



Interim Evaluation Report

Project Title	Internet Based Business Coach for SME Managers
Project Acronym	NETCOACH
Grant Agreement Number	2010 LLP/LdV/TOI/2010/IRL-506
Deliverable Type	Report
Deliverable Number	33
Date of Delivery	15/11/2011
Author(s)	External Evaluation: Ursula Pretterhofer Internal Evaluation: Brigitte Zörweg, MERIG
Editor	Brigitte Zörweg, MERIG
Related Work Package	WP7
Availability of Deliverable	Internal Document

Content Overview

Introduction	3
Responsibilities.....	4
Executive Summary.....	4
Internal evaluation	6
Past Activities.....	6
Comparison of plan and “reality” – Results	11
External Evaluation.....	15
Annex.....	23
Meeting evaluation report – Kick-off Meeting.....	24
Meeting evaluation report – 2 nd Partner Meeting	29
Meeting evaluation report – 3 rd Partner Meeting	34
Website/Portal Checklist	39

Introduction

Work package 7 of the Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovation project NETCOCH 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 the results of the internal and external evaluation procedures which have been implemented in the first project year of the NETCOACH project.

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 implemented in the evaluation of the NETCOACH project and its main results. 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.

Whereby on the 3rd and 4th component special attention will be put in the second half of project implementation.

Responsibilities

MERIG leads work package 7 – 'Monitoring & Evaluation', and cooperates closely with the project promoter WESTBIC as well as the external evaluator.

MERIG

- Preparation of the evaluation plan. (Project month = PM3)
- Preparation of evaluation sessions for the project meetings. (after each meeting)
- Provision of evaluation tools (e.g. questionnaires, interview guidelines etc.) and of guidelines for partners how to use the evaluation tools. (on-going)
- Feedback to the project coordinator and the partners. (on-going, plus special feedback sessions in each partner meeting)

External evaluator

- Independent external evaluation in collaboration with MERIG and all partners. (contracted in January 2011, since then on-going feedback to MERIG, plus participation in the Graz meeting in September 2011; external evaluation report is part of this interim evaluation report, see respective section for further information)

WESTBIC

- Close cooperation with MERIG and provision of relevant information.

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. (on-going)

Executive Summary

This interim evaluation report consists of two parts: it describes on the one hand the results on internal evaluation, which are outlined in details in the next paragraph and on the other hand the feedback from the external evaluator is provided in the following section.

Internal evaluation reflects in the first sub-chapter briefly on past activities and tasks performed within the first project year. Based on the internal evaluation activities which have been performed during the project implementation and the interim results which have been provided for the interim assessment, relevant work packages are briefly outlined. Even if some delays have been reported during the project implementation the consortium is aware of this fact and has a clear plan on how to overcome this matter of fact and reorganise remaining tasks and activities in a way that a successful closure of the project can be expected at the end of the project run time. In general the project

partners' work is in line with the work programme and also internal communication functioned well. However the problem related to the withdrawal/exchange of the Norwegian partner, which is on the agenda since the second partner meeting in March 2011, has still not been solved in a satisfying manner.

The subsequent sub-chapter focuses on the evaluation of the NETCOACH project results. It provides a comparison of what has been done in the first project year in terms of project implementation and what has been planned and described in the proposal and contractually agreed. Specific details can be found on the next pages.

As an annex the single meeting evaluation reports of the first three partner meetings and the portal checklist, which contains information about the user friendliness of the public project website at <http://www.netcoach.eu.com> is added. This portal check has been performed in 11/2011.

External evaluation is based on the documents provided by the internal evaluation manager until 15.11.2011 and some internal communication. WP 2 (Learning content development), WP 3 (Platform development), WP 4 (Pilot testing) and WP 5 (Qualification & certification) and their results no. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23 and 25 have been assessed in detail concerning their delivery in due time as well as their quality and adequacy. Most of the results have been delivered in good quality, some have not started yet or been finished as scheduled.

Internal evaluation

Past Activities

The NETCOACH work programme foresees seven work packages (WPs). WP 1 – ‘Management and Coordination’, WP 6 – ‘Dissemination and Exploitation’ and WP 7 – ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ are horizontal activities which are ongoing throughout the whole project duration of 24 months. All other WPs are organised subsequently.

At this reporting stage all work packages apart from WP4 ‘Pilot Testing’ have started or are under implementation.

In the following brief description the current status of work is briefly outlined and reflected from the view of the internal evaluator:

WP 1 – Management and Coordination [duration: project months 1-24]

In total five ***partnership meetings*** are foreseen during the course of project implementation. So far three meetings have been held as initially planned in the work programme (Mullingar 11/2010, Sofia 03/2011, Graz 09/2011). Sufficient documentation is provided within the interim report documentation. All meetings had a clear goal and have been relevant to support the project progress and to achieve the results. Representatives of all partner organisations attended the first meeting. At the second and third meeting the partner from Norway, P4, the Folkeuniversitetet Fjellregionen did not participate. The first three partner meetings have been evaluated right after each meeting. Survey Monkey, an online tool, has been used to gather information from all participants. The results of these meeting evaluations have been presented to the partners by (1) sending them to all partner organisations and by (2) discussing the main issues at the beginning of the next meeting. This process proved to be successful as some of the remarks have already been taken up and put into practise. For more details, the single ***meeting evaluation reports*** can be found in the annex of this report.

Beside the meeting evaluation questionnaire the internal evaluation manager conducted four ***interviews with representatives of partner organisations***, the core persons involved in the project implementation, on SKYPE, two after the second partner meeting and two after the third partner meeting within the first project year. These short interviews focussed on topics addressing the start-up phase of the project, the aims of the project and the expectations related to the usefulness of the results for the target group, managers of SMEs. Furthermore communication as well as project management issues have been addressed. The feedback provided has especially been concerning communication and management issues on a very broad range, some improvement potentials been outlined. For the first two interviews the feedback has been discussed at the third partner meeting. The same procedure will be applied at the remaining partner meetings. In terms of content and project outcomes and results again a very varied picture has been presented. One reason for this can be found in the diversity of the partnership, where universities, regional development agencies and small research associations collaborate.

The **composition of the consortium** is the same since the preparation of the project applications. However after the first three project months it turned out that the Norwegian partner does not fulfil his tasks as outlined in the work programme and agreed in the partner contract. Therefore the rest of the partners started a discussion process at the second partner meeting on how to overcome this issue and find an adequate way to proceed with the project implementation. So far this process has not been concluded, the problems have once again been pointed out at the third partner meeting. As a substitution of the partner by another Norwegian partner does not make any sense (a lot of work has already been performed in the first project year), the consortium now intends to proceed with a smaller consortium, not taking the country specific situation of Norway into consideration. To put this into practise the coordinator has formulated an amendment which has already been sent to the Irish National Agency. Tasks have been distributed among remaining project partners, according to their competencies. The NETCOACH project partners are currently waiting for the response of the Irish National Agency.

The submission of the **interim report** is foreseen for this month, the official submission deadline is 30th November 2011. No delays are expected regarding the submission of the report.

In general management and communication seem to be efficient, even if some delays are reported. However, the consortium is aware of that and corrective measures are planned to overcome this issue. It is expected that the project will be finalised as initially foreseen.

WP 2 – Learning content development [duration: project months 1-24]

This work package has two main aims: (1) to **explore the user requirements of the SME owners/managers** and (2) to **develop a detailed, highly relevant, modular curriculum** for training and support of management staff in SME.

This work package has foreseen four main deliverables: the specification for conducting needs analysis; the report on the needs analysis; the NETCOACH curriculum and the development of the VET modules.

This work package is managed by the Institute of Technology and Development, the Bulgarian partner. The first phase and aim has been performed within the first six project months. All partners apart from the Norwegian contributed to the elaboration of the needs analysis. The documents delivered serve as a good basis to support the elaboration of the curriculum. More feedback on results R9 and R10 can be found in the next paragraph.

For the development of the VET modules, R12, the consortium has agreed fixed dates for delivering, end of July 2011. However, only two of the four modules are currently available on the platform, the NETCOACH Business Coach. Several discussions about the format of module on knowledge management lead to this delay. It is not clear until when the missing content shall be elaborated. Therefore it is highly recommended to the work package leader and to the coordinator of the NETCOACH project to speed up the process and to agree on final dates, in order to make sure that the content will be available for the second stage of pilot testing.

WP 3 – Platform development [duration: project months 1-24]

The aim of this work package is to ***develop and launch the NETCOACH website incorporating the training materials*** in a user friendly and accessible manner.

Therefore this work package will produce five relevant results: specifications for the NETCOACH platform; first prototype; second prototype; NETCOACH web based e-learning platform live with full content and the final release of the platform with full documentation.

Based on the specifications for the NETCOACH platform the first prototype has been elaborated and is now ready for being pilot tested. Based on the results of the pilot testing a second prototype will be elaborated containing lessons learnt from the piloting. This process will be repeated until the final release of the platform with full documentation will be available at the end of the project, in PM24.

Due to the fact that some delays occurred during the implementation of WP 2 it is obvious that the implementation of this work package is to a certain extent delayed as well. It is recommended to the consortium to draw up a clear updated time frame in order to avoid an extension of the entire project runtime and to guarantee that all deliverables and tasks are implemented accordingly and in good quality. This has already been done with the document on pilot testing methodology. Please refer also to the next work package to learn more about this implementation process.

WP 4 – Pilot testing [duration: project months 12-24]

WP 4 aims at ***testing and evaluating the e-learning material*** with the target group.

The start of this work package was foreseen PM12, October 2011 and will end in PM24, the closure of the project. Due to the fact that the Norwegian partner is responsible for the implementation of this work package according to the work programme and his non-performance in the project, the remaining project partners decided at the third partner meeting in September 2011, that the role and tasks of this partner will be redistributed among the remaining partners. WESTBIC the lead partner volunteered to take over the lead of WP4. All other partners agreed to support the implementation of relevant tasks. Therefore the small delay that is currently visible is very well traceable. In the meantime (PM13, October 2011) WESTBIC elaborated the pilot testing which contains also a timeline which shows that a closure of this work package can be possible in due time.

WP 5 – Qualification and certification [duration: project months 1-24]

The focus of this work package is the ***exploration of certification opportunities for the e-learning programmes*** developed. This work package will produce four main results: the benchmarking report; analysis tool to determine the user competencies and skills gap; procedure for acquiring European wide valid certificates and the incorporation of the RPL tools in the web platform.

Within the reporting period the consortium has undertaken a huge research on RPL systems in their partner countries. A benchmarking report has been elaborated by the work package leader, Universidade do Algarve, results and next steps have especially been discussed at the second and third partner meeting. In terms of availability of results, so far only the first result is available. All other will be elaborated in the second half of the project implementation. This delay is justified by the fact that the consortium decided to elaborate the results in combination with the development of the learning materials and the pilot testing. This decision is well traceable, however, the consortium must be aware of the fact that the project is currently already in PM14 and that there are only 10 more months left to finish NETCOACH and to produce all results in good quality.

WP 6 – Dissemination and Exploitation [duration: project months 1-24]

This work package concentrates on the ***promotion and dissemination of the NETCOACH project*** and its main results.

In order to guarantee that stakeholders are well informed, attracted and involved in the implementation of the NETCOACH project different dissemination channels have been and will also be established in the second half of the project implementation.

The main deliverables of this work package are as follows: dissemination and external communication plan; project website; articles; project presentations; leaflets; project CD-Rom; business plan and a final workshop.

It is foreseen to update the dissemination and external communication plan constantly until the end of the project, therefore the final version of this result will be available at the end of the project. The project website has been set-up and a so-called portal check has been performed. Results of this check can be found in the annex of this report, which highlights some improvement potentials.

As usual in European funded projects like this one, dissemination and exploitation play a more important role in the second half of the project, as soon as first results are visible and are available to be discussed with the target group and stakeholders. Therefore it is recommended to the consortium to pay special attention to dissemination and exploitation activities from now on until the end of the project in order to guarantee that the end-users will profit as much as possible from the newly developed products and outcomes of the NETCOACH project.

WP 7 – Monitoring and Evaluation [duration: project months 1-24]

The aim of this work package is to ***guarantee a high quality standard of the work performed during the project implementation***. Therefore a multi-level evaluation concept containing an internal as well as an external component has been set-up.

Several supportive measures have been set by the internal and external evaluator, like assisting the set-up of an overall evaluation plan, conducting the evaluation of each partner meeting, performing a portal check, conducting a target-performance-comparison, etc. The internal and external evaluation managers are in close contact in order to reflect on the project implementation and improvement potentials.

According to the work programme three main deliverables are foreseen: Evaluation plan, interim evaluation report and final evaluation report. Additionally the project application foresees the formulation of 'external evaluation terms of reference'. This letter is attached to the interim report of the NETCOACH project More information to the single deliverables can be found in the next section.

Comparison of plan and “reality” – Results

In general the project partners worked in line with the work programme outlined in the proposal and the contract, even if there have been some delays reported during the course of project implementation.

The following table indicates the planned results according to the project proposal/contract. The comments give a short assessment of the completion status of the deliverables/results:

	Title	Content	Comment
R1	Project meeting kick-off	First meeting of all consortium members, planned in project month 1.	The first meeting has been held in November 2010, in Ireland. All partners attended the meeting. The delay of one month resulted from difficulties in finding a suitable date for all partners. As partners already started to work prior to the meeting, this delay did not influence the project implementation.
R2	Steering committee meeting	These project management meetings will take place in 6 monthly intervals, starting in PM6. Additionally SKYPE conferences can be scheduled on demand.	So far and according to the time plan, three partner meetings have been held in Ireland, Bulgaria and Sofia. Two more meetings will be organised until the end of the project; they are planned for Portugal and Germany. The documentation of the meetings proves that the meetings have been relevant for the work progress. Next steps are clearly outlined; relevant partners attended the meetings. However, the Norwegian partner only attended the first meeting. Due to various reasons this partner was not able to join the second and third meeting. This unclear situation is currently solved by the coordinator and the Irish NA.
R3	Closing seminar	Seminar, inviting project partners, interested bodies, SMEs, entrepreneurs and regional training authorities. Foreseen for PM12.	This seminar has not been organised within the reporting period. Due to some delays in the project implementation it is expected that this event will be organised in the second project half, where partners can show much better first results.
R4	Partners report interim	Quarterly progress report on activities, results and updates, submitted by all partners to the project manager. The partner reports will be compiled to one interim report by the project manager.	The project manager developed templates which are used by the consortium members in order to report their activities on a three monthly basis. These tools allow to support the management of the project and to make it more efficient. The tool is also highly appreciated by the team, as it saves a lot of work, prior to the official reports.
R5	Partners report financial	Quarterly financial report on budgetary and financial claims, submitted by all partners to the project manager. The partner reports will be compiled to one interim report by the project manager.	The project manager developed templates which are used by the consortium members in order to report their expenditures on a three monthly basis. These tools allow to support the management of the project and to make it more efficient. The tool is also highly appreciated by the team, as it saves a lot of work, prior to the official reports.
R6	Financial claim audit	Six monthly financial report/claim submitted by the project manager, including external financial audit report.	As this tool has not been required by the Irish NA, it has not been used.

	Title	Content	Comment
R7	Project presentation	The NETCOACH project website will include a .ppt project presentation in English and will provide general project information in all partner languages.	The general information of the project is available on http://www.netcoach.eu.com . It is available in all partner languages, apart from Norwegian. To evaluate the project website a so-called portal check has been performed by using a standard checklist. The main results are outlined in the annex of this report. The LLP disclaimer is missing and should be added. Currently the .ppt project presentation is not available on the project website.
R8	Internal financial and communications procedure	Drafting of financial and communication procedures will be complete and procedures circulated to all relevant stakeholders to ensure awareness of compliance issues and individual requirements.	This document describes the methods used to ensure the effective and timely communication between project partners.
R9	Procedure/specification for conducting needs analysis	Description on how the needs analysis shall be performed.	The provided document provides short summaries and information about lessons learnt from the fore-runner projects on which NETCOACH is based. As the needs analysis consists also in performing a survey in all partner countries, addressing managers/owners of SMEs, it would have been favourable, also to highlight the single steps and procedures to conduct this survey. This information/process has been elaborated by the consortium and discussed in partner as well as SKYPE meetings.
R10	Report of results of SME needs analysis	Individual reports from project partners will be combined into an overall report with evaluation, conclusion and recommendations.	The training needs analysis report provides a good overview of the current situation in the partner countries. Some hints like for example questions related to e-learning are highlighted. Respondents consider the platform to be easy-to-use. Therefore project partners have to pay attention when developing the training content more deeply to take this feedback into consideration. Project partners seem to be aware of this issue. It can be expected that the NETCOACH results will take into consideration the results of the survey very well and that they are of good use for the target group.
R11	NETCOACH curriculum	Development of the curriculum for NETCOACH.	Even if the elaboration of the NETCOACH curriculum is not described in any details in the corresponding work programme, it has to be highlighted that the provided document does only contain a list of sub-chapters for each of the four modules and instructions on how to write the modules. Key elements of a standard curriculum, like general aim, learning objectives, time lines are missing.
R12	VET modules	Four topics, selected based on the results of the needs analysis and the research of fore-runner projects.	Based on the writing instructions partners elaborated learning content regarding the four modules: 'creativity and innovation', 'knowledge management', 'e-business' and 'integrated management systems'. So far only two of the four modules are available in EN for being pilot tested. As there exists a huge delay in implementation partners should urgently clarify and agree on when the missing modules will be available.
R13	Specifications for NETCOACH web-based e-learning platform	Specifications for NETCOACH web-based e-learning platform.	This document provides the frame on how the e-learning platform shall be developed. It outlines briefly the main concepts and provides guidelines on the set-up of the platform.
R14	First prototype of the NETCOACH web based e-learning platform	First prototype of the NETCOACH web based e-learning platform	This deliverable has been delayed. It is currently available on http://www.netcoach.eu.com and will be used for the first pilot testing which will take place in November 2011.

	Title	Content	Comment
R15	Second prototype of the platform	Second prototype of the NETCOACH web based e-learning platform	After the first test cycle, where two of the four modules will be tested by two test persons in each country, the second testing will contain the whole content. Due to delays in elaborating the learning content this test phase will be delayed as well. The consortium is aware of this fact and has foreseen corrective measures to guarantee an on-time close of the project in September 2012.
R16	NETCOACH web based e-learning platform live with full content	NETCOACH web based e-learning platform live with full content, containing lessons learnt from pilot testing.	This result will be due in PM18. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.
R17	Final release with full documentation	The final version of the NETCOACH website and e-learning platform.	This result will be due in PM24. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.
R18	Pilot testing methodology and questionnaires	This document describes the methodology to be used for the pilot testing and contains the questionnaires which will be used to perform the pilot testing of the NETCOACH project results.	According to the work programme this deliverable has been foreseen for PM6. However, as it is part of a logical step-by-step development process, the consortium agreed on having this document ready right before the pilot testing. The document is of good quality and describes single steps of the whole pilot testing process very well. The multi-level testing concept will allow to involve different stake holders on different stages of the product development.
R19	Evaluation report of first test phase results	This report will contain the results of the first test phase of the pilot testing.	Due to a short delay and the decision to perform the first pilot testing in PM13 this result will be due in PM13. It is therefore not relevant for the evaluation interim report.
R20	Evaluation report of second test phase results	This report will contain the results of the second test phase of the pilot testing.	This result will be due in PM17. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.
R21	Evaluation report of third test phase results	This report will contain the results of the third test phase of the pilot testing.	This result will be due in PM21. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.
R22	Benchmarking report of RPL systems in participating countries	Benchmarking report of RPL systems in participating countries	This report presents the benchmarking of recognition of prior learning (RPL) in five countries, Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland and Portugal, in order to identify best practice and opportunities for improvement of the e-learning programmes developed for NETCOACH. The report describes the different situation in the partner countries. As things are developing/changing quite fast all over Europe, the consortium agreed to have an update of the report at a later project stage.
R23	Creation of a common analysis tool to determine the user competencies and skills gap	Creation of a common analysis tool to determine the user competencies and skills gap.	During the course of project implementation the consortium members got aware that the elaboration of this tool is more relevant at a later stage of project implementation. Therefore this tool will be available in the second project half. This procedure is from an internal evaluation view traceable, a later availability can be accepted.
R24	Development of procedure for acquiring European wide valid certificates for qualifying modules	Development of procedure for acquiring European wide valid certificates for qualifying modules.	This result will be due in PM22. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.

	Title	Content	Comment
R25	Incorporate RPL tools in the web platform	Incorporate RPL tools in the web platform.	As there exist some delays in the elaboration and testing of the web platform, these elements will be available in the second half of project implementation. The consortium is aware of this delay, it can be expected that the results will be implemented as initially foreseen. A strict time-planning will be necessary to finish the project as initially foreseen and in good quality.
R26	Dissemination and external communication plan	Different dissemination and exploitation strategies will be elaborated and outlined in the dissemination and external communication plan.	Within the first project year partners discussed at all meetings different possibilities to disseminate the project in all partner countries and in Europe. Dissemination activities have been reported to the project manager on a regular basis.
R27	Local/regional presentation	Presentation of the NETCOACH project, including regular press release, media exploitation.	The project and these intermediate results have been disseminated in all partner countries; stake holders and interested public are informed on a regular basis. Dissemination activities have been reported to the project manager on a regular basis.
R28	Communication materials incl. flyer, brochure, etc.	Communication materials incl. flyer, brochure, etc.	To reach different stake holders in the best way, different dissemination materials have been elaborated in all partner languages, apart from Norwegian.
R29	Business plan	Business plan, including marketing plan/internet strategy and accreditation and licensing framework	This result will be due in PM22. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.
R30	Project CD-Rom	As a final result a project CD-Rom will be produced. 3,500 copies are foreseen.	This result will be due in PM24. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.
R31	Evaluation framework	The evaluation framework will outline the time frame and methodologies for internal quality assurance and evaluation procedures which will be applied by the internal evaluator to provide feedback on the project.	This framework has been elaborated in project month three. It describes the internal evaluation process in details and contains as well an overview about the external evaluation component which is also foreseen in the NETCOACH project.
R32	External evaluation terms of reference	External evaluation terms of reference	This document outlines the main elements (content, timing, budget, etc.) which shall be taken into consideration by the external evaluator, who has been sub-contracted by the internal evaluation manager.
R33	Interim evaluation report	Combined report on internal and external processes to date.	This document.
R34	Final evaluation report	Combined report on internal and external processes for the entire project.	This result will be due in PM24. It is therefore not relevant for the interim evaluation report.

External Evaluation

In this interim evaluation report external evaluation covers the results scheduled till November 2011.

Result 9: Procedure/Specification for Conducting Needs Analysis

Work package number: WP2

Target groups/beneficiaries: Partners/SMEs recruited for participation in needs analysis

Language: English

Medium used: Text file

Availability according to proposal: PM 3 (December 2010)

The following report has been delivered on 10.12.2010:

Specification and Methodology for TNA Based on the Analysis of TNAs Reports

Comment:

Result 9 has been delivered in due time.

The report contains information on seven completed LLP projects in a field similar to that of the NETCOACH project, their contents and training methodologies. The available learning material and the topics presented in various handbooks and e-learning materials are summarised as well.

Result 9 aims to investigate the previous experience and to summarize the conclusions, lessons learned and main findings of the TNAs reports from the seven completed LLP projects in order to contribute to the TNA of the NETCOACH project, especially to the development of the envisaged questionnaire.

The first part of the report describes the seven projects according to year, countries involved, number of participants, topics and project aims. This description is well suited to get a first insight into the projects.

In the second part content-specific conclusions and training methodologies are described. The topics of the content section are well chosen: state-of-the-art, topics of main interest, problems, best practices and lessons learned. A good overview is given, despite the fact that the obtained results cannot be compared directly due to variations in the survey methodology, form of the survey and questions used, group sample and scope. The method of attributing the projects to the four NETCOACH modules (Creativity & Innovation, Knowledge Management, E-Business and Integrated Management Systems) also well supports the development of the NETCOACH questionnaire. Nevertheless uniform sub-headings for the four chapters are missing, which would have increased readability. Moreover chapter 4.1.4 should be named "Integrated Management Systems" and chapter 4.1.5 should be deleted.

The sub-chapter on training methodologies has been well presented highlighting specific questions as the use of e-learning, personal learning preferences, available technologies etc. Nevertheless the presentation is not neatly arranged containing no diagrams or other visual presentation techniques.

The third part provides a helpful short summary of the main topics included in the prepared handbooks and e-learning materials. Nevertheless the conclusions have not been formulated in an adequate way, being much too short and presenting no further information than that already delivered in the introduction. Annex 1 (first variant for the TNA Questionnaire) as announced in the chapter "Methodology" is missing.

The title of result 9 is "Procedure/specification for conducting needs analysis". In the report the outcomes of other LLP projects are presented, but the description of the important step between the collection of the previous experiences and the formulation of the NETCOACH questionnaire is missing. However, in result 10 it is shortly mentioned which parts of the questionnaire are based upon the previous surveys.

Overall the report can serve as a good basis for the formulation of the NETCOACH questionnaire, as the previous experiences from a large number of LLP projects (seven) and respondents (900) from 16 EU countries are included covering a variety of topics of interest for the NETCOACH project. Their description is presented in good quality and structure. Nevertheless the report lacks some uniform sub-headings as well as visual displays. Moreover the chapter "Conclusions" does not contain adequate information, as it is much too short. Most importantly a description of the input of the results of the TNAs of the seven projects to the effective formulation of the NETCOACH questionnaire is missing.

Result 10: Report of Results of SME Needs Analysis

Work package number: WP2

Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners

Language: English

Medium used: Text file

Availability according to proposal: PM 5 (February 2011)

The following report has been delivered on 9.5.2011:

Report of Results of SME Needs Analysis

Comment:

Result 10 has been delivered with a delay of three months.

The report summarises the results of the TNA survey conducted in five EU countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Portugal) in February 2011 highlighting the main conclusions and findings of the survey. The first part of the questionnaire aimed to identify motivation and interest of target groups for additional resources for training and coaching. After that respondents were asked to make some general observations and state some expectations for the near future. The second part discovered areas of specific interest for entrepreneurs and managers and the third part aimed to review the preferred forms and methodologies of learning. The last section included statistical information on the company and the managers.

First of all the on-line platform <http://www.kwiksurveys.com> was used for conducting the survey and for analysing the results. It allowed easy access to different language versions of the survey, possibility of modification and access to the final results of the survey for all partners.

The questionnaire is well elaborated subdivided into four relevant parts and thus enabling a detailed needs analysis. It is also mentioned, where the results of the seven previous LLP project were built in, in order to optimise the present questionnaire. The results of this survey are well displayed including visual presentations and valuable conclusions. Useful details are presented for the respondents as a whole, also occasionally subdivided by country.

However, a more detailed analysis per country including possible explanations for country-specific performance that might have influenced the overall performance has not been given. Another interesting aspect would have been: Is there a larger difference between the answers of micro and small companies? Furthermore in questions 6 and 7 the options "Others" are not available, although their inclusion would have been helpful. Concerning the conclusions the statement in the first paragraph: "Moreover, managers only occasionally search for specific training content." is unclear. Overall it would have been helpful, if the questionnaire had been attached.

The questionnaire is very comprehensive on the one hand (e.g. see listing of topics for each of the four modules), on the other hand the answering time of eight minutes is neither too long for the busy managers nor too short to obtain satisfying results.

The partners succeeded to fulfil the target of 20 respondents per country (except for Germany) totalling 138 respondents – managers and entrepreneurs. However, as seen in Germany, some questions requested (oral) explanations and thus should have been formulated in a clearer way.

Overall the SME needs analysis is of good quality and well-suited to contribute to the next phase of the NETCOACH project. The questionnaire is well-elaborated and the survey results are presented in a clear and easy to read way. The conclusions are precise and helpful. However, some questions could have been formulated more clearly, so that no oral explanations would have been necessary (see case of Germany). Moreover the report would have profited from more detailed results, e.g. geared to the single countries or the different company sizes.

Result 11: NETCOACH Curriculum Developed

Work package: WP2

Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners

Language: English

Medium used: Text file

Availability according to proposal: PM 5 (February 2011)

The following report has been delivered on 30.4.2011:

NETCOACH Curriculum Developed

Comment:

This result has been delivered with a delay of two months.

Guidelines how to structure the four modules concerning the presentation on the internet are delivered separately for each module. A style guide and general guidelines are attached as well.

The structure for the modules is precise and well thought out including a subdivision into chapters, tutorials and tools. Survey results have been considered. However, the guidelines for module 3 "E-business" are missing. In addition apart from the overall structure no further guidelines are given on how to set up the single chapters, like aim of the chapters, learning objectives, estimated time to go through the chapters, summaries at the end, etc.

The style guide and the general guidelines are very clear and appropriate.

Overall this report is of good quality concerning titles of chapters and sub-chapters, style guide and general guidelines. However, it lacks further details concerning aims, learning objectives, time frames and summaries. Furthermore no guidelines have been presented for module 3.

Result 12: VET Modules

Work package: WP2

Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners, interested bodies, SMEs, entrepreneurs, regional training authorities

Language: English, German, Portuguese, Norwegian, Bulgarian

Medium used: Website

Availability according to proposal: PM 5-14 (February to November 2011)

Two modules in English language have been launched on the website by 15.11.2011.

Comment:

This result has only partly been delivered by now, as only two out of four VET modules for specific target groups are presented on the NETCOACH website: Creativity & Innovations as well as Integrated Management Systems. Both modules are only available in English. According to the project manager module 2 is expected to be on the web by the end of the year and module 3 at the beginning of next year. Due to this delay, result 12 will be evaluated in detail in the final evaluation report.

Result 13: Specifications for NETCOACH Web-based E-learning Platform

Work package: WP3
Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners
Language: English
Medium used: Text file
Availability according to proposal: PM 6 (March 2011)

The following report has been delivered on 25.9.2011:

Specifications for NETCOACH Web

Comment:

Result 13 has been delivered with a delay of six months and is still under preparation.

The result does not contain specifications for the NETCOACH web in a narrower sense, but the outcomes of web development so far. After the determination of the requirements and a research of suitable technologies, a second visual prototype has been developed. The steps of work are well described.

Two modules have been designed as e-learning content appropriate for informal online learning. The content is presented in a user friendly way. Tools are available for download and resources for further reading are attached.

Further features will comprise extended search, tag cloud search, feedback possibilities, pre-assessment and search engine optimisation features. They are planned to be online before starting piloting actions. The further development of the second prototype will be based upon the pre-pilot testing and the feedback gathered. Result 13 will be assessed in detail in the final evaluation.

Overall this result is still under preparation and contains the outcomes of web development so far, not so much specifications of web development. Two modules have been designed as e-learning content so far, they are presented in a user friendly way.

Result 18: Pilot Testing Methodology and Questionnaires

Work package: WP4
Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners, interested bodies, SMEs, entrepreneurs, regional training authorities
Language: English, German, Portuguese, Norwegian, Bulgarian
Medium used: Text
Availability according to proposal: PM 5 (February 2011)
Number of copies: 60

The following report has been delivered on 10.10.2009 (as displayed in the document, most probably on 10.10.2011):

Framework for Pilot Actions

Comment:

Result 18 has not been delivered in due time.

The setup of the pilot testing foresees three phases as well as test evaluations and modifications. Thus different stakeholders can contribute to product development at different stages. The single phases are described according to purpose, test partners of the consortium/numbers of SMEs to be involved, main issues to be covered and further procedures. Feedback comprises relevancy of the content of the modules, assessment of the tools regarding efficiency and reliability, functionality of the platform, etc.

How the three pilot testings will be done and how the results will be integrated in the product is described in good quality. Organisational aspects have been outlined satisfactorily and the pilot test schedule adequately displays the steps of the task. Nevertheless limitations of the pre-pilot testing are that only the English version and only two modules will be assessed.

The questionnaire for the first test phase attached is very efficient asking about access problems, ease of navigation, content, suggestions for improvement, etc. It has been formulated in a very open way, so that answers are not limited to given categories. Its content is well suited to evaluate the website. The questionnaires for the other two test phases are missing.

Overall result 18 is of good quality foreseeing three phases as well as their evaluation and modification. A shortcoming of the pre-pilot testing is that it can only be done for the English version and for two modules out of four. Furthermore only the questionnaire for the pre-pilot testing is attached to the report.

Result 19: Evaluation Report of first Test Phase Results

Work package: WP4

Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners

Language: English

Medium used: Text file

Availability according to proposal: PM 11 (September 2011)

Comment:

The first test phase is about to take place right now. Thus this result will be delivered with a delay of about three months.

A detailed assessment of this result will be done in the final evaluation report.

Result 22: Benchmarking Report of RPL Systems in Participating Countries

Work package: WP5

Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners, interested bodies, SMEs, entrepreneurs, regional training authorities

Language: English

Medium used: Database

Availability according to proposal: PM 3 (December 2010)

The following report has been delivered on 29.9.2011:

Benchmarking Report of RPL System in Participating Countries

Comment:

Result 22 has been delivered with a delay of nine months.

In this report the benchmarking of recognition of prior learning (RPL) in five countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland and Portugal) has been presented in order to emphasise similarities and differences per country and to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement of the e-learning programmes developed by NETCOACH.

The content is manifold comprising ten different features to be described for each country. As things are developing/changing quite fast all over Europe, the consortium agreed to have an update of the report at a later project stage, which will be assessed in the final evaluation report.

The report is elaborated in good quality, using graphs and diagrams to visually present the results. It is very comprehensive. Uniform criteria have been used to describe the situations in the different countries. The conclusions well elaborated and suitable to support NETCOACH development.

The appendices contain detailed information on the single countries involved. However, appendix 2 and 3 have been given the same name.

Overall result 22 is of good quality, presenting comprehensive and relevant content in a visually appealing manner.

Result 23: Creation of a common Analysis Tool to Determine the User Competencies and Skills Gap

Work package: WP5

Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners, interested bodies, SMEs, entrepreneurs, regional training authorities

Language: English

Medium used: Website

Availability according to proposal: PM 6 (March 2011)

Comment:

This tool has not been delivered yet.

At the last NETCOACH meeting it was agreed that a 'strategy train' type diagnostic would be prepared for each module. Users will be invited to use the tool without being mandatory. P1 will present a proposal on a short assessment tool at the tele-meeting on December 7th.

Result 25: Incorporate RPL Tools in the Web Platform

Work package: WP5

Target groups/beneficiaries: Project partners, interested bodies, SMEs, entrepreneurs, regional training authorities

Language: English, German, Portuguese, Norwegian, Bulgarian

Medium used: Website

Availability according to proposal: PM 12 (September 2011)

Comment:

This activity has not taken place by now.

Annex

Meeting evaluation report – Kick-off Meeting

Summary

Six participants answered the questionnaire on the first NETCOACH partner meeting in Mullingar, Ireland from the 16th to the 17th of November 2010.

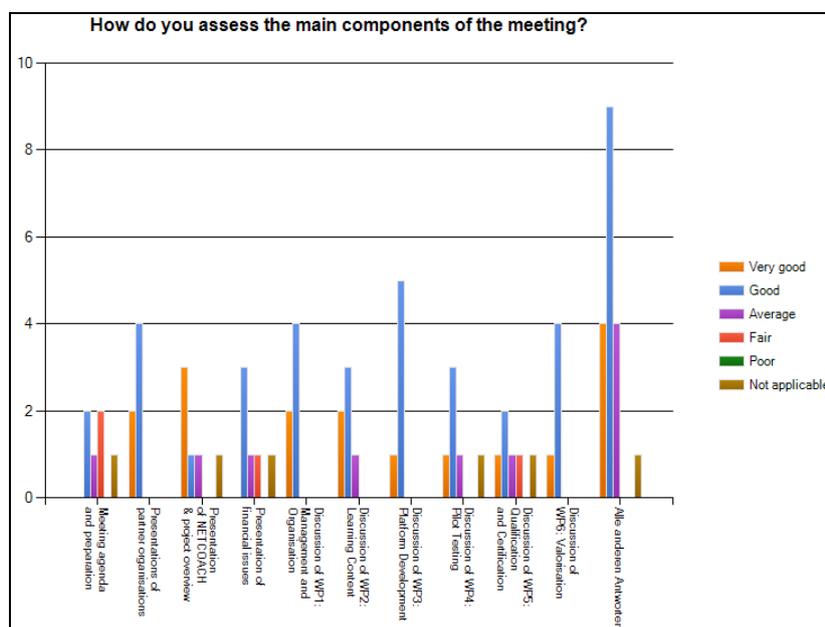
Expectations – “Reality” – Future

The main hopes and expectations for the partner meeting were mainly focussed on a first meeting and getting to know the project partners, the establishment of a working relationship and the agreement of a work schedule for the project. Participants also wanted to learn more about the project in general and to work on a common project vision. They also expected clarity about the aims, results and deliverables of the project.

These expectations were mostly met. The composition of the group was appreciated. Nevertheless three respondents stated that the final product and its implementation were not so clearly determined.

Respondents had to assess single components of the meeting with the marks 'very good', 'good', 'average', 'fair' and 'poor'. Most components were rated with 'very good' and 'good', but some also with 'average' and 'fair'. 'Presentation of NETCOACH & project overview', 'Discussion of WP7: Quality management', 'Presentation of partner organisations', 'Discussion of WP1: Management and organisation', 'Discussion of WP2: Learning content', 'Discussion of WP3: Platform development', 'Discussion of WP6: Valorisation' and 'Discussion of WP4: Pilot testing' received the best marks (components with best marks cited at the beginning). They all had average marks between 'very good' and 'good'. Respondents were not so satisfied with 'Meeting agenda and preparation', 'Presentation of financial issues' and 'Discussion of WP5: Qualification and certification'.

A detailed overview of the rating of the single meeting components can be found in the graph below:



Respondents learned quite a lot during the partner meeting. They received a lot of information on the other partners and learned what they expected. Respondents got to know more specific details of their tasks and hints for their work. One respondent remarked that mistakes in the budgets of the partners could have been avoided, if he had proved everything before the signature of the contracts.

Critical comments

There was not much respondents did not enjoy during the meeting. Two respondents stated that the agenda should have been sent out before the meeting in order to ease preparation for the meeting. To hand out the agenda at the meeting was said to be too late. One respondent also disliked that some partners did not prepare for the presentation of their work packages. Another respondent stated that the lack of internet in his hotel room was very inconvenient for him.

Positive critiques

Respondents enjoyed most during the meeting to finally meet the project partners who had contributed so much during the application. They also enjoyed to work in a small group and to do efficient work. Respondents enjoyed the debates to shape the work packages and the enthusiasm to get things clear and operative. The working atmosphere was said to be very cooperative and all participants tried to bring in ideas and thoughts.

Concerns

This chapter of the meeting evaluation questionnaire consists of four sub-sections, asking respondents about their concerns concerning project management, timing of activities, clearness of the next steps as well as completion of agreed tasks.

Related to project management partners had concerns because of the large work load and because vast practical experience of the project manager in Leonardo projects is missing.

When asking about the timing of activities respondents remarked that timing seemed to be under control. Nevertheless a summary table with all agreed deadlines should be provided by the coordinator as soon as possible. The importance to keep on schedule was stressed.

No major concerns have been reported about the clearness of the next steps as well as the completion of the agreed tasks. One respondent mentioned that the next steps should be pointed out clearly in the minutes of the meeting.

On the following pages the results of all questionnaires are compiled:

01 02	What were your main hopes and expectations for the partner meeting?	To what extent were these expectations met?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To meet the partners, establish a working relationship and agree a work schedule for the project. 2. The get to know the team and to learn about the project. 3. (a) To meet some participants in person the first time and get to know them. (b) To learn more about the expectations of the different project partners. (c) To learn more about the project in general and to work on a common project vision. 4. Meeting the partners and discussing the work process. 5. Clarity about the projects results, the aims of the project; form the applications description it sounds very complex; wanted to get a clear vision what we have to deliver at the end. 6. To get our own role in the project cleared out more detailed. The same for the other partners. And to develop all together to a functional team. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I was very pleased with the group and believe we will have a successful project. 2. Average - idea about final product and its implementation is not very clear. 3. Mostly met. The picture about what we'll produce is clearer even if there are several points to clarify after we've the results of the needs analyses. 4. High. 5. Partly: for me it seems that from the part of the coordinator the final products were not clearly enough explained, some open questions remain, I have the impression that the development of the final material which will be taken from various resources on the one hand and will also consist of new VET modules on the other hand might be too complex ... also considering the conditions of the work package of LiNK (time and budget). 6. To be honest, to a higher degree than I thought I could expect.

03	What did you enjoy most during the meeting?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finally meeting the project partners who have contributed so much towards the application. • Working in a small group. • We worked very efficient. • The contacts with other participants. • Very cooperative working atmosphere; all participants tried to bring in ideas and thoughts. • The debates we had to put each WP in concrete form. The eager and enthusiasm to get things clear and operative.

04	Was there any part of the meeting that you didn't enjoy?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfortunately I was limited to the time I could share with partners outside of business hours. • Involvement on some partners who have not been prepared for presenting their work packages. • Absence of an agenda which should have been sent out in order that partners can prepare better for the meeting; to hand out the agenda at the meeting is too late. • It would have been helpful to receive an agenda earlier to better prepare for the meeting. • No. • No.

05	What did you learn during the partner meeting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I learned that the partners bring a high level of expertise in all the areas we need it. This was my hope for the group and what we have exceeds my expectations. • That I should prove everything before contracts are signed, this would have avoided the mistakes in the partners budgets. • What other partners expect. • A lot of new information about other partners, better coordination of work, more specific details of our tasks. • Project applications are one side ... how to make the way to reach the results is the other side, very often a kick-off meeting defines things and all partners are invited to discuss. • I learned a lot about you and your organisations and got a lot of important tips to look up on the net.
-----------	---	--

06	How do you assess the components of the meeting?						
	Meeting agenda and preparation	0 Very Good 😊😊	2 Good 😊	1 Average 😊	2 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
	Presentations of partner organisations	2 Very Good 😊😊	4 Good 😊	0 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Presentation of NETCOACH & project overview	3 Very Good 😊😊	1 Good 😊	1 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
	Presentation of financial issues	0 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	1 Average 😊	1 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
	Discussion of WP1: Management and Organisation	2 Very Good 😊😊	4 Good 😊	0 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Discussion of WP2: Learning Content	2 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	1 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Discussion of WP3: Platform Development	1 Very Good 😊😊	5 Good 😊	0 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Discussion of WP4: Pilot Testing	1 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	1 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
	Discussion of WP5: Qualification and Certification	1 Very Good 😊😊	2 Good 😊	1 Average 😊	1 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
	Discussion of WP6: Valorisation	1 Very Good 😊😊	4 Good 😊	0 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Discussion of WP7: Quality Management	2 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	0 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
	Contribution of participants (participation in the discussions etc.)	2 Very Good 😊😊	1 Good 😊	3 Average 😊	0 Fair 😊	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable

06	How do you assess the components of the meeting?						
	Organisational aspects (e.g. meals, hotel)	0 Very Good 😊😊	5 Good 😊	1 Average 😊	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have chosen N/A on those aspects that were my sole responsibility. We didn't have preliminary agenda for the meeting. There are still not clear some PM issues. The lack of internet in the hotel rooms for me was very inconvenient. 						

07	Do you have any concerns about the main discussion points of the meeting?	
	Project management	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a large work load. PM lack practical experience in Leonardo projects. No - for all items.
	Timing of activities	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will be important to keep on schedule. No. A summary table with all agreed deadlines should be provided by the coordinator as soon as possible. I think we did a good job to make things clear, at least to an extent.
	Clearness of the next steps	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ok. No. Next steps have to be pointed out clearly in the meeting minutes. I hoped for at a first meeting.
	Completion of agreed tasks	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ok. No.

08	What are you going to do as a result of the meeting?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare minutes and distribute documents as agreed. Fulfil tasks as agreed. This was the kick-off-meeting so there are no concerns since practical project implementation has not started. Begin with TNA tasks, prepare questionnaire. Dissemination: setup of project webpage with main information about the project. Project management: providing a DMS according to the structure of the WPs for storing all documents. I have two extremely busy weeks in front of me now. After that I will read me up on stuff on the net and start planning for my main responsibility in the WP 4.

09	Anything else you would like to say?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. Thanks to the host. Hope you all came safe home. Looking forward to meeting you again and hope you all will have a peaceful and relaxing Christmas in between!!!

Meeting evaluation report – 2nd Partner Meeting

Summary

Six participants answered the questionnaire on the second NETCOACH partner meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, from the 16th to the 17th of March 2011.

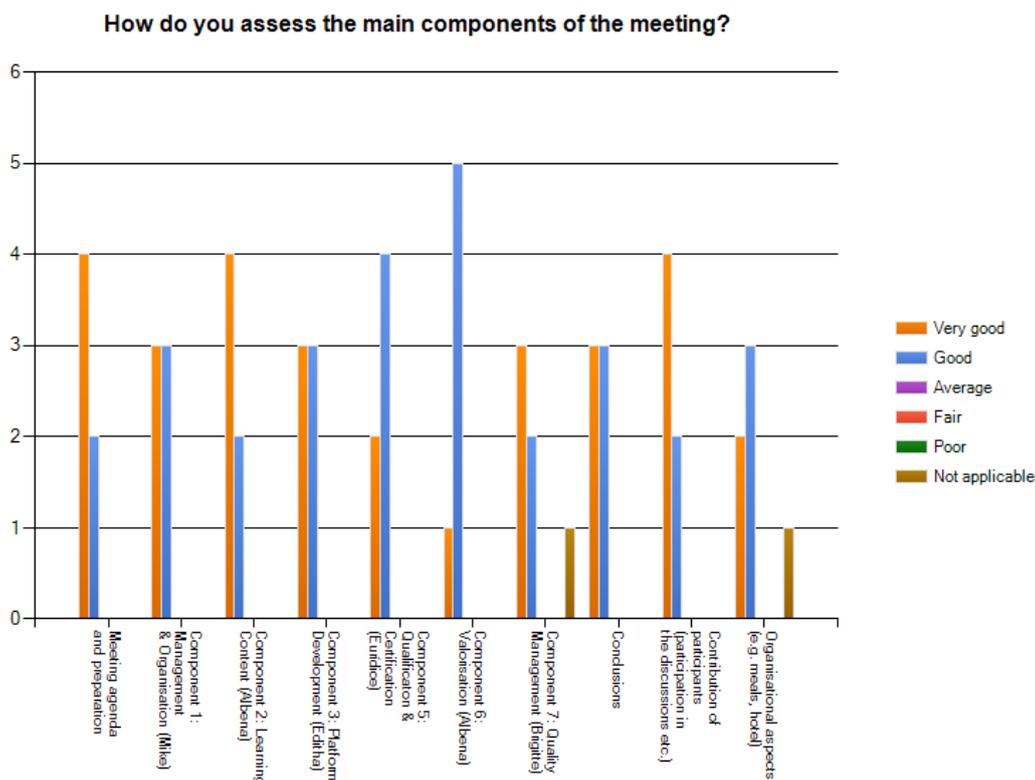
Expectations – “Reality” – Future

The main hopes and expectations of the participants for the meeting were to discuss a common vision on the project and to share it with each other. Respondents also hoped to be able to clarify the objectives and to get a clearer picture of the final product and the next steps to be done. They also hoped to receive inputs for platform development. The roles of the transfer projects were also expected to be clarified during the partner meeting.

These expectations were met to a large extent, for two respondents between 80 % and 85 %. Another respondent stated that good progress was made, especially the results envisaged have been clarified. And another respondent remarked that long discussions were held on the possible inputs from the transfer projects.

Respondents had to assess single components of the meeting with the marks 'very good', 'good', 'average', 'fair' and 'poor'. All components were rated with 'very good' and 'good'. 'Meeting agenda and preparation', 'Component 2: Learning Content (Albena)', 'Component 3: Platform Development (Editha)', 'Component 5: Qualification & Certification (Eunice)', 'Component 6: Validation (Albena)', 'Component 7: Quality Management (Brighte)', 'Conclusions', 'Contribution of participants (participation in the discussions etc.)' received the best marks.

A detailed overview of the rating of the single meeting components can be found in the graph below:



Respondents learned a lot during the partner meeting. They realised that it can be very efficient to work in small groups and how out of an idea a good project with clear outputs can result. Respondents also learned about the needs and preferences of SMEs related to the content and the structure of the NETCOACH platform as well as about RPL processes in the participating countries.

Critical comments

Only very few critical comments were made. One respondent stated that the coordinator should chair the meeting in a little bit more efficiently, as in his opinion discussions were too extensive. Another respondent regretted that the meeting was not attended by all partners. It was also criticised that the presentation of component 5 was not fully prepared and that component 3 could not be presented because of long discussions beforehand.

Positive critiques

Respondents enjoyed most during the meeting the productive working sessions with fruitful discussions on the project, possible problems and their solutions and especially on the WP on learning content. They also enjoyed the good working atmosphere, in which problems could be solved in a friendly and constructive manner.

Concerns

Respondents were asked about their concerns about the main discussion points of the meetings in relation to project management, timing of activities, clearness of the next steps as well as completion of agreed tasks.

Almost no concerns were mentioned in relation to project management. One respondent stated that the lead partner does a good job that could be still improved.

Concerns related to the timing of the activities were that the project is behind schedule for some work packages and that it will be difficult to manage all the work that has to be done within the next months. The latter point also refers to completion of agreed tasks.

One respondent mentioned that the next steps and the agreed tasks should be pointed out clearly in the minutes of the meeting.

On the following pages the results of all questionnaires are compiled:

01 02	What were your main hopes and expectations for the partner meeting?	To what extent were these expectations met?
	<p>7. That we discuss and share a common vision on the project.</p> <p>8. To get a clearer picture about the final product and the next steps.</p> <p>9. Progress the project.</p> <p>10. To clarify the objectives, to have discussions and agreements for the schedule for the next months of work.</p> <p>11. To discuss the activities already done, to plan the further activities and to have a more accurate overview of the project outcomes and their concrete benefits for the project beneficiaries.</p> <p>12. Clear definition of deliverables/products; to get all important inputs for WP platform development; role of the transfer projects for the material that will be developed in NETCOACH; to what extent will the material from former projects be used.</p>	<p>7. I think we made good progress. The picture, expected and envisaged results get clearer now.</p> <p>8. 85%.</p> <p>9. Very well.</p> <p>10. Great extend.</p> <p>11. Quite good.</p> <p>12. 80% ... long discussion but at the end we reached a common ground; main problem was the different opinion/approach among partners about the available materials and how to present them in NETCOACH.</p>

03	What did you enjoy most during the meeting?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think we've worked very efficiently. • The very productive working sessions. • Free and open discussion, particularly in relation to the learning content work package. • Cooperation spirit. • The fruitful discussion of the project, possible problems and the ways to solve them and the achieving of the results. • Working atmosphere was good, even if it was very stressful in some phases, all problems were solved in a friendly and constructive manner.

04	Was there any part of the meeting that you didn't enjoy?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. • No. • No. • No. • I liked everything. • The coordinator should lead the meeting a little better - this is not a critique, only a feeling I had sometimes, when we nearly "got lost" in the discussion.

05	<p>What did you learn during the partner meeting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That some taxi drivers cheat in all countries ;-)) • That it can be very efficient to work in small groups. • At this meeting I saw our idea getting closer to reality. Outputs are now much clearer and I am encouraged that we will achieve the desired outcomes. • I learned about the needs and preferences of SMEs related to the Netcoach platform contents and structure, with the presentation of the survey's results conducted under WP2, and learned a bit more about RPL processes in the participating countries (WP5).
-----------	--

06	How do you assess the components of the meeting?					
Meeting agenda and preparation	4 Very Good 😊😊	2 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Component 1: Management & Organisation (Mike)	3 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Component 2: Learning Content (Albena)	4 Very Good 😊😊	2 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Component 3: Platform Development (Editha)	3 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Component 5: Qualification & Certification (Eurídice)	2 Very Good 😊😊	4 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Component 6: Valorisation (Albena)	1 Very Good 😊😊	5 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Component 7: Quality Management (Brigitte)	3 Very Good 😊😊	2 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
Conclusions	3 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Contribution of participants (participation in the discussions etc.)	4 Very Good 😊😊	2 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
Organisational aspects (e.g. meals, hotel)	2 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was unfortunate that not all partners attended the meeting. • Component 5 - presentation was not fully prepared due to lacking time ... Component 3 - presentation was prepared but not used during the meeting because of long discussions (uploaded to al-fresco). 						

07	Do you have any concerns about the main discussion points of the meeting?	
	Project management	Concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. • I feel more confident about PM. • No. • Leading role good but should be improved.
	Timing of activities	Concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a lot of work within the next months - let's hope that we can manage! • Everything is under control :) • No. • Behind the schedule in some WPs.
	Clearness of the next steps	Concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear. • Yes. • No. • Have to be pointed out clearly in the meeting minutes.
	Completion of agreed tasks	Concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a lot of work within the next months - let's hope that we can manage! • Yes. • No. • Have to be pointed out clearly in the meeting minutes.

08	What are you going to do as a result of the meeting?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfil tasks as agreed. • We have a quite heavy workload scheduled before the next project meeting ... • Continue with agreed deadlines. • Press release with information on the results of the SME survey to be published on the sites of CRIA (www.cria.pt) and University of Algarve (www.ualg.pt) and prepare a radio program for RUA FM (Radio of the University). Complete the benchmarking report on RPL process and do some research on ECVET to be included into the benchmarking report. • Discussing approach for the platform with experts in my company.

09	Anything else you would like to say?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hotel was great, thanks for choosing it! • Thank you to all partners. • No. • :)

Meeting evaluation report – 3rd Partner Meeting

Summary

Five participants answered the questionnaire on the third NETCOACH partner meeting which took place in Graz, Austria, from the 29th to the 30th of September 2011.

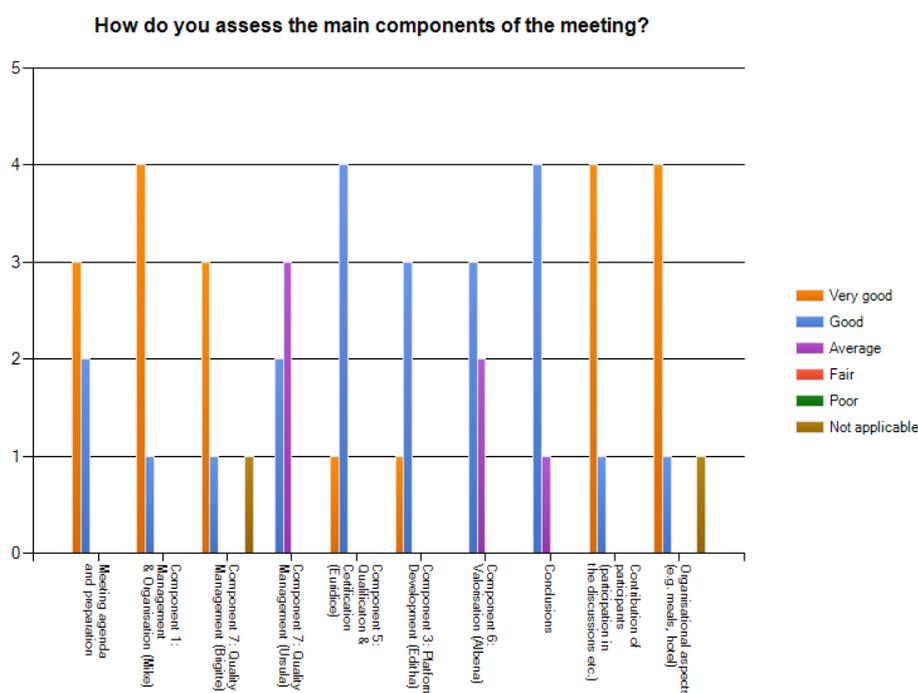
Expectations – “Reality” – Future

The main hopes and expectations of the participants for the meeting were manifold. Partners expected to get an updated overview of the project situation and to clarify some aspects related to management issues and some of the WP outputs. It was also expected that the preparation of the interim report as well as the usefulness and appropriateness of the products for SMEs were discussed. Another hope was that platform development would be supported and improved by partner feedback. Furthermore partners expected to learn about the next steps to be done.

These expectations were met to a large extent. Some doubts still remain about the WP outputs and one respondent is disappointed that KM will remain the same.

Respondents had to assess single components of the meeting with the marks 'very good', 'good', 'average', 'fair' and 'poor'. All components were rated with marks from 'very good' to 'average'. 'Component 1: Management & Organisation (Mike)', 'Contribution of participants (participation in the discussions etc.)' as well as 'Organisational aspects (e.g. meals, hotel)' received the best marks. 'Component 7: Quality Management (Ursula)', 'Component 6: Valorisation (Albena)' and 'Conclusions' were rated lowest.

A detailed overview of the rating of the single meeting components can be found in the graph below:



Respondents learned a lot during the partner meeting. They learned about new project opportunities, new progressions in the field of online learning, new developments in web technology as well as possibilities in respect of RPL and certification options. Respondents also learned that some aspects of the project have to be improved, but that a compromise has to be found between the possible and the optimal.

As a result of the meeting partners will contribute as agreed (e.g. platform development, content production, research) and improve communication. They will also prepare and submit the interim report and take care of re-contracting and budget modifications with the NA.

Critical comments

When asked about parts of the meetings partners did not enjoy, the following issues were mentioned: One partner was not sure about the final NETCOACH platform, the content and the different entry points. Another partner disliked that everybody rejected his/her ideas in the first instance, while he/she just wanted to respond on the TNA. One partner did not like that after one year of work flyers are still not available. Furthermore communication between the meetings still has to be improved.

Positive critiques

Respondents enjoyed most during the partner meeting that everyone brought in ideas and took part in the discussions. They also enjoyed learning from other partners. Moreover they liked the effectiveness of the meeting and the good working atmosphere as well as the very nice and comfortable venues.

Concerns

Respondents were asked about their concerns about the main discussion points of the meetings in relation to project management, timing of activities, clearness of the next steps as well as completion of agreed tasks.

Concerns regarding project management were that ongoing re-contracting issues need to be resolved. The “Norwegian” question was also seen as a concern.

Regarding timing of activities it has been mentioned that some deadlines have not been met and pilot testing should be done as soon as possible. Furthermore the speed of work should be accelerated.

There were no concerns regarding clearness of the next steps.

Regarding completion of the agreed tasks one partner was concerned that the report on RPL does not completely reflect the situation in each country.

On the following pages the results of all questionnaires are compiled:

01 02	What were your main hopes and expectations for the partner meeting?	To what extent were these expectations met?
	<p>13. The meeting should bring me a step further regarding to platform development. I expected feedback from partners about the things which are already online and suggestions how to proceed and improve the platform.</p> <p>14. I expected that the meeting would give us an updated overview of the project situation and clarify some aspects related to the management issues and about some of the Work Packages' outputs.</p> <p>15. To see the final content and to learn about next steps.</p> <p>16. Further progression of project objectives. Preparation for interim report, and communication of requirements from each partner.</p> <p>17. To think and discuss again if we are on the right way to produce something useful and appropriate for SMEs.</p>	<p>13. 80%.</p> <p>14. About the management issue the expectations were met, because the situation was clarified; about the WP's outputs still remain some doubts.</p> <p>15. 60%.</p> <p>16. Very well.</p> <p>17. Partially, I'm really disappointed that KM should be the same, while I'm released that at least for e-business module Mike allows me more freedom ;).</p>

03	What did you enjoy most during the meeting?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group, everyone brought in ideas and took part in discussion. • The effectiveness and the cosy atmosphere, the venues were very nice and comfortable. • Good working atmosphere. • Learning from other partners. • Meeting the partners and have discussions.

04	Was there any part of the meeting that you didn't enjoy?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing to mention. • Nothing relevant to mention. • Not sure about the final NETCOACH platform and the content and the different entry points. • No. • When everybody rejected on the first instance my ideas. It was just because I wanted to respond on the TNA.

05	What did you learn during the partner meeting?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That we need to achieve an intermediary point between the optimum and the possible. That we have to improve some aspects and sometimes to come back to the completed tasks in order to provide a better result. • New progressions in the field of online learning. New developments in web technology. Possibilities in respect of RPL and certification options. I also learned from the experience of other partners working on LLP projects. • New project opportunities. 	

06	How do you assess the components of the meeting?						
	Meeting agenda and preparation	3 Very Good 😊😊	2 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Component 1: Management & Organisation (Mike)	4 Very Good 😊😊	1 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Component 7: Quality Management (Brigitte)	3 Very Good 😊😊	1 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	1 Not applicable
	Component 7: Quality Management (Ursula)	0 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	2 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Component 5: Qualification & Certification (Eurídice)	1 Very Good 😊😊	4 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Component 3: Platform Development (Editha)	1 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Component 6: Valorisation (Albena)	0 Very Good 😊😊	3 Good 😊	2 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Conclusions	0 Very Good 😊😊	4 Good 😊	1 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Contribution of participants (participation in the discussions etc.)	4 Very Good 😊😊	1 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
	Organisational aspects (e.g. meals, hotel)	4 Very Good 😊😊	1 Good 😊	0 Average 😐	0 Fair 😐	0 Poor 😞😞	0 Not applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After one year work on an important document for dissemination (flyer) is still in progress. • All partners contribute well, not just in the work packages directly under their responsibility, but across all work packages. This is to the ultimate benefit of the project. 							

07	Do you have any concerns about the main discussion points of the meeting?	
	Project management	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. • The "Norwegian" question. • - • Ongoing re-contracting issues need to be resolved.
	Timing of activities	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, some deadlines were not met. • Try to accelerate a bit. • - • Pilot testing is now becoming urgent.
	Clearness of the next steps	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear. • No special concern about that. • - • Next steps are clear.
	Completion of agreed tasks	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ok. • A little bit concerned about the report on RPL because sometimes I don't think it reflects completely the situation in each country. • - • There is some creep in this context, but not on the critical milestones.

08	What are you going to do as a result of the meeting?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platform development as agreed, content production 2nd module. • To respond to the commitments we took, to improve the communication. • Contribute as agreed. • Prepare and submit interim report. Expedite re-contracting and budget modifications with NA. Continued focus on learning content. • Clear PM activities, research.

09	Anything else you would like to say?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. • We still need to improve our communication between the meetings and give feedback when asked. • Thank you very much to all partners.

Website/Portal Checklist

The checklist¹ is split into 4 roughly equal sections, (I) Accessibility, (II) Identity, (III) Navigation, and (IV) Content. Not all points are necessarily applicable to all sites. The checklist can be seen as a guideline to check basic elements and functions of a web site and to get a quick overview about possible improvement potentials or to guide developers. We introduce 3 basic ratings like traffic lights: (1) **Green** = Good/pass, (2) **Yellow** = Needs work/rethink, (3) **Red** = Bad/fail/check in detail. Short comments are added directly in the checklist where applicable.

Website: <http://www.netcoach.eu.com>

Section I. Accessibility

This section contains not only traditional accessibility issues, but anything that might keep a visitor from being able to access the information on a website.

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Short description</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Comment</i>
01	Site load-time is reasonable	With broadband connection the site should be displayed with "no visible" delay.				
02	Adequate text-to-background contrast	Eyes and monitors vary wildly; the core contrast should be kept high.				
03	Font size/spacing is easy to read	Opinions vary on the ideal size for text. Poor readability increases frustration, and frustration leads to site abandonment. Line spacing is adequate.				
04	Flash & add-ons are used sparingly	People won't wait 5 minutes for a plug-in to load. Use animations only when it really enhances goals. Sticking to standard HTML/CSS is also a plus for search engines.				
05	Images have appropriate ALT tags	Not only do sight-impaired visitors use ALT tags, but search engines need them to understand your images. Especially critical when using images for key content, such as menu items.				
06	Site has custom not-found/404 page	If a page on your site doesn't exist, a white page with "404 Not Found" is a good way to lose a customer. Create a custom 404 page, preferably one that guides your visitors to content.				Not checked
07	Site works in different browsers	Check if the site works in different browsers - even if currently IE is most common.				Checked with IE9, FF6, Chrome15

Section II. Identity

It's important to answer quickly who publishes the site and what it is about, and make the paths to obvious follow-up questions clear: "What do you do?" "Why should I trust you?" etc.

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Short description</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Comment</i>
08	Company logo is prominently placed	Put your logo or brand where it's easy to find, and that usually means the upper-left of the screen. People expect it, and they like it when you make their lives easy.				
09	Purpose of site & "publishers" is clear	Answer "What do you do?" concisely with a descriptive tagline. Avoid marketing jargon and boil your unique value proposition down to a few words. This is also a plus for SEO.				Home page starts with a short, easily understandable intro.
10	Page is "digestible" in 5 seconds	In usability often the 5-second rule is mentioned. Even if it might be more or less users need to get the basic gist of the page in just a few moments.				
11	Clear path to publisher information	Confidence is important on the web, and people need an easy way to learn more about the publisher of the site.				
12	Clear path to contact information	Similarly, visitors want to know that they can get in touch with you if they need to. Preferably, list your contact information as text (not in an image) - it'll get picked up by search engines.				Contact info could be also added to the imprint in the page footer. (But it is "behind" the imprint link.)

¹ The website checklist is based on the 25 items usability checklist developed by Dr. Peter J. Meyers (<http://www.useffect.com>).

13	Disclaimer	Is a disclaimer included (required for example for websites / publications funded by third parties)? Is it meaningful and useful?					LLP disclaimer is missing. Please refer to LLP guidelines for using LLP logo and disclaimer.
----	-------------------	---	--	--	--	--	--

Section III. Navigation

People need clear paths to the content that interests them. Following points cover some basics.

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Short description</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Comment</i>
14	Main navigation is easily identifiable	Almost every site on the web has had a main menu since the first browsers came on the market. Is main navigation easy to find, read, and use?				
15	Navigation labels are clear & concise	The main navigation should be short, to the point, and easy for mere mortals to grasp.				
16	Number and function of buttons/links	Are menu items feasible, logic and useful? Are they really needed and clear for the user? Do external links open in new pages/tabs? Etc.				
17	Company logo is linked to home-page	People expect logos to link to home-pages, and when they don't, confusion follows.				NETCOACH logo is linked to the "home" page. Partner organisation logos in "Partners" section are not linked to respective partner sites.
18	Links are consistent & easy to identify	The underlined, blue link is a staple of the web. Are links either blue or underlined? Links should stand out, should be used sparingly enough that they don't disrupt the content.				
19	Site search is easy to access	If there is a site search, is it prominent. Usability guidelines tend to prefer the upper-right corner of the page. Is it simple and clear - "Search" still works best for most sites.				
20	"Display" of website	Avoid having a visitor scroll horizontally at least with the screen res. 1024*768				

Section IV. Content

Content is king. Content needs to be consistent, organized, and easy to skim through.

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Short description</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Comment</i>
21	Major headings are clear & descriptive	Most people don't read online, they skim. Are headings (major and minor) used to set content apart and keep it organized?				
22	Critical content is above the fold	The "fold" is that imaginary line where the bottom of the screen cuts off a page. Content can fall below the fold, but important content should fit on that first screen users guided to scroll down.				
23	Styles & colours are consistent	Layout, headings, and styles should be consistent site-wide, and colours should have the same meaning.				
24	Emphasis (bold, etc.) is used sparingly	It's a fact of human cognition: try to draw attention to everything and you'll effectively draw attention to nothing.				
25	Ads & pop-ups are unobtrusive	Ads are a fact of life, but if, they should be integrated nicely into the site and it should be clear that "this is an add".				
26	Main copy is concise & explanatory	Content should be concrete and descriptive and avoid jargon. Not too long texts, repeating things etc.				
27	URLs are meaningful & user-friendly	Meaningful keyword-based URLs are generally good for both visitors and search engines. URLs should be made/displayed "descriptive and friendly".				
28	HTML page titles are explanatory	More importantly, your page titles (in the <TITLE> tag) should be descriptive, unique, and not jammed full of keywords. Page titles are the first thing search-engine visitors see!				Not checked