparency of the courses seems to be working with the needs and predispositions of the potential users. Menu, which is not that intuitive, could be improved, but not necessarily as it is fully legible in its current form (provided that the Platform Manual was read prior to the platform use).

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Summing up, the presented Multi-feature VOIP platform and the courses included within fully deserve the high score according to the CL principles with use of modern technologies for remote education. Apart from the substantial assessment of the elaborated materials and technical aspects of the system, the platform and courses do not raise objections in the sphere of education methodology.

dr Sławomir Gawroński
University of Information Technology and Management

Review

OF THE VOIP MULTI-FEATURE E-LEARNING PLATFORM

Teleworking and CL in ICT courses

As a trainer of social competence and a coach I present my opinion regarding the e-learning platform designed for 50+ trainees.

I considered three areas: 1. Technical aspect in relation to recipient i.e. functionality and legibility of the platform and implementation of ICT skills of 50+; 2. Learning model based in CL and perception of 50+ trainees; 3. Contents and form of “Teleworking” course presentation.

The platform was designed for adults i.e. 50+. In my opinion, this is the way how the users, who had no contact with computers in their education and first decades of their employment, are getting familiar with the IT. At the same time, while using the platform, the users are gaining knowledge in particular fields. The use of the platform (with the Manual) and division to stages is in my opinion logical and transparent. Moving forward is clear, using the forum and chat is easy and the percentage indicator of progress is motivating.

CL model was implemented according to the principles. All eight phases of the methodology has its reflection in the e-learning tool. At the same time it is a way of learning that enables individual work (through platform during the time chosen by the user with possibility to repeat and go back in one’s own tempo) and motivates to work through collaboration with randomly chosen users. Adults find it important to share experience (forum, chat) and opinions and to present their work. Methodology implemented on the platform – through division into stages, matching of co-operatives and communication tools between users and tutor – and opportunity to share finished tasks meet the assumptions.

The content of the “Teleworking” course gives the users, in legible form, the crucial information regarding the topic. Authors included history, legal issues and skill aspects assigned to this type of work e.g. time management. Users, through presentations, are becoming familiar with the knowledge and through the exercises they widen their perception of teleworking and its use. It is interesting that while using the e-learning platform and learning a particular matter the users are becoming a part of remote working itself.



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Summing up: big undertaking – implementation of the platform – which gives the 50+ users the knowledge in chosen areas (according to the needs analysis) and implementing their skills of IT utilisation.

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Małgorzata Żydło



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Review

ON THE VOIP MULTI-FEATURE E-LEARNING PLATFORM

HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE COURSE

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The reviewed course is a part of the VOIP e-learning platform. The project is based on the RAVT methodology utilising Collaborative Learning (CL) method.

The course consists of two parts where the first part describes hardware components of the computer whereas second part describes basics of MS Word 2007 and software designed for presentations – PowerPoint 2007.

Methodology of the first session is based on detailed description of PC elements, starting from motherboard, through processor unit, memory, storage and peripherals. Descriptions are on the user level without issues that may be too technical or unintelligible for learners without technical background. Course includes lots of photos. The difference between computers used in the office or at home (3D games) was discussed. Moreover, the course has clearly practical nature designed for users who want to know the computer from inside.

Second session discusses the basic software used to edit documents, MS Word 2007 and PowerPoint 2007 in particular. Introduction covers common elements like file management, ribbon, keyboard shortcuts, bookmarks in the menu etc. Following part consists of more detailed descriptions of text formatting, using the ruler, paragraph and others. Part devoted to PP describes graphic themes management, slides and different fields, object (images, cliparts) management, etc.

The part devoted to software as a whole covers a large dose of knowledge, however it is condensed and must be supported by large amount of exercises. E-learning nature allows going back to chosen fragments which will be of particular meaning in this case. Moreover, the course has practical and vocational nature, however – as it would lengthen and complicate the material – the more complex issues are not described e.g. automatic table of contents or formatting using styles.

Course as a whole is well adjusted to the users, text is clear, Sans serif font may be zoomed if needed. The background is not overloaded with graphical



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elements, page layout based on frames ensures easy and intuitive navigation.

Interesting innovation characterised by a big potential is the utilisation of discussion forum and interaction resulting from pair/group work. Such activity brings significant effects in courses related to IT branch. The Platform Manual simplifies the use of the platform – it covers issues related to the system itself, its handling and describes the model of eight phases.

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Summing up, the course covers large amount of useful and practical knowledge that is transferred in a friendly and relatively attractive manner. The presentation of the material matches the target group needs. Improved effectiveness was achieved by the utilisation of CL model in the remote learning.

Marcin Jędrzejczak

Review

ON THE VOIP MULTI-FEATURE E-LEARNING PLATFORM

English language course

The VOIP Project English course is a well-designed e-learning tool for the beginners. The course is structured into 12 sessions aimed at providing participants with vocabulary and grammatical structures allowing them to convey basic meanings in some everyday situations. Each session consists of a comprehensible explanation of a chosen grammatical material followed by exercises, and a lexical component focusing on a certain topic area, such as professions, family relations or sport. Course participants can also listen to short dialogues and read simple passages on the topic discussed in each session. While the material for listening provides course participants with a model of native speakers' pronunciation, it offers little else. Unfortunately, course designers did not develop the potential of the listening and reading material they included in each session to enable the course participants to gain basic listening and reading comprehension competence by providing them with appropriate tasks. As for the choice language content in each session, it will help students to develop language skills necessary to communicate in common everyday situations. However, both grammar and vocabulary exercises seem a little mechanical and do not allow any language creativity on the part of course participants, except perhaps for a final task in each session where students have to cooperate in pairs or groups to write a dialogue or a short text. It is also regrettable that while the course designers undertook to explain the symbols used in phonetic transcription of English words as well as suggest how to pronounce them, they did not think it worthwhile to record a proper pronunciation model of each sound so that students could listen to it and practise. Despite some drawbacks, the course will enable its participants to master the basics of English grammar and pronunciation, as well as provide them with comparatively extensive range of vocabulary. Its interactive character is particularly commendable, as well as the fact that each student's progress is monitored by a qualified teacher who checks students' written assignments and discusses their work with them in the fora. On the whole, if completed with some additional teaching material, the course is an easy to follow and useful first step towards developing English language competence.

Beata Kiersnowska



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German language course

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Expanding the platform with the courses concerning German language is a very good idea. Very legible and clear appearance of the platform, easy in use, analogical design of particular sessions definitely encourage to learning. Single sessions consist of clearly formed exercises which gives one the feeling of freedom, which is important with the target group. The platform users may find interesting and practical information, share experience and help each other.

Lexical material used in the exercises gives ready constructions and use them according to the context. A learner may listen to the vocabulary used in dialogues through which one practices pronunciation. Large amount of dialogues show real situations in which learners could find themselves. It motivates learners to communicate which is very important in the process of foreign language learning. Listening and comprehensive reading skills exercises are characterised by the lack of diversity (e.g. multiple choice, gap fill-in, match the answers, answer a question, etc.).

“Try yourself” section is a very good way of revision and progress monitoring. Diversity of exercises is a clear advantage. Writing exercises focus only on dialogues which may be insufficient – other forms would be good: e-mails, text messages.

Grammar is important in German language, especially at the beginning of learning. Some of the major issues were briefly discussed (plural, conjugation of verbs, cases). It would be good to expand some aspects and introduce more grammar exercises. Assuming that the platform is designed for 50+ at A1 level (basic) the introduced vocabulary may appear too difficult. Cultural elements are noteworthy as they depict some traditions and common life in German speaking countries.

Tutor plays a significant role in the process of learning. He/she knows how to achieve aims, support the learners so they can understand the matter and focus on the problematic issues.

Tutor is an expert, manager, impeller. The manner of knowledge passing is very clear and the success is in the hands of trainees and tutor. Division into phases, work in groups or pairs, IT utilization foster the experience and



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views exchange and depict variety of working forms which motivates and encourages.

The knowledge on the platform is focused, useful, without errors (Vocabulary Part 1 Bitte schön should be written separately).

Personally I encourage to learn foreign languages with the use of IT as this way of learning is the future. Strona | 19

Justyna Biskup

Review

ON THE VOIP MULTI-FEATURE E-LEARNING PLATFORM

French language course

Multi-feature platform that was developed under Life Long Learning (VOIP – VET for Over 50 Employees through Multi-Feature Platform) offers an innovative way of foreign language learning (including French) in comparison to already existing platforms. The choice of message-order language suggests that the recipients know English and are willing to learn French.

Innovative solution means that the learner can deal with computer and the Internet and cooperate with other learners and tutor in the tempo adjusted to his own potential starting from “zero” level and moving towards higher levels of knowledge and grammar/lexical skills. 50+ is a group that has huge advantage given the psychological barriers in direct contact with group that learns languages without using technology. The platform gives the opportunity to test individually the language material (own tempo and time) before joining the group where one can develop and test his skills in direct interaction.

Course is divided into 12 sessions and gives progressive chances to practice all basic language competences (listening, reading, writing, speaking) and “sub-competences” (phonetics and vocabulary), which gives the learner the sense of progress and encourages to continue. Platform offers lots of functional solutions which give one opportunity to personally organise the didactic material.

Substantive side of the course offers contents related to everyday life and social interaction, which may be an advantage for learner together with sense of security provided by the tutor and forum.

The content, after some linguistic and substantive corrects, may encourage learners due to modern circumstances connecting cooperation using IT, forum and help of a tutor.

From the didactic point of view, some exercises may seem too complex (French grammar). Such exercises appear in the “Try yourself” section where a learner has to finish some difficult words that are not categorised grammatically. These exercises are common in English didactics, not French as the level of exercises may be demotivating. Podcasts, which are available, may be helpful here in order to listen to them before starting an exercise.



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Summing up, the platform has lots of advantages (functionality, transparency, content, cooperation with group and tutor, diversity of exercises, progression) and may become a motivation element that encourages the target group to learn French language.

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Helena Leja



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Final conclusions

The developed platform has a clearly innovative nature and fits into modern tendencies of development and improvement of remote education (e-learning). Experts agreed that the VOIP platform was adjusted to the needs of the target group: 1. through the content of the courses (foreign languages, ICT and teleworking – as indicated in the needs analysis); 2. learning at own tempo which is matched to individual time and perception.

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The material is presented in a clear way, starting from basic issues and components crucial to computer functioning. Course includes large number of exercises which are very helpful in knowledge acquisition. Operating the platform basing on the Manual as well as functional division into stages of each course is clear and logical.

Moving between stages of the training is legible. Thanks to adequate solutions the tempo and time of learning matches the individual needs of each participant. Moreover, gaining knowledge in ICT field during learning other issues and opportunity to exchange experience and views through chat and forum was achieved as well.

The VOIP platform makes it possible for different age groups to educate and up-skill in convenient time, which fits into the LLL idea.

The course authors, having in mind the hierarchy of education, planned the course structure in a way that allows realization of simple aims (remembering) and then more complex aims which result from the previous ones (analysis and synthesis). Adequacy to the transferred model means division into phases i.e. individual work connected with experience exchange and work results presentation (Collaborative Learning).

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