



Internet Based Business Coach for SME Managers

## Evaluation Plan

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

Work package:	<b>WP 5 – Evaluation and Quality Assurance</b>
Result:	<b>31</b>
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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 NETCOACH project.

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;

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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.egavet.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.

- Reduce the workload of writing the final or interim report.

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 NETCOACH:

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

## Evaluation framework in NETCOACH

Work package 7 of the Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovation project NETCOACH is "Monitoring & Evaluation". The aim of this work package is to initiate and coordinate internal as well as external monitoring and evaluation processes. The external evaluator is contracted by MERIG, the project partner responsible for WP7, 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 NETCOACH:

- 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 NETCOACH 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
- Evaluation of the NETCOACH 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 NETCOACH 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 7 – 'Monitoring & Evaluation', and will cooperate closely with the project promoter WESTBIC 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.

#### WESTBIC

- 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 NETCOACH 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 NETCOACH 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 NETCOACH 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 NETCOACH 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.

## NETCOACH evaluation time-plan

Internal evaluation processes in NETCOACH are addressing (1) evaluation/monitoring of progress and processes, and (2) are assuring that all intermediate results meet the declared objectives of the proposal and relevant for the defined target group.

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
11/2010 (Mullingar / IE)	Kick-Off-Meeting Presentation of WP7 'Monitoring & Evaluation'. After the meeting questionnaire to assess the meeting.	Report to the promoter & partners
03/2011 (Sofia / BG)	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 & partners
09/2011 (Graz / AT)	Third Partner Meeting Short presentation and discussion about evaluation. Feedback round about project progress. Methods: Presentation, group discussion. Ex post meeting and project	Report to the promoter & partners

	progress evaluation using a questionnaire.	
04/2012 (Faro / PT)	Fourth 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 & partners
09/2012 (Mullingar / IE)	Final 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 & partners

- 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.

- Individual interview with relevant key personnel

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
At 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting: ITD, LiNK MV At 3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting: WESTBIC, UALG/CRIA At 4 <sup>th</sup> meeting: FU Fjellregionen At final meeting: WESTBIC	One representative per organisation (promoter - twice) will be interviewed during one of the partner meetings. Methods: A structured individual interview will be conducted with each partner organisation. MERIG will prepare the interview guidelines and perform these interviews during the partner meetings in Sofia, Graz, Faro and Mullingar.	Short feedback report, which will be part of the interim and/or final report.

- Review of quarterly monitoring reports

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
Quarterly, starting in 01/2011	Aims: Feedback to the project management and also to the partners about the advancement of man-days consumption and general project expenses. Methods: WESTBIC will in cooperation with MERIG develop the reporting system. All partners will use these form and report quarterly their expenses and man-days consumption.	Feedback to the management and contribution to the interim and final report by using simplified reporting forms.

- Deadlines

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
Ongoing additionally: 10/2011 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
10/2011	Internal review of the interim report which will be submitted by the project manager to the Irish 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 09/2011). WESTBIC will send the report to MERIG which will do the internal assessment.	Filled in assessment form which will be sent to the promoter WESTBIC.
10/2012	Internal review of the final report; Method: see above.	Assessment form (s.a.)

## 2. Evaluation of the intermediate and final results

- Preparation of the guidelines, checklists and questionnaires which will be used for the evaluation of intermediate and final results of the NETCOACH project

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
	Aim: Evaluate the interim and final project results. Method: An evaluation system which allows to evaluate the intermediate and final results will be developed.	Short report to the promoter and all partners, especially WP-leaders.
11/2010	Evaluation of result 26 / WP6: Dissemination and external communication plan.	s.a.
12/2010	Evaluation of result 09 / WP2: Procedure/specification for conducting needs analysis.	s.a.
12/2010	Evaluation of result 31 / WP7: Evaluation framework.	s.a.
12/2010	Evaluation of result 32 / WP7: External evaluation - terms of reference.	s.a.
12/2010	Evaluation of result 22 / WP5: Benchmarking report of RPL systems in partner countries.	s.a.
01/2011	Evaluation of result 10 / WP2: Report of results of SME needs analysis.	s.a.
02/2011	Evaluation of result 11 / WP2: NETCOACH curriculum developed.	s.a.
02/2011	Evaluation of result 18 / WP4: Pilot testing methodology and questionnaires.	s.a.
03/2011	Evaluation of result 13 / WP3: Specifications of NETCOACH web-based e-learning platform.	s.a.
03/2011	Evaluation of result 23 / WP5: Creation of a common analysis tool to determine the user competencies and skills gap.	s.a.

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
03/2011	Evaluation of result 28 / WP6: Communication materials.	s.a.
03/2011	Evaluation of result 33 / WP7: Interim evaluation report.	s.a.
09/2011		
03/2012		
06/2011	Evaluation of result 14 / WP3: First prototype of platform.	s.a.
08/2011	Evaluation of result 19 / WP4: Evaluation report of first test phase results.	s.a.
09/2011	Evaluation of result 15 / WP3: Second prototype of platform.	s.a.
09/2011	Evaluation of result 25 / WP5: Incorporate RPL tools in web platform.	s.a.
01/2012	Evaluation of result 12 / WP2: VET modules (content).	s.a.
02/2012	Evaluation of result 20 / WP4: Evaluation report of second test phase results.	s.a.
03/2012	Evaluation of result 16 / WP3: NETCOACH web-based e-learning platform live with full content.	s.a.
07/2012	Evaluation of result 24 / WP5: Development of procedure for acquiring European wide valid certificates for qualifying modules.	s.a.
07/2012	Evaluation of result 29 / WP6: Business plan.	s.a.
09/2012	Evaluation of result 17 / WP3: Final release with full documentation.	s.a.
09/2012	Evaluation of result 30 / WP6: Project CD-Rom.	s.a.
09/2012	Evaluation of result 34 / WP7: Final evaluation report.	s.a.

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	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.
10/2011		
Ongoing	s.a.	s.a.
09/2012		

## 2. Quality of products and results

- Feedback of the external evaluator concerning WP2 “Learning content development”

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
01/2012	Aims: The main deliverables of WP2 shall be checked by the external evaluator to provide feedback about the quality of the materials.	Presentation of the feedback to the consortium.

- Feedback of the external evaluator concerning WP3 “Platform Development”

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
09/2012	Aims: The main deliverables of WP3 shall be checked by the external evaluator to provide feedback about the quality of the materials.	Presentation of the feedback to the consortium.

- Feedback of the external evaluator concerning WP4 “Pilot Testing”

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
06/2012	Aims: The main deliverables of WP4 shall be checked by the external evaluator to provide feedback about the quality of the materials.	Presentation of the feedback to the consortium.

- Feedback of the external evaluator concerning WP5 “Qualification & Certification”

When	Evaluation aims and methods	Expected outputs
07/2012	Aims: The main deliverables of WP3 shall be checked by the external evaluator to provide feedback about the quality of the materials.	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 WP7)

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
	10/2010	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
<b>Internal evaluation</b>																								
<b>1. Progress and processes</b>																								
Meetings		M1				M2						M3							M4					M5
Communication and transnational collaboration																								
Interviews with key personnel						BG, DE						IE, PT							NO					IE
Review of quarterly monitoring reports																								
Deadlines																								
Management and management reports																								
<b>2. Intermediate and final results</b>																								
WP2			R09	R10	R11											R12								
WP3						R13			R14			R15						R16						R17
WP4					R18						R19						R20				R21			
WP5			R22			R23						R25										R24		
WP6		R26				R28																R29		R30
WP7			R31, R32			R33						R33						R33						R34
<b>External evaluation</b>																								
<b>1. Ongoing feedback</b>																								
Feedback about processes and progress																								
<b>3. Products and results</b>																								
External evaluation: Learning content development																								
External evaluation: Platform development																								
External evaluation: Pilot testing																								
External Evaluation: Qualification and Certification																								
Interim and final external evaluation reports																								