

# Mid-term evaluation

## A methodology

At the very middle of the project, some of the foreseen objectives - and the partnership components as well - are partially changed. Those relevant changes were communicated to the EU and this procedure took some time and caused a “pause” and a delay of the activities.

Using a traditional “objective-result” evaluation would have been, in this case, non-effective because it is easy to guess that the biggest part of the expected results are not been already achieved; moreover we would miss as well all the relevant work that led to the actual configuration of the project and its reasons. Indeed, we have to consider this new configuration as a result of a significative activity made by the partners, instead of a simple missing of the foreseen goals.

To develop a better understanding of this process, it has been decided to use a participative and inquiring technique of evaluation, that mix up a traditional “SWOT Analysis” matrix with a specific set of indicators from recent literature (Reggio P.G. - 2000 “Contro l’Esclusione” Guerini, Milano). This kind of technique should allow us to better understand - from the partner’s own voice - the effort that has been conducted and the goals already obtained, with an esteem of the relevance of those results for partner’s organisations.

Hereafter we describe the work protocol proposed to partner gathered in a specific evaluation session hold in the transnational meeting in Besancon (France) in October 2012.

## Protocol used

1. Partners were asked to express brief comments (as “tweets”) on the first project year, from its origins to today, on a white sheet.  
It is important that people “physically” write their comments and they don't merge different comments.
2. Then they have entered their comments (between 10 and 30 max.) in the boxes of the document here attached.  
This can be a pretty boring part, but it is fundamental because at a glance it gives a *graphical* summary of the themes focused by the participants: on which “box” comments emerged spontaneously and where they are mainly positioned (positive or negative columns; things that can be managed or not by the partners).  
It may happen that same remark is to be reported in more than one box; thus better specifying its meaning and reasons for its positioning in the boxes.
3. At this point, the first product has been reviewed by participants, deciding whether it was appropriate or needed to be completed and integrated.  
Any addition was appreciated and encouraged. Comments were directly written in the boxes and, however, still had to be synthetic “tweets”.
4. Finally, all the comments made by the participants were picked up and wrote them all together into boxes replicating the 4 SWOT categories.

5. Participants read together the results of this work and produced new comments and interpretations.

It is particularly interesting at this stage to dwell on comments that relate to the partnership as a whole, the work done and the results obtained and see if there is consistency or inequality of interpretations.

## Produced results

At the end of the work, the evaluation session has produced:

- each participant's own assessment
- overall remarks and interpretations produced by the group, including all those shared by all participants while those discussed during the evaluation session will be instead adjusted or eliminated.

It is interesting to notice that the form does not require the participants or organisation name. The reason is that the technique aims at a participative evaluation, where the single voices are lost and a common idea has taken their places.

This is not mandatory; people have just no places to put their names into.

In this case, almost anybody used this privacy approach. Two of them wrote their name on the top of the paper; two identified their organisation in the sentences they put in the scheme. France and Belgique partners used french as a language; Italians used their own language.

In this case we feel free to indicate the origin of some specific comments, in order to better understand their meaning.

## Elements emerged during the first year concerning...

	Positive factors produced by the project 	Negative factors produced by the project 	Facilitating factors due to context 	Obstacles due to context 
Changes within own organisation				
Relationship with other project partners and actors				
Relationship with project manager				
Work done and attained results				
Obtained results				

(note: example of the grid used for the evaluation session)

## Mid-term evaluation

### Results

5 documents were filled in by the partners: Belgique, France, Italy (coordinator and partner separately) and Spain. Ireland was not present although they could have added an interesting point of view of the first part of the project.

It was not requested to sign or to make recognisable the evaluation, because what was to be collected is a full partnership's evaluation.

The documents produced can be read at 2 different levels: from a "quantitative" point of view, it is possible to sum the number of elements in every single cell, line and row, revealing the most focused theme and the order of the interest risen. Then, the analysis can look at the meaning and sense of the sentences, in a simple "qualitative" analysis.

### Overall partners satisfaction

The following grid has been completed in a quite simple way: reporting the sentences inserted by the partners using their own numbering.

That means that the more numbers are in a cell, the more partners have focused their attention on that specific area. Moreover, if you find low number in a cell, it means that that question has become immediately evident to the people who were puzzled by the technique. When you read "extra" in a cell, it means that a sentence has been added after the discussion with the whole partnership instead of being noticed spontaneously by the answerer.

We have to consider the framework that appears at a first glance: very full areas and completely ignored ones. The first ones are coloured in a light green when positive and light red when negative. The others, the "forgotten", are in light grey.

	Positive factors produced by the project  <b>TOT: 24</b>	Negative factors produced by the project  <b>TOT: 15</b>	Facilitating factors due to context  <b>TOT: 9</b>	Obstacles due to context  <b>TOT: 13</b>
Changes within own organisation <b>TOT: 14</b>	a. extra b.2 - 3 - 4 c.5 - 7 d.- e.- <b>TOT: 6</b>	a.- b.- c.1 - 2 d.3 - 11 e.- <b>TOT: 4</b>	a.- b.extra c.- d.- e.8 <b>TOT: 2</b>	a.- b.extra c.- d.- e.7 <b>TOT: 2</b>
Relationship with other project partners and actors <b>TOT: 25</b>	a.- b.1 - 5 - 6 c.6 - 8 d.1 - 10 e.1 - 2 - 3 <b>TOT: 10</b>	a.- b.6 c.3 d.5 - 9 e.- <b>TOT: 4</b>	a.3 - 4 - 5 - 9 b.- c.- d.- e.5 <b>TOT: 5</b>	a.- b.extra c.4 - 6 d.- e.4 - 6 - 9 <b>TOT: 6</b>
Relationship with project manager <b>TOT: 7</b>	a.- b.6 - 7 c.- (coord, itself) d.- e.extra <b>TOT: 3</b>	a.- b.- c.1 - 2 (coord.) d.- e.- <b>TOT: 2</b>	a.extra b.- c.- d.- e.- <b>TOT: 1</b>	a.- b.- c.- d.- e.10 <b>TOT: 1</b>
Work done and attained results <b>TOT: 11</b>	a.8 b.- c.- d.2 e.12 <b>TOT: 3</b>	a.- b.- c.- d.3 - 4 e.extra <b>TOT: 3</b>	a.10 b.- c.- d.- e.- <b>TOT: 1</b>	a.1 - 2 - 6 - 7 b.- c.- d.- e.- <b>TOT: 4</b>
Obtained results <b>TOT: 4</b>	a.extra b.- c.- d.- e.11 <b>TOT: 2</b>	a.- b.- c.- d.7 e.extra <b>TOT: 2</b>	a.- b.- c.- d.- e.- <b>TOT: 0</b>	a.- b.- c.- d.- e.- <b>TOT: 0</b>

Data	Analysis
"Positive factor produced" is the fullest columns of all, at a distance: 24 items, 9 more than the second column	<i>Satisfaction about the work done</i>
"Even" columns (positive aspects) are a bit more filled with elements than "odd" columns (negative, internal and external)	<i>An overall positive attitude about the first period</i>
"Relationship" row is the far most used one (25 items, 11 more than the second more represented line)	<i>Relation is the focus of this part of the project</i>
"Obtained results" is the less used row: 4 items, 2 of them are added after the discussion	<i>Results are still not a question for the partners</i>
"Facilitating factors" is the less filled row: 9 items	<i>Partners cannot see a lot of positive point in the context to lean on</i>
4 of 5 partners show from 8 to 10 elements in first 2 "pros" and "cons" rows	<i>Medium level of specific analysis (min: 0; max: 30)</i>
1 of 5 has 3 elements in "pros and cons" rows (2 of them added after the discussion); 10 elements in the 2 "context" rows	<i>Main focus on context level for this partner</i>
3 of 5 show 1 to 3 elements in 2 right rows (opportunities and threats from the context)	<i>Low interest in context analysis (min: 0; max: 30)</i>
2 of 5 show from 7 to 10 elements in "context" rows	<i>Medium level of context analysis</i>
3 of 5 have significative prevalence in "pros" row	<i>good satisfaction</i>
1 has 0 elements in "cons" row; 1 has 1 element; 1 has 2 elements	<i>mainly positive</i>
1 of 5 shows an approximate <i>tie</i> between "pros" and "cons" (1 element less in the "cons" but 2 of them are replicated 2 times and they overcome the "pros" element 5 to 4)	<i>neutral</i>
1 of 5 has more "cons" than "pros" (7 and 3)	<i>critical voice among the partners; it is the coordinator of the project</i>
2 of 5 has added new comment (2 and 3) after the discussion; 3 "pros" and 2 "cons"	<i>discussion enriched in some way the analysis but did not change the first impression</i>

## Comments on Graphic and Quantitative Data

- The work done is enough to make some evaluative comments; it would be interesting to have more time dedicated to the task of finding people's perceptions on the work done and to use in a more precise way.
- Discussion has not produced a significant number of new ideas in the partners: 9 on 61 are the sentences added after the interaction with the other. People still have some difficulties and small resistance in matching with different ideas and cultures.
- Work done in this first part of the project - unless it is very scarcely described - is mainly satisfying the partners, at the moment.
- Satisfaction derives mostly from the relationship area. This could be a "minus" if we consider that the project has specific results to obtain. But it can also be considered a good point, if we reckon that transnational projects have as a main value, to let (professional) people meet and exchange their skills and approach to phenomenas.
- Partners have been able to focus mainly on the aspect that they can manage (in a positive rather than in a negative way). This is related to personal responsibility and "internal locus of control" by them.
- Probably the most part of the project effort has been spent in building the relationship between the partners: this is the main result they underline and it is not only the best thing they think they have done, but also the area where threats mainly were.
- It is very interesting, indeed, that some fall-outs on the organisation are already declared. In theory, this should be a later result: an outcome of the direct goals reached by the project. 3 partners have already had some advantages from the project subscription.
- Project management is not taken in a particular account; probably partners need to better discuss this item, possibly in absence of the coordinator. After all, satisfaction seems to be the main attitude, at the moment.
- Coordinator is the less satisfied partner: could this be an "auto-critical" approach used to allow others to express their concerns? Otherwise it could be an evaluation more focused on the inner part of the project - the partnership and its functioning - instead of the more positive outcome on the single organisations described by the professional partners.
- Some of the partners coupled an interest - still alive after more-than-a-year work - in context elements, but this does not affect other's focusing. In other words, it is not relievable any complaining and passive attitude but a self-confident way of thinking.
- Context is a bit more seen as an obstacle than a source of opportunities; in other words, they are not able to notice all the facilitating tips that they can count on.

## A closer look

In the following grids, sentences written by single partners are reported as they were in the original paper. One after another, in an alphabetical order.

At the bottom of the grids, a synthetic summary “lecture” is produced by the evaluator.

### Changes within own organisation

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chance to meet other colleague and to find solutions to common or specific problems</li> <li>- Improvement of CRIF image at a regional and national level</li> <li>- Our participation will push in the right direction for the ongoing implementation of the NFIL recognition</li> <li>- <b>Outlook on the future, due to the presence of countries ahead in the developing process</b></li> <li>- Quality indicators and other recommendations of the project will allow the creation of a quality control tool in our context</li> <li>- SiQuCAE helps in the future development and implementation of the right procedures in our territory</li> <li>- Wealthy experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FOREM support has been revised (from FOREM itself)</li> <li>- Initial goals have changed from nowadays</li> <li>- Low fall-out on the local network</li> <li>- <b>Specific goals not always reconcilable between the partners</b></li> </ul>

Fall-outs on specific organisations seem to be closely related to the well pointed out “relationship” matter. To get in contact with different people that work in a different way, inlaid in different (and future-bound) scenario is considered as a main topic.

A real and specific fall-out can be considered the image improvement declared by France’s CRIF. This is a significative one because the external visibility is a critical point underlined in the results “cons”.

Differences between partner and their own context is to be considered - specifically at the beginning of the project - a problem. Someone points out that those differences are sometimes irreconcilable. That can lead to changes in the initial goals and we must assume - as the sentence is in the “cons” column - that the new ones are not as satisfying as the previous.

## Relationship with partners and other subjects

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active involvement by the partners</li> <li>- Define common practices with other partners</li> <li>- Effective and relevant international meeting</li> <li>- Good relations with other partners</li> <li>- Help given by the partner to a better reflexion on the practices</li> <li>- It is positive to have been asked to participate as full-right members of the project, since it is in line with our own priorities and interests</li> <li>- Our first impression was that the different perspectives and interests were too diverse, but after the revision a real convergence has taken place</li> <li>- Our participation has allowed for us to realise the similarities between our system and those already implemented elsewhere</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes in partnership</li> <li>- Delay in feedback by consortium members</li> <li>- Our first impression was that the different perspectives and interests were too diverse, but after the revision a real convergence has taken place</li> <li>- Significant practice gap between partners</li> </ul>

As already written before, this is the most satisfying area. There are some specific reason for this, that make more persuasive those words: effectivity of the meetings, reflexions derived also for the more advanced partners, or the common practices obtained. But what it seems to be highly convincing, is the item both reported in *pros* and *cons* columns: difference noticed at a first glanced, that reduces more and more during the project, till it becomes an important trade-off that facilitates everyone's work.

On a negative side, it is easy to notice that this preparatory work take lot of time and it is hardly foreseen and managed. It causes delay, stress and the feel of inadequacy in some people, especially in project responsables.

## Project management

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective partnership coordination</li> <li>- Our first impression was that the different perspectives and interests were too diverse, but after the revision a real convergence has taken place</li> <li>- The feeling is that the project is on the right track, things are being done!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FOREM support has been revised (from FOREM itself)</li> <li>- Initial goals have changed from nowadays</li> </ul>

Evaluation on project management effectiveness are not enough to say anything certain.

One reason can be found in methodology: the coordinator herself led the evaluation moment with the partner and the answer are vague and poorly based on evidences. Both on positive and negative side, although the “pros” are a bit more convincing than the “cons”.

The only sentence to be considered interesting, in some way, is the one that indicates that a partner has a feeling to be well on the right track, with a clear heading. That is a pure perception, but an interesting one.

## Work done

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High expectations from the partners that makes a better involvement</li> <li>- <b>Implementation of the work can affect other aspects of VAE</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial project was too vague and undefined in some aspects</li> <li>- Lack of external visibility of the project</li> <li>- Need to re-focus the goals</li> <li>- <b>Specific goals not always reconcilable between the partners</b></li> </ul>

This question could have been misunderstood by the partners. Unless it is clear that the next one - about the results - can be mainly deserted, at this stage of the project, the one about the work that has been conducted until now should have caused some more instances and discussion by the partners.

Aside of the number of items, the themes are quite interesting: one consider a high involvement of the partner, due to the expectations that the project goals.

Moreover, it has been well pointed out from one partner that this work is affecting a lot of other aspects of the validation system.

On the other side, the “cons” are a little bit more than the “pros”; this could probably attain at the “re-focusing” work, that has obtained good results but it could possibly have been avoided if only specific goals were better described in the initial draft. The worst consequence of all is that some of the national specific goals are no more reconcilable with the actual configuration of the project.

### Obtained results

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A work group created for the first time that involves subjects that work on VAE (public/private; award bodies; sponsors...)</li> <li>- Chance to meet other colleague and to find solutions to common or specific problems</li> <li>- Perspective view, due to the presence of countries ahead in the developing process</li> <li>- Wealthy experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very demanding</li> </ul>

This area is probably not complete, but very positive. The only negative point is that the project is quite demanding; but this could be at least a very positive element when the goals will hopefully be reached.

On the positive side, there are *personal* results, such as the wealthy experience; the others are only *process* results.

That means that partners have obtained a work group to share their problems and efforts; colleagues to work with in search of new or better solutions; sometime, source of information from more developed contexts. Nobody has already reached a practical tool or a new defined protocol to improve quality in validating skills. But this is the next step goal for almost everyone.

## General Comments on Qualitative Data

- The item more referred is the one about the relationship with partners. This is not a surprise, because it is quite usual - in international programme - to point out the chance to get in touch with other people, professionally related but having different culture and habits.
- The work and results areas are almost white, in particular in the “cons” row. The reason should be that the goals are not yet achieved (and they are not meant to, at this stage of the project) and failure can be a potential danger, but still not a sentence to fix on the paper.
- Work done has a little prevalence of the “cons”: we can assume that partners are pointing at the difficulties encountered and the changes in the program. Some problems have been removed and some advance were achieved, but with some delays in the process.
- The feeling is that this preliminary work should have been done before going any further. Otherwise everything would have been unmanageable. Probably they could better foresee and manage this basic job, and this causes some little frustration; but the new consciousness achieved by clarifying everyone position and contribution gives a strong confidence for the work that has to come.
- Project management seems to be quite difficult and demanding (goals changed; diverse perspectives from any partner) but almost effective. The low number of evaluations makes hard to tell more about this function.
- Fall-outs on organisations are quite a lot and that is a good point for an half term evaluation. Some of the partners - two in specific - claimed that they have already achieved important results on their own territory.