



INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report presents an interim evaluation for a Leonardo Da Vinci Lifelong Learning Programme Multilateral Transfer of Innovation project, *Foundations for Work*. In line with the terms of reference, the interim evaluation report is designed to provide a comprehensive judgment of the operation, management and effectiveness of the project, drawing on a range of data sources. The report draws on three principal sources of data: (1) a review of all work plans and quarterly monitoring reports (2) consultation of all partners (3) participation in, and minutes of partner meetings. The six sections are presented as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Methodology; (3) Project goals (4) Project design (5) Project operation (6) project impact.

About the project

The Silver Sidekicks project will form a response to the issues of digital exclusion for the older generations throughout Europe by exploiting the specialist knowledge and experience of the partner organisations. We will develop an adult education Train the trainer multimedia resource pack which will train the Third Age generation to become Silver Sidekicks, who in turn will enable the participation and inclusion in adult education and society by the older people who are being labelled as the Fourth Age generation.

The objectives:

- To assess good practice and carry out a training needs analysis in digital literacy and engagement for older learners.
- To develop and implement a pedagogic strategy targeting the training and engagement of senior citizens in Digital Media and ICT and to provide appropriate curricula to address the issue of user motivation among the target group.
- To develop appropriate induction for tutors and trainers that focuses on the learning needs and learning capacities of senior citizens meeting the educational challenge of an ageing population in Europe.
- To train 50 Third Age people to act as tutors and trainers for senior citizens as part of a peer learning strategy to reinforce inter-generational learning and foster greater social cohesion.
- To develop and provide appropriate learning content for senior citizens that is cognisant of their interests and learning habits.
- To have this learning content recognised and accredited to facilitate the development of further learning pathways encouraging seniors citizens to use their newly acquired skills to remain active in the workforce.
- To train 1000 Fourth Age senior citizens in basic Digital Media and ICT skills throughout the European regions participating and provide appropriate accreditation in recognition of achievement and to facilitate further learning where appropriate.
- To develop a virtual club for all of the senior citizens, the 3rd Agers and the 4th Agers, through a Web 3.0 enabled website for User Created Content that offers senior citizens the opportunity to share their experiences past and present and facilitates their contribution to digital archive content thereby enabling greater social cohesion, active citizenship, inter cultural dialogue and personal fulfilment.

Through a thorough development and testing process in year one of the project, a suite of curricula will be created that demonstrate the social value of Digital Media and ICT skills to the senior citizen target group by incorporating practical computer literacy, communication using email, access to essential services on line – internet banking, shopping online, online bill paying, information retrieval. This focus on the social value of Digital Media and ICT skills will significantly address the issue of user motivation and ensure that the availability of Digital Media and ICT can benefit all citizens and improve the quality of life of senior citizens.

Partner organisations on the programme are:

- DiversityWorks (UK)
- The School of Economics & Law WSEiP (Poland)
- Fundacion CTIC – Centro Tecnologico (Spain)
- Folkuniversitetet Kursverksamheten vid Lunds Universitetet (Sweden)
- Istituto Formazione Operatori Aziendali IFOA (Italy)
- University of 3rd Age U3A (UK) ***Withdrawn from the project in December 2014***
- TIME Associates (UK) ***As of December 2014***

The report begins with an account of the methodology. It then presents the results of the evaluation based on an analysis of the various data sources.

2. Methodology

The report provides a synthesis of the results from an analysis of the work plans and various monitoring activities undertaken during the course of the first year since project commencement.

Work plans and monitoring reports

Documentation produced within the project itself includes work plans, the initial project application, timelines of activities, minutes of meetings, as well as results produced, e.g., the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) report. The following face-to-face partner meetings have been held to date: Belfast, 17-18 February 2014; Poland, 10-11 June 2014; Gijon, 29-30 October 2014.

Monitoring reports include the internal monitoring reports produced each quarter.

The focus of the work is a robust evaluation of the management, operation and impact of the project, taking a critical and detached standpoint. However, it also includes a formative dimension, i.e., providing the project team with emerging evaluation results to help in their decision-making about project modifications and improvement. Therefore the focus of the monitoring activities in each quarter has been to:

- Evaluate progress made during the quarter for each of the WP targets
- Highlight any departure from intended schedule
- Increase the capacity of the project team for engaging in self-evaluation with a view to ongoing improvement
- Provide recommendations for action areas needing priority during following quarter.

The data sources used in the production of the monitoring reports is varied and includes the following:

- Survey of partners using quarterly questionnaire
- Document analysis and review, e.g., work package plans, new project documentation being developed such as the TNA report
- Surveys and other research carried out by project partners, e.g., survey of experts / trainers, stakeholders and older learners in the TNA report
- Internal reports, e.g., Internal monitoring reports
- Other dissemination events and products, e.g., ezines media, press releases
- Ongoing consultation with partners.

Evaluation approach

Given the comprehensive scope of the project, and in order to optimise the formative and summative purposes of the evaluation, the interim report focuses on four key project components: goals, design, operation and impact. Firstly, the report is designed to help maintain the focus on project goals and on the needs of beneficiaries, and to enable project members to judge project outcomes against relevant success criteria. Secondly, by focusing on project design, it attempts to ensure alignment between the project goals and the project plan, and support internal mechanisms for quality assurance. Thirdly, the evaluation helps in the monitoring of performance, highlighting obstacles to progress and participation,

and recommending adaptation where needed. Finally, the focus on impact helps highlight issues relating to the quality of project outcomes, dissemination and valorisation, and project sustainability.

This leads to four key questions which should be useful in guiding the work of the project into its second year: What are the **goals** of Silver and the needs of the target group? How does the **design** of the project support these goals? Is the project **action** as it was designed? What **impact** is the project having? This framework is based on the Daniel Stufflebeam's CIPP model of programme evaluation, which addresses four different aspects of the project: goals, design, operation and impact. These can be summarised as follows:

- Project goals: introduction and rationale: analysis of the context, project goals and how well these match the needs of intended beneficiaries
- Project design: analysis of the project design and how well this aligns with project goals; analysis of monthly dissemination and exploitation plan
- Project operation: analysis of project operation (management, participation, compliance with design);
- Project impact: some indication at this interim stage about impact

The evaluation results are presented below according to each of these sections, drawing on the various data sources.

3. Project objectives

The results show that the project team has taken various measures to ensure appropriate alignment between the project objectives and the needs of the intended beneficiaries.

Goals of the project

The stated objectives of the project are:

Objective 1 is to research the context for Digital Media and ICT provision in each country, to include identifying best practice to key stakeholders in Digital Media and ICT provision, to undertake a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis and understanding the national qualification frameworks for Digital Media and ICT.

Objective 2 will be to work with partners, specialist agencies and end users to develop and implement a pedagogic strategy targeting the training and engagement of senior citizens in Digital Media and ICT and to provide appropriate curricula to address the issue of user motivation among the target group.

Objectives 3 and 4 will be to develop appropriate induction for tutors and trainers and to train 60 Third Age people to act as tutors and trainers for senior citizens as part of a peer learning strategy.

Objective 5 will be to develop and pilot a programme on Digital Media and ICT with appropriate learning content for senior citizens that is cognisant of their interests and learning habits.

Objective 6 will be to have this learning content recognised and accredited to standard commensurate with the work being undertaken.

Objective 7 will be to train 1000 Fourth Age senior citizens in basic Digital Media and ICT skills throughout the European regions.

Objective 8 will be to enable participation and inclusion in adult education and society by older people by providing access to digital media resources and the opportunity to use Web 3.0 to access services and facilities which will enable fuller participation in the Digital society.

Needs analysis of intended beneficiaries

In order to achieve these goals, the project undertook an up-to-date analysis of the needs of this particular group. This was designed as a work package led by the Polish partner and culminating in the production of the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) report. The report is available on the project website. The methodology included a review of the literature, a survey of experts and adult education trainers, and focus groups with older learners in each of the five countries represented. The survey of the older learners was carried out using focus group interviews, while the survey of experts / trainers and stakeholders was carried out online in each country.

The TNA report identified a catalogue of key skills/needs that would allow the beneficiaries to actively and safely participate in the World Wide Web.

Due to the significant differences between the participants of the research (which was universal as similar phenomena were observed in every partner country), the training needs were divided into two learning groups:

- absolutely necessary (basic)
- extended

The aim of such a division was evaluated as necessary in order to reach a point where the trainees that gained the competences specified for the first group could avoid digital exclusion. They might then continue their training in the extended course and become active ICT and Internet consumers.

Project design

The interim evaluation results show that there is a good correspondence between the goals of the project and the project design.

Alignment between goals and design

The results show that the project team have considered carefully the alignment between the goals and the design.

Decisions around the composition of the partner team and the allocation of responsibilities have been made in the interest of realising the project goals.

Medium for materials

The project design includes the provision of materials in DVD on the basis that this would impact more successfully on education and training.

These resources would be downloadable and the accompanying documentation would be designed, but not printed.

It has been proposed that materials accessible through an internet download would be more advantageous for increasing its usage by practitioners and the learners themselves. Also another option could be memory sticks given that users did not always have access to a DVD player. This suggests that the project team should give further consideration to the possibility of making the material available through memory sticks, and not just on DVD.

Another provision in the project design was the requirement to ensure that all materials were fully accessible to workers and stakeholders in each of the partner countries. This will require appropriate localisation and translation for learners working in English, Spanish, Polish, Italian and Swedish.

In summary, this interim analysis suggests that the project results will increase the basic competences of older learners so they may improve their digital literacy and online life.

4. Project operation

The evaluation results to date suggest that the project is operating well and the project is on track to realise its goals. This section addresses two key aspects of the project operation: (1) achievement of progress as scheduled in the work packages and in the schedule of results (2) performance of group.

Group performance

Results from monitoring reports shows that all respondents are happy with progress being made. The various reports show a very high level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the partnership. Partners reported that communication is effective, roles and tasks are understood, all partners are actively engaged, sufficient progress has been made, and the project is responding well to unforeseen events.

All respondents reported that the first Belfast meeting was very useful in preparing the ground for the year ahead. One respondent referred to the extra benefit in meeting the other project members face-to-face for advancing the work: *'The meeting was a good opportunity to talk face to face and socially with everyone. It is always easier when everyone is in the same room to have the discussions and debate the way forward.'*

Progress with work packages

Respondents reported a very high level of satisfaction with regard to progress being made on individual work packages. They also judged very favourably the work of colleagues on other work packages.

At the same time, the interim results show that partners are conscious of the need to further progress certain activities. For example the completion of the draft materials and prototype resource toolkit. An analysis of the timeline of activities also shows that progress is being made as scheduled on the vast majority of activities.

It is too early to comment on progress in relation to the remainder of the results as these are due for completion in 2015. Key project deliverables in the second year of the project will include production of promotional material, a pilot test report, resource toolkit, and launch.

Meetings

The partner meetings play an important role in the successful operation of the project. The monitoring reports show that respondents consider that time is always used as productively as possible during meetings.

The meetings follow an established schedule, which usually include the following agenda items:

- Update on project management and partner requirements;
- Review of current work packages;
- Review of Evaluation Strategy;
- Individual finance meetings;
- Review of progress reports and action planning;
- Review of dissemination;
- Activities & Next Six Months Deadlines.

Monitoring and evaluation

There are a number of activities undertaken within the project designed to guarantee and maintain quality in the project operation and results, with one of the work packages, *Quality Assurance and Evaluation* devoted entirely to quality assurance. Monitoring and evaluation also form part of the work undertaken in the project management package, for example, monitoring calls which the project co-ordinator undertakes with each of the partners.

The interim results confirm that partners are satisfied with the rigour of the evaluation processes and that the project had a strong evaluative framework in place.

5. Project impact

The fourth focus in the interim evaluation is the actual impact of the project. At this interim stage, given that the main project results are not yet available, the key issue in relation to impact is the awareness raising and communications with the target groups and other stakeholders, for example, dissemination of the TNA. The interim results suggest that the project team has made progress in this area, and is mindful of the need to further enhance activity in this area.

Dissemination

A number of results have already been produced with partners reporting a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of the work to date. Partners were asked to indicate the quality of those project results which were due for completion by the end of December 2014. There was a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of these products, in particular, the database of dissemination contacts and the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) Report. When asked to identify the most successful work of the project to date, partners frequently referred to the TNA. They reported that this was very well received by stakeholders, thereby enabled the project to already make an impact. Its publication on the website accounted for the increased number of hits on the website which was reported at the Belfast meeting. The TNA exercise enabled the project to connect with the target groups and involve them in the work at an early stage. In interviews, one partner explained that involving the target groups at such an early stage would help ensure greater awareness and take-up once the results were developed:

'I think the fact that we involved the older learners, trainers and the NGOs from the outset in the training needs analysis and the consultations and the focus groups, I think that hopefully has built in some buy-in, so that there is a ready acceptance of the products whenever we do get them developed'

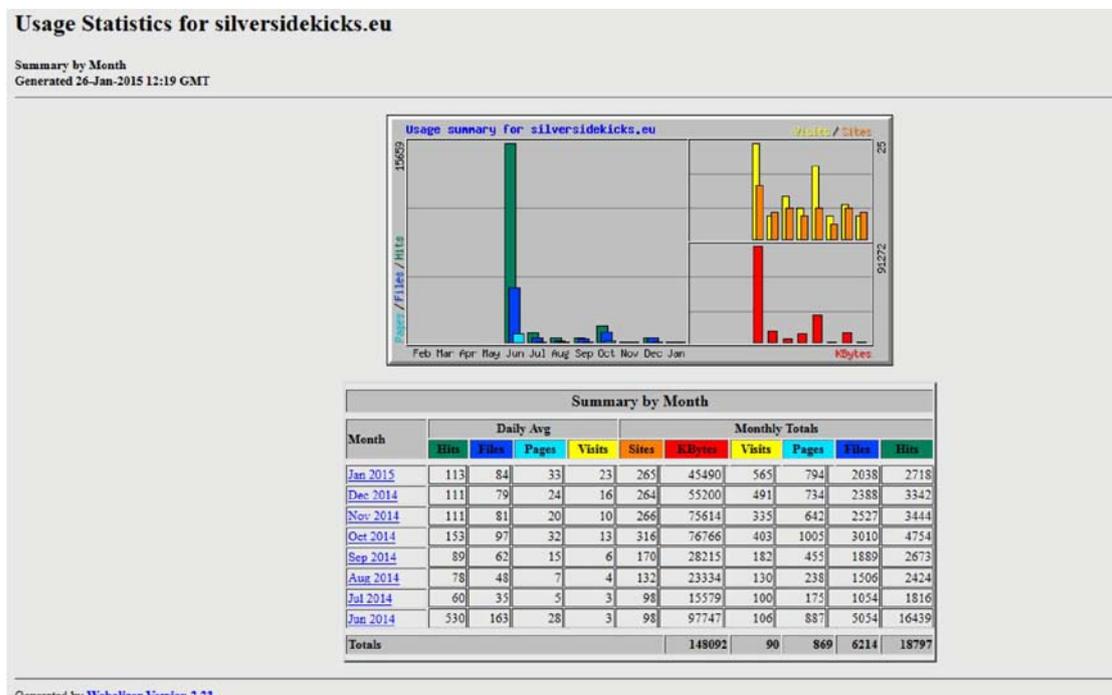
Apart from being available on the website and sent to the dissemination databases (2600 contacts), a number of copies were printed and were sent to key stakeholders. Partners were also involved in their own local dissemination activities. There were also references to the circulation of the TNA report and one respondent had a seminar with representatives from employment services and the local municipality.

Online presence

The project has also been making an impact in attracting visitors to the project website located at www.silversidekicks.eu/en and a limited scope through social media. The project website continues to be enhanced since its original launch and will be available in all partner languages in early 2015. It carries links to the partner organisations and the TNA report has been published.



Website statistics produced as part of WP 4, Technical Realisation, shows that the website is receiving a great level of interest at this stage. The screenshot presented below show that at the moment the website is running at 23 visits per day. This should be considered a good outcome at this stage in the project, and if current progress continues, it is likely that the daily figure could even triple by the end of the project.



Progress has also been made in the use of social media, although partners are of the view that the full potential of these media has not yet been fully realised given that the actual materials intended for the learners and their practitioners have yet to be produced.

Therefore, while there is a certain satisfaction among partners with the use of social media to date, this is quite moderate compared to their satisfaction with other aspects of the project. When when asked for their opinion on the use of the Twitter feed – three considered these ‘good’ while one respondent considered it ‘fair’. These results can be explained by the fact that, as one respondent put it, the type of work being currently undertaken by the project would not lend itself to a greater use of social media:

“Twitter is not overly active at this stage as the work being undertaken is generally preparatory and not of interest to the general public, yet.”



Dissemination as a priority for second phase

Despite the progress reported above in dissemination, partners also recognise that greater progress could be made in this area even at this stage. For example, one respondent considered communication with the target group thus far to be ‘fair.’ Another commented: *‘Communication with the target group was essential throughout the Training Needs Analysis stage and will be again with a purpose when the product is ready for testing.’*

Dissemination was therefore a frequently recurring theme when partners are asked to identify priorities for the next stage of the project. Dissemination is on-going to varying degrees in the partnership, with some partners having better opportunities than others.

Partners also noted that the substantial work on dissemination could happen in the twelve or so months that would be available once the materials were produced and available.

A related activity is the exploitation of materials when fully developed. A key element of the exploitation plan will be the provision of an accredited pathway so that the materials can be used as part of an accredited award. At the Poland meeting, the project co-ordinator reported that a module overview was being designed in conjunction with Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCNNI), a UK awarding body module design standards to ensure the Silver course could be more easily accredited.

In summary, dissemination activity has increased since the earlier stages and will become fully operational once the materials are available.

Concluding comment

The initial work plan developed by the project team when submitting *Silver Sidekicks* to the Agency provided a very strong rationale for addressing the needs of older generations and their danger of exclusion, this continues to be an issue of great importance. The work achieved in Silver Sidekicks at this interim stage suggests that the project has the potential to make a significant contribution to increasing the life chances of this vulnerable group of people.