

Refine Project Meeting, Kaunas 4 – 6 November 2004

Evaluation Report

Remarks:

As there has been a budget cut of the project from the proposal 300.000 Euro to the contract 200.000 Euro, the responsible committee of the project decided that the evaluation budget also had to be cut significantly to be able to support the projects better. This means that the evaluation will be reduced to a report on the two meetings: the first one in Kaunas, November 2004, and the second and last one in Rome, 2005.

Before attending the Kaunas Meeting, I studied especially the workplans of each partner and considered all the information which was available on the website of the project beginning November 2004.

I. General Observations

The REFINE Project is very ambitious.

- There are many partners in this project with very different experiences in the area.
 - Partners who know each other very well from other projects and new partners
 - Partners with very different professional background
 - With different ideas how to transfer the result
 - With different cultural background
 - Some have a long tradition in the area and a lot of experience in the way of handling the tools analogue to their tradition (e. g. Great Britain, France)
 - No history of all the kind of tools like European CV or portfolio
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- There are language problems, what do you lose when translating from your mother tongue into English and vice versa?
- The political situation of the partners differ in various aspects:
 - There are partners who have to consider very strongly the national policy, e. g. in higher education, what do universities really want?
 - How was labour market changing and influencing the use of the tools?
 - How do European goals conform with national goals? What speed and what money is behind it?
 - There are partners who are in the process of changing their political system including the educational system.
- The tools and sectors were viewed from different perspectives.
 - It is ambitious because of the mixture of sectors and the idea of transfer between the sectors.
 - Some tools which are working – or sometimes not even working – in one sector are difficult to transfer (e.g. credit system in universities) into another sector.
 - Can there be given common proposals to use tools in different sectors? What is good for one sector must not necessarily be good for another, or even tools might be differently judged within the same sector depending on the national conditions.
 - How close and how far away from one another are the sectors? It depends very much on the development in each country.
 - The goal of the project to propose at the end a set of tools which can be additional, modified, adapted or even develop new tools has to consider a sound methodology to achieve reliable results.
 - The methodology has to be accessible for all partners.

These observations came up during the sessions and are common to many when not all situations concerning the project. They were brought up in different contexts within the working groups or in the plenary.

II. The Project Meeting

The project meeting was prepared by the four chairs of the project representing universities, vocational training, Youth/NGOs, and adult education.

The REFINE Project Meeting was part of the 28th EUCEN Conference. The participants could therefore also profit from the information disseminated in the conference, e. g. on the future of European project policy in the area of education.

There were altogether five sessions of the REFINE Project Meeting.

Session I - The Project Meeting started with a plenary to discuss administrative business, objectives of the project and the meeting, timetable, and financial queries. Pat Davies, representing EUCEN, was the main person responsible. The participants were asked to comment the proposed format of the meeting to which they all agreed.

Session II - The working groups were divided in sectors so that there was the possibility to come to a common definition of the tools used in the same sector. As it was also the first meeting of the members, it was necessary that they first get to know each other – e.g. personal and professional background. This plays an important role in their future cooperation, which is mainly on-line.

Session III and IV – In the “market place” for tools, the participants were given opportunity to take a look at the tools which had not been tested by themselves. The general acceptance differed a lot, owing to the organizational conditions.

After the “market place”, the group workshops started this time divided according to tools. It was another possibility to meet partners from different sectors who use the same tool.

Dividing the participants into sectors or tools has proven to be very effective. Everyone had the possibility to present and discuss their topics within a sector as well as within their used tool/s.

All sessions were very well prepared, considering the objectives of each working group and the suggested topics for discussion so that each group was working towards a common direction. This was seen by the participants as helpful and effective.

In all groups, there was a possibility for each member to report on his/her experience of the previous year. Many of these experiences were common. Those members who have more experiences could give answers to some questions because they have encountered them before. The not-so-experienced partners had sometimes questions and ideas which had not been seen before, therefore giving the more-experienced partners a new perspective. This contributed to a very good interaction within the group.

New ideas and solutions often come up in discussions where participants have different backgrounds, nationalities, working experience, and experiences with the tools.

Session V – In the plenary, each group had the possibility to give feedback and present its work report. Michel Feutrie summed up the different feedbacks and reports and analysed the common problems, as well as the differences, that came up in the different workgroups. Michel Feutrie is an expert in this area and was therefore in a good position to point out the significance of the results of the project meeting in relation to the European discussions on the tools.

One of the objectives of Session V was to discuss and decide on the workplan for the second year. This took place under consideration of the results of the meeting.

III. Personal Remarks

Certainly, the time frame of the project is much too restricted. Considering of the volume of the work involved and having only one meeting at the beginning and at the end of the project means that the responsible coordinator is pressured of achieving so many goals in so short a time - the process of the exchange of experiences, the ideas of changing the tools, transfer of sectors, etc. The coordinator also

has to consider the experiences and ideas of the partners of his network and is therefore highly dependent on the cooperation of the members of his network.

Nevertheless, the possibility of success is relatively high owing to several factors: the participants are highly motivated in the topic, very competent in various areas, and the coordinators have an excellent background knowledge about the contents and project management.

In 2005, we hope to have results, in which each participant could find relevant aspects for his or her own area of work, and at the same time, results which can give some added value to the European discussion.

Ina Grieb
Oldenburg, 12. November 2004