VOCIS
VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF THE INNER SELF

Working for quality outcomes

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Working for quality outcomes

(IO9 Quality system)

Pietro Ragni

What was planned?

The Quality System (QS) of the project was to be planned and implemented by Antares (IT) - with the consensus and the collaboration of all the project's partners. Quality is never the doing of a single person, but the result of a common process and for VOCIS under the leadership of an experienced partner.

The first action was to be the presentation, during the kick-off meeting, of the QS plan for VOCIS project. Four areas were to be investigated: a) monitoring the project development; b) assessment of the gathered results; c) evaluation of the quality of each product and d) impact evaluation. A second section holds a Risk Plan, where a list of possible risks with their probability (esteem), their possible negative effects and the suggested remedial action is included. At the end of the document, a short illustration of the two levels conflict resolution procedure is added.

In particular, a set of Project general Qualitative & Quantitative Indicators (PQQI) were to be proposed and then decided with the consensus of the partners; including different sets of SMART indicators aimed both to monitor and evaluate the project process and its results

The partnership was to discuss, amend, if needed and approve the QS plan. Then each partner was to appoint 1 expert (PQE) in charge to manage the QS within the activities and tasks entrusted to that partner. Then the Quality System Committee (QSC), coordinated by the Quality Coordinator QC (an expert appointed by Antares) and including all the PQEs, was to be appointed.

All the major findings of the QS are to be promptly communicated to the Coordinator (and in the case to the involved partners). The QC participates in all the partnership meetings and uses these opportunities to show the progresses of the QS and the achieved results. In this way there will be a

continuous control of the project situation; in any case each 6 months an "intermediate check" both for monitoring and for evaluation is presented.

An intermediate report at the end of Year 1 (internal tool; language English, outcome 1 of this IO) and a final QS report to show all the ongoing process (partially to be downloaded on the web; language English, outcome 2 of this IO) is delivered. Report 1 as well as some additional work can be found in this document. The final report (January 2018) may be accessed in a separate document on vocis.org. We like to invite you to check also chapter 3 from VOCIS@hand on this subject.

Report 1 (October 2016)

1. Introduction

The QS will have five areas: a) monitoring of the project development; b) assessment of the gathered results; c) evaluation of the quality of each product; d) impact evaluation; e) risk mitigation.

As decided during the kick-off meeting in Rome for the first area we started with the first tool of the QS. After all partnership meetings we will submit a questionnaire to all the participants (Ann. 1). It is a simple questionnaire divided into two main parts: general issues and project's contents and methodologies.

This tool will be used throughout the project; there will be four different (for the second part) Evaluation Questionnaire (EQ) editions, one after each meeting (Rome, Dublin, Zadar and Luxembourg) - and it will be a useful tool to evaluate the meeting itself and if some aspects were missed or under-evaluated, in order to correct the approach. Moreover, this monitoring tool will be useful to allow each partner to be fully involved in the project's progress, giving their suggestions in each phase and considering all products as a partnership product.

The aims of this evaluation tool are:

- for the general section to understand if all the partners were involved in the meeting, understood their role in the project, were satisfied with their tasks and happy about the project's activities up to that point;
- for the contents and methodologies section to understand if for the foreseen activities, in the studied period, all the relevant discussions

and definitions were clearly understood and if there are any suggestions or amendments to be produced in order to modify the developing work of the project;

- for both to guarantee that time-table implementation is on schedule during the project duration; to provide timely information to the project management about the progress of the activities to improve the performance of the work packages as well as to facilitate project management and to perform continuous observation and evaluation of the fulfilling of the project goals.

All the participants to the meetings will be required to fulfil the EQ and to insert some relevant comment. The QC will elaborate a report on the basis of the EQs findings showing it the next meeting. If any relevant problem / suggestion arise the QC will communicate to the Coordinator a specific recommendation.

2. General Section of EQ after the meeting in Rome

The kick off meeting was held in Rome 20-22 of April and 10 of the participants answered to the EQ. In particular, below is the first section of it with the average score for each question.

General Vote	1 min. – 5 max.
- The organisation of the meeting was fine	4.8
- I am satisfied with the quality of my own participation	4.8
- My expectations about this meeting were met	5.0
- I appreciate co-operating with the other project partners	4.9
- Clear understanding of all administrative aspects	4.9
- The extra meeting activities arranged were interesting	4.9

The total average score for the sum of the six questions is 4.9. It is an uncommon high score for the first meeting; we can think that this excellent results come out from the positive crossing of three factors: a) the project started with a big delay, when the Luxemburg N.A. was able to find the funding amount and the partners continued to have mutual contacts, mainly thanks to the coordinator; b) all the partners have a very good experience in such a Programme and some of them already cooperated in the past; c) the general approach was very friendly also if strictly targeted to the effectiveness of the meeting.

First Question - *The organisation of the meeting was fine.* We have had almost all maximum scores for this question and some comments like: "Very pleasant and interesting"; "Good organisation and great people willing to help with logistical aspects"; "For the next meetings it would be nice if the hosting partner could organise lodging for the partners all at the same place (better for group relations"; "Thanks a lot to our Italian Friends!" and " Good preparation for the meeting". Then no major problems on this item and one suggestion: to host all the partners in the same place.

Second Question - *I am satisfied with the quality of my own participation.* Also in this case only excellent scores, here a couple of comments: "I have had the opportunity to express my ideas and to discuss with the partner; it was very interesting"; "We had good spirit within our team" and " Yes, I feel I participated well". Also there no problems and a fine involvement of all the participants in the discussion of the several aspects of the VOCIS project.

Third Question - *My expectations about this meeting were met.* This was the only general question with the 100% of maximum score; what a nice think for a kick-off meeting! There were interesting comments: "Feedback from partners was that everything was well structured and that they received the information they needed. It was also clear which questions needed to be answered by the coordinator after the meeting (timesheets, Lux. NA's rules, etc.), thus minimising uncertainties and doubts"; "Teambuilding was a matter for this first meeting and in my opinion we managed it successfully. In workshops, different partners had the opportunity to start working together and feedback was that they are eager to work together on specific IOs"; " I am of the opinion that we have fulfilled all expectations"; "Within the first meeting we've built a strong and lovely team" and " It was very nice to meet new colleagues". It will be important for the future on one hand to save this beautiful team-spirit and on the other to organise next meeting in the same participative way.

Fourth Question - *I appreciate co-operating with the other project partners.* Also in this case only positive comments: "It was really a pleasure to see that all partners possess key competences, that they have a lot of experience and that they are motivated by the project. What else can you ask for as a project coordinator!?"; "We expecting very fruitful further cooperation"; " We have to know each other better, but the feeling is very good" "There are high competencies within the group" and "They are also very nice persons with which you can have nice chats and laughs". A new partnership which meets for the first time is always a delicate starting point;

these fine comments show us that we are in the good direction with our project and there is a mutual esteem among the partners.

Fifth Question - *Clear understanding of all administrative aspects.* Also in this case high scores, we suppose thank to experience of all the partners. Here the main comments: "For me it is quite clear. I give it a 4 since some aspects still need answers. But on the other hand, these aspects have been clearly identified"; "We understood and accept all administrative tasks"; "This was explained well"; "Principles clearly presented, but no doubt, questions will show up during project"; "Good and clear guidance by Marco!" and "Clear understanding of contractual and financial formalities". Of course we can point out that there are "some aspects that still need answers", but in general there is a full understanding of the foreseen administrative aspects, the coordinator, speaking with their NA will solve possible doubts.

Sixth Question - *The extra meeting activities arranged were interesting.* Also for this question all high scores and positive comments: "Very interesting to see new locations and hosts were very interesting and have many useful information"; "Thanks to this meeting I could re-calibrate my perception of "al dente" (I realized that my al dente was actually totally overcooked)", more seriously, Rome is a great and beautiful city, we saw a lot of interesting things and ate a lot of good things"; "I enjoyed our time together outside of meeting times".

3. Content Section of EQ after the meeting in Rome

Below is the second section of the EQ, the one targeted to "Contents & Methodologies"; into the right column there is the average score for each question.

Contents & Methodologies Vote	1 min – 5 max
- I was satisfied of the outcomes of the meeting	4.9
- Clear understanding of further activities to be realised	4.8
- There was a general consensus on the Diagnostic Toolkit	4.8
- There was a general agreement on project web page for the project	4.4
- There was a general consensus on the QS Plan	4.9
- There was a general agreement on the main activities to be realised and on the project timetable	4.9

The total average score for the sum of the six questions is 4.8. Also in this case it is an uncommon high score for the first meeting; probably this come out from a suitable preparation of the meeting itself during the two months before it.

First Question - *I was satisfied of the outcomes of the meeting.* Very high average score for all the questions, if not the fourth; in this case we've got the following comments: "Important input from partners regarding for instance: website, IO2 diagnostic toolkit, ways of communication"; "Partners motivated (see above) to work on IOs"; " Good teambuilding with experienced and nice people" and " We worked cooperatively, timely and with excellent results". No major problem arose during the meeting, there was a fruitful exchange of experience and ideas, the foreseen activities appear under control.

Second Question - *Clear understanding of further activities to be realised.* Also in this case all positive scores and positive comments: "Activities during the Kick-off conference helped us to understand all project tasks"; " Yes, it was a great step forward"; "The original plan was simplified by the NA according with the reduction of the budget, now it is everything clear and well defined" and " Good initial discussion with further clarity as we move through the project". Activities to be performed and IOs to be realised are clear and there is no problem of feasibility related to them; everything was well explained and deeply discussed during the meeting in Rome.

Third Question - *There was a general consensus on the Diagnostic Toolkit.* The first draft of the toolkit was appreciated and there was a large discussion within the partnership for possible improvements; the high score and the comments stressed this situation. These are some of the comments: "The first version Diagnostic Toolkit as the instrument has met our expectations. The final version will be even better after we do implemented process of instrument validation. Expert team form University of Zadar will be happy to participate in this process"; " Yes, also if we decided to optimize it with an internal test in all the involved countries"; "One partner issued the concern that something may be missing in the theoretical frame the diagnostic toolkit is built on. A possible solution could consist in a dialogue between this partner and the leading partner for the Diagnostic Toolkit in order to agree on the present version or identify which variable could be missing"; "The discussions and presentations were transparent and clear" and " There were helpful discussions and a brilliant brainstorming that led us to a good product".

Fourth Question - *There was a general agreement on project web page for the project.* This was the question who gets the lower score (4.4), but in any case a very good one; that happens not for disagreement on the web design, but for the reason that lot ideas come out and then the coordinator will work on them. Here some of the comments: " We drafted some proposal and stressed the main topics to be host in the web; now we'll wait the coordinator implementation"; "We worked in 2 groups to determine requirements towards the project's web page and its design. A synthesis of the group's results was made afterwards and reflects the consensus between all project partners"; "We have made just a draft of web page so some additional work should be done"; "Partner from Ireland and Italy brought in good new ideas" and " The appearance and structure of the website was agreed in principle. The website will evolve and grow in line with the realization of our intellectual outcomes". Then now there is only to wait for the "additional work which should be done" in planning the VOCIS web page.

Fifth Question - *There was a general consensus on the QS Plan.* Again high scores and very positive comments, like: "Yes. We thing that QS Plan is great tool for our work and cooperation. Also, because of the seriousness and commitment of partners think that some elements of the QS Plan will not have to be activate"; "Pietro delivered a clear and useful idea for our common QS"; "Very clear" and "Yes, the quality system makes sense and is not too heavy". At the end there was a full consensus on the QS plan proposed by Antares and the partnership adopted it.

Sixth Question - *There was a general agreement on the main activities to be realised and on the project timetable*. Also on these aspects of the project there was a full agreement and commitment from all the partners, as we can read in some of the comments: "Project timetable will give us enough time to complete all planed activities"; "Good initial discussion with further clarity as we move through the project"; "Everything was very clearly defined and dates are OK. We are hoping that future work would be very successful and fruitful"; "I am sure and convinced that our partnership will work on a very high level"; "The Timetable of Activities was revised since some partners wanted to start earlier with their IO" and "Thanks to strong partners and an excellent cooperation we agreed to formal aspects of the project". Then also on these topics there was no major problem for the partners.

Getting the project done – a final analysis

1 Indicators of achievement: Results / Level of success

During the first meeting in Roma, presenting the Quality Plan, a first group of indicators was introduced, then, during the meeting in Dublin we decided to organize the indicators in two sets: one (50 indicators) targeted to the management & implementation process (including the impact) and the second (40 indicators) to the IOs contents. These indicators were selected with the SMART criterion: Specific to the objective it is supposed to measure (in particular to the proposal framework), Measurable (either quantitatively -a number foreseen and a number obtained- or qualitatively -a score to show the opinion-), Available -related to the activities carried out-, Relevant to the information needs, Time-bound about the time to expect the objective to be achieved.

The indicators and the other tools used within the Quality System (QS) of the project are targeted also to guarantee a homogeneous and high standard quality for all VOCIS products before they will be submitted to the public. In particular, the internal quality control of the various project's products was done via a "consensus procedure": at the end of each IO, each partner will circulate their relevant documents/products to all the other four partners in order to allow a process of validation for each realised document/product. The Quality System Committee (QSC) will be activated starting from the kick-off meeting to examine all relevant material of the project. It will give (after the evaluation of each partner) its suggestion and/or its consensus for the usage of the document/product. Then the Coordinator will give a final assessment and the approval for publishing the product.

At the end, as it is possible to understand reading the Final QS Report, there was a full satisfaction on the achievements of VOCIS project; we foreseen a minimum score of 4 over 5 for the satisfaction of the partnership for each IO product and at the end we've got a score for each of them of 5 (indicators V, X, XV, XXI, XXVII, XXXI and XXXIX) and a score of 4,6 for the overall satisfaction for the produced IOs (indicator XL) as there was the common opinion that we did our best in the framework of the project, but some more work will be done to optimize the set of VOCIS tools. It is important to say that, during the project, no major disagreement was perceived and in any case we never need to start the procedure for the mitigation of risks (see QS Plan point 11). To show some example of opinion stating the good scores on the different IOs, below are a few comments on

specific IOs. "I appreciated very much the results about validation of the dimensions and items of the tool. I am confident the final version fully fits the project objectives" (O2); "A rich number of exercises, very interesting and for sure they will have a good impact on the users" (O3); "Suggestions for improvement have been made. The good quality of the material has been confirmed by participants of the various tests." (O4); "A good work was done by Antares, also the tests gave evidence of that; this part of the VOCIS offer will be able to give value to all the project" (O5); "Very nice the slides of Daliborka, Zadar University did a good job with their students" (O6); "Very very happy for the book: essential, elegant and useful" (O7); "They did a large work, both for the monitoring of the project and for the evaluation of all IOs; at the end a valuable final report was produced (there are few things to add, after Lux.)" (O9).

For the level of success there are first of all some objective facts: the project was carried out within the foreseen deadline, without any extension requirement; there was a general satisfaction within the partnership for the project products; there were no internal conflicts or arguing. Moreover, looking at the indicators (see the Final QS Report), there were higher values than the minimum foreseen at the beginning of the project for several important aspects, i.e.: (ind. 1) nr. of involved experts (coaches, trainers, teachers, students) 391; (ind. 2) nr. of involved org. (providers, associations, schools) 25; (ind. 35) performed dissemination actions 59; (ind. 36) number of users and stakeholders contacted for the project 1650; (ind. 37) press contacts 49; (ind 38) number of contacts through social networks 5696 (mid I/'18); (ind. 44) nr. Of target group & stakeholders contacted 736; (ind. III, VII, XII, XVII, XXIII) larger number of people involved in the IOs testing.

2 Monitoring and evaluation / Budget control & time / Staff frequencies

The partnership decided to give a particular importance to the quality system (QS) in the project in order to support the work together of the partners, to monitor the fulfillment of the foreseen tasks and to evaluate the quality of VOCIS products and their potential impact.

During the kick off meeting of VOCIS project in Rome, the coordinator of the QS (Dr. Pietro Ragni, Antares) presented the Quality System Plan (QSP) for the project. There was a large discussion within the partnership on the

aims and tools to be used and at the end the QSP was unanimously approved. The Plan was updated three times during the project (see the final QS Plan on the website). Then a QS Committee (QSC) was appointed during the meeting with one representative for each partner; it was in contact during the project life span to support the Coordinator of the Project and to control the correct execution of all foreseen activities and the suitable building up of the project products.

The five persons involved in the QSC and doing the larger part of the QS activities are experts of the five partners, the large majority of them have had previous experience in monitoring and evaluation for complex projects; the QS coordinator has a specific experience, thanks to similar activities performed in the last 20 years and to the experience as external expert for the Italian National Agency Erasmus Plus and before Leonardo da Vinci. They were in contact at least one time a month, in order to follow the ongoing activities. Also the other participants were involved in the QS exercise both answering to the Evaluation Questionnaire after each meeting and discussing, during the meeting, with the QS coordinator.

The QSP had six main tasks:

a) monitoring the development of the project activities;

b) assessment of the gathered results;

c) evaluation of the quality of all the IOs products;

d) planning the risk mitigation and the conflict resolution procedure within the project;

e) verifying the satisfaction and the feeling of the people involved in the dissemination activities;

f) beginning the impact evaluation.

To get these results, three tools (evaluation questionnaire, network analysis and Internal Interview) and a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators (90 in total) were planned and put in place by Antares and unanimously approved by the partners. For more details, see the Final QS Report.

The QS in this project is not only intended as a transversal action useful to help the harmonic going on of the project process, but also as an exercise which will be a real support to the IOs. In the double sense to understand during and at the end of each product how it satisfies the foreseen requirements and a high quality standard, in order to be offer to the public

and to create a quality process, supported by suitable tools which can be used by all the institutions or organizations which will decide to adopt our product. In particular, planned and used some questionnaires linked to the products we were working on; now these tools (see QS Plan) are ready for the use, in case an organization/institution will use one or more VOCIS products, to capture the opinion and feeling of the groups involved in the selected activities.

The budget control was performed by the coordinator asking each 6 months the needed documents to all the partners and verifying their coherence with the foreseen budget of the project. No major changes were required for the budget. The time management also was under the control of the coordinator; we have had a little delay, as we decided to spend more time in the planning of the O2 questionnaire, with a large work of all the partners; anyway the delay was regained during the second part of the project.

3 Difficulties

Shortly after the first meeting in Rome which was very positive and productive, the project coordinator changed, but the new project coordinator was appointed very soon and quickly brought up to speed. The meeting in Dublin was critical, as some doubts and perplexities had to be solved, but at the end everything was solved. On one hand there was a full acceptance of the new coordinator (some comments from the QS Report: "Danielle, who had to jump into the coordinator's role, did a good job and explained the relevant administrative aspects"; "The change of the coordinator was dissolved, the contents are still clear as well as the work-packages"); on the other hand the deep discussion in Dublin and the good progress of the project activities clarified the last perplexity on the role and the tasks of the different partners.

The only other difficulty was the delay after the decision to spend more time for a suitable planning of the O2 product; as said before, in Dublin we have had the opportunity to positively assess the final version of O2 and during the second year we were able to cancel the delay.

Within the QS Plan we identified (as first example) 8 possible risks and for each of them we esteemed the probability and the negative degree (using a scale of three value: low, medium, high) and for each of them we foreseen suitable remedial actions. Also if VOCIS approach was to try a prevention of

any risk, in the QS Plan we have already foreseen the risk mitigation policy for the project and the consequent conflict resolution procedure articulated in two levels (see QS Plan). Anyway we already experimented that all the major risks can be avoided by each partner both working with the to-do-list on Basecamp and using frequent internal communication among the coordinator and the partners and this was VOCIS approach. At the end we can say proudly that we didn't need to use neither the risk mitigation policy, nor the conflict resolution procedure.

Evaluation Questionnaire for VOCIS

Comments of .... (partner name) Filled by......................... (expert name)

In order to give feedback and further information to the project, we would like to ask each of meeting participant to fill in the following questionnaire.

I meeting VOCIS Project in Rome (IT) , 20/22 – 04 – 2016

Please give input on the following general and specific aspects related to the II meeting of VOCIS Project.

General Vote	1 min – 5 max	Suggestions and Comments
- The organisation of the meeting was fine		
- I am satisfied with the quality of my own participation		
- My expectations about this meeting were met		
- I appreciate co-operating with the other project partners		
- Clear understanding of all administrative aspects		
- The extra meeting activities arranged were interesting		

Contents & Methodologies Vote	1 min – 5 max	Suggestions and Comments
- I was satisfied of the outcomes of the meeting		
- Clear understanding of further activities to be realized		
- There was a general consensus on the Diagnostic Toolkit		
- There was a general agreement on project web page for the project		
- There was a general consensus on the QS Plan		
- There was a general agreement on the main activities to be realized and on the project timetable		

Thank you for your answers.