



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



**HERITAGE & NATURAL RESOURCES FOR GREEN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP (HENGE) PROJECT
PROJECT NUMBER 2011-1-ESI-LE005-35905**

INTERIM EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

BS&A
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Heritage and Natural Resources for Green Entrepreneurship (HENGE) Project aims to provide support to individuals living in rural areas that are interested in exploring self-employment as a viable career option. Led by Lawton School and funded under the Leonardo da Vinci funding programme, the Project seeks to develop a virtual training programme that will allow individuals to make an assessment as to whether they could start a business making use of the heritage and green resources in their immediate area.
- 1.2 A Quality Plan has been developed to oversee the HENGE project. This Plan identified the need to employ an independent external evaluator to support the role of the Project Coordinator and Internal Evaluator in managing and quality assuring the work of the Project. Brian Stratford & Associates were appointed to carry out this work.
- 1.3 The role and responsibilities of the external evaluator are as follows:
- Liaise with relevant key personnel from each of the partner organisations.
 - Design and analyse tailored questionnaires circulated throughout the period of the project.
 - Attendance at one transnational meeting in Edinburgh.
 - Review of documentation relevant to the project.
 - Review of secondary material relating to the project including internal monitoring and evaluation material of the participating partner organisations.
 - Production of an Interim External Evaluation at the 12-month stage.
 - Production of a Final External Evaluation at the end of the project.
 - To support the Internal Evaluator throughout the Project.
- 1.4 This report presents an interim external evaluation report for the first 12 months of operation of the Project up to the end of September 2012. This will focus on the materials that have been produced to date, progress being achieved against each work package and to draw some qualitative observations of how the project and partnership have operated thus far. Where possible, the report will attempt to avoid duplication with the interim reports produced by the Project Coordinator and Internal Evaluator.

- 1.5 Having provided some background to the Project and what it hopes to achieve, the report will consider the extent to which the quantitative targets have been met and any issues in relation to these. This will be followed by some qualitative analysis of how the Project has operated thus far with recommendations made for future Project delivery where applicable.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 HENGE is a Transnational European Union project delivered by a multidisciplinary group of 8 partner organisations from 6 countries. The Project has received support from the Leonardo da Vinci funding programme that focuses on vocational education and training and seeks to address the learning and teaching needs of individuals across Europe.
- 2.2 Building on the previous success of the Panorama Grundtvig Project, HENGE aims to adapt and transfer an innovative methodology and curriculum for natural and cultural heritage resource evaluation and rural entrepreneurship, and to transfer this to new geographic markets via the partners in the consortium reaching from Spain to Turkey.
- 2.3 The Europe 2020 strategy identified the need for training to be provided in basic green enterprise skills. HENGE seeks to create a virtual training programme that will encourage individuals living in rural areas to maximise their built, natural and cultural heritage resources through entrepreneurship. Users will receive training on sustainable rural enterprise opportunities and 'green enterprise skills' allowing participants to consider setting up a micro-company or agri-tourism business as an option. Hosting the resources on an e-learning platform will ensure the training modules are accessible beyond the funding period for the project. In particular, the Project seeks to provide support to disadvantaged groups in the labour market, including young people, women, older people and the disabled.
- 2.4 The Project Partners have established the following objectives:
- To transfer the results of the root project Panorama in order to significantly improve the situation of the labour market and employment policy in the innovation-importing countries;
 - To raise awareness of local heritage and natural resources and how they may be used in the context of rural entrepreneurship;

- To develop a virtual training platform and training programme;
- To deliver an information campaign to reach training institutions;
- To bridge the gap of regional disparities in employment performance;
- To create conditions for applying the principles of Sustainable Development throughout local rural business proposals.

2.5 As a result of the successful delivery of the Project, it is hoped that the following outcomes will be achieved:

- The development of a training programme which will assist dwellers in rural communities to consider self-employment and set up their own green business;
- Provision of a tool to review processes and look for ways to use heritage and natural resources more effectively which can help rural businesses reduce their environmental impacts;
- Provision of a trans-sectoral approach to vocational education and training and to the labour market;
- Transfer of the materials to an e-learning management system;
- Translation of the results (training modules, user manual, and information material) into the languages of the innovation-importing partner countries;
- Testing the training solution in target markets;
- Production of dissemination materials;
- Production of a project website;
- Development of an on line modular course in 6 languages.

2.6 As a result of the Project and the support provided, it is intended that the resources developed continue to be available following the lifespan of the project. The Partners envisage mainstreaming and multiplication of the training programme into the national arena of each partner country and will transfer the materials to an e-learning management system ensuring access post September 2013.

2.7 Project Delivery

The delivery of the Project has been divided into eight Work Packages as follows:

Work Package	Activity	Led by
1	Project Management	Lawton
2	Quality Management	CEL
3	Research and Needs Analysis	CCIBN
4	Adaptation and Transfer: Development of Training Framework	Oatridge
5	Pilot Testing	CCIT
6	Dissemination, Valorisation and Promotion	Assist Net
7	Transfer of Materials Developed to LMS	Lawton
8	Implementation	Alytus

The quantitative outputs from this work to date will be considered individually in the next Section. To avoid duplication with the internal evaluators report, the analysis will aim to consider each Work Package in general and focus on the overall implications for the Project. Feedback on the documentation produced will have been provided directly to each partner at the time of production and so will not be covered again in this report.

3. REVIEW OF PROJECT OUTPUTS

3.1 The following provides an overview of the quantitative outputs established for the project and the extent to which the targets have been reached as of the end of September 2012. In each case, the description of the Work Package from the original application for funding has been included.

3.2 Work Package 1 – Project Management

Description: The Project Management WP includes all important monitoring and coordination activities within the partnership, including planning and implementation of the transnational project meetings. This work package will be coordinated by the applying organisation to ensure full achievement of the targets.

Progress to Date: 2 partner meetings held (Gijon and Edinburgh) with minutes taken; financial and administrative systems/documentation put in place; Project website; Declaration of Intellectual Property Rights produced.

As Project Co-ordinator, Lawton School has overall responsibility for this work package, although with many of the activities being delivered at a national level, all of the partners will have responsibilities in this area. Thus far, the project has run very smoothly with no major delays in the activities to be delivered. This can largely be attributed to the professional project management displayed by Lawton School.

A Tasks and Deadlines document was created documenting all of the activities to be undertaken by project partners, the deadline for their completion and any explanation if there has been a variance from the target set. All tasks from the initial application form have been included, with the list updated following each partner meeting. This is an excellent way of ensuring that partners are aware of what it is that they have to do whilst also assisting with the monitoring of progress across the work packages.

One observation would be that when target dates for completion are put in place, it is important that these are agreed with the partner responsible to ensure that they are realistic and can be delivered within that timeframe. When a date for completion is missed, the Project Coordinator can then follow this up with the

partner to establish why the agreed date has not been met. This is not to suggest that target dates have been imposed by the Project Coordinator in any way.

The completion of the Declaration of Intellectual Property Rights can also be considered good practice in ensuring that the use of the materials produced by the Project are clear, both during and following its completion. This has been an issue on a number of other EU funded projects and it is good that this has been resolved at an early stage. The website is attractive, well set out and includes a good mix of information in relation to the Project, including details on partner meetings and other events used to promote the Project thus far. The site has made good use of colour and is easy to navigate in each target language.

3.3 Work Package 2 – Quality Management

Description: This work package will ensure the quality of processes and outputs in the project. It will ensure that the project is both internally and externally evaluated.

Progress to Date: Quality Assurance and Evaluation Plan, Quality Assurance Report, Baseline Survey Questionnaire.

A Quality Assurance and Evaluation Plan was established in January 2012 setting out the ways in which Project progress will be monitored in terms of both processes and products. A report was produced by the internal evaluator following the project meeting in Edinburgh as well as an interim report on the first year of the projects operation focussing on the outcomes achieved to date. The Plan provides for both the internal and external evaluator to produce reports after each meeting. This is considered to be excessive for a project of this size. Instead, the internal evaluator will produce a short report following each project meeting based on feedback gathered from the partners and the external evaluator will assist in this process as required. It would also be difficult for the external evaluator to produce a report on meetings at which he will not be present.

The evaluation process has made use of survey monkey as a tool for gathering information from project partners. This means that partners can be sent a link, complete the questions and submit the answers. The software will collate the answers making it easier for these to be reported on, particularly where the

answers are quantitative. This also reduces the need for using lots of questionnaires on email. The format used can then be exported and the graphics used in a word document, as has been the case in the Quality Assurance report.

It will be important that all partners engage fully with the evaluation of activities, both by completing the questionnaires on meetings and distributing and reporting on evaluation forms issued as a part of the workshop testing process. Not all partners that attended meetings completed questionnaires in the timescale established and this has contributed to delays in the internal evaluator being able to complete their reports.

The external evaluator was appointed in March with the initiation meeting taking place in April 2012. Where possible, the external evaluator should be involved in the Project at the earliest possible stage so that they can inform and advise on the processes followed as required. This Project was already well underway by the time the external evaluator was appointed thus reducing the opportunity to play a part in the formative stages. Ideally, the evaluator should have been appointed following the first project meeting and in position before the end of 2011.

3.4 Work Package 3 – Research and Needs Analysis

Description: The WP provides research and analysis of potential rural enterprise and resource evaluation needs. This research will help to redefine the existing content and ensure that they are transferred appropriately to meet the needs of the new partner countries, or innovation-importing countries.

Progress to Date: Guidelines and Methodology for Needs Analysis, Questionnaire and Needs Analysis Reports produced.

The production of the Needs Analysis report provides an important foundation for the delivery of the remainder of the Project by identifying key issues for the target group to be considered when creating delivery materials. A questionnaire survey was carried out with the potential target audience with focus groups held to further discuss the information gathered. The results of this process were fed into CCIBN as the partner responsible for this work package and a detailed Needs Analysis report produced in May and agreed with the Project Coordinator in July 2012. Much of this process was complete by the time the external evaluator was

appointed so it was not possible to contribute to many of the activities as they happened.

It is very important when carrying out an analysis such as this that the Report produced is used to inform the materials that will be developed at a later stage in the Project. With this Project being the next stage in the development of the Panorama project, further consideration could have been given to the way in which the information was gathered and reported to make it easier to draw a direct correlation between the findings and the training resources being produced. Perhaps a skeleton Curriculum Framework could have been available at an early stage, based on the Panorama Project findings, to better inform the methodology for the research. Also, if time had permitted, it would have been beneficial for the questionnaire information to have been submitted, collated and reported on before the focus groups took place. The focus groups could then have been used to discuss findings for all 6 countries as opposed to focussing on the individual findings for their own country.

When undertaking any analysis across a range of European countries, the cultural and linguistic variations need to be taken into consideration. It is important to ensure that the language used is appropriate to the target audience in that country and that terminology used will be familiar and understood by those that will be reading and using it. The overall meaning of a question should not be changed, and the results gathered need to be consistent, but perhaps the way a question is worded could be adapted to reflect the norms in that country as required.

3.5 Work Package 4 – Adaptation and transfer: Development of training framework

Description: To achieve the innovation transfer - based on the results from research and analysis - the root product will be adapted to the respective innovation-importing countries. New material will be added to attend the new skills for green jobs element.

Progress to Date: Curriculum Framework produced, Module 1 Units 1 and 2 drafted.

The majority of this work package will take place in the second year of the Project. To date, a Curriculum Framework has been produced setting out an

overview of the topics that will be included in the Modules. As with the development of all training materials, this Framework is likely to change as the actual modules are produced. The Framework looks to have a good balance between general business skills and the more specific topics that will be addressed by the Project overall.

The initial units that have been drafted look very good. The structure is easy to understand with care having been taken to ensure that there is not an assumption of previous understanding from the individual that the materials are targeted at. The Glossary section will highlight key terms that may not be immediately understood and the exercises allow the participant to apply the learning in practice in a user-friendly way.

The training materials will be discussed in greater detail at the next project meeting in Tarsus in October 2012. There is a need for the final draft of these materials to be available as soon as is possible to allow for the translation of the modules into the 5 additional languages and development of the e-learning platform before the pilot testing commences in early 2013. It will be important that all partners fully engage with the development and validation of the materials, including the provision of photographs and examples from each of the countries to ensure that the final product is truly representative of all the partner countries.

3.6 Work Package 5 – Pilot Testing

Description: test runs of the training programme and development of the definitive structure of the training course

Progress to Date: None

The pilot testing will be discussed in detail at the meeting in Tarsus in October 2012. Testing will take place in each of the importing countries, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania in early 2013.

When carrying out pilot testing of the materials, it is important that the methodology being used is clear to all of the partners involved to ensure that there is some consistency between the different countries. Following a consistent methodology will allow for more effective comparisons to be made between the testing countries and therefore more robust conclusions to be drawn. The tests

are to be used to validate the training course that has been produced and so it is very important that the experience is similar in each test centre in an attempt to reduce any inconsistency in the findings across the countries.

3.7 Work Package 6 – Dissemination, Valorisation and Promotion

Description: This WP develops a detailed dissemination and exploitation plan and implements the measures to publicise the project and its funding. It provides information to the target audience and relevant stakeholders and ensures transfer of basic information on the project implementation. It includes a comprehensive information campaign aimed at the target group and vocational education and training institutions to achieve sustainable utilisation of the project results in the partner countries and beyond.

Progress to date: Dissemination Strategy Manual; HENGE Project Logo and Leaflet produced; Facebook page created; 2 Newsletters; Mailing lists of key contacts in each partner country; Analysis of Dissemination October 2011 – April 2012.

The aim of this work package is to ensure that the results and outcomes of the project are promoted and exploited over the 2-year duration of the project. This has included putting a comprehensive plan in place, identification of key stakeholders at a national level, recording of dissemination activities in each partner country and the production of Newsletters to disseminate the project. As such, the dissemination and exploitation activities are the key to the overall success of the project as without making others aware of the work, the impact and reach of the project would be negligible.

It is clear from the level of organisation and the quality of the materials produced that the partner responsible for these work packages has considerable expertise and knowledge in this area. The newsletters are succinct but clearly convey the message to be related. The project has also benefited from being registered with the ENTER network allowing for promotion of the project across Europe and beyond the partner countries.

Dissemination activities by all partners are likely to increase in the remainder of the project, particularly as more elements are completed. It will be very important that all partners are fully engaged with the dissemination of the Project and seek

to take advantage of any opportunities that arise to promote the project and its benefits, as listed in the Dissemination Strategy. This will include the utilisation of social media channels by all partners. Again, where possible, dissemination should be done in a consistent way to enable learning to be gained and comparisons to be made as to what was successful in different partner countries.

It is also going to be important that all partners supply information on their dissemination activities, including accompanying photographs where these are available, to allow for this to be reflected in the reports produced and on the website. This information can also be utilised on the Facebook page for the Project.

3.8 Work Package 7 – Transfer of the materials developed to the LMS

Description: To reach a broader audience and ensure reuse by the target groups, the course content will be transfer to a LMS, which will be piloted in the innovation-importing countries. Training Staff will be trained in the use of the system.

Progress to date: Template of LMS prepared.

The transfer of materials on to the LMS will be discussed at the meeting in Tarsus in October 2012. This activity requires the completion of the training modules before it can begin in earnest.

It will be important that the materials placed on the e-learning platform are easy to use and understand as many of the individuals that will use these may be doing so unsupervised and there will not be provision beyond the lifespan of the Project to have assistance from a partner. Care will need to be taken in selecting the most appropriate e-learning platform for the materials and that the format of the modules is developed with how the final product will look being borne in mind.

3.9 Work Package 8 – Implementation

Description: Following the idea of the innovation transfer, the final work package includes the implementation of the adapted results and products in the new target countries. The partner organisations of these countries will implement the products in vocational training institutions and report about the entire implementation phase.

Progress to date: None

There was some discussion at the meeting in Edinburgh as to how the outputs were going to be implemented beyond the lifespan of the Project. The partner responsible will prepare an Implementation Strategy and this will be discussed at the meeting in Tarsus.

As with dissemination during the period of Project delivery, implementation will be crucial if the benefits of the Project are to be felt beyond the 2-year project delivery phase. Each partner will need to consider how they want to utilise the materials that have been developed, including whether they want to use them for commercial purposes or if they will be made available free of charge. There is potential for partners to learn from one another in terms of the way they implement the training modules and this should be reflected in any plan that is produced. The plan also needs to reflect the different structures in place that need to be worked with and through in each partner country. Strategies should also be considered for how the training materials can be used across Europe as a whole and if there are any other networks, organisations or projects that HENGE can link with that would help to achieve this purpose.

3.10 Summary

The review of the work packages for the first 12 months of the project has shown that the partners have been very successful thus far in achieving what was set out in the original application. There have been some delays to achieving the target timescales set but these have not had a detrimental impact overall on the successful delivery of the project and its outcomes. This has laid a solid foundation for the second year of the project delivery.

It will be important that all partners fully 'buy in' to the project and its requirements, including undertaking all necessary dissemination activities, promoting and using the Facebook profile and ensuring that monitoring and evaluation is carried out, both by staff and workshop participants.

4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

4.1 The following will provide a brief overview of the operation of the HENGE project partnership to date with some observations made on the delivery.

4.2 Project Planning

Whilst I had not been appointed as the external evaluator at the time of the initial meeting in Gijon, it appears that the Project Coordinator had planned the meeting very well to ensure that the project got off to a good start, despite the meeting taking place earlier than had been originally planned. The Project Coordinator had a clear idea of what needed to be achieved at the first meeting and appears to have undertaken the necessary 'soft planning' prior to the meeting to anticipate some of the likely issues that would arise with possible solutions identified. Each work package was presented with the partner responsible giving their ideas but also allowing for input from other partners.

The Project Coordinator also appears to have had a good understanding of the requirements of the project as set out in the application for funding and how these would develop. As was mentioned earlier, the list of activities to be carried out that is produced following each project shaping meeting is an excellent way to plan and monitor the project as it progresses and makes it easy for all partners to see what they need to do and the timescale for completion.

4.3 Work Packages

When putting together the work packages for this project, Lawton School have clearly thought through the demarcation of the activities to ensure that there are no unnecessary overlaps in areas of responsibility. In the survey following the first meeting, all partners indicated that they were clear as to their responsibilities within their work package. This has been an issue on a number of EU Projects in the past. There have also not been many tasks arising that were not anticipated in the original planning process, with additional activities taken on as required by the relevant partner. It will be important that the links between the work packages are seamless where possible and that delays are not caused by one partner not delivering on time. There have been no undue delays thus far in the project delivery.

4.4 Project Management

In a project with 8 partners, the role of the Project Coordinator in managing the progression of the project is very important. The role of the Coordinator should include:

- Acting as the Chairperson and taking minutes at project meetings.
- Taking the final decision on issues arising once the other partners have had the opportunity to have their say.
- Setting timescales for completion and ensuring where possible these are adhered to.
- Verifying the quality of the work produced under each work package, in conjunction with the internal and, where applicable, external evaluator.
- Managing the correspondence between project meetings to ensure partners are kept informed and that issues are resolved as they arise.

4.5 Project Meetings

I have attended one of the project meetings to have taken place thus far and so it is only possible for me to comment on the operations of the meeting in Edinburgh.

The meeting in Edinburgh can be considered to have been successful as decisions were reached on all of the key issues raised. The time was split between presentations by the relevant partners on their work package, round table discussion on issues to be resolved and group working to begin the initial stages of developing the workshop contents. The internal evaluation report backs up the partner's satisfaction with the meeting and how it operated.

Partners seemed willing to work together and there were no discussions that became heated or contentious issues raised. The agenda was largely kept to and the meeting effectively chaired. With all partners having either one or two members of staff in attendance, there were not considered to be too many individuals in the room that may have slowed down the discussions and made decision making more difficult to achieve.

For the future, it would be beneficial if all documentation that is to be discussed at meetings is circulated to all partners in advance (preferably 2-3 days) to allow for this to be read and feedback prepared as required.

4.6 Communication

Overall communication has been good in this project. There have been a number of issues in relation to communication within the project thus far. Without looking at the individual incidents, a number of overall principles can be applied:

- When a request for information is sent from one partner to another, the project coordinator should be copied in so that they are aware of what has been requested. If the information is required from only one partner, then all partners do not need to be included in this.
- When a request for information is received by email, the recipient should acknowledge the email so that the sender knows it has arrived. Where possible, the recipient should give an indication as to when the information will be available, if the requested information cannot be supplied at that time.
- Where information has not been received within the requested or agreed timescale, a follow up email should be sent by the partner, and copied to the project coordinator, as required.

There will be occasions where information cannot be delivered within the agreed timescale but this in itself should not be a problem. The problem exists where the partner does not communicate that there will be a delay thus holding up the overall delivery of the project.

4.7 Project partners

The partner organisations bring together a wealth of experience from a wide range of different backgrounds to the HENGE project. Partners seem to be well suited to the particular role that they have been assigned to in the project as evidenced by the high standard of the outputs outlined in Section 3 above. Having the project developed in 6 languages can also be considered to be a key strength and increase the opportunities for disseminating the results beyond the countries represented within the partnership.

4.8 Involvement of target audience in the project

A key strength of the HENGE project has been the direct involvement where possible of the target beneficiaries in each element of the delivery process. Both target beneficiaries and potential support organisations were involved in the creation of the Needs Analysis report and the workshops to be delivered will be targeted at these groups to ensure that they are suitable for the audience that they are targeted at.

Whilst the partners are clearly experienced in the area of training delivery and working with the target groups, having the involvement of the beneficiaries increases the legitimacy of the project outcomes and makes it much more likely that the work produced will be well suited to their needs.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This report has highlighted that the HENGE project has been successful in its first 12 months of delivery. All of the project outputs that were anticipated have been delivered on time and there have been no delays that have had an unduly adverse impact on the project thus far.
- 5.2 Delivery to date has laid an excellent foundation for the operation of the Project in Year 2. This will include the delivery of the pilot tests of the modules, the production of associated materials that can be utilised by trainers in the future and culminating in the final conference that will present the findings of the Project. It is not anticipated that there will be any major issues arising with future delivery.
- 5.3 It will be important that all partners fully engage in the work to be delivered and do not simply concentrate on their own work packages. This will include utilising dissemination and exploitation opportunities, using the project social media tools and ensuring that evaluation work is carried out where required. Maximising the impact felt by the project will be the key to ensuring that HENGE leaves a legacy across Europe for the delivery of training on green entrepreneurship in rural areas to groups that are at present marginalised in the labour market.