Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013

Leonardo da Vinci

TRANSFER OF INNOVATION

Sustainability of European Cooperation Projects in VET

Check list for Project Coordinators

Introduction

The implementation of European cooperation projects should lead to generating added-value in vocational education and training in Europe. In order to achieve this, the benefit that the project results offer should be sustainable. Sustainability may not concern all the aspects of a project. In each project some activities or results may be maintained, while others may not be possible or necessary to maintain. Sustainability means that **crucial** activities and results of the project are maintained and continue to deliver benefits to the target group, structure, sector or system **after** the end of the EU funding. Ideally, the sustainability of a project should also generate impact, meaning direct or indirect long-term effects on actors, structures, sectors or systems **beyond** the original project environment.

Factors that support and favour sustainability, and even impact, are the following:

Project level factors:

o   Quality of project design meeting the needs of target group/s and/or sector/s
o   Involvement of partners: sense of ownership and motivation
o   Effective management and leadership
o   Active participation of the target group/s and/or sector/s
o   Capacity for securing adequate resources for continuation

Context level factors:

o   Institutional support
o   Public authority and political support
o   Socio-economic support

This check list provides project coordinators with guidance on what to take into account and to do to support the sustainability of their projects.

The following check list is structured (1) around conclusions from a European Commission study on the sustainability of international cooperation projects[1], and (2) practical recommendations how to ensure, factor by factor, the sustainability of project activities and results.

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[1] "Sustainability of international cooperation projects in the field of higher education and vocational training", November 2006, European Commission, Directorate-General Education and Culture: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/publications_en.php

Project-level factors

1. Quality of project design meeting the needs of target group/s and/or sector/s

Conclusions		Recommendations	Done
C1.1.	Projects matching clearly identified needs are more likely to attract target group/s and end user/s, socio-economic actors and the labour market respectively funding and support after the end of EU funding.	Maintain a regular and structured dialogue to the labour market (to business and/or to public authorities depending on your project)	
C1.2.	If regular revision is done to adjust to changes in socio-economic needs projects will be more likely to be sustainable (see C8.1).	Once a year at least, review, assess and, if necessary, update the risk and needs analysis and decide on appropriate improvements (e.g. by means of a quality process and regular assessments, see C1.4).	
C1.3.	The projects that present a high level of innovation for the Partner country require closer examination of for example accreditation procedures or existing quality standards.	Safeguard the innovative components of your project during its implementation and at the same time ensure that the innovation is acceptable in the partner country/ies.	
C1.4.	Provision to maintain and enhance the high level of quality of the project for all "importing" partners is a key factor of sustainability.	Safeguard the quality of your project during its implementation through appropriate tools and practices (continuous quality evaluation, peer reviews, benchmarking activities…).	

2. Involvement of consortium members: sense of ownership and motivation

Conclusions		Recommendations	Done
C2.1.	The precise definition of the role of each partner is of particular importance.	Draw up an organisational chart of consortium partners, depicting their role and contribution (tasks).	
C2.2.	A maintained and continuous commitment of all consortium partners and their individual involvement is one of the most crucial factors of sustainability; it may counterbalance a lack of institutional support (see C6.1).	Ensure continuous and well-balanced involvement of each partner throughout the project life in order to avoid the risks of partners dropping-out or becoming over-involved (for example, through regular steering committee meetings).	
		Organise participative management with clear decision-making procedures and regular reporting.	
C2.3.	A moderate turnover within the consortium partners' staff can maintain the dynamic of the project; a turnover that is too high can hinder it.	Demonstrate how the partners' capacities and resources contribute to the project purpose and ensure that there is a limited renewal of project team members in each partner institution (by introducing contractual provisions)	
C2.4.	International cooperation may stop without endangering the project sustainability.	Do not try to continue the cooperation after the end of the EU funding if it is not relevant.	
C2.5.	There may be opportunities to launch new international projects to maintain the cooperation after the project.	Promote the planning of new projects between consortium members, even if it is not sufficient to build a real sustainability.	
C2.6.	Respecting the others' values is particularly important: the lack of mutual consideration between the partners can hinder sustainability.	In your first project meeting, pay attention to discussing how cooperation in the project will take place (communication between meetings, time tables etc.). Make sure consortium members get to know each other better, this helps smooth cooperation.	

3. Effective management and leadership

Conclusions		Recommendations	Done
C3.1.	Effective management can favour the involvement of partners, fundraising and the capacity to anticipate sustainability issues. Experienced project managers can ensure this.	Be sure that there is at least one coordinator experienced in international projects in the consortium.	
C3.2.	Sustainability can be linked to the fact that the project leadership combines institutional influence and professional interest.	It is important to involve the most influential persons in the own and in the partner organisations as well as the most active ones.	
C3.3.	The lead project coordinator's capacity to develop transparency and confidence amongst the partners is important.	Foresee regular feedback to partners. Use information and communication technologies, but also face-to-face meetings.	
		Ensure accountability commitments between project coordinators.	
C3.4.	Importance of the lead project coordinator's ability to develop a quality process that matches European standards.	Project leaders should foresee quality assurance procedures.	
C3.5.	The lead project coordinator's ability to disseminate the results and to communicate on the project is important.	Be attentive to dissemination practices to the right public. Make an communication analysis on which the communication plan will be based.	
C3.6.	Importance of the lead project coordinator's ability to take into account contributions from external advisers (such as peers, public authorities…)	Involve external advisers in decision-making processes inside the project consortium (participation in a coordination committee) and schedule regular feedback to stakeholders by Internet, as well as appropriate dissemination of project information to selected officials or decision-makers, for example a newsletter .	

4. Active participation of target groups

Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C4.1. The help of target groups and end-users on the project activities can be useful.	Formal involvement of target groups and end-users in project activities through sector or professional associations or social partners.	
	Organise or create symbolic rewards to the most committed persons, for example a mention in the project newsletter.	

5. Capacity for securing adequate resources for continuation

Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C5.1. In most cases, the continued financing of project activities after EU funding has not been foreseen, even when only a part of the activities continue and need adequate resources. Securing continued financing is linked to institutional support (see below C6.1). Some projects have found interesting solutions by mixing different sources of financing: public, private and international.	Actively lobby your own organisation to secure the main resources and do your best to create an autonomous entity in charge of implementing the project.	
	Identify which local actors (private, public) could help you to finance the relevant project activities after the EU funding and try to obtain some kind of formal agreement for future support.	
	Make your partners lobby local actors in their countries for support to project activities after the EU funding has come to an end.	
C5.2. The sustainability of projects is linked to continued international cooperation where direct relations and exchanges are maintained.	Foresee and promote the various other (than EU support) opportunities to maintain the cooperation with your partners.	

Context-level factors

6. Institutional support

Conclusions		Recommendations	Done
C6.1.	An important factor for sustainability is if the project is supported by the hierarchies of the partner organisations because this is a precondition for later financial commitments (see C5.1 above)	Maintain the support of the hierarchy/ies by organising regular (not continuous) involvement of the hierarchies in the project life (in the steering committee for example).	
		Flag up the types of project activities that can benefit from support (material, financial and human) and obtain formal commitment regarding resource allocation.	

7. Public authority and Political support

Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C7.1. Political support and support by the authorities or authorised bodies is a key factor for the sustainability of project results. It is important to find the right level of support: local, regional, national or professional organisations.	Try to maintain support at the right level (see C3.6 and below).	
C7.2. Political support and support by the authorities or authorised or professional bodies can be favoured by direct links between the project team and them.	Do active lobbying at influential players in ministries, parliament, regional/local authorities and key education and training organisations (e.g. accreditation bodies, national umbrella organisations).	
	Pay attention to publicising the project in order to enhance added value for authorities and public institutions: e.g. project presentations, leaflets and newspaper interviews.	
C7.3. Integration in existing national and international networks and associations is important.	Facilitate contacts between consortium members and national and international networks throughout the life of the project and maintain them after the end of the EU project.	

8. Socio-economic support		
Conclusions	**Recommendations**	**Done**
C8.1. Depending on each project and context projects can be relevant to the local socio-economic communities around the project partners. The more a project corresponds to socio-economic needs, the more it will be able to obtain support from local actors.	If relevant for your project, try to obtain support from local (private or public) actors to ensure sustainability.	
	Identify cultural gaps or economic impediments to socio-economic support in order to facilitate active lobbying.	
C8.2. Integration in existing local and regional networks and associations is important.	Ensure contacts between consortium members and local and regional networks throughout the life of the project and maintain them after the end of the EU project.	