Intellectual Output 6: Quality Assurance Reports

Activity 1: Quality Assurance Strategy

QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

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DOCUMENT SUMMARY

Document Title	Quality Assurance Strategy
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Abstract	The DIGITAL_BRIDGES Intellectual Output 6 (IO6) "Quality Assurance Reports" will provide methodologies, procedures and tools for quality assurance of the Project.
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1. INTRODUCTION

This document presents the main guidelines and the procedures, which will be used in purpose to ensure the Digital_Bridges project quality. Quality management is the process for ensuring that all Project activities necessary to design, plan and implement a project are effective and efficient with respect to the purpose of the objective and its performance.

Quality Assurance Strategy aims to outline methods of formative and summative evaluation of that will be used through the Project. Moreover it will describe Project partners' vision of a quality culture, specify the indicators for monitoring quality and outline the tools in terms of templates, techniques to be used to achieve quality in the project.

Quality Assurance Strategy (QAS) gives consortium a clear understanding of how quality will be assessed and what documentation they can expect (addressing quality) during the project.

1.1.   The Digital_Bridges Project

For years scientists observe difficult situations in European society – the number of older people are increasing, unemployment and relocation became serious problem too. Health and social services sector face serious challenges among all Member States while trying to adjust to demographic ageing, societal change, rising expectations and consumerism, changing employment and family patterns, evolving technological opportunities and funding issues. A key part of health and social services sector deals with vulnerable people. Greater emphasis must be spent on generating an effective and innovative way of developing the human capital of those responsible for improving the quality of life for vulnerable people throughout Europe.

Education and training plays a main part in developing and improving specialists who work with vulnerable people, more generally, the social services sector. In many parts of Europe this sector has a strong emphasis on learning and assessing skills for job roles in real practice environments – practice learning. There are strong demand for practice learning with new qualified professionals and professionals as part of "in-service"/CPD training. There rise challenges in arranging practice opportunities where trainees are able to learn the core skills of the job and receive high quality support, supervision and assessment of their practice from qualified mentors/practice assessors. Finding sufficient numbers of such placements has been challenge for long time. Other challenges like risk associated with work-based learning, safety and well-being of service users in giving trainees access to their lives must be taken to consideration as well.

In aim to address these challenges Digital_Bridges project will develop an immersive 3D virtual environment which provides safe and easily accessible environment where Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training students as well as professional social workers dealing with vulnerable people can learn by interacting with Non-Player Characters in simulation of a real world service. This way they not only get required skills and knowledge but also do it without cause any unintended harm to vulnerable client.

During this project pedagogy for trainers/mentors around the use of the simulated practice learning environment and development will be developed. As well as curriculum around simulated practice learning aligned with ECTS/ECVET for credit transfer will be developed and delivered. The Project aims to train 200 trainers/mentors to use the environment and carry out a large-scale European pilot with over HE/VET students and professional social care workers using the new curriculum.

This project covers three complementary fields of HE/VET education the labour market and HE/VET policy making with technology partners to provide the simulation. The outcomes and deliverables of this project will propose innovative policy objectives and will address challenges related to professional skills, promoting competences.

2.   PROJECT QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality assurance is a process to provide confirmation based on evidence to ensure to all project's parts: partners, beneficiaries, stakeholders and etc. that the "final products" (eg.

curriculum, educational game, training materials, etc.) meet needs, expectations, and other requirements. It assures the effectiveness of process and procedures tools are in place to make sure that the expected levels of quality will be reached to produce quality outputs.

Quality assurance includes the evaluation of the overall performance of the project on a regular basis to provide confidence that the project will satisfy the quality standards defined by the project. In purpose to warrant quality assurance we need to be:

- Effective (outcomes orientation) – *do the right things*: achieve goals, deliver outcomes that meet requirements.
- Efficient (process orientation) – *doing things right:* proper planning and monitoring, most economical way (human and financial resources).

2.1. The Project's organizational structure

Before defining the Project Quality Assurance procedures and methods main structural components of the Project or Project's organizational structure which take major part in quality assurance should be presented. Project's organizational structure is composed of four main linked and depended to each other units.
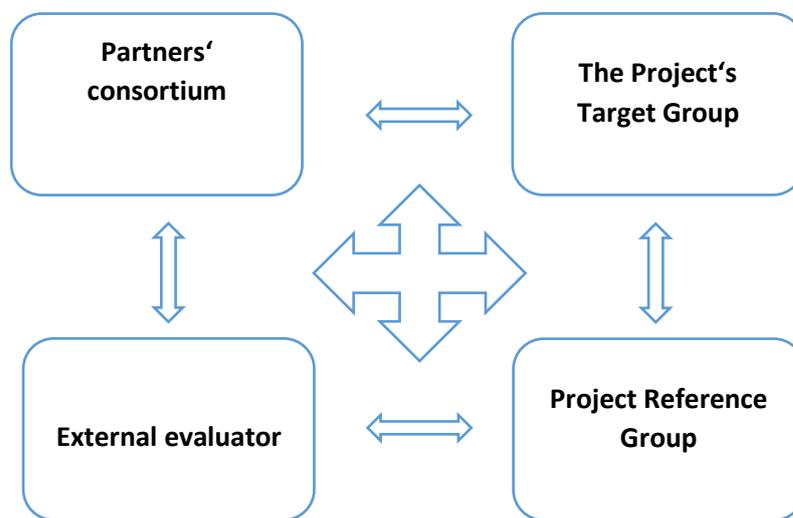
The Project organizational structure

Roles of each of above mentioned units in quality assurance process should be elaborated.

Partners' consortium is institute of all organizations which are involved in the Project. The main Partners' consortium task is to implement objectives which were agreed in the Project contract. Partners' consortium is also responsible for respectful communication with each other, performance of tasks on agreed schedule, monitoring the quality of each output, arbitrating and solve possible misunderstandings and disagreements. Partners' consortium is composed by a representative from all partners:

Institution	Representatives
University of West of Scotland (UWS)	Thomas Connolly, Stephen Farrier, Thomas

	Hainey, Liz Boyle
Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC)	Frances Scott, Frances Barbour, Nina Roberts
Context Learning Finland Oy (CLF)	Ari Ketola, Teemu Patala
Melius s.r.l.	Francesca Di Concetto, Gigliola Paviotti
Vytautas Magnus University	Rasa Naujaniene, Dovile Jankunaite, Vaida Butautaite
Education and Innovation Centre (EI)	Dara Tsvetkova, Nina Tsvetkova

Two partners of consortium have particular roles in quality assurance – UWS and VMU. UWS is the Project coordinator who plays main role in permanent management of the Project (eg. financial issues, technical management and control, etc). UWS will keep tight relations with all Project organizational structure units. Also keep relations with European Commission officers. This responsibility last during the entire time of the Project. VMU leads Quality Assurance activities and will be responsible for cohesive monitoring and evaluation methodology throughout the Project, document system for internal peer reviews in relation to the content of the Project, liaise with external evaluators (Project Reference Group) in gathering evaluation and feedback.

Project Reference Group will be established near the beginning of the project to help provide independent input to, and analysis of, the key intellectual outputs. Each project partner is committed to suggest members to Project Reference Group.

External evaluator - will be contracted near the start of the project to provide 2 independent, external evaluations of the project, a formative report half-way through and a final report.

The Project's Target Group is composed of HE and VET students, social workers and young specialists who need particular practice knowledge about how to provide social support for vulnerable people. Students and practitioners will be actively involved in simulated practice environment evaluation during piloting activities. Teachers, trainers and mentors will be invited to evaluate pedagogy and curriculum for simulated practice and teacher training materials.

2.2. The Project Quality Assurance Segments

The Quality Assurance will be structured into four main areas:

1. **The Project Content**, the content of the intellectual outputs in terms of suitability will be evaluated in a peer review by the partners' consortium on a quarterly basis. Moreover, the Project Reference Group (PRG) will provide feedback on outcomes and deliverables.
2. **The Project Communication and Organisation** will provide insights into the internal atmosphere of the project, items like decision making, division of work, cooperation and communication flow and the overall management of the project will be discussed in this area.
3. **The Project Effectiveness** will deal with the achievement of set objectives in terms of numbers as stated in the project proposal.
4. **The External View**, additionally, the perspectives of the external stakeholders such as the independent external evaluator and the Project Reference Group will be taken into consideration for the evaluation of the content as well as the effectiveness of the outcomes.

3. THE PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION
3.1. Objectives and criteria of evaluation

There are many different definitions of evaluation and all of them may be appropriate. However, the main idea of evaluation is the purpose of improvement and accountability. Evaluation has two main purposes. Firstly, evaluation can be about accountability. It is used to justify the existence of the project, its work and its continuation. It is essential for the protection of the public interests. Secondly, evaluation can be about improvement. In this case it can be seen as a developmental process – processes that help to illuminate problems and recognize good practice. It is a process that reduces the likelihood of repeating mistakes and using mistakes as a learning opportunity. Both purposes are valid and important and will be applied for the Project monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Project aim to provide data and information on the progress of the project work, the quality of cooperation between the partners and the compatibility of the results with the assumptions. In addition, reliable assessment increases the rationality of decision-making and management and also provides objective information on the implementation and results of the project.

The basic objectives of the Project the evaluation will include:

- improving the project, by providing information to enhance its effectiveness,
- improving the management of the project through continuous monitoring of the progress and conveying information to partners,
- identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the project,
- signaling emerging problems and taking necessary reparation actions,
- providing comprehensive assessment of the project,
- clarifying the degree of compliance of the objectives and results with the assumptions of the project,
- assessing the achievement of the assumed results.

Main Criteria of The Project Evaluation

The project evaluation will be conducted based on the following criteria:

- relevance, which will assess the extent to which the objectives pursued by the project meet identified problems in the project area
- efficiency, which will assess the level of "economy" of the project, i.e. the ratio of costs to the finished products (the inputs are both financial and human resources and working time).
- effectiveness, which will assess the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved as defined in the planning stage.
- influence, which will assess the relationship between the objectives of the project and the general objectives.
- sustainability, which will assess whether the results achieved by the project can continue to exist after the end.

3.2. Types of Evaluation

The types of evaluations used in the Project are directly related to project objectives. We can exclude two types of project objectives: project implementation objectives and outcome objectives. From which it follows that we will apply two types of evaluation:

- **formative** – implementation, process oriented evaluation (eg. project management, effective completion of outputs)
- and **summative** – outcome oriented evaluation (eg. number of teachers and students trained in the pilots as well as their feedback; number of participants in Multipier Workshops and ect.).

Formative Project evaluation

Formative Project evaluation begins at the start of the Project and continues during whole time of the Project. It refers to all tasks, assignments that was planned to do during the project. When formative project's evaluation is performed we can assess ongoing project activities, predict unexpected developments before they have an impact, spot delays and plan inconsistences, measure progress, and get information which could be used to improve the Project.

Formative project evaluation

Implementation evaluation   Progress evaluation
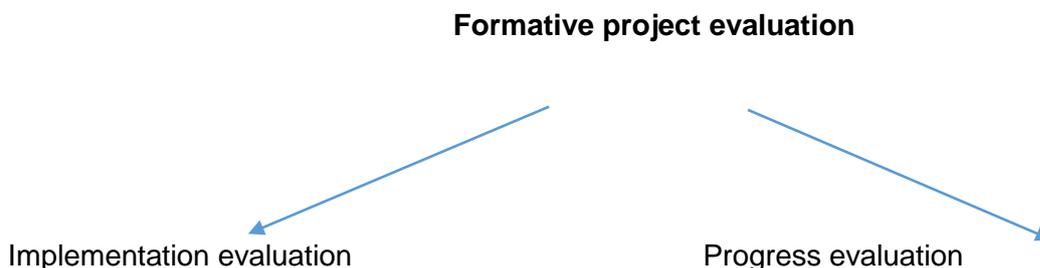
Implementation evaluation

Implementation evaluation aims to assess whether the project development is being conducted and delivered as planned. Digital_Bridges project is composed of 7 phases:

- O1: Pedagogy & Curriculum for Simulated Practice Learning for Social Workers who Interact with Vulnerable People
- O2: Simulated Practice Educational Game
- O3: Teacher Training Materials
- O4: Evaluation of Simulated Practice Educational Game
- O5: Policy and Practice Guidance
- O6: Quality Assurance Reports
- O7: Dissemination and Exploitation Outputs

Each of these 7 phases has additional activities and each of these activities have partner to be responsible for it and approximate date for start and the end. Activities plan was prepared by the Project coordinator (UWS). Each partner is responsible to perform the activities assigned, perform activities on time and qualitatively, deliver activities to activity leading partner, provide feedback in purpose to improve the quality.

Activity		Lead	Start	End
O1-A1	Requirements Analysis	UWS	01-10-2014	31/11/2014
O1-A2	Develop Pedagogy for Simulated Practice Learning for Social Workers who Interact with Vulnerable People	EI	01-12-2014	31-01-2015
O1-A3	Develop Curriculum for Simulated Practice Learning for Social Workers who Interact with Vulnerable People	SSSC	01-12-2014	31-01-2015
O2-A1	Develop Game Design Document	CLF	01-01-2015	28-02-2015
O2-A2	Develop Simulated Practice Educational Game	UWS	01-03-2015	31-08-2015
O3-A1	Develop pedagogic guide	EI	01-08-2015	30-09-2015
O3-A2	Develop training materials	VMU	01-09-2015	31-10-2015
O3-A3	Evaluate Pedagogic Guide and Training Materials	UWS	01-11-2015	31-12-2015
O4-A1	Identification of Participants for Piloting	Melius	01-11-2015	31-12-2015
O4-A2	Analysis of Piloting of Simulated Practice Game	UWS	01-01-2016	31-03-2016
O5-A1	Policy and Practice Guidance	SSSC	01-04-2016	31-07-2016
O5-A2	Develop Best Practice Guides	VMU	01-04-2016	31-07-2016
O5-A3	Develop Use Case Scenarios	Melius	01-04-2016	31-07-2016
O6-A1	Quality Assurance Strategy	VMU	15-09-2014	18-10-2014
O6-A2	Evaluation of Intellectual Outputs	VMU	21-10-2014	31-08-2016
O6-A3	Establish Project Reference Group/Community of Practice	VMU	15-09-2014	18-10-2014
O6-A4	Interim Independent External Evaluator Feedback	VMU	31-07-2015	28-08-2015
O6-A5	Final Independent External Evaluator Feedback	VMU	31-07-2016	28-08-2016
O7-A1	Dissemination and Exploitation Outputs	Melius	15-09-2014	18-10-2014
O7-A2	Project website and social media sites	CLF	15-09-2014	31-08-2016
O7-A3	Refereed Academic & Professional Papers	UWS	15-09-2014	31-08-2016
O7-A4	European Conference	UWS	01-07-2016	22-07-2016
O7-A5	Exploitation Plan	UWS	01-04-2016	31-07-2016

During the Project's implementation evaluation is important to raise and be able to answer to these questions:

- Are the appropriate participants selected and involved in the planned activities?
- Do the activities and strategies match those described in the plan? If not, are the changes in activities justified?
- Are activities conducted in line with the proposed aims and objectives?
- Are you developing the planned collaborative relationships?
- Is a management plan developed and followed?

Progress evaluation

Progress evaluation aims to assess progress in meeting the project's goals, to determine the impact of the activities and strategies used, to assess whether some of the project activities need to be improved. Project implementation objectives refer to all those things that we plan to do in the project. And include all the processes: project coordination and management, partners meetings, communication, etc.

In purpose to evaluate the Project progress these questions should be asked:

- Are the partners moving towards the anticipated goals of the network?
- What hinders the advance towards those goals?
- Which of the activities and strategies are aiding the partners to move toward the goals?

Summative evaluation

Summative evaluation is oriented to the Project's outcomes. It evaluates project's success in attaining its expectations for participants (communities, networks, organizations, individuals). It describes what was expected to happen to our "target groups" (HE/VET students, social workers, trainers/mentors) as a result of the project. This includes expectations about how the project will change participant's knowledge, skills, attitudes or awareness. It is for evaluating project's success in attaining its expectations for participants. Summative evaluation leads to impact reports and quality assessment.

When we perform summative evaluation these questions should be asked:

- Has the project been successful in attaining its predicted objectives?

- Are participants exhibiting the expected changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors or awareness?

You may be successful in attaining implementation objectives, but if you do not have information about outcomes, you will not know whether project is worthwhile. Similarly, you may be successful in changing participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes but if you do not have information about the project implementation, you will be unable to identify the parts of the project that contributed to these changes.

4. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

Main evaluation instruments which will be constructed and used during the project are the following:

Peer review of the intellectual outputs will be performed by the Project Partners consortium in purpose to make sure if they are of an appropriate quality. When the activity leader will finish certain output, this output will be placed on Basecamp for other Project's partners review and evaluation. If any of partners have some remarks or ideas how to improve intellectual output all these remarks will be taken in to consideration by an activity leader.

External peer review of the intellectual outputs. Project Reference Group and piloting participants will also review key intellectual outputs before they are finalized. Project Reference Group will be established of leading practitioners and policy/decision makers to support the implementation of the Project. The reference group will contribute to the evaluation of the project, dissemination activities, and valorization activities. Project Reference Group will evaluate these outcomes: Develop Pedagogy for Simulated Practice Learning for Social Workers who Interact with Vulnerable People (O1-A2); Develop Curriculum for Simulated Practice Learning for Social Workers who Interact with Vulnerable People (O1-A3); Develop Simulated Practice Educational Game (O2-A2); Evaluate Pedagogic Guide and Training Materials (O3-A3).
Teachers who took part in Piloting activities will evaluate the pedagogy and curriculum for simulated practice and the teacher training materials. Also simulated practice environment (output O2) will be evaluated by piloting the environment with students in HE, VET and professional practice. A pre-test/post-test controlled experiment will be used and both qualitative and quantitative data collected and analysed to determine the learning effectiveness of the environment.

Self-evaluation questionnaires will be used to evaluate project partners' individual expectations, comments on the project development, added value, communication and etc.

Group discussion with formative evaluation sessions will be carried out in each partner's meetings, Multiplier workshops involving the key actors involved in the project. Partners will be asked about general project issues (how they managed to accomplish the planned actions, whether they managed to meet deadlines, their opinion about the transnational coordinator's support, organisation of events, their opinion about the attainment of fixed goals, etc.)

The External view. The Independent External Evaluator will provide two external evaluations – a formative report partway of the Project and final report. All feedback and comments captured from the Independent External Evaluator will be collated and investigated on a regular basis. Any issues identified will be very carefully considered and corrected by the Project's partners. In addition, the feedback from the Independent External Evaluator will be compiled into quarterly reports so that the feedback and comments can be carefully considered within the wider context of developments and results. All the Project's partners will be involved in resolving any issues identified by the external evaluator.

4.1. Evaluation And Quality Tools

During the Project these evaluation and quality tools are proposed:

Project monitoring questionnaires to assess project management.

Inner evaluation form in purpose to assess intellectual outputs.

External evaluation questionnaire/form which will be prepared for Project Reference Group to assess intellectual outputs before they are finalised. External evaluation questionnaire will be prepared in English and the translated to each partner's language – Italian, Finnish, Lithuanian and Rumanian.

Pre-test/post-test questionnaire will be fulfilled by trainers, mentors, teachers to evaluate pedagogy and curriculum for simulated practice and the teacher training materials. Also pre-test/post-test questionnaire will be used by students and professionals to evaluate simulated practice environment.

Project monitoring questionnaire

This is a short questionnaire for the assessment of Digital_Bridges Project Kick-off meetings. It aims at providing feedback to the project promoter and all partners. To outline strengths and challenges is very important for managing improvement processes.

1. What were your main hopes and expectations for the partner meeting?

2. To what extent were these expectations met?

Mark the answer when 1 means "Poor", 5 - "Excellent".

● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5

3. Were all the tasks in the meeting agenda covered properly?

4. What did you enjoy most during the meeting?[*]

5. Was there any part of the meeting that you didn't enjoy?

6. How do you assess the components of the meeting?

	Very good	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Sufficiency of information received before the meeting	●	●	●	●	●
Work-schedule of the meeting	●	●	●	●	●
Organization of the meeting	●	●	●	●	●
Quality and utility of presentations	●	●	●	●	●
Time allotment for presentations	●	●	●	●	●
Clearness of next steps	●	●	●	●	●
Contribution of participants (participation in the discussions etc.)	●	●	●	●	●
Other	●	●	●	●	●

7. Were the objectives for the next meeting set clear?

8. Please give further suggestions as to how we can improve these meetings in the future

Inner evaluation form

Version	Partners Name	Date	Remarks, comments, suggestions for improvement
			1. ……….. 2. ……….. 3. ………… 4. ………… …………

External evaluation questionnaire/form

Will be prepared in the future…

Pre-test/post-test questionnaire