



LLP – Leonardo da Vinci

Transfer of Innovation

U-COACH

Executive coaching

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**Report on the Methodology
for Assessment and Validation**

WP7 – Validation and Evaluation

DOCUMENT HISTORY

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Executive Summary

In this uncertain and turbulent economic period, it becomes necessary to provide managers, administrator and (medium and low) executive panels of European SMEs with useful and effective management tools.

U-COACH is a transnational project aiming to provide European SMEs with skills and competences through Executive Coaching, in order to allow everyone in the organization to develop and foster self-learning and leadership skills, thereby making all of them main actors in the success of the enterprise. The project strategy envisaged the transfer and adaptation of materials and contents developed at regional and national level in the framework of previous projects and by project partners. In short, the U-COACH project involves a transfer of knowledge in multiple directions among regions with different sociocultural contexts and with different level of training in regard to the project.

To this aim, the consortium developed the U-COACH system, which includes the knowledge base, the self-diagnostic tools, the training area and the support system. Once the system is developed, it will be evaluated by representatives of the target public.

The aim of the present document is to develop a common validation methodology and fieldwork, in order to evaluate:

1. The overall impression of the beneficiaries on the developed system
2. The contents of the training programme
3. The e-learning platform

The results of the validation will indicate the improvements that must be made to the self-learning system, both in its technological components and in its contents.

Sommario

Introduction.....	4
1. The U-COACH Self-Learning System.....	5
2. What is evaluation?	6
3. Aims and scope of the validation	6
4. Evaluation tool	9

Introduction

In vocational training as well as in other sectors of EU co-operation and shared work between the member states will increase. There will be even more European people in the future. New applicant countries will join and old member states will continue and increase the co-work with each other. All this means new projects with new partners in the future. In that work the evaluation of the shared projects will have an important role. There are lessons to be learnt and new innovational ideas to be applied.

The evaluation of the project is neither easy, nor a simple thing to do. It is a diverse phenomena consisting of different stages, levels, sectors and time lines during the project lifetime. The project is understood here as a group of people from different institutions joined in collaborative work in order to reach objectives officially defined and set together.

But why is project evaluation so important?

The first answer to this question is because it is a requirement of the funding organisation, in this instance the European Commission. However this is a short-sighted view. Formative evaluation is a fundamental tool for improving good practice and therefore performance of any project. Indeed the requirement for an evaluation strategy is a feature of most, if not all funding programmes inside and outside of the EU.

Improvement is in itself important. It shows that the project is flexible and helps to convince the partnership that the process of evaluation is for their benefit as well as being a requirement of the funders. It should also show how others outside of the project have benefited and help to raise standards for future centralized projects.

The present report aims to provide a common methodology for the evaluation and validation of the U-COACH main outcome: a self-learning system for European SMEs.

1. The U-COACH Self-Learning System

The aim of U-COACH is to equip managers, administrators and (medium and low) executive panels of European SMEs with the skills and competences necessary to integrate and apply the techniques of Executive Coaching to the management process, through the creation of a continuous learning experience that would allow an improvement in the performance and competitiveness of these organizations.

The development and application of Executive Coaching as a people management tool at all levels of organizational management and leadership will foster leadership and self-management skills, with the consequent improvement in procedural and organizational performance. A bigger implication and motivation in the performance of day to day tasks will lead the organization to a more competitive position in the market.

The learning approach is based on an on-line self-learning method using a platform that integrates material and information contents, knowledge and training about Executive Coaching and a knowledge base that allows guided access towards several tools and techniques of this field, with instructions and real examples of its application

In particular, the U-COACH consortium developed a self-learning system, which consists of:

1. The **knowledge base**, that will allow a friendly, fast and easy access to materials and contents about executive coaching techniques for managers, administrators and (medium and low) executive panels of SMEs.
2. A **self-diagnostic tool** that will guide the user to proper materials according to the situation and specific application environment.
3. **Training area** with different useful contents and tools for executive coaching and for people management, as well as any other topic related to the object of the project.
4. **Support tools** as forums, FAQs, manuals for system use and any other tool that users consider necessary (WP3) will be developed and incorporated.

A very important phase of the project is the evaluation and assessment of the main project outcomes, of the training contents and technological aspects. The results of the evaluation will indicate the improvements that must be made to the self-learning system: the improvements will be implemented in order to fully adapt the system to the needs of the target public.

To this purpose, the development of a common Assessment/Validation Methodology is crucial.

2. What is evaluation?

On the European project level the evaluation varies and has many objectives and targets: the objectives set for the project, the outputs produced in the project, the impact of the work of a project as well as the way of doing evaluation itself within the project.

A Survival Kit for European Project Management¹ gives very strict and concrete advice for evaluation:

'In the context of European project work evaluation is a process which:

- supports the project and acts as a check on whether the targets have been met;
- allows the results to be improved based upon judgments made about the value and quality of the project;
- simplifies decision making and can assist with fundamental changes in the project, should these be necessary.'

An evaluation strategy agreed together within the partnership is a basis for evaluation criteria and methods of doing it. Evaluation is a methodologically diverse area using both qualitative and quantitative methods such as case studies, survey research, statistical analysis, etc. Evaluation data can be qualitative and quantitative or mixed. The structure of evaluation can be very complicated according to project objectives and targets, duration of a project and partnership.

3. Aims and scope of the validation

Evaluation in this phase of the U-COACH project is focused on the self-learning system developed for European SMEs and in particular on:

- The overall impression of the beneficiaries on the developed system
- The contents of the training programme
- The e-learning platform

The goal is to detect faults and possible improvements in the materials, contents, tools and support system. The aim is therefore the validation of the system: to correct detected deficiencies and incorporate the indicated improvements. The assessment and validation allow content improvement of the self-learning system as well as the functionality and friendliness of the system itself, as it assesses its implementation.

¹ H. Bienzle. A Survival Kit for European Project Management. (2004)
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/erasmus_2000_2006/documents/survival_kit_EN_updated_version_2004.pdf

The criteria to evaluate and validate the system are:

For what concerns contents and materials:

- Permanent applicability
- Adaptation to target public
- Relevance
- Satisfaction

For the technical aspects:

- Accessibility
- Ease of navigation
- Participant satisfaction

The evaluation will be conducted using questionnaires to be distributed to representatives of the target group. Each partner should collect at least 20 filled questionnaires and provide the preliminary findings by using the template attached to this document, which offers a common framework for collection of answers and a basic statistical analysis.

Once the questionnaires and the statistics have been recollected, Eurocrea Merchant will be in charge for the overall analysis of the results, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view.

The final result of this process of assessment and validation will be a high-quality “tuned” self-learning system, with functional self-diagnostic, high-quality training area and proper support system, adapted to the needs of recipients and users. Improvement needs will be reflected in the validation and assessment report made by representatives of the target public.

The evaluation process, in particular, will have the following characteristics:

Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People management / Human side of the company• Social systems perspective
Enterprise size	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enterprises employing no more than 250 employees
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge intensive organisations from any sector• Technology entrepreneurs who need to equip themselves with business acumen• Owners, managers and middle managers who are obliged to lead and motivate teams
Number of SMEs involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 20 questionnaires per partner
Time to fill in the questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited to roughly 15 minutes

4. Evaluation tool

Evaluation Questionnaire

Name of trainee (optional):

Place (Town, Country):

Position/Function:

Please circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements
Where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree.

A. EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

Please circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements	Strongly agree.. ..Disagree				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I have a good opinion of the training material in general	1	2	3	4	5
2. The contents appear relevant related to the training of a manager and useful.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Technical issues are clearly explained and demonstrated	1	2	3	4	5
4. The training material introduces new and innovative elements respected to other training materials related to Executive Coaching	1	2	3	4	5
5. The content of each module is sufficiently exhaustive of the dealt argument	1	2	3	4	5
6. The contents were clear and exhaustive	1	2	3	4	5
7. The arguments are useful in order to feel the gap of your acquaintances	1	2	3	4	5
8. The cases studies are sufficiently exhausting to exposure the real situations about techniques, tools and instrument of environmental issues?	1	2	3	4	5

9. Did you follow the steps proposed in the programme?

Yes No

10. Which of the 6 training phases were most valuable to you?

Please rank the list below where 1 is most valuable, 2 is second most important and 3 is third most important.

1) UNDERSTAND CONCEPT	
2) ASSESS NEEDS	
3) IDENTIFY GOALS	
4) GENERATE PLANS	
5) APPLY TOOLS	
6) REINFORCE THE COMMITMENT AND LEARNING	

11. What has been your motivation to do this training?

Please circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements	Strongly agree.. ..Disagree				
	1	2	3	4	5
To improve my knowledge					
I am interested in the topic					
To improve my skills & competencies					
To improve the working conditions					
I trust the training provider					
It seems high quality course					

B. EVALUATION OF THE E-LEARNING SYSTEM

12. Evaluate the registration procedure:

Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor

13. Evaluate the user friendliness of the system:

Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor

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14. Evaluate the functionality of the website:

Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor

15. Overall evaluation of the self-learning system

Excellent Very poor

1	2	3	4	5

16. Do you think the training will be useful for a better management of human resources in your company and indirectly for your business?

Very useful	Useful	Partially useful	Useless

17. Would you recommend this course to other people? Yes No

18. Any other comments or suggestions?
