



Exploitation Plan v2_revised June 2011



“A credible exploitation plan is one which is incremental to what partners already do”¹

¹ ExBased partner Jan Bormans, Flanders District of Creativity, Belgium.

1. Objective for exploitation²

The aim of the ExBased project's work package 3 Exploitation is to ensure the best and widest possible use of project results by the target groups after the life time of the project and to establish communication and distribution channels for the transfer of results to potential end users primarily within the partner regions and countries, but also beyond.

In the ExBased project, the objective of exploitation activities is to go one level up and one intensity higher than dissemination (defined as the process of making results available), because “making sure that a product will be used amounts to more than spreading information about it”³.

Though there is a fine line between where dissemination stops and exploitation begins, the ExBased project aims to act upon the distinction between the two processes and has as such chosen to operate with two separate strategies and action plans, which are, nevertheless and inevitable, complementary and entails a certain degree of overlapping activities and outcomes.

Exploitation activities provide the project partners with a new opportunity to market and brand themselves, as they, via the project and the products developed, have gained something new – and different – to offer. Exploitation provides an opportunity to strengthen and/or establish connections and cooperations with stakeholders generally of interest to the partner organisations.

In their individual exploitation plans⁴, the ExBased partners identify how, why and towards whom they will go about *integrating and systematically use; disseminate and distribute* project results⁵ during as well as beyond the lifetime of the ExBased project.

1.1. Potential barriers to exploitation

In order to ensure that project results are exploitable, i.e. represent value for the target group and are applicable, the ExBased products must be developed in such a way that they are adapted to and meet the real needs of the primary target groups: the eventual users (business consultants) and beneficiaries (the businesses). The project has taken a number of measures to meet this requirement:

² The ExBased exploitation plan_23.02.2010 (submitted with the Progress Report, Nov. 2010) has been revised upon discussions in the partnership during the 4th project partnermeeting (i.e. towards the end of the project period); upon recommended readings and upon lessons learned during the 2nd year of the project. Complementary to this general project level exploitation plan are the ExBased partners' individual exploitation plans, likewise developed in June 2011.

³ Survival Kit: Managing Multilateral Projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme, p.118

⁴ Partners' individual exploitation plans are available on the ExBased project's SharePoint (Folder: WP3 Exploitation).

⁵ Words in italics ref. Survival Kit: Managing Multilateral Projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme, p.122

- Effective exploitation requires that end results meet the needs of the end users as identified at the start of the project through the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) (WP5) and the conducted interviews with business consultants from the partner regions.
- The trial-out phase (WP7) as a test in practice and an external evaluation of the products (tool box and training material) on what does and does not work well in practice and in actual business contexts; this including testing identical products across countries to account for potential intercultural differences that may otherwise act as a barrier to the wider transfer and use of the products to regions and countries beyond those in the partnership. In getting the data needed, the success of this phase of the project was much dependent on the trained business consultants who have acted as well as intermediaries towards the companies.
- The trialling out of the ExBased tools, case studies and the principles of the experience economy has proved to be popular in the partner countries and companies proved to be motivated for trying it out. Evaluation of the project results carried out in WP7 has demonstrated tangible benefits for both target groups (business consultant and companies). With a successful fine-tuning of the products (training material and tool box) (WP8), the project can thus deliver project results that are usable for consultants across countries.

2. Strategy: overall considerations and key premises for exploitation

Distinguishing exploitation from mere dissemination activities, EC resources define exploitation as a two-tier process of *multiplication* (“the planned process of *convincing* individual end-users to adopt and/or apply the results of programmes and initiatives”) and *mainstreaming* (“the planned process of *transferring* the successful results of programmes and initiatives to appropriate decision-makers in regulated local, national or European systems”)⁶ respectively.

The revised ExBased exploitation strategy works primarily at the local-regional level; acknowledging that the European level is most realistically and most credibly approached as a matter for the dissemination activities: in terms of reaching beyond the countries and regions in the partnership, the ExBased partners can, realistically, only commit themselves to informing and making results and products available; the partnership cannot, after the project period, be available to ensure an actual transfer and use of the project results in regions (geographically) beyond their natural and everyday working spheres.

Having said that, however, exploitation activities at the project level to be undertaken during the lifetime of the project seek to accomplish more than ‘information spreading’ and to integrate at the European level elements of ‘multiplication’ (ref. above): the final project conference, the ExBased LinkedIn group and the ExBased website will come to constitute ‘a deliberately planned process’ of

⁶ LLP Project Handbook, p.24 (italics added)

convincing people to use, adopt and apply the project results: they will be activities doing more than sharing information and making project results available: they will be designed so as to ‘convince of’: to highlight, demonstrate and showcase, exemplify and bring testimonies to the *benefits* and the *outcomes* directly from end user to end user; they will be shorter or longer term fora for consultants and companies to act as sources of inspiration, guides and trainers for one another.

Further, the exploitation strategy works with two separately defined phases: *before* the end of the project (activities undertaken by partners as a partnership) and *after* the end of the project period (partners operating individually according to own plans and organizations’ practices). By this, the strategy explicitly acknowledges that exploitation activities start already during the project period, during which the partnership – by its joint as well as its separate and individual activities commence to establish effective channels for the exploitation of project results for after the project period.

The revised project exploitation plan remains a document giving a general overview of the overall ExBased strategy and measures for exploitation more than being a plan describing and scheduling particular measures. This is deliberate, as the overall project level plan is meant to constitute the framework within which the individual partner plans are to operate as individual parts of a whole working towards the same end. Bearing in mind that exploitation, by definition, primarily takes place at the individual partner level, it follows that the action-oriented scheduling, with a specific number of defined concrete measures to be implemented and carried out, rests at partner level.

Jointly, the ExBased project level exploitation plan and the partner’s individual exploitation plans meet the minimum level of sustainability as defined in the EC resource ‘Survival Kit: Managing Multilateral Projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme’. Together the exploitation plans define and schedule activities with a view to the objective that after the end of the ExBased funding period,

- There is still a contact person available for at least the whole project, or, preferably in each partner institution
- The project results are integrated and systematically used in the partner institutions and disseminated in their local (national) environments
- The main project results continue to be distributed in their local (national) environments by all partners and can be easily obtained on request
- The project website is maintained and fully operational for three years after the end of the funding period. Through the website potential users can access the project results and ask for support from the project partnership when using them⁷

Evidence of tangible benefits for both target groups (consultants and businesses) obtained from the evaluation of project results during the WP7 trial-out phase, provides the ExBased partners with the necessary justification and motivation to willingly go above and beyond requirements during the lifetime of the ExBased project and actively engage in the continued exploitation of the project results.

⁷ Survival Kit: Managing Multilateral Projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme, p. 122

The ExBased project's main instruments for exploitation (as described in the present document) are:

- WP7 trial-out phase
- Final project conference
- Other EU-funded projects
- Educational institutions
- ExBased website
- ExBased LinkedIn group
- Individual partner exploitation plans

3. Target groups

The revised ExBased exploitation strategy operates with three main target groups defined as the 'eventual users and beneficiaries of the project and other stakeholders of crucial importance'⁸:

1. Business consultants locally and regionally across Europe;
2. Conventional SMEs locally and regionally across Europe;
3. Intermediaries and stakeholders such as project developers and educational institutions also in LLP countries that are not represented in the ExBased partner consortium.

Acknowledging that the ExBased partnership is rather Northern European in its composition, the projects recognizes the importance of reaching beyond the partnership's limited geography, though, as marked elsewhere in this document, it is likewise acknowledged that partners have no resources and no obvious opportunities for doing exploitation activities beyond their own regions – especially not beyond the funding period. Such activities of reaching beyond the countries in the partnership will thus amount primarily to dissemination activities; with a longer term view, however, of establishing potential channels also for effective exploitation by means of reaching out to intermediaries with contacts to eventual users and beneficiaries in countries outside the ExBased partnership. Engaging with such intermediaries will be done at the final conference, via the ExBased website and the ExBased LinkedIn group, but additionally via established Brussels-based networks such as the ERRIN Design & Creativity Working Group; other likeminded EU-projects such as the INTERREG IVC project Creative Growth and the LLP project Creative Tools.

At the local-regional level, and with a view to reaching the main target groups, the ExBased partners' individual exploitation plans point to the use of exploitation channels such as:

- Local and regional SMEs
- Local and regional intermediate organizations, business development agencies, chambers of commerce and political levels
- National networks and associations of business agencies
- Network of teachers, leaders and institutions on creativity and innovation methods

⁸ Survival Kit: Managing Multilateral Projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme, p. 118

- Local and foreign universities
- Mentoring networks and social media networks
- Organisations' own staff and associates as ambassadors for the ExBased products
- Trained consultants and companies as ambassadors for the ExBased products

4. Main exploitation instruments and activities for ExBased

As mentioned above, the ExBased exploitation strategy is divided into and works with two separately defined phases: *during* and *after* the project period. By definition, activities after the project period will be limited at the joint project level as partners will have ceased to exist as a partnership and will be operating individually and in accordance with existing organizational practices.

4.1 During the project period: intensive interaction and establishing channels

Exploitation activities are an integrated part of the entire project period, during which the partnership commence to establish effective channels for the exploitation of project results for after the project period. With a view to exploitation, the activities have as their defined sustainability objective to bring about ongoing intensive interaction with the eventual users and beneficiaries of the project's results.

4.1.1 WP7 Trial-out phase

The WP7 trial-out phase forms part of the exploitation strategy as much as of the project's dissemination strategy, because:

- a) ExBased practises have informed partner organisation's way of thinking and have started to be integrated into partner organisations' own and existing practices;
- b) The project has during the trial-out phase reached out to and actively engaged the project's defined end users and thereby established channels through to stakeholders of crucial importance for exploitation of project results beyond the project period.

The trial-out phase has brought about a number of business stories and testimonials from consultants which can and will be further developed by the partners and used in their individual exploitation activities for underlining the personal gains; formulating and exemplifying the "what's in it for me"- aspect, thereby making it easier to convince end users to use the project results.

4.1.2 Final project conference

The ExBased project will host the final project conference during the days of the Creativity World Forum (www.creativityworldforum.be) organised on 16-17 November 2011 in Hasselt (BE). The forum is, since 2004, a yearly recurring conference on business creativity; every three years the forum is organised in Flanders (BE). The Forum brings together approx. 1500 people from all over the world. At the CWF in 2008, 62.4% of all participants were companies; mostly from the conventional sector, and 21.4% of these were companies with less than 10 employees, ref. ExBased's main company target group (small/micro and conventional). Other participants count representatives from policy levels and intermediaries such as consultants and business development organisations. Organising the ExBased final conference at the CWF is thus a prime opportunity to disseminate and promote the results of the project, not merely to a European, but to a world-wide audience of relevant stakeholders. As such the final conference forms part of the planned process of reaching beyond the geography of the ExBased partnership and of establishing potential channels for future exploitation of the project results.

4.1.3 Other EU-funded projects

The ExBased project will seek to become one of those already existing projects that future projects should reference when applying for EU-funding. By this, future projects would built upon and further develop the results generated, the lessons learnt and the products developed through ExBased and by this extend the project beyond the lifetime of the funding period itself. Becoming a frame of reference for future projects will require widespread awareness that the ExBased project exists as a best practice Leonardo-funded project. Therefore, the project will liaise both with the EC's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the individual national agencies for the LLP and Leonardo programme⁹.

The national agencies will be approached by direct mail with a standard message providing the facts and figures of the project as well as the partnership's reflections on what, from the project, its results and products, is to take further and further developed in future projects.

4.1.4 Educational institutions

The ExBased products will be integrated into existing educational practice and courses in a number of educational institutions in Europe and abroad. It was mentioned in the ExBased application that the partnership would aim for the training module be incorporated into ECTS system. The training module is, however, not suitable for this purpose as the partnership has come to realize that the shortness that works for people already in a job, i.e. what works in practice for business consultant, is not sufficient for an ECTS accreditation and a stand alone course.

⁹ List of national agencies available from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/leonardo/contact_en.html

However, ExBased lead partner BASW, a well established educational institution in Denmark, will see to the ExBased products being used as integrated elements in existing courses at the Academy; likewise will Staffordshire University and Keele University in UK, and the Tampere University of Applied Science may likewise consider this. Additionally, BASW partner universities in the USA and Australia have shown an interest in using the ExBased tools as new additions to their already established courses.

4.1.5 Individual partner exploitation plans

At the individual partner level like at the overall project level, it is acknowledged that exploitation activities and interaction with the eventual users and beneficiaries as well as intermediaries of crucial importance is start already during the project period. The ExBased partners' individual exploitation plans contain details on activities foreseen for the establishing of effective channels for the exploitation of project results for after the project period.

Partners' exploitation plans are available for download from the project's SharePoint (WP3 folder).

4.2 After the project period: convince and transfer

Activities after the project period will, by definition, be limited at the joint project level as partners will have ceased to exist as a partnership and will be operating individually and in accordance with existing organizational practices. Partners' individual exploitation plan are thus the main instrument apart from two joint, online and partly self-managing, measures: the ExBased website and the LinkedIn group.

4.2.1 ExBased website

At the end of the project period, the ExBased website will contain all fine-tuned material and products that the project has produced as well as information on the results and learnings it has generated. The website will function as an electronic archive through which other regions and all relevant stakeholders can access and download the material for inspiration and usage, e.g. adapting them to their own needs and/or practices or perhaps even building on them and taking them to a next level.

The ExBased website will be accessible min. 3 years after the project period.

4.2.2 ExBased LinkedIn group

The LinkedIn group ‘ExBased – Business Consultant Network’ is already a well-established and functioning group; and as an open group on the social media platform, it has the potential to reach much beyond the partners and the countries in the ExBased partnership. The LinkedIn group is a suitable means to make project results live on; keep the channels and connections to the end users and beneficiaries, established during the WP7 trial-out period, active also beyond the lifetime of the project. The group has the potential to generate an active crowd of ambassadors for the project and its tools; a forum for discussion and continuous improvement and adjustment, that is likely to contribute to convincing and ensuring an actual transfer of results, by inviting, motivating and guiding, in a self-help system, consultants to adopt and apply the tools developed.

The LinkedIn group will be advertised on the ExBased website. The group is expected to be largely self-managable with partners’ own frequent use being at the same time a watchful eye on inappropriate use of the group’s discussion forum.

4.2.3 Individual partner exploitation plans

The overall guiding principle for the ExBased exploitation strategy is the fact that a credible exploitation plan is one which is incremental to what partners already do. Thus, neither can partners exploit in other countries than their own; nor can successful efforts at exploiting the ExBased results be ones that are detached from the individual organisations’ established practice and channels of communication.

The partners’ individual exploitation plans describe in more or less detail how partners will endorse the project results through demonstration, education and facilitation; how results will become integrated into the organisations’ existing knowledge bank and suite of resources and their portfolio of knowledge and expertise; and how, via use in practice, users will be encouraged to apply and adopt the resources – in part or whole, to their own specific needs and practices.

Partners’ exploitation plans are available for download from the project’s SharePoint (WP3 folder).

5. Milestones: activity plan overview (project level)

The activities described above are summed up and scheduled in the table below. It contains the joint project level activities taking place during the lifetime of the project. The partners’ individual exploitations plans bear details on a wide range of activities scheduled to take place locally and regionally beyond the lifetime of the project funding period.

Exploitation milestones: activity list	Timescales
M1 Exploitation plan	February 2010

M2 Revised Exploitation strategy and activity plan	June 2011
M3 Individual partner exploitation plans	June 2011
M4 WP7 trial-out phase and intensive interaction with potential end users and beneficiaries	January - May 2011. Several partners foresee individual measures to do follow-ups and refresher days with a view to maintaining the trained and engaged consultants and businesses as ambassadors for the project
M5 Final project conference	16-17 November 2011
M6 Liasing with European stakeholders such as project developers and educational institutions	Commencing already at the start of the project period as overlapping with dissemination activities and potentially unlimited after the end of the project ref. partners' individual plans.
M7 ExBased website as a resource archive of finetuned products and tools	December 2011
M8 ExBased LinkedIn group (open)	Commencing already in April 2011 as a closed group for project partners, trained consultants and companies. Open group as of June 2011 and foreseen to exist unlimited after the project period

6. Resources required: people and budget

For all ExBased partners, hours and man days to be spent on exploitation are part of the total and overall staff cost budget. In accordance with the ExBased project application p. 60, the indicative number of staff days allocated to Work Package 3 on Exploitation is as listed below per partner:

Partner	Country	Name	No of staff days
1	Business Academy South West (BASW)	Denmark	10
2	South Denmark European Office (SDEO)	Denmark	10

3	House of Business Aabenraa (EHAA)	Denmark	10
4	Creative Industries Development Agency (CIDA)	United Kingdom	10
5	North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce	United Kingdom	10
6	Flanders DC	Belgium	10
7	Ideone / Creative Tampere	Finland	10
Total			70

There is no additional budget for Exploitation. Only staff costs are foreseen for this work package.