



VccSSe – National level evaluation of the 1st year of the project

Summary Report

0. Introduction

Every partner institution was asked to fill the form concerning the National level evaluation of the first year of the project (see the Annex). 9 different forms were received by the Coordinator of the Project and by the Valladolid team who made the Summary Report.

After the National level evaluation of the first year of the project has been completed by the partner institutions, several aspects of the project have been emphasized and conclusions have been drawn.

The following Report tries to gather all the opinions given by the partnership and provides us with the feelings and guidelines to continue and improve our collaborative work as regards the use of ICT (mostly Virtual Instrumentation) in Education.

I. The purpose and meaning of the project

The institutions point out the importance of the project focusing on the following aspects:

- Improve in-service teachers, Ph.D., master students' abilities to understand the role of ICT, use new types of technologies in Education (virtual instrumentation and experiments);
- Provide science teachers with useful resources for their classes;
- Integrate new pedagogical approaches in the teaching task and update their scientific – didactic knowledge;
- Work cooperatively with other European educational institutions;
- Improve our expertise in in-service teacher training by exploring the usability of ICT tools in the teaching of science concepts.

II. Management of the project

The **management of the project on the coordinating institution level** has been considered to be **EXCELLENT** because of the well organized meetings, fast response to questions, step-by-step monitoring, encouraging spirit, updated information, paperwork problem-solving, competent guidance, total dedication, good communication and overall coordination. One partner points out some differences in the financial administrative routines in different participating countries. The coordinating institution also evaluates very positively the management of the project as regards the organizational and financial matters and clear reports presented by the most of the partners.



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The **management of the project on the institution level** has been considered **VERY GOOD** because of the good management group cooperation and work through coordinating meetings in which tasks are assigned, project common rules are observed and information is spread to all the members. No problems have been pointed out. The coordinating institution also states the unlimited support they have received from all their staff in terms of equipment acquisition, facilities and made-in-time expenses management.

To the question “**How easy or difficult do you find the paperwork (report sheets etc.) in the project?**”, the paperwork is in general considered **QUITE DIFFICULT** and **BUREAUCRATIC**, requiring too much of our time, and sometimes boring. Some partners think that paperwork has been rushed up to meet the project phases according to the initial plan even though the project activity started with a three months delay. One partner insists on the differences in the financial administrative routines in different participating countries which make it more difficult to fill in the reports especially those for staff costs.

III. Significance of the coordinating meetings

Târgoviște meeting (Romania, 11 – 15 January 2007)

VERY SIGNIFICANT because it meant the starting point of the project, it was a key meeting for the planning of different aspects of the project:

- Information of the European Commission Regulations regarding the management of Comenius Projects;
- Justification of expenses and forms to use;
- Analysis of the training modules structure;
- Analysis of the training materials;
- Analysis and selection of resources and software: webpage, platforms, virtual instrumentation tools;
- Discussion of pedagogical aspects of proposed software;
- Discussion, clarification and distribution of responsibilities.

Warsaw meeting (Poland, 11 – 15 May 2007)

VERY IMPORTANT because it meant following up and improvement of these aspects of the project:

- The structure of the training modules and training materials;
- The design of the *virtual experiments e-space* and assessment tools;
- Possibilities of the selected software;
- Usefulness of *Camtasia Studio* software;
- Direction and criteria of assessment of project process and products.



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Gijón meeting (Spain, 21 – 25 November 2007)

RELEVANT because the project has entered the training and the implementation stage which involves the discussion of the following items:

- Evaluation of the training courses: participation, outcomes, involvement;
- Evaluation of the assessment tools: development, design and improvement;
- Evaluation of the progress of the first year of the project;
- Information and evaluation of the financial management and status.

IV. Co-operation with the coordinator and partners in / between meetings

The **Co-operation with the coordinator** has been **VERY SATISFACTORY**, fluent and quick for every question and doubt that came out, a very helpful attitude.

The **Co-operation with the other project partners** has been **EXCELLENT** especially among those working with the same software and those designing evaluation tools in between meetings. In the meetings all aspects of work have been taken up in cooperation and sharing. It is pointed out that some partners have to be more dynamic in making and solving the tasks established in the project since this lack of effectiveness slows down and affects the positive progress of the project activities.

V. Co-operation and support within your institution.

The **overall support of all the institutions** towards the project has been **EXCELLENT** - good understanding and cooperation, friendly attitude. All the necessary areas within the institutions - technicians (ICT specialists, web administrators etc.), financial department, tutors, and other members of the local project team - cooperated effectively and efficiently as all of them regard the project as an opportunity for staff development as well as expertise and improvement in teacher training.

VI. Progress of the project

Till the **end of the first year we have accomplished certain very important tasks** of the project, such as creating the training materials and evaluation tools and running the first edition of the training course, despite the three month delay at the beginning of the project. Certainly, the main goals have been reached in most of the institutions.

In order to keep up with the project phases established in the initial proposal, partners consult the *Application* and the *Agreements (Project Agreement, Minutes of the Meetings)*.



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These documents are clear and well structured since most of them include tables with all the information needed. The partnership has looked at them an average of 6-10 times.

As for the **collaborative platforms and/or course management systems**, the partnership consider both *phpGroupWare* and *Moodle* as **VERY GOOD** collaborative and managing tools for the needs of the project, with free access as the most valuable aspect. “*phpGroupWare*” platform is thought to be easy to use and to manage because the training materials are well organized and can be easily accessed. In other words, it is a valuable *organizational memory* of the project progress. The only disadvantages are that we are not able to make versions and the interface is not very friendly.

As far as *Moodle* is concerned, most partners think it is a simple, clear, useful and well organized course management platform, a “*nice surprise and big revelation*” for most of the partners. *Moodle* provides us with opportunities to deliver content and assignments to the teachers, to monitor their work, to form a community of practice using the forum provided. Even many trainees have expressed the willingness to use it for other teaching objectives.

VII. Commitment to the project during the first year

Partnership dedication and participation in the project ranges from **TOTAL** (1 institution) to **NOT FULL EFFORT** (1 institution). The general feeling is that we did our best, with a lot of self-teaching and real efforts to accomplish all the tasks in time - revision of documents; filling in forms and reports; translations (webpage, training materials, evaluation tools etc.); course organization and management; getting familiar and working with *Moodle*, *phpGroupWare*, and all the other project software; plus all the institution coordinating meetings.

All partners **allocate enough of their regular working time** for the project sometimes even at weekends to be in time. For some working teams it is part of their regular work and for others it is an extra time allocation depending on the amount of work they have in other areas. Certainly, team work allows some partners to complete more tasks.

VIII. The strengths and weaknesses of the project

Weaknesses of the project mentioned:

- Not enough time spent on analyzing available VI free software - the software was chosen mainly based on partnership expertise.
- Last time rushing in starting the 1st edition of the course, few materials and some of the evaluation tools were in process to be finalized during the training modules sessions.



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- The “immediate” reactions of some partners regarding the solving of their assumed tasks.
- The differences between the partners concerning the selection of the teachers for the Training Module (very easy in some countries, problems in others).
- The co-operation between the partners through the *phpGroupWare* platform in the first half year of the project.
- Differences among the partners in order to gain access to the teachers of their area.
- Different virtual instrumentation. It would have been better not to focus on so many different virtual technologies.
- The cost of software in some cases – for some of the course participants it will be a pity that they cannot use the knowledge they acquired in the training module sessions because of the above. Anyway for the second edition, free software will be also used.
- The size of the project (financially) is still so limited that separate personnel cannot be used for the project.
- Too much work for so little money.
- The financial part of the project is very bureaucratic.

Strengths of the project stressed:

- Excellent work of the coordinating institution: project management, webpage mastering, e-space structuring and managing, great preparation and experience of some partners on virtual instrumentation and software used.
- The promoting of new e-learning methods and technologies (virtual experiments) and their implementation into the classroom.
- The partnership of the project which covers almost all Europe and contains partners with a high experience and expertise in introducing/using ICT in education.
- The work inside the group – a perfect symbiosis between technical and pedagogical professional people, all of them interested and involved in doing a good work and feedback.
- Very collaborative group of people; very good work atmosphere and clear interest in the topic of the project, enhanced by previously having worked together in another project.
- High level of requirements: *Moodle* platform knowledge; *Crocodile Clips*; *phpGroupWare*; English language knowledge.
- The creation of an e-learning in-service teacher community for the integration of ICT in teaching and learning at national and European level.
- The creation of a database including good working examples constructed and tested by the teachers in their real classrooms regarding ICT in teaching and learning science concepts.



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IX. Future of the project and some considerations

Due to general satisfaction about the project activities, outcomes and coordination, the partnership foresees a **VERY POSITIVE FUTURE**. In the next two years, till the end of the project activity, we hope to accomplish the following planned aspects:

- Use of free, therefore fully available, software to be able to design VI experiments and share them with other colleagues;
- Full analysis of pedagogical aspects of VI;
- Re-evaluate the training modules and optimize them for the second edition;
- Finish the training periods (first and second editions) in very good conditions and with qualitative products;
- Develop a second edition of the Training Modules, fully organized and coordinated, even extending it as an established teacher training module for every institution;
- Good results concerning the training of the teachers and their final products / experiments.
- Promote and deal with the *Moodle* platform in depth;
- Develop more didactic proposals of use in the classroom in every one of the virtual instruments (*LabView; Cabri Geometry; Crocodile Clips; GeoGebra* etc.).
- Full implementation in the classroom;
- Involve a large number of teachers in the *VccSSe* community.

The whole partnership will continue with the **dissemination of the project** in its second year as it is considered a very valuable and necessary aspect if we want to spread our work and contribute to enhance the European dimension of education with collaboration and sharing with all European countries, and later on, with the international community. This dissemination activity will, with no doubt, be sounder since project outcomes and reflection and evaluation of different aspects of the project will be more complete and articles will be written and published, presentations prepared for conferences and congresses, opinions offered and more VI courses organized and offered to other teachers.

On the whole, it is emphasized that at the end of the training period, we will have the research data in our hands, so we will be able to write research articles for national journals, in order to promote those data and to participate in regional, national, European and even international conferences for teachers and teachers trainers and overall researchers on the topic of the use of ICT.