



## Evaluation and Quality Assurance Plan

This document outlines internal evaluation activities which shall be performed in the MASTER project and addresses issues related to external evaluation

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## Background

Evaluation processes are getting more important in recent years. This is not only manifested by the growing number of publications about evaluation and quality assurance processes in general but also by the requirement of contractors for the implementation of such mechanisms. Evaluation and QA can have different characteristics reaching from the formal requirement to be certified according to certain ISO standards to the requirement to commit to more informal quality standards and evaluation processes. In the field of vocational training also certain standards and norms have been introduced like DIN PAS 1032-1<sup>1</sup> or the ISO/IEC 19796-1 norm. The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) provides a European-wide system to help Member States and stakeholders to document, develop, monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their VET provision and quality management practices.<sup>2</sup>

On a general level for evaluation processes four basic requirements can be outlined<sup>3</sup>:

- Usefulness: e.g. clearly defined evaluation goals, demands of “users” of evaluation results;
- Feasibility: e.g. realistic planning concerning methods, time, costs; diplomacy in evaluation processes etc.;
- Fairness: e.g. respect of standards of how to deal respectfully and fair with evaluation “objects” and
- Accuracy / Exactness: e.g. production and arrangement of valid results addressing the evaluation questions, aims and targets.

It is a clear requirement of the European Commission that funded projects plan evaluation and quality assurance processes. But it is more than only a requirement: Evaluation processes are important instruments to ensure and improve quality of processes, products and results and should be seen as supporting measure to projects irrespective of evaluation as internal or external process or both, like in the project MASTER.

According to a suggestion in the Survival Kit for European Project Management<sup>4</sup> evaluation processes shall:

- Simplify the consultation process within the project partnership;
- Predict the development of the project and prepare the project team for pressure points in the course of the project life span;
- Assist the project coordinator in quantifying results and relating these to the project objectives;
- Reduce the workload of writing the final or interim report.

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<sup>1</sup> DIN Ref. Nr. PAS 1032-1:2004: “Learning, Education and Training focussing on e-learning – Part 1: Reference Model for Quality Management and Quality Assurance – Planning, Development, Realisation and Evaluation of Processes and Offers in Learning, Education and Training.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/policy-context/european-quality-assurance-reference-framework/framework-overview.aspx> (22/11/2010).

<sup>3</sup> Also the German Association for Evaluation (DeGEval) proposes similar standards for evaluation in the publication: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation e.v. (ed.): Standards für Evaluation; 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Bienzle, H. (ed.): A Survival Kit for European Project Management. Advice for Coordinators of Centralised Socrates Projects; 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition; 2004.

In that sense evaluation shall provide very practical and direct support for projects. All partners should be involved in evaluation and quality assurance processes and commit to procedures of critical review and improvement.

Summarising, the following two items outline the main aims of evaluation in MASTER:

- *Primacy of practical usefulness of results!*
- *Provision of assistance for practical challenges!*

## Evaluation framework in MASTER

Work package 5 of the Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovation project MASTER is "Evaluation and Quality Assurance". The aim of this work package is to initiate and coordinate ***internal as well as external review and evaluation processes***. The external evaluator is contracted by the project partner responsible for WP5 to accompany the whole project and provide inputs from the perspective outside the consortium. This document integrates internal and external evaluation, whereas for external evaluation also the external evaluation framework exists, specifying the contracted tasks.

According to what was outlined above, evaluation is seen as ***support and counselling mechanism*** which aims at ensuring good cooperation, high quality of outputs, user orientation etc. In general it is the goal to support the project management in ensuring good project performance and to outline improvement potentials. The following items outline general aims of evaluation and quality management in MASTER:

- Provision of feedback to the coordinator and the project partners.
- Outlining improvement potentials concerning processes, products and results and contribute to improvement activities.
- Raise awareness about quality within the project and support of decision making processes within the consortium and support the effectiveness and efficiency of the transnational partnership.
- Contribute to positive public relations and specifically a clear orientation on requirements of the target group / potential users of the project results.
- And last but not least to support the project that it meets its quantitative as well as qualitative objectives.

Basically evaluation processes address

- (a) project internal processes,
- (b) the evaluation of project outputs and
- (c) the evaluation of the "sustainability" of these outputs.

Therefore ***formative and summative evaluation methods*** and quality assurance mechanisms on different levels are proposed in the evaluation plan for MASTER and will be outlined in more details in the next section. Summarised the following four components are of basic interest to ensure the quality of outputs as well as collaboration:

- Overall internal project evaluation – process and progress monitoring

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- Evaluation of the MASTER content, programme and materials developed
  - Evaluation of the piloting system
  - Evaluation of sustainability and impacts on the target group

## Evaluation procedures

This section outlines the specific evaluation and quality assurance procedures planned in MASTER by firstly giving an overview about the responsibilities of the partners in general, than providing a short overview on risks and evaluation challenges in funded projects. The central point is a draft time and activity plan followed by a Gantt chart.

### ***Responsibilities***

MERIG leads work package 5 – Evaluation and Quality Assurance, and will cooperate closely with the project promoter TECHIN as well as the external evaluator.

#### MERIG

- Preparation of the evaluation plan.
- Preparation of evaluation sessions for the project meetings.
- Provision of evaluation tools (e.g. questionnaires, interview guidelines etc.) and of guidelines for partners how to use the evaluation tools.
- Feedback to the project coordinator and the partners.

#### TECHIN

- Close cooperation with MERIG and provision of relevant information.

#### External evaluator

- Independent external evaluation in collaboration with MERIG and all partners.

#### All partners

- Internal and external evaluation processes can only be successful when all partners are cooperating. This includes providing the requested information completely, faithfully and in time.

### ***Project risks and evaluation challenges***

There are numerous risks in projects which are at the same place challenges that can be highlighted by evaluation. The outlined items include only some classes of risks followed by short statement of how evaluation can help to find countermeasures or overcome these challenges:

1. Time plans are too ambitious or deadlines are not met

Most partners who are involved in the MASTER project have a long experience in planning and carrying out projects on national and/or European level. This experience will

help partners to monitor the scheduling of the activities and to respect the intended deadlines. Internal evaluation reports as well as management reports will outline when deadlines are not met and the project management is requested to take appropriate measures which can reach from an extension of the deadline to issue a caution.

## 2. Methodological problems

- the selection of relevant materials / models / studies
- the user requirements analysis
- the design and development of the foreseen outputs

The methodological problems mentioned above will be discussed at the project meetings with all partners. The project manager and the internal evaluator will also be actively and constantly involved in this monitoring and evaluation at work package level, but at the same time will have to guarantee the methodological coherence of all the project activities and results. The review of methodological options will be carried out throughout the duration of the project. Any possible problem emerging in this area will be discussed and solved in the framework of the foreseen evaluation and quality assurance session at the project meetings and in parallel to the MASTER piloting, performed in WP4.

## 3. Management challenges related to transnational collaboration and internal communication

Even though such problems are perfectly normal given the composition of a transnational partnership including a variety of different organisations, the activities foreseen by the project will contribute to the progressive strengthening of working bonds and communication channels between the partners: actually, the work plan foresees the recourse to all the possible strategies and technological tools aimed at guaranteeing a frictionless and constant communication between the partners: face-to-face meetings, document sharing, discussions and SKYPE sessions, e-mailing etc. However, in case that the internal project evaluation processes show problems of communication between partners, the project management will be informed and asked to intervene with specific ad hoc countermeasures.

## 4. Mismatches of results vs. initial objectives are identified

The project work plan and this specific evaluation plan foresee several moments of evaluation of the achieved results in comparison with the stated objectives: this evaluation will take place periodically during / after partnership meetings, in accordance to the piloting of the MASTER system, services and contents and with additional evaluative tools and methods. This mechanism will allow the project management and the partners to refine activities and actions in case the obtained results do not correspond to the objectives of the project. The evaluation of the developed materials with experts and in the pilot trainings will provide the necessary feedback from the target group and will be analysed in order to improve the project results.

## 5. Problems related to the valorisation (dissemination and exploitation) phase

In order to prevent the emergence of such problems, dissemination and exploitation activities will be a key discussion issue in all MASTER partnership meetings. The project manager will be in charge of constantly monitoring the dissemination and exploitation activities and guaranteeing the achievement of the stated dissemination and exploitation objectives.

## MASTER evaluation time-plan

Internal evaluation processes in MASTER are addressing (1) evaluation/monitoring of progress and processes, and (2) evaluation of the piloting of the MASTER system, services and content.

External evaluation will also focus on progress and processes but the main focus lies on summative evaluation of project products and results, whereas also interim products and results are subject of external evaluation.

The following plan gives an overview about the different evaluation levels, the time scheduling, aims and methods as well as expected outputs of internal evaluation. MERIG will plan the different evaluation steps and will develop and distribute the necessary evaluation forms etc. but all partners are committed to provide information and inputs when requested and are asked to translate evaluation forms if this is necessary for the evaluation procedure.

### *Internal Evaluation*

#### 1. Evaluation/monitoring of progress and processes

- Meetings

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
02/2011 (Warsaw)	Kick-Off-Meeting Presentation of the evaluation plan (v1.0). After the meeting questionnaire to assess the meeting.	Report to the promoter
09/2011 (Rome)	Second Partner Meeting Short presentation and discussion about evaluation. Feedback round about project progress. Methods: Presentation, group discussion. Ex post meeting and project progress evaluation using a questionnaire.	Report to the promoter
07/2012 (Graz)	Third Partner Meeting Short presentation and discussion about evaluation. Feedback round about project progress. Methods: Presentation, group discussion. Ex post meeting and project progress evaluation using a questionnaire.	Report to the promoter
10/2012 (Warsaw)	Final Meeting Short presentation and discussion about evaluation. Feedback round about project progress. Methods: Presentation, group discussion. Ex post meeting and project progress evaluation using a questionnaire.	Report to the promoter

- Communication and transnational collaboration

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
Ongoing activity	Aims: Feedback about transnational cooperation of the partner institutions. Methods: The internal cooperation shall be evaluated and feedback to the consortium and specifically the project coordinator generated. Methods: Discussion during the evaluation sessions at the partner meetings. Interviews with the partners. Subject of post-meeting questionnaires.	Will be reported in the interim and final report as well as in the minutes of meetings or report to the promoter.

- Planning control

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
Prior to the start of each work package: WP1: 12/2010 WP2: 05/2011 WP3: 06/2011 WP4: 01/2012 WP6: 12/2010 WP7: 10/2011 WP8: 12/2010	Aims: Feedback to the project management and also to the partners about the launch and planning of each work package. Methods: Work package leaders will send their work package plans which will serve as basis for the project implementation to MERIG and MERIG will provide feedback to the work package leaders and the project coordinator TECHIN.	Feedback in the form of short reports to the management and work package leaders.

- Deadlines

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
Ongoing additionally: 11/2011 10/2012	Aims: Feedback to the project management and also to the partners. Methods: If deadlines have been met they will be assessed against the initial work-plan and the detailed work plans drafted during the project. Feedback will be provided in the day-to-day communication with the project management, during meetings and reported in the interims and final report.	Feedback to the management and contribution to the interim and final report.

- Management and management reports

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
12/2011	Internal review of the interim report which will be submitted by the project manager to the Polish National Agency. Method: An evaluation form for the assessment of reports will be created by MERIG and guide the review. (The form will be available in 10/2011). TECHIN will send the report to MERIG which will do the internal assessment.	Filled in assessment form which will be sent to the promoter TECHIN.
12/2012	Internal review of the final report; Method: see above	Assessment form (s.a.)

## 2. Evaluation of the piloting of the MASTER system, services and content

- Preparation of the guidelines, checklists and questionnaires which will be used by all partners for the evaluation of the piloting of the MASTER system, services and content

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
Ongoing	The guidelines, checklists and questionnaires for the piloting of the MASTER system will be prepared by MERIG (evaluation leader) with the strong support of SOOIPP (pilot action leader) and sent to the partners. If necessary the partners will translate the evaluation tools.	Guidelines, checklists and questionnaires [EN]

- Pilot setting and pilot run: Observation of the pilot run by the organising partner, the internal or external evaluator or the project manager

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
First half of 2012	The pilot run of the MASTER system, services and content will be performed with approx. 20 companies which will test the methodology being transferred The „participative “observation“ shall outline improvement potentials of the MASTER system, services and content. Methods: The observer will be briefed by the guidelines provided by MERIG and receives templates for writing the minutes.	One pilot run report per test run [EN]. Summary prepared by SOOIPP.

Internal evaluation will produce two evaluation reports: One interim and one final report of internal evaluation summarising all evaluation results in the respective project period (first year, the whole project).

## External Evaluation

### 1. Ongoing feedback

- Feedback of the external evaluator about processes and progress

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
Ongoing 11/2011	The external evaluator provides feedback to the partners on the one hand concerning the evaluation of results achieved so far and on the other hand concerning the process of project implementation itself. Methods: Discussion sessions with MERIG. MERIG will provide all relevant documents which are necessary to perform the external evaluation. Presentation of evaluation results.	Report.
Ongoing 10/2012	s.a.	s.a.

## 2. Quality of products and results

- Feedback of the external evaluator concerning WP1 “Knowledge Sharing and Research”

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
07/2011	Aims: The main deliverables of WP1 shall be checked by the external evaluator to provide feedback about the quality of the report.	Presentation of the feedback to the consortium.

- Feedback of the external evaluator concerning WP2 “Competencies and Learning Outcomes Design”

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
09/2011	Aims: The main deliverables of WP2 shall be checked by the external evaluator to provide feedback about the quality of the report.	Presentation of the feedback to the consortium.

- Feedback of the external evaluator concerning WP3 “System Design and Integration”

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
01/2012	Aims: The main deliverables of WP3 shall be checked by the external evaluator to provide feedback about the quality of the report.	Presentation of the feedback to the consortium.

External evaluation will also produce two evaluation reports: One interim and one final report of external evaluation summarising all evaluation results in the respective project period (first year, the whole project).

## Gantt – Chart (time plan for WP 5)

project month	2010		2011												2012									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	11/2010	12/2010	01/2011	02/2011	03/2011	04/2011	05/2011	06/2011	07/2011	08/2011	09/2011	10/2011	11/2011	12/2011	01/2012	02/2012	03/2012	04/2012	05/2012	06/2012	07/2012	08/2012	09/2012	10/2012
<b>Internal evaluation</b>																								
1. Progress and processes																								
MASTER Evaluation plan																								
Evaluation sessions of meetings																								
Ongoing internal evaluation																								
Planning control																								
Budget consumption control																								
Evaluation of reports																								
2. Piloting of the MASTER system, services and content																								
Guidelines, checklists and questionnaires for piloting																								
Pilot setting and pilot run																								
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1. Ongoing feedback																								
Feedback about processes and progress																								
3. Products and results																								
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System Design and Integration																								
Interim and final external evaluation reports																								