



Access International Development (AID)

Final Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

The vision of the Access International Development (AID) project was to contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance in the International Development sector through the development, validation and implementation of a certified training programme that truly reflects the needs of the sector and meets the training and employability needs of those individuals in or wishing to enter the sector. The training was aimed at those who were relatively new to the sector or who wanted to work in the sector but weren't sure about any gaps in the knowledge or skills required to be effective as practitioners.

The AID Project aimed to:

- Work with NGOs, charities and other stakeholders in the development of a Skill Set framework for professionals employed in or wishing to enter the International Development sector.
- Ensure that the Skill Set developed recognises and addresses the need for a European qualification which is also able to reflect local / national need.
- Develop, test and implement training materials that reflect the learning styles and needs of the sector and potential beneficiaries.
- Base the programme on clearly defined 'necessary skill sets'.
- Implement a European wide certification/validity of both the qualification and certification.
- Create and manage a European network committed to driving and improving learning so that it meets the identified needs of the sector and the individuals it employs.

Over the two years of the project, the partners completed an extensive research and training needs analysis exercise, of people working in the International Development sector in Ireland, the UK, Spain and Bulgaria which in turn served to inform the development of the following project outcomes:

- International Development Skill Set – a description of target competences of those working or wishing to enter the sector
- Access International Development Training Materials – a training package for the AID programme in five languages (Bulgarian, English, French, German, and Spanish) mapped on to Level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).
- AID Online Course and Self-Assessment service available through the European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA) online portal

- ECQA Exam Question Database – a set of multiple choice test questions that will support the certification and online examination of the International Development Skill Set

The AID Skills Set, training materials and related resources have been piloted and validated with the 10 trainers and 66 learners drawn from the International Development sector and broadly disseminated to key stakeholders in the International Development sector as well as education providers, policy makers and individuals.

The Project consortium is made up of four organisations representing four EU countries:

The project coordinator partner is the University of Ulster based in Northern Ireland, which is a leading UK university for widening participation. It has a well-established International Development Programme and a UNESCO Centre.

Fast Track to IT (FIT) from Dublin, Ireland is an industry-led initiative with a mission to build an inclusive smart economy and possesses significant experience in training development and the coordination of European projects under the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The European Centre for Quality from Bulgaria brings expertise in the field of quality assurance and project coordination.

The University of Deusto, Spain is a well-known European research institution with a strong track record in Humanitarian Assistance studies and a member of the NOHA network.

The consortium provides an appropriate balance and mix of skills and perspectives. It has been further supplemented by the support of the sector representatives including CADA – the Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies, Northern Ireland; Dóchas – the Irish coalition of International Development NGOs; and BOND the UK network of International Development NGOs.

Further information on the project and its products can be found on the project website www.aidproject.eu

Table of Contents

- 1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES..... 6
- 2. PROJECT APPROACH 8
- 3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS..... 14
- 4. PARTNERSHIPS 21
- 5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE 23
- 6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES 25

1. Project Objectives

The AID project has been developed with a vision to contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance in the International Development sector through the development of, validation of and implementation of a pan-EU CPD programme that truly reflects the needs of the sector and meets the employability needs of those individuals in or wishing to enter the sector.

The project aimed to:

- work with NGOs, Charities and other stakeholders in the development of the competency framework for professionals employed in or wishing to enter the International Development sector;
- ensure that the framework developed recognises and addresses the need for a pan-EU qualification;
- develop, test and implement a range of pedagogical approaches that reflects the learning styles and needs of the sector;
- develop and deliver an EQF accredited diploma level CPD qualification.

To achieve the overall aims of the project the following concrete objectives were set out:

- To develop a modern training and certification programme that reflects sectoral needs as well as those of individuals within the sector;
- To base the programme on clearly defined 'necessary skill sets';
- To promote cooperation within the EU and within participating sectors in the quality assurance process;
- To create and coordinate a European network committed to driving and improving learning so that it meets the identified needs of the sector and the individuals it employs;
- To implement an EU-wide certification with validity of both the qualification and certification;
- To support participants in training and further training activities to acquire skills relevant to the sector;
- To base design and implementation of the training materials on best practice and 'lessons learned' by using practical examples and 'real-life' case studies.

The project has very clear and achievable target groups which include International Development delivery agents e.g. NGOs and charities, public sector funders of 'International Development' at an EU level and at national levels within the countries of the project participants, education and training providers, accreditation and certification bodies and individuals employed in the sector as well as those wishing to enter the sector.

The benefits for its targeted users are multiple and can be analysed at different levels:

- Individuals working in the International Development sector (as employees or volunteers) can access a European-wide accredited CPD certification in International Development, either through the European Qualifications and Certification Association (ECQA) portal or through the University of Ulster's Life Long Learning Certificate in Professional and Professional Development programme. They can access training content and tools addressing management of real-life development problems, opportunities and situations. Individuals wishing to enter the sector gain better understanding of concrete development issues and employability skills.
- International Development organisations (NGOs) and funders get access to an attractive and accessible CPD solution for existing employees which can be also used to attract and train new candidates to the sector. In the long term the programme can strengthen capacity and credibility of the sector.
- The project also encourages collaboration between education providers and the sector representatives and promote high performance and innovation in systems and practices in the field;

The International Development sector representatives have been involved in the project from the initial development stage. Not only have they supported the development of the project application (for example, the Dóchas network in Ireland, and the Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies, Northern Ireland), but they have also contributed to key phases of the project implementation, dissemination and exploitation. The inputs and feedback gathered from the sector through the initial online survey, focus groups and pilot testing, to a great extent informed the design of the training programme. They were enthusiastic about the project and its outcomes and spread the positive message to the wider sector and to national, European, and international agencies.

2. Project Approach

The AID project has developed an approach which will support the improvement of the quality of training and recognition of different skills within the International Development sector across Europe. The final outcomes of the project can ultimately be used in different EU Member States, providing each one with a means of unlimited access to exemplar training materials and a means of certification in the field of International Development related work for those wishing to work in the sector at home or abroad.

The AID project followed a clear developmental methodology of research, product design, development and implementation, which was supported by an on-going evaluation of its progress, interim and final results and continuing valorisation activities aimed at the dissemination and exploitation of its products and results.

A fundamental element of the project approach was direct involvement and close co-operation with the target group i.e. individuals and organisations working in the International Development sector. This approach contributed and added value to the final products.

Research and training needs analysis

The research phase involved three months of quantitative and qualitative research activities aimed at identifying trends across the partner countries regarding existing training and certification pathways within the International Development sector, to measure their impact on career and employment opportunities, but primarily to study the existing skill gaps and identify CPD pathways that reflected best practice, based on examples and experience from different European countries. The conduct of the survey was an excellent opportunity to get to know the sector from different perspectives as well as to compare the results between participating countries. A common online questionnaire was developed, translated into all partner languages and distributed to 120 organisations representative across the four partner countries. Prior to this distribution exercise, each project partner identified organisations that they thought would add value to the survey results and established links with them or used their existing links to make contact. This served to enhance the engagement and support for the project's development from sector representatives during the research phase. Between June and September 2011, the project partners contacted various organisations in UK, Ireland, Spain and Bulgaria with the request to complete the online questionnaires. A total of 65 valid questionnaires were gathered and then analysed.

The survey findings were summarised and analysed in a Research Report and have informed the development of a Skill Set for the International Development sector, the training programme and resources. All partners have been involved in this phase and took part in several workshops during project meetings, which aimed at developing the AID Skills Set. The Skill Set was further reviewed and validated by the sector representatives through focus group sessions and direct feedback collected by emails or phone conversations. This served to ensure that the project maintained continued close cooperation with the International Development sector and was open to influence and feedback from people working within the sectors, who were simultaneously the main target group of the project.

Training Materials and Online Course Development

The product development phase also involved a strong collaboration between the Project Partners and the sector representatives. The AID Training programme learning objectives were chosen to address the skills gaps as identified through the survey research and to match the European Qualifications Framework requirements.

The Access International Development training materials were developed in the form of full modules that have been mapped on to the European Qualifications Framework Level 5.

An important element of the product development phase was set up of collaboration with the European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA) on the accreditation of the programme and preparation for delivery through the ECQA online e-learning platform and exam system. The requirements of the ECQA certification processes, procedures and systems had to be thoroughly understood in order to meet all requirements and achieve the ECQA pan-European accreditation for the training programme.

The pilot version of the programme was uploaded to the University of Ulster e-learning platform to allow for pilot testing of the training materials.

The Pilot Implementation of the AID Training Programme

The pilot implementation of the AID Training Programme started with the “Train the Trainer” workshops whereby selected tutors from Bulgaria, Spain and the UK were introduced to the AID curriculum and encouraged to critically reflect on its content and the pedagogical approaches used, thereby contributing to their improvement and refinement.

The next phase was the start of the pilot online course AID with a group of 66 participant working, volunteering or interested in joining the International

Development sector. In order to get a European perspective and feedback students were recruited from all Partner countries i.e. Spain, Ireland, Bulgaria and all regions of the UK.

The recruitment of the pilot course participants was carried out through multiple channels including email communication, advertisements in International Development networks and individual NGO's newsletters, websites, bulletins, internet portals (www.activelink.ie) and personal contacts. As a result, over 400 applications for the pilot programme were sent out and 116 applications were submitted for consideration. Interestingly, expressions of interest in the AID training pilot opportunity were received from people working in international development or wanting to work in international development from literally all over the world which demonstrates the reach of the dissemination channels that were used. A total of 66 participants were enrolled to the pilot AID course who were then invited to a face-to-face day-long residential induction workshop organised by the respective partners in Sofia for Bulgarian participants, Bilbao for Spanish participants and Belfast for UK and Irish based participants. All participants received the same induction workshop, regardless of their country base and where it was being delivered as the trainers were delivering the same workshop materials to their cohorts in their respective regions.

The online training was delivered by 4 lecturers and tutors from the University of Ulster through the University of Ulster e-learning portal – Blackboard. Participants were enrolled as part-time students of the University of Ulster and introduced to the Blackboard online environment using the University of Ulster's orientation for students training materials.

The pedagogical approach used in the delivery of the online training materials reflected best practice in development education and online teaching methods. Module content was released on a weekly basis and participants read over the lecture and seminar notes provided; engaged in a variety of moderated online discussions with a cross section of peers from other countries in their respective tutorial groups; wrote journals that documented their learning; explored real life case study exemplars to inform their understanding of international development related work at home and in the field; and completed assessment exercises designed to develop their employability skills in the international development sector. Each module consists of six units of work to be covered and each unit was released sequentially on a weekly basis to encourage progression in learning. Reference to practical case studies is used to illustrate the application of theoretical concepts throughout. This training is not designed to emulate a Masters level programme (of which there are many well established ones available throughout Europe), but rather to address the gap in training provision for those who want to bring a vocational skill set to development work but want to better understand the additional knowledge and skills needed to be an effective development practitioner.

Module content is described later in the report in the section ***Project Outcomes and Results***. The initial induction workshop does not form part of the accredited training but rather provides participants with an opportunity to explore what the training will entail and to encourage participants to critically reflect on their skills and knowledge gaps. This is an important pre-requisite to the training programme. The module material is then designed to ensure that regardless of the specific area of international development related work that participants are seeking to work in, the training will provide them with the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and values regarding the policy context and employability skills needed to be an effective development practitioner at entry or intermediate job role levels in the sector.

The assessment framework for certification of the training materials employs a mixed method approach of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment exercises, in keeping with best practice in development education pedagogy and mirroring the discursive approach taken in the development of the training materials. The assessment framework encourages participants to engage with the training materials in a critically reflective manner and to demonstrate their learning through a series of applied case study tasks, quizzes and critical reflection exercises to allow them to demonstrate that they have achieved the stated learning outcomes mapped to the various elements associated with each of the modules.

Evaluation and Quality Assurance

The evaluation of the AID project was designed as an ongoing process, throughout the whole duration of the project.

The subject of the evaluation was both the project's evolvment (i.e. compliance to the work plan and time schedule), as well as processes and products of the project (project meetings, the AID online course).

An Evaluation Officer (P2) has been assigned and whose role was to oversee the evaluation of the project and its products; to provide guidance throughout all phases of execution; to co-ordinate the project's internal review process; to design evaluation questionnaires, collect and analyse the results and present to the Consortium members.

The evaluation of the AID training programme comprised of a formative evaluation on completion of the first module and summative evaluation at the end of the programme to evaluate training implementation, identify key learning and to suggest areas for improvement. This programme evaluation was carried out through an online questionnaire distributed to the course participants.

The feedback from the participants in the evaluation exercise was very positive with 70% of participants stating that they would recommend the training to their friends. Other comments from participants in the qualitative feedback were as follows:

“The modules provided a good overview on the theory of the topics and at the same time were not too theoretical. They were connected with practice through examples of the work of different organizations and in different contexts.”

“I found all the modules very useful. Information, exercises, case studies and the questions for discussion mark contemporary global issues and problems and they can be applied in my work with children and adults, can be spread out because everyone is connected with those problems.”

“the material was excellent - I was particularly surprised at how interesting even the less interesting (if that makes sense!) part were. I loved the video links and the stats. The case studies were relevant and fascinating.”

Dissemination and Exploitation

Dissemination activities started at the very beginning of the project and ran through the entire lifecycle of the project according to a well structured and clear dissemination and exploitation strategy.

The main channels and means for dissemination used in the project were:

- a) Project website (www.aidproject.eu) with detailed information about the project, partnership, planned activities and results. A link to the project website together with the short description has been placed on the project partner organisation's websites.
- b) Social networking tools – A Facebook page was created for the project (www.facebook.com/aidproject) to raise awareness among a wider community, promote and sustain engagement of the key stakeholder within and beyond the project lifecycle
- c) Mailing - e-mails with information about the project were sent to potential interested parties at crucial stages of the project (people working in the development sector, NGOs, students, training organizations), especially before the focus group, when asking for comments on the Skill Set and at recruitment stage.
- d) Promotional materials and media – a project leaflet was printed out in the first few months of the project and distributed at events at national and international level, press releases, internal newsletters were also used to reach the target audience

- e) Events, conferences, workshops and seminars - a number of presentation and research papers dedicated to the AID project were made at several events:
- A Joint Ministerial meeting between Irish and UK Ministers of International Development: Jan O'Sullivan (Irish Aid) and Alan Duncan (UK's Department for International Development), hosted by the Northern Ireland Assembly's All Party Group on International Development (APGID).
 - The Development Studies Association Ireland (DSAI) Annual Conferences in Maynooth and Dublin City University in 2011 and 2012 respectively
 - Irish National Agency Conference on Lifelong Learning Programme opportunities
 - Bulgarian National Agency Conference and Information Day on "Lifelong Learning Programme" - sectoral Programme "Leonardo da Vinci".
 - *Development and Development Education* Conference hosted by the Development Education Research Centre, Institute of Education, University College, London in January 2012
 - Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies, Northern Ireland's Annual General Meeting held at the University of Ulster attended by the two Junior Ministers from the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers in the Northern Assembly in November 2012.

The final launch event for project dissemination, which was held on the 10th December 2012 in the Northern Ireland Assembly Buildings in Stormont, Belfast marked the closure of the project and launched the project results to over 40 representatives of the international development sector, educators, policy makers and individuals. The conference was hosted by the Chair of Northern Ireland's All Party Group on International Development, Conall McDevitt MLA. It was attended by other Members of the Legislative Assembly including the Minister for Justice in the Northern Ireland Assembly, David Ford MLA.

The exploitation strategy was built upon the dissemination activities and the strong network of International Development NGOs involved in and dedicated to the project from its inception. As a result a number of external evaluation have expressed interest in using the AID training materials for the organisation's volunteers and staff and this includes VSO UK, the Welsh International Development Hub network, BOND UK, Dochás, Ireland, and CADA Northern Ireland.

All Project Partners have become members of the ECQA and formed a Job Role Committee for the programme thus committing themselves to the maintenance and further development of the programme through the ECQA structures.

In addition to taking on the lead role in the ECQA Job Role Committee and ECQA accredited training provider, the Lead Partner – University of Ulster is committed to continuing the delivery of the programme through its own e-learning portal as a Certificate in Personal and Professional Development.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The main achievements and results of the AID project include:

Research Report and Training Needs Analysis in the International Development sector

This research report presents an overview of the training needs and experiences of people employed within the International Development sector in UK, Ireland, Spain and Bulgaria. It summarises findings of a three-month quantitative and qualitative research activity aimed at identifying trends across the partner countries regarding existing training and certification pathways within the International Development sector, to measure their impact on career and employment opportunities, but primarily to study the existing skill gaps and identify CPD pathways that reflected best practice, based on examples and experience from different European countries.

The Research Report consists of 12 different sections:

- Overviewed of the Report
- Methodology
- Overview of Participating Organisations
- Engagement in International Development Work
- Essential Skills to Work in the International Development Sector
- Skills Gaps in the International Development Sector 'At Home'
- Skills Gaps in International Development Sector 'Abroad'
- Training and Continuous Professional Development
- Changes in International Development Skill Set
- International Development Skills in Demand
- Availability of Training Opportunities
- Certification Process and Training Provision in International Development sector

This report played an important role in the project as it informed the design of the International Development Skill Set.

International Development Skill Set

The International Development Skill Set provides a framework of competencies needed by employees working in International Development and those wishing to enter the sector. Development of this Skills Set was fundamental to further work and to the project achieving its targets.

The Skill Set has been divided into four main pillars representing the wide scope of International Development sector:

- 1) Intercultural Competences
- 2) Management Skills
- 3) Human Rights, Gender & Equality
- 4) Sustainable Development.

Each pillar is further broken down into more specific themes and outlines essential skills on both the basic and advanced levels.



The content of the Skill Set has been reviewed and validated by the sector representatives who took part in focus group sessions and individual consultations.

AID Training Materials

The AID training materials have been developed in conjunction with the AID Skill Set and their contents have also been informed by the findings of the AID research report. To this end, the project partners have also provided support for the development of a pilot version of the AID course training materials. The training

materials have been developed in the form of full modules that have been mapped on to the European Qualifications Framework Level 5, using the University of Ulster's validation process for quality assurance purposes.

The descriptions of the modules that make up the training materials are as follows:

The training commences with an induction workshop called *Access International Development: Why work in International Development?* This workshop module engages participants in a process of guided critical self reflection about their motivations, aspirations and expectations in relation to working in International Development related fields, either at home or abroad. It introduces the AID International Development Skill Set to participants to inform thinking about what is required to work in this sector and to reflect on their own knowledge and skills gaps. The induction workshop does not form part of the accredited training programme but is an important pre-requisite to the accredited training programme.

Module one of the training materials is called *Access International Development: Exploring Key Challenges of Working in Cross Cultural Development Settings*. This module was designed to encourage participants to think about the key aspects of what working in international development requires in terms of self-awareness, reflection and critical thinking as well as a sound understanding of the role development workers can play and the values they are expected to bring to their practice. The module encourages participants to learn the importance of 'doing no harm', setting themselves in context, understanding that context and taking steps to ensure they stay safe (and indirectly keep others safe).

Module Two was released once the first module was completed to allow students the time and space to familiarise themselves with the Blackboard Learn online e-learning environment. Module two, called *Access International Development and Globalisation: Key Themes and Ideas That Inform Practice*, is designed to introduce participants to the important themes and thinking that drive contemporary development practice. It was developed to encourage students to think in an integrated fashion, to understand the complex linkages between humans in the Minority and Majority worlds and the natural environment, to develop an awareness of pressing development issues and their role in responding to those issues identified.

Module Three, called *Access International Development: Research and Programme Tools for Effective Practice* introduces participants to the importance of making decisions and implementing programmes based on good and up to date data. It introduces students to the many tools currently in use by international development practitioners throughout the programme cycle. By the end of the module, participants should be able to identify what tools are most appropriate to different phases in the international development programme cycle.

Module Four, called *Access International Development and Globalisation: Gender Awareness, Human Rights and Human Security in Development* is designed as an introduction to the importance of factoring gender into development policy and practice in the Global South and the reasons why. It also examines human rights and human security based approaches to development in the twenty first century and why they have become such important overarching paradigms in the pursuit of development cooperation work.

The final module five, called *Access International Development: Sustainability and Climate Justice* explores the complex challenges of balancing the sometimes competing needs for poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability in the Global South. It examines the challenges of climate change and the response espoused by the climate justice movement as it influences international development policy and practice.

The development of the training package has been managed by the Director of the International Development Programme at the University of Ulster, who is also Course Director for the undergraduate Minor in International Development, with more than 15 years' experience of curriculum design and delivery of International Relations, International Development, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainable Development and Development Education courses in the higher education sector in the UK and internationally. Other experienced colleagues have worked on the content and structure of the AID training materials too, including staff with extensive field experience of working in humanitarian aid and international development in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The structure and the content of the training materials were revised subject to the findings of both the formative and summative participant evaluations that were undertaken as part of the evaluation process.

Five of the AID modules were produced as learner booklets available in a PDF format which can be used for the delivery of face-to-face training or for self-directed learning. They are available in five languages: English, Spanish, French, German and Bulgarian.



AID Online Course and Self-Assessment

The full programme can be accessed as an online course accredited by both the University of Ulster’s Certificate in Personal and Professional Development and the European Certification and Qualifications Association (ECQA) portal.

The University’s Certificate in Personal and Professional Development was the accreditation that the pilot testing participants received upon successful completion of the course. The course was delivered in English, fully online via the University’s online learning environment, Blackboard Learn. This course was delivered by academic staff in the University’s International Development Programme in conjunction with staff in the Lifelong Learning section of the University’s Access and Distributed Learning Department.

The AID programme delivered as the University of Ulster’s Certificate in Personal and Professional Development (CPPD) was assigned a total of 60 UK credit points with assessment based on a pass/fail only basis. The assessment framework employed a mixed methods approach to test that the participants had successfully demonstrated the associated learning outcomes identified with each module. The assessment methodology included case study analyses, online tests, critical essays on a case study topic of interest, completing research and programming tool exercises and writing reports relevant to best practice in the international development sector currently. Participants were provided with a marking schema to ensure they understood what was expected of them in the assessment process and to make the feedback as useful as possible to help them improve as their learning progressed.

The ECQA accredited AID programme will also be delivered online with certification issued upon successful completion of assessment that tests the associated learning outcomes as articulated in the course documentation.

Evaluation Results

According to the final evaluation findings from the participants on the training pilot the Access International Development training materials were deemed to be challenging, relevant, thought provoking and useful. The feedback from participants on the pilot was very positive overall.

Over 85% of participants rated the overall AID Pilot programme as Good or Excellent and the modules' content and quality considered as the main strengths of the programme. They felt that they learnt a lot from the programme. 89% of participants claimed that it helped them develop knowledge and understanding, skills and values and attitudes to International Development. 70% would recommend the course to their friends. Students felt that the course challenged them both personally and professionally and encouraged them to continue with further training.

The AID e-course was considered well prepared with high quality materials in general, although the online, distance learning delivery mode was a challenging element to some.

The following comments from the course participants, best reflect the impact of the programme on the target groups:

“I found all the modules very useful. Information, exercises, case studies and the questions for discussion mark contemporary global issues and problems and they can be applied in my work with children and adults, can be spread out because everyone is connected with those problems.”

“The material was excellent - I was particularly surprised at how interesting even the less interesting (if that makes sense!) parts were. I loved the video links and the stats. The case studies were relevant and fascinating.”

“The modules were excellent. I learned a lot from each of them. Interesting topics and discussion points.”

During discussions at the project dissemination conference in December 2012, one of the participants on the training programme explained that her participation in the training had made her more effective and confident in her role as a fundraiser for a large UK based NGO. She had come to the role with well developed fundraising

skills and experience but with less knowledge of the international development sector at home and abroad. She described how her participation in the training had helped her to better understand her role as a fund raiser in the organisation and had improved her understanding of the work that her organisation was engaged in at home and internationally. Participation in the training had served to deepen her job satisfaction as well as having made her a greater asset to the organisation she works for.

All project partners contributed to the positive inputs and commitment to moving the project on to the delivery stage. Therefore, the Research Report, Skill Set and AID training materials result from the combination of know-how and experiences brought to the project by each of the various organisations. Partners feel that the project has huge merit and can make a real difference to the International Development sector across Europe as well as for education and training providers who wish to deliver training in this field.

The AID Skill Set, Research Report and the AID Programme booklets are available on the project website www.aidproject.eu. Individuals or organisations interested in the online version of the AID programme (certified by either the University of Ulster or ECQA) are welcome to contact Roisin McEvoy at the University of Ulster (r.mcevoy@ulster.ac.uk) for further information.

4. Partnerships

The project partnership is made up of four organisations representing four European countries:

1. The University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK
2. Fast Track Into Information Technology, Ireland
3. University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain
4. European Centre for Quality, Bulgaria

All partners bring unique aspects of expertise from the fields of International Development, training and curriculum design, European project coordination and quality assurance. They therefore all contribute to creating an added value to the partnership at the European level in the following ways:

- Competencies and skills exchange – each partner has distinct competencies in the area of the International Development sector, developing training materials, validation of learning and certification that is why all partners contribute to the development phase of the project;
- Mutual understanding of skills and training needs within the International Development sector in Ireland, UK, Spain and Bulgaria;
- Strengthening existing and establishing new networks for collaboration between Member States. Some partners have already successfully collaborated before the project and this project helps to maintain and strengthen their collaboration. At the same time, partners who did not know each other before have set up positive relationships which may result in further cooperation in the future.
- Contributions to various EU policy areas:
 - The project developed Access International Development training materials and an EU-wide CPD accredited Certificate in Personal and Professional Development.
 - Enhanced collaboration between the Higher Education and the International Development sectors.
- Project results can be transferred across all EU Member States and can enhance the recognition of skills and career paths within the International Development sector across Europe.

- The project has the added benefit of widening networks and partnerships outside the Consortium. Partners have established relationships with a variety of International Development representatives from different countries, who are very interested in the aims and objectives of the AID project.

5. Plans for the Future

All Partner organisations are committed to using the project resources internally or within their networks beyond the project's lifetime. Partners will maintain and further develop the project materials through the European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA). All partners are now members of the Association and have formed a Job Role Committee for the AID programme. Other organisations interested in the programme delivery can apply to join the Job Role Committee or register as training providers with ECQA. Interested learners will be able to sign up for the online AID course on the ECQA Moodle platform, complete the training and then apply for certification upon successful completion of an online exam.

The University of Ulster will continue to offer the Access International Development programme as the University of Ulster's Certificate in Personal and Professional Development. As the lead partner in the project, the University of Ulster will continue to disseminate the various ways in which the training is available through the networks that the International Development Programme is a member of, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. This will ensure the sustainability and growth of the project beyond the life span of its funding. More work is already planned with a variety of UK and Irish based NGOs to promote the uptake of the training materials as part of their in-house training provision for current and new employees, for example, VSO UK is currently undergoing a review of all of its learning and training provision and they have expressed an interest in using the training provided by the AID project for future training plans with staff in the UK and internationally. This link has come about as a result of one of their new staff members having been a participant on the AID pilot training programme and the demonstrable benefits that the employee gained from undertaking the training provided.

In keeping with the growing move by higher education institutions and other education and life long learning organisations to provide open source learning materials, a series of learner booklets based on the AID training content, has been created and disseminated. The stand alone Access International Development Learner Booklets can be used as part of internal CPD programmes by organisations working in the international development sector or can be used by individuals for self-directed learning. The dissemination of these learner booklets is designed to encourage those who engage with the training to enrol in the accredited training offered by ECQA. Each learner booklet consists of one of the modules on the AID training programme. Four of the six units are made available in the learner booklets with the final two being described and directing the learner to ECQA to complete their learning and to consider undertaking online accreditation of their learning via the ECQA portal.

All content in the training materials will be periodically refreshed and updated by project partners to ensure its continued currency and relevance to ongoing changes in the international development policy and practice arenas.

The project website will be maintained to provide a channel for further dissemination of any future updates to the project training materials. The Facebook page will also provide those interested in the project with a means to stay in touch with one another and the project team and to share how they have used their training on the AID programme in their respective careers or in a voluntary capacity.

The Project Partners will continue to promote the project materials to the International Development organisations as resources for the professional development of their staff and volunteers.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The Project contributes to EU policies:

LLP-Obj-a: To contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field.

The project contributes to the development of quality lifelong learning and promotes high performance in the international development sector at home and abroad by providing high quality training for those early career professionals working in development or those seeking to pursue a career in development. The training provided draws on European models of best practice with regard to the nature of the content delivered and the pedagogical methodologies that underpin the training approach.

LEO-SpObj-a: To support participants in training and further training activities in the acquisition and participation in the European labour market

The project contributes to this priority, as project partners individually and at an EU level, are actively engaged in this field of work. The sector is made up of large numbers of individual NGOs and charities and now recognises that it needs to develop effective high quality lifelong learning opportunities if it is to retain and attract people. The project linked the sector with education and training specialists to develop a high quality, innovative/responsive CPD programme recognised across the sector at the EU level.

LLP-Obj-c: To help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning available within Member States.

There is a wide-ranging consensus among NGOs working in support of international development initiatives that the sector is constrained in capacity and credibility by the lack of a single recognised and accredited qualification in the field of international development, and that such provision at an EU level would add greatly to the level of professionalism, to the ability to attract strong candidates into the sector and to the degree of competence and credibility of the sector.

LEO-OpObj-3: To facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training.

Through the support of the International Development sector, improvements will be made regarding sector-wide identification of skills gaps and competence needs and their subsequent integration in VET provision. A more integrated model of learning has been fostered through encouraging the involvement of key stakeholders in making VET qualifications/systems more responsive to the needs of the International Development sector and individual learners.

Priority 3: Developing Vocational Skills considering the labour market needs – New Skills for New Jobs.

The project has been driven by the need/demand from within the International Development sector and is supported in its submission and subsequent delivery by a broad range of existing organisations from within the sector. The sector is one which provides considerable employment and opportunity for growth as identified from within the sector and by the OECD and other international fora. At present the sector has identified an absence of an appropriate EU-wide CPD programme as an issue that the outputs from this project addresses.

Priority 1: Transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications

The transparency and recognition of qualifications and competences was improved by applying an EU-wide certification and assessment framework mapped to EQF Level 5 that is fully transparent and can equally be applied in EU Member States.

Discrimination: Promoting equality between men and women and contributing to combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The development of systems, content and pedagogy will be designed to ensure that any potential gender bias is eliminated with a particular emphasis on ensuring the project is designed to promote equality of uptake by both men and women. In particular, the materials will be designed to eliminate bias and systems / pedagogy designed to ensure equality of access. The project aims to mobilise the potential of a person regardless of gender.

Employment

The project increased the attractiveness of the International Development sector for those employed within it and for those who may wish to consider a career in the sector. It promoted collaboration between the International Development sector and education and training specialists to ensure that lifelong learning is mapped to the needs of a vibrant and growing sector which is currently under-developed in terms of quality assured training provision.

Recognition of Qualifications

The project developed an EQF based qualification and certification of competences as a priority to ensure that a fully transparent programme is developed that can be applied equally to all Member States.

