

INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT'S AGENT (INMA) PROJECT

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EX ANTE EVALUATION REPORT

Promoter:



Evaluation:



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INTRODUCTION

Innovation and Knowledge European Management's Agent - INMA project is a European Project approved under Lifelong Learning call in 2010. This, at least, means that:

- There is a partnership or consortium at European level which will be in charge of the development of the whole project
- That partnership is made of independent organizations:
 - From different countries
 - With different expertise and background
 - With different experience in working in EU projects
 - Of different sizes
- Some partners know each other and have worked together in the past but some others don't so:
- The partnership as a whole is a NEW partnership and all together will have to implement a 2 years project.

The success of the project will depend on several different factors, but there are some which can be identified and evaluated from the very beginning of the project and it will allow the partnership to define and develop ways and tools to avoid future problems.

So, that's one of the main aims of this ex ante evaluation:

To analyze interests, feelings, expectations and fears of all partners from INMA's partnership regarding:

- The partnership itself
- The project's definition / foreseen implementation
- The project's defined timetable
- The project's foreseen final products

As it has been already explained, one of the main components to success in a project development is the partnership itself in all terms (communication, relationship, fulfillment of expectations, etc...), and this is not important just for implementation but also –and even more- for some key transversal themes in all European projects:

- **Internal Management and communication:**
Process of monitoring and reporting a project implementation, including relationship and exchange with project's partners and European Commission.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (Participatory):**
Evaluation (at project level) is a crucial phase for projects since it allows a review and qualitative and quantitative assessment of: 1) the results achieved against the aims (as regards activities/products); 2) the means used to achieve these results in relation to the contractually agreed budget.¹
Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) is the joint effort or partnership of two or more stakeholders (such as researchers, farmers, government officials, extension workers) to monitor and evaluate, systematically, one or more research or development activities².
- **Valorization (Dissemination and Exploitation):**
Process of disseminating and exploiting the results of projects with a view to optimizing their value, strengthening their impact, transferring them, integrating them in a sustainable way and using them actively in systems and practices at local, regional, national and European levels³
- **Sustainability:**
Process by which crucial activities and results of the project are maintained and continue to deliver benefits to the target group, structure, sector or system after the end of the EU funding⁴

As it can be achieved from previous definition all of them imply involvement of all partners which makes always easier the best implementation of the project. In this way a good (not only in terms of right partners but also in terms of quality in the relationship and common goals) partnership will:

- make it easier for the coordinator, avoiding extra efforts and resources waste
- jointly solve possible problems or deviations from original plan and learn together during the process

¹ The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 – Glossary. (European Commission, DG Education and Training) http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/guide/glossary_en.html

² Vernooy et al., 2003

³ *Dissemination and Exploitation of Results*. (European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Directorate Communication and culture, Unit C3)

⁴ *TRANSFER OF INNOVATION. Sustainability of European Cooperation Projects in VET*. Check list for Project Coordinators. (European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo Da Vinci)

- make a wider dissemination and exploitation plan with bigger impact at EU level and a common message
- find future possibilities to exploit project and products in different sectors, countries...

But for these it is necessary to share aims, to understand the project in the same way, to implement systematic and clear communication system and, most of all, to share it.

And this brings us to the second aim of this ex ante evaluation:

To analyze and share among the partnership:

- Reasons of each organization / person for becoming a partner in the project
- Expectations and fears

Which will allow us to compare with the interim evaluation and final one and check whether those expectations were jointly achieved or not.

METHODOLOGY

For the ex ante evaluation we will avoid fill in questionnaires as much as possible, working with it in an informal way and helping the partners to know each others' feelings. Evaluation is a share monitoring but also learning activity and, from our point of view, it is very important to know what the rest of the partners think, feel, expect, desire or fear and check how much we share it or how much we can solve together.

With that premise, the evaluator will propose and show a power point slide with an "itinerary" of themes to be answered by all people attending and involve in the project. This "itinerary" will include next issues:

INITIAL REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

All partners have always a strong reason to participate in the project, the aim of this question is to know what that reason was -which is usually link to the

partner's general expectations for the project- and check whether the proposal was fully understood and compare, at the end of the project with final evaluation, whether that reason / expectation was fulfilled or not.

- Why did you decide to participate in this project?

PROJECT COMPREHENSION AND FORESEEN IMPLEMENTATION

It seems that even when proposal has been written together by all partners, or at least shared before preparing and submitting, it is always easier to write it than implementing and it comes that once the project is approved there are some things that seem not to be as clear as they were, some others that could have been misunderstood or some which seemed to be more difficult when writing that now. With the first part of implementation, timetable and final products / results we want all partners to share expectations and fears and work with it as a kind of positive and less positive feelings' thermometer.

- What are your expectations regarding the project:
 - Implementation and timetable
 - Final products / results
 - Partnership
- What are your fears regarding the project:
 - Implementation and timetable
 - Final products / results
 - Partnership

ANY OTHER COMMENT

Let's give all of us the opportunity to share any other thing you have in mind!

The ex ante evaluation will take place during the last day of the kick off meeting and once the project has been already explained and clarified by the promoter / coordinator. The reason is that the partners have already had some time to present themselves one to another, to go through all working plan in detail, to check monitoring and financial issues... so whole information should be now much clearer than the first day of the kick off meeting, first time in the morning, and it should be

clear enough to start working step by step in the project; better to share it now, that we still have time to work, than later.

Those were the reasons why we did it as a joint out loud activity during the kick off meeting in Greece, with presence and participation of all partners.

INMA EX ANTE EVALUATION

INITIAL REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

Initial reasons of the partners to participate in INMA project given by the partners can be organized into two different groups of answers:

1. Those given by partners who participated in original Innovation Agent project (which is being transferred), who already knew each other and also the promoter.
2. Those given by partners who didn't participate in original Innovation Agent project, who didn't know neither each other neither the rest of the partners or the promoter.

For the first group, main reasons to participate in the project proposal were:

- They missed the testing part from the original project (which they couldn't do because of limitations in budget but they will with INMA).
- Knowing the promoter in advance, and having had a good experience in previous common projects, was also a reason.
- Links to their own work and products which allow them to add their own experience as it happens with REVALENTO's learning tool.

For the second group, main reasons to participate in the project proposal were:

- Possibility of meeting and knowing new organizations working in some fields in which they have no experience, which can help to learn and open new trends.
- The possibility of being involved in EU projects with more experienced partners.
- The possibility of using the profile not only in medium size enterprises but also in small ones.

And there were some reasons which were shared by all of them:

- They consider the profile as very interesting, even more interesting in this crisis period we are leaving.

- Having the final product as a multimedia and Multilanguage training tool will facilitate further exploitation and sustainability.

Those organizations which are training organizations remark that it as an extra factor to be interested in the full transfer of the profile.

From the promoter side, main reason to submit the proposal, was to be able to update the profile and to convert its curricula and training contents into a digital tool; that way they will be able to really transfer it to other countries since main problem -faced after finalizing the original Innovation Agent project- was that there was no way to give an answer to demand received from all Europe during the last 5 years because all training contents were available only in paper and just in Spanish. That problem will be solved with actual INMA project.

PROJECT COMPREHENSION AND FORESEEN IMPLEMENTATION

What are your EXPECTATIONS regarding the project:

- **Implementation and timetable**
 - To find a way to link the project / profile / products to other activities which each partner is implementing at national level in their own country.
- **Final products / results**
 - The final format / layout of the training tool (main final product) which should be “friendly”, attractive and easy to use.
 - Possibilities of future commercialization of final product.
- **Partnership**
 - To strength relationship after first good impression made in this first kick off meeting and contact.

What are your FEARS regarding the project:

- **Implementation and timetable**
 - Most partners were worried about kick off meeting and what kind of information was going to be given on it, but they all agree that the kick off meeting was well prepared and information regarding project and

next stages were clear enough to start working on the project's activities.

- Some partners are afraid of not being able to do everything on time and with expected quality.
 - How to find the right experts to validate the product and how to involve them
 - How to “sell” / disseminate / marketing the outcomes of the project in the right way.
 - How to make the online social community work and be alive and whether experts and target should be together or not in that social community.
 - There is a special fear from one of the partners related to main target of the project since unemployed women are not a target in Holland anymore.
- **Final products / results**
 - How to define and agree in educational level / background / working experience of target for the final product (which is also connected to contents, design and layout, possibilities of future commercialization).
 - How to keep the high standard reached by the kick off meeting along the whole project.
 - There is a special fear from one of the partners regarding implementation of technological tools (both for training platform and training tool), since they are not sure about whether planned transnational meetings will be enough to define those products or some extra or bilateral extra meeting should be added (skype meetings could also be a parallel extra solution).
 - **Partnership**
 - The only fear comes from promoter and it is much more related to financial reporting than to implementation.

ANY OTHER COMMENT

- All partners share the fear on financial reporting and how to do it well according to explanations given during the kick off meeting.

- There is a specific comment from two partners related to the budget, which they feel it could be a little too short for contents' translation in the translation amount included under subcontracting.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It seems that all organizations had a clear aim and that it is actually shared, in one way or another, by all of them. It will help to project's implementation.

The aim of all partners to link the project and its results and products to other related national activities already running is very positive for sustainability.

Shared interest in profile and its training curricula will help to development however partners should define and agree on:

- Target (which will also define contents and marketing / dissemination strategy)
- Exploitation, for what it is important to agree also on property and copyrights within the partnership to avoid future problems

And to be able to do so, first partners should:

- Read carefully the original profile, its target and results
- Do the report at national level regarding SMEs needs in innovation and HHRR
- Do the report at national level regarding existing similar profiles

to know and understand both the market and competence to find their place.

Budget should be analyzed in deep by each partner during the first 4 months of project implementation to decide whether and what changes (if any) are needed for promoter to ask the European Commission, having in mind that total budget is fixed and there is no way to increase it.

There is a shared fear about financial reporting, promoter should work in clarifications and maybe asking for partial reports could help all partners to prepare better the interim and final report for the European Commission (which are compulsory).

GOOD LUCK!!!!

