Result 1.3

Report on the results of all evaluations and quality assurance

Hanse-Parlament
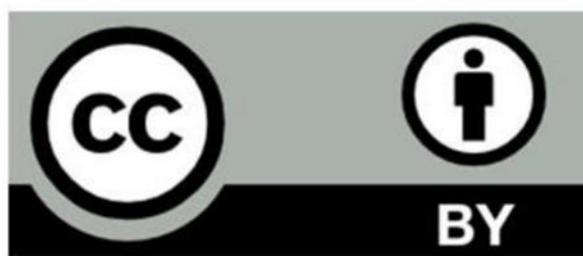
Promoting permeability through dual bachelor's programs with integrated initial and further vocational training (BA&VET)

Partner

Hanse-Parlament (Lead Partner), Germany

Satakunta University, Finland, Finland

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Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Estonia

Pomeranian Chamber of Handicrafts for SMEs, Poland

Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg, Germany

Language

English

Content

1. Project Summary and Introduction

The word region is defined as "an area, especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries"[1]. The Baltic Sea region (BSR) is particularly unique. While the Baltic Sea is the pivotal point defining much of the region's characteristics and challenges, the countries are also extremely different. Geographically, they are divided between Northern, Western and Central/Eastern Europe, historically, they have been shaped by the East-West divide after the second world war. Nevertheless, given their proximity to the Baltic Sea, they have much in common.

The EU has acknowledged this by issuing the very first macro-regional strategy, the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy in 2009. As most countries boarding the Baltic Sea were by then EU member states, it can well be considered the EU's inland sea. The challenges, such as saving the sea, i.e. ensuring clear water, rich and healthy wildlife as well as clean and safe shipping, and the opportunities for a prosperous region through cooperation measures to increase innovation, deepen the single market by improving transportation systems, connecting energy markets and fighting trans-border crime together, make the region very distinct from other parts of the world. Therefore, "BSR integration is best understood as the way that European integration has been translated into this region, further deepening and leveraging access to the rest of Europe and the markets that the EU provides"[2]

Over the past 25 years, this region has become a densely integrated, e.g. in the areas of trade, investment, labor mobility, transport and energy infrastructure as well as research collaboration. Furthermore, it demonstrates a broad landscape of robust cross-border organizations and collaborative efforts. Nevertheless, "companies do not look at the Baltic Sea Region as one integrated market in terms of their strategies. For most of them, the region remains a group of individually small markets within the EU, each with its different dynamics, rivals, and often even regulatory rules'"[3].

Keeping this in mind, the lack of comprehensive regional data collection is surprising. Therefore, as part of the Erasmus+ funded project "Promoting permeability through dual bachelor's programs with integrated initial and further vocational training" (BA&VET), an analysis of the region's demography, economy, and labour as well as education market has been conducted. The majority of the data is taken from the Eurostat database of the European Union. When needed additional sources, such as the OECD database have been consulted as well.

1.1 Project summary

Objectives: What do you want to achieve by implementing the project?

- Increasing permeability between vocational and higher education

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[1] Oxford Dictionary

[2] Skilling, David (2018). *The Baltic Sea Economies: Progress and Priorities*. Copenhagen: Baltic Development Forum, p.10.

[3] Ibid., p.11

- Recruiting universities for tasks of further education in climate and environmental protection

- Providing excellently qualified entrepreneurs, managers and skilled workers and reducing the shortage of skilled workers to meet the challenges in climate and environmental protection

- Strengthening the productivity of SMEs through innovation support and R&D projects

- Promoting cooperation between SMEs and colleges/universities

Implementation: What activities are you going to implement?

- Analyses economy, education and labour markets and qualification needs

- Creation of solution models for 4 project countries

- Development and implementation of Train the Trainer program

- Development and implementation of 2 dual three-stage Bachelor's degree programs and 2 further trainings in climate and environmental protection

- Implementation of R&D projects in SMEs

- Quality assurance for training measures and project implementation

- Dissemination, transfer of results and implementation consultation

Results: What project results and other outcomes do you expect your project to have?

- Result report of the analyses of the economy, education and labour markets and qualification needs

- Solution models for four project countries

- Complete train-the-trainer program

- Module manuals with all documentation for two dual three-stage Bachelor's programs in climate and environmental protection

- Two further education programs in climate and environmental protection

- R&D projects implemented in SMEs

- Quality manual and results reports

- Manual, result videos and broad regional transfer of results

1.2 Objectives, results and target groups

The main objectives of the project are as follows:

a) Increasing the permeability between vocational education and training and higher education and thus promoting the attractiveness of vocational education and training

b) Strengthening the recruitment of colleges/universities for the important tasks of continuing education in climate and environmental protection

c) Providing highly qualified entrepreneurs, managers and skilled workers who, in addition to good theoretical knowledge, also have practical competences, skills and professional experience in climate and environmental protection and reducing the shortage of skilled workers to cope with the very large tasks in the energy, climate and environmental sector.

d) Attracting entrepreneurs and executives who have all the skills to successfully run a company and perform high-quality tasks in climate and environmental protection

e) Strengthening the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises through knowledge and technology transfer, promotion of innovation and implementation of manageable R&D projects

f) promoting cooperation between SMEs and colleges/universities, strengthening colleges/universities to implement dual courses of study on climate and environmental protection, and promoting entrepreneurship in higher education.

In pursuit of these objectives, the following results will be achieved:

1. Analysis results on the economy, demography, education and labour markets as well as qualification needs in climate and environmental protection

2. Curriculum, Teaching materials, implementation report and evaluation concept and report for teacher training

3. Module handbooks with integrated continuing education, teaching materials, examination regulations, implementation reports as well as evaluation concept and reports for a three-stage dual Bachelor's degree program

- Business Administration and Sustainable Management for SMEs
- Management of Renewable Energy Technology in Buildings

4. Concept for promoting innovation by SMEs and evaluation concept and report

5. Concept for innovation promotion of SMEs and R&D projects carried out for SMEs

6. Concepts and report for the evaluation and quality assurance of qualifications and

R&D subsidies as well as project implementation, transfer of results, implementations and implementation consultations

The primary target groups of the project are:

a) school leavers who wish to combine vocational education and training with a bachelor's degree and thus receive excellent employment and professional career opportunities.

b) students who are qualified in higher education and university and at the same time in a company and who are highly welcome in SMEs as managers and professionals or as independent entrepreneurs.

c) owners, managers and specialists of SMEs who are qualified in continuing vocational training, acquire tailor-made competences and skills for high-quality activities in climate and environmental protection and achieve a recognized continuing vocational qualification.

d) SMEs that attract suitably qualified young entrepreneurs, managers and specialists, receive innovation funding and carry out R&D projects together with colleges/ universities.

The project addresses the following secondary target groups (beneficiaries):

a) colleges and universities which, in order to expand their educational opportunities in climate and environmental protection, receive all the documents and materials for two new dual bachelor's degree programs in order to meet the labour market needs and the conditions of SMEs in particular.

b) chambers and other vocational training institutions which attract strong young people to vocational training, receive curricula for continuing vocational training modules for the qualification of SMEs and their staff, and cooperate intensively with col-leges/universities in teaching and innovation promotion.

c) teachers, advisers and lecturers from chambers, other VET providers and colleges/universities who are qualified in Train the Trainer programs to provide high-quality further training, to carry out dual study courses in cooperation with companies as well as innovation promotion and R&D projects for SMEs at a high-quality level.

1.3 About the results of all evaluations and quality assurance

At the beginning of the project, a concept and quality plans for the quality assurance and evaluation of the project implementation of the project results were prepared and discussed and agreed with all project partners (see Result 1.2 Quality manual).

On the basis of this concept, the quality assurance and evaluation measures were carried out throughout the project duration. Result 1.3 "Report on the results of all evaluations and quality assurance" includes in a summary the results of quality assurance and evaluations.

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2. Results of quality assurance and evaluations

2.1 Methods and goals of evaluation

Numerous evaluation methods and standards have been established on an international level. The comparison of applied methods shows that concerning the validity evaluation criteria, they play a significant role (cf. among others Widmer, Th., Evaluation: Ein systematisches Handbuch, Wiesbaden, 2009).

Depending on which criteria certain priority is assigned to, the evaluation results turn out correspondingly.

The same significance has pragmatic direction. Therefore, the question: which goals have to be reached with the evaluation?

2.11 Goals

As a rule, the evaluation has the following goals:

1. It has to provide objective knowledge about the progress (quantity and quality) of processes.

2. It serves to control such processes and helps to capture the strong and the weak points. Therefore, it is an instrument of quality assurance.

3. It serves legitimization. In other words, a successful evaluation is evidence of the competence of the person responsible for the process being evaluated.

4. Transparency, in order to make a dialogue possible.

In order to achieve these goals, the evaluation was performed in a process-related and summative manner: process-related (also formative, development-related) in order to evaluate the quality of the project progress and if necessary, to make changes. The summative evaluation or evaluation of results serves the evaluation of the specified objectives within the framework of the project, final evaluation of impact and efficiency of the project lecturers management, of cooperation and transfer.

2.12 Methods

Ordinarily, it is reasonable to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative instruments for evaluations: "If one wants to ensure the availability of statements concerning relevant program conditions and impacts through the framework of mutually reinforcing evidence so the multiple methodic access providers, in general, a more comprehensive and informative picture than a mono methodic approach" (Brandtstädter, Jochen (1990): Development during the course of life. Approaches and problems of lifespan development psychology. In: Mayer, Karl Ulrich (Hg.): Life courses and social transformation (special issue of the Cologne magazine for sociology and social psychology. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.).

Whereas for the analysis of process-related data (program control, execution etc.) first of all qualitative survey methods are suitable, for the verification of achievement of the goals, of impact and causal assessment quantitative survey and evaluation methods have to be implemented (Stockmann, Reinhard: Was ist eine gute Evaluation. Saarbrücken: Centrum für Evaluation, 2002. (CEval-Arbeitspapiere; 9).

Within the framework of evaluations, the most frequently used methods are:

- Secondary analysis of available materials

- Guided interviews

- Standardized surveys or partly standardized surveys

- Case studies

Which methods are selected and implemented in particular depends on the central questions of evaluation discussed herein, therefore which goals and tasks are set, who performs the evaluation and which research paradigm must be the basis for this?

Within the framework of the present evaluation the mixed model – consolidation model – is implemented. According to the general description it means that first of all quantitative survey/research is performed. The obtained data material is subsequently evaluated quantitatively, then it is followed by qualitative research method which is aimed at the consolidation of achieved results. So, it provides material for the interpretation of expected and unexpected effects and illustrates the results of quantitative studies on the basis of case examples.

Therefore, for the evaluation of the BA&VET project standardized as well as partly standardized surveys were used in the form of written questionnaires during planned and conducted partner workshops as well as an online survey. Complementary results were achieved after that with the help of guided interviews.

The secondary analysis of available materials was also included in the broadest sense, i. e. for the registration of framework data of the project the control instrument "Activity planning" and "Project application" were evaluated in order to capture project goals, terms and tasks of the project consortium and to take them into account during the implementation of separate evaluation steps and assessments.

2.2 Evaluation in the BA&VET project

In the BA&VET project, the evaluation has two purposes: to assess the developed and/or tested measures and to evaluate the implementation of the project, as described in the following.

2.21 Evaluation of the developed educational measures and other results

The quality assurance for all the educational measures was performed according to EQAVET. All the training was implemented according to the work-based learning principles.

The target groups of the educational measures were owners, managers and professionals of SMEs and students as well as lecturers and consultants who conduct the qualification programs.

To fully meet the requirements of the target groups right from the start, they were involved in the development of educational measures through expert discussions, practical tests and participation in workshops. In addition, Baltic Sea Academy and its members (24 universities from 9 countries) and Hanse Parlament and its members (50 chambers of crafts, industry and commerce from 13 countries) as well as SMEs shared experiences, came up with up-to-date topics and regional conditions.

In order to take into account different regional/national conditions, the educational measures were tested in different countries and evaluated by using written surveys of participants, interviews with participants, lecturers and SMEs as well as by accompanying observations. The evaluation of the training measures which took place during the entire implementation process, from preparation to evaluation phase, was carried out:

- Train the Trainer program by the Partner 01 Hanse-Parlament.
- Dual study program "Business Administration & Sustainable Management of SMEs" by the Partners 07 Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg and 04 Politechnika Gdanska.
- Further vocational training program "Commercial Specialist in Sustainable Management" by the Partners 07 Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg and 06 Pomeranian Chamber of Handicrafts for SMEs.
- Dual study program "Engineering in Management of Renewable Energy Technology in Buildings" by the Partners 02 Satakunta University and 03 Tallinn University of Technology.
- Further vocational training program "Energy Service Manager/Energy Consultant" by the Partners 02 Satakunta University and 05 Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- Innovation promotion & R&D projects by the Partner 01 Hanse-Parlament.

To point out, the evaluation of educational measures developed during this project is not the subject of the present report but the evaluation of the project implementation, management by the lead partner, cooperation in consortium as well as with transfer recipients. Concepts and results of the evaluation and quality assurance of all educational measures are presented in the respective educational measures, see:

- Result 2.5 Qualification of teachers, counsellors and university lecturers of all project partners
- Result 3.4 Implementation and evaluation course "Business Administration & Sustainable Management" and qualified students
- Result 3.6 Evaluation concept and reports training program "Sustainable Management" and prospects of further implementing
- Result 4.2 Evaluation, reports and qualified students of the degree program "Engineering in Management of Renewable Energy Technology in Buildings"
- Result 4.5 Evaluation concept and reports training program "Energy Service Manager/Energy Consultant" and prospects of further implementing

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- Result 5.2 Evaluation concept and report for innovation support and R&D projects carried out in SMEs

The results are published on the project website https://ba-vet.eu and can be viewed there and downloaded free of charge.

2.22 Evaluation of the management, cooperation and transfer

The project works with a strong centralized management. The goals, content related tasks, cost requirements and schedule were agreed in detail with each partner and set in an action plan, communication and dissemination plan, which are constantly monitored and updated by the lead partner's project team with many years of experience. The action and dissemination plan as well as the billing were transparent for all partners and were regularly discussed in workshops.

The lead partner monitored the project process monthly. In case of divergence from the targets or deadlines the corresponding partners were immediately informed, and solutions worked out together. The results of the control and any necessary updates to the planning were discussed and agreed with all partners every six months.

For further evaluation tasks of the project implementation including transfer activities, an external office was engaged, that as a neutral institution also carried out surveys of the project participants and transfer recipients.

2.3 Evaluation results of the management, cooperation and transfer

2.31 Data sources

For the evaluation of the project implementation the following data sources were used:

1. Project application of the lead partner
2. Activity Plan
3. Written surveys of participants of every workshop and event
4. Online survey of all project partners
5. Detailed interviews with all project partners as well as separate transfer recipients (sample)
6. Intellectual outputs developed during the project

Interim results of the evaluation were continuously included in the implementation of further work, so that a continuous process of learning and improvement was achieved during the project implementation. The overall results are listed below.

2.32 Evaluation criteria

Concerning the evaluation criteria which must be used in relation to the evaluated processes, the opinions in scientific literature diverge strongly. Often it is recommended to use checklists which contain up to 100 and more criteria according to which the processes can be evaluated.

To ensure the practicability of the evaluation but nevertheless to assess the results thoroughly, the evaluation of the project implementation concentrated on four criteria.

1. The quality and the efficiency of management

2. Communication and cooperation in the project consortium

3. The involvement of transfer recipients and transfer activities

4. The expected benefits of products developed within the framework of the project

According to international experiences with evaluation which are available first of all in the English-speaking countries a holistic (integral) evaluation of processes should have the priority.

During the evaluation of the registered data the focus was on the following criteria:

- How do project partners assess the cooperation in consortium and the project management of the lead partner?
- Have the expectations of the project partners been met?
- Did the management meet the requirements?
- How do transfer recipients assess their involvement and the transfer activities?
- What benefits do the developed products have for the project partners and the transfer recipients?

2.33 Evaluation results of the Transnational Project Partner Meetings

A standardized survey was conducted during the transnational project partner meetings. As a survey instrument, a questionnaire was created with statements that can be accepted or rejected by the respondents with a higher or lower consent according to the given multi-level response scale. This method made it possible to form the first impression, a sketch, a tendency to satisfaction and the opinions of the respondents. The individual answers were later discussed in detail in individual interviews.

Four workshops with the personal presence of all project partners and experts were planned and realized:

- on 19. – 20.03.2023 in Tallinn, Estonia
- on 11. – 12.10.2023 in Hamburg, Germany
- on 04. – 05.09.2024 in Riga. Latvia
- on 17. – 18.09.2025 in Gdansk, Poland

Online meeting with all partners was held on:

- 19 April 2023
- 01 June 2023
- 18 March 2024
- 12 June 2024
- 22 January 2025
- 16 May 2025

Accordingly, an evaluation of the four project meetings took place.

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The workshops usually lasted ¾ or the full day and were always accompanied by an additional joint evening event to promote communication and exchange of experience. The dates for all workshops were set before the start of the project in consultation with all partners.

The lead partner invited all partners to the workshops six weeks in advance in writing with a detailed agenda and sent out prepared project materials to be discussed together. Moreover, the lead partner prepared a detailed presentation for each workshop, which was then sent to all partners together with the workshop minutes after the meeting.

In addition to the workshops with all partners also workshops with 2 – 3 partners were organized, where individual questions to implementations were discussed.

The written evaluation of the workshop included 20 topics related to the preparation and the conduct of the workshop, the communication in consortium and the management of the lead partner. For each topic the participants could choose between five answer categories

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagreel
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Participants also had the opportunity to make suggestions for cooperation within the consortium, the implementation of the project and the organization of the workshop. However, this possibility was rarely used.

Below, an example of a written workshop feedback form is attached. The workshop feedback forms were identical for all workshops to record possible changes in the statements during the project lifetime.

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WORKSHOP FEEDBACK FORM OF THE PROJECT "BA&VET"

Please indicate by ticking the scale that applies to your opinion on the following aspects of the project workshop.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The Lead Partner (LP) sent the information on the workshop in due time					

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The information on the workshop: agenda, venue, hotel, etc. is satisfactory					
All project partners were involved in planning the workshop, e. g. setting the date, time, etc.					
The communication with the LP is reliable and supportive					
In general, communication with each other (between the partners) is smoothly					
The topics on the agenda were transparent					
There was devoted enough time for every topic					
All partners were involved in making decisions and action during the workshop					
Everyone who has wished, got a chance to speak, discuss, share own opinion					
The planned total time for the workshop was satisfactory					
In the framework of the workshop was enough time planned to communicate with each other					
All in all, the working atmosphere was good during the workshop					
The premises, lighting, technique, etc. of the workshop were satisfactory					
The time management like punctuality, effectiveness, etc. of the workshop is good					

After the workshop I am well informed about the common further steps in the project (appointments, meetings, etc.)					
After the workshop I know very well what my individual tasks in the future are					
All questions I had before the workshop were clarified during the workshop					
Carrying out the workshop together with other events for reasons of time and cost saving and experience exchange with others from different countries is particularly positive aspect					
The organisation of hotel, joint lunch/dinner and catering is good					
It is good to receive information about other projects, acquisitions and funding possibilities during the workshop					

Do you have any suggestions to improve and strengthen cooperation in the consortium, project implementation, and organization of the project workshops?

....

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Thank you!

Almost 90 % of all participants strongly agree with all topics of the survey and 10 % agree.

The participants rated the following statements as particularly positive, a large proportion of whom were rated as "strongly agree":

- Timely and comprehensive information by the lead partner

- Involvement of all the partners in discussions, consultations and during decision-making
- Very good working atmosphere
- Good communication with the lead partner and other partners
- Satisfactory spatial and technical conditions
- Good organization and conduct
- Very good information about other current projects and planned new projects

The following statements were largely valued with "consent":

- All project partners were involved in planning the workshop
- The planned total time for the workshop was satisfactory
- All questions I had before the workshop were clarified during the workshop

Over the course of time, the evaluation results have changed only slightly. The management, organization and implementation of the project, information, and communication as well as the execution of workshops are evaluated very positively and show only marginal starting points for improvements.

2.34 Online survey of project partners

In this case, it is a partially standardized online survey. The online questionnaire is a newer, more modern method than paper, telephone or face-to-face surveys. The positive aspect of this form of written questionnaire is that it is quick and easy to implement, e.g., respondents can decide for themselves when to complete the questionnaire and there is no time pressure to answer questions. With online surveys, time and costs are saved and immediate availability of data is possible. For example, the free internet tool Survey Monkey, in which the questionnaire was completed, automatically summarizes the answers to each question and displays them graphically.

The written online survey contains 26 questions on project implementation and the use and dissemination of the results.

1. In your opinion, do the tasks developed and implemented so far follow the project's objectives?
   All persons determine they match the project objectives.

2. Taking into consideration the tasks performed so far, please indicate your expectations in regard to meeting the project's deadlines?
   80 % stated that the deadlines were met in full, 20 % assumed slight delays.

3. What were the biggest challenges for you when implementing the project?
   In each case, 56 % stated 'no challenges at all' and in each case 11 % stated `time schedule for tasks', 'delays' and 'problems with individual tasks'.

4. In your opinion, is the implementation of the BA&VET project an asset to both - beneficiaries of the project (for example SMEs, chambers) and project partners as it allows for the improvement/development of new skills and knowledge?

The most partners completely satisfied this question; answered „A great deal" or "A lot".

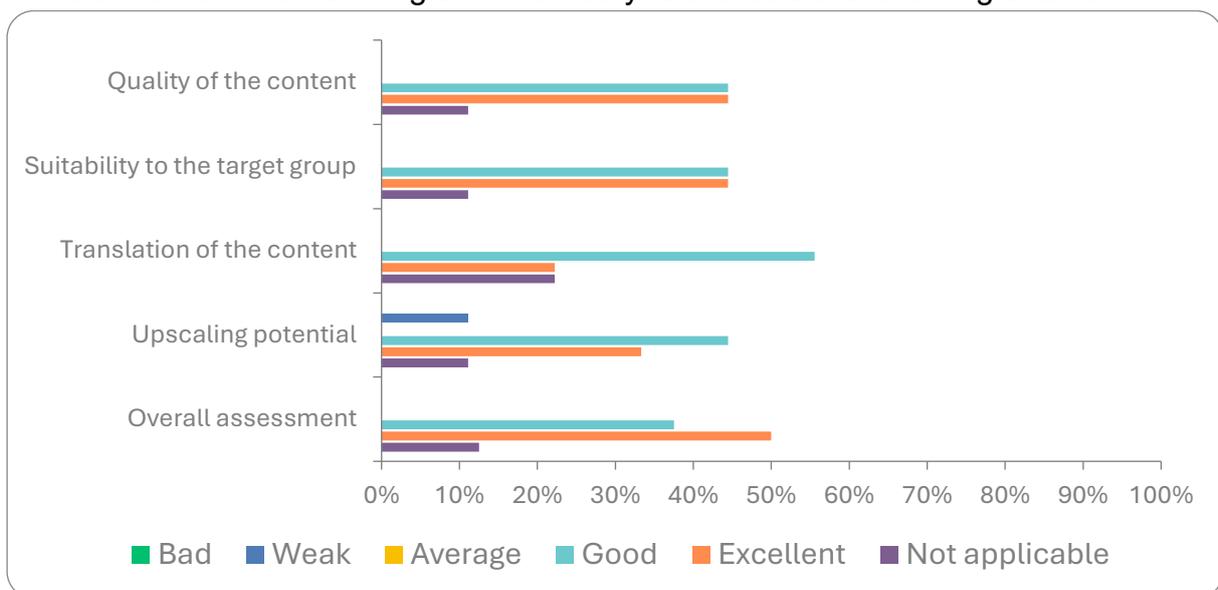5. The international composition of the partnership is an enrichment for the whole project approach.
   Most of the people responded strongly agree, two persons agree.

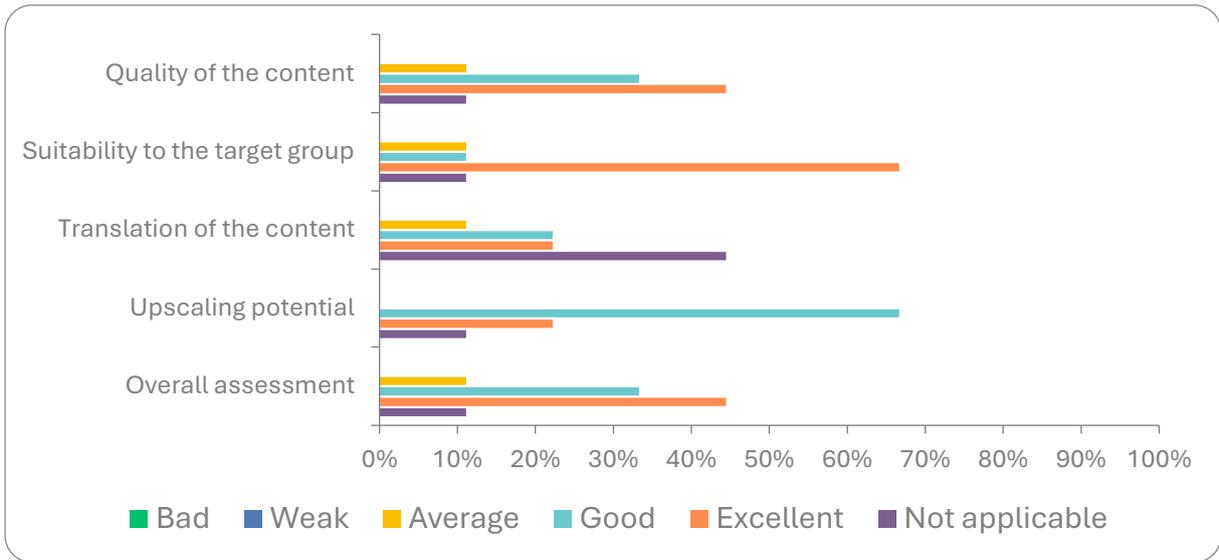6. How do you benefit from the international cooperation within the project?
   - International cooperation is highly appreciated by most partners; the transnational project approach is described as without alternative.
   - New experiences are viewed particularly positively, and the following points are also highlighted: New contacts and projects results are useful. It is very important experience for the countries in which the project has been implemented.

7. The partners were asked to rate the individual outputs of the project in terms of various criteria. This led to the following conclusions.
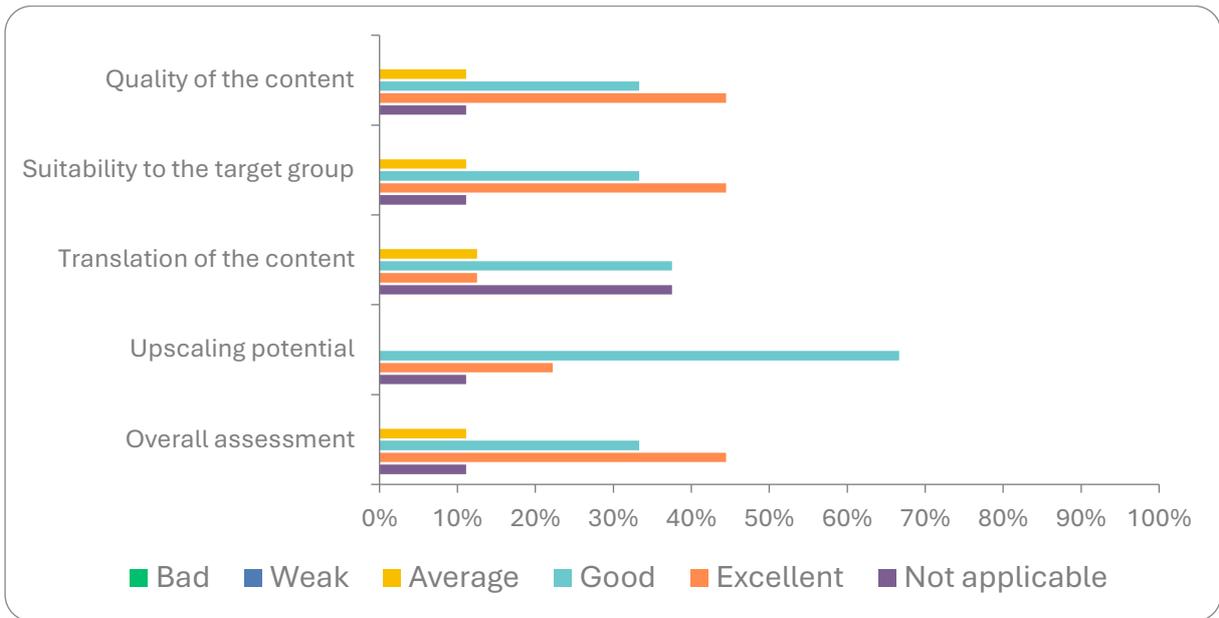
Result: Train the Trainer Program - how do you evaluate the following criteria?

Result: Dual Study Course Sustainable Management - how do you evaluate the following criteria?

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Result: Further Trainings Sustainable Management - how do you evaluate the following criteria?
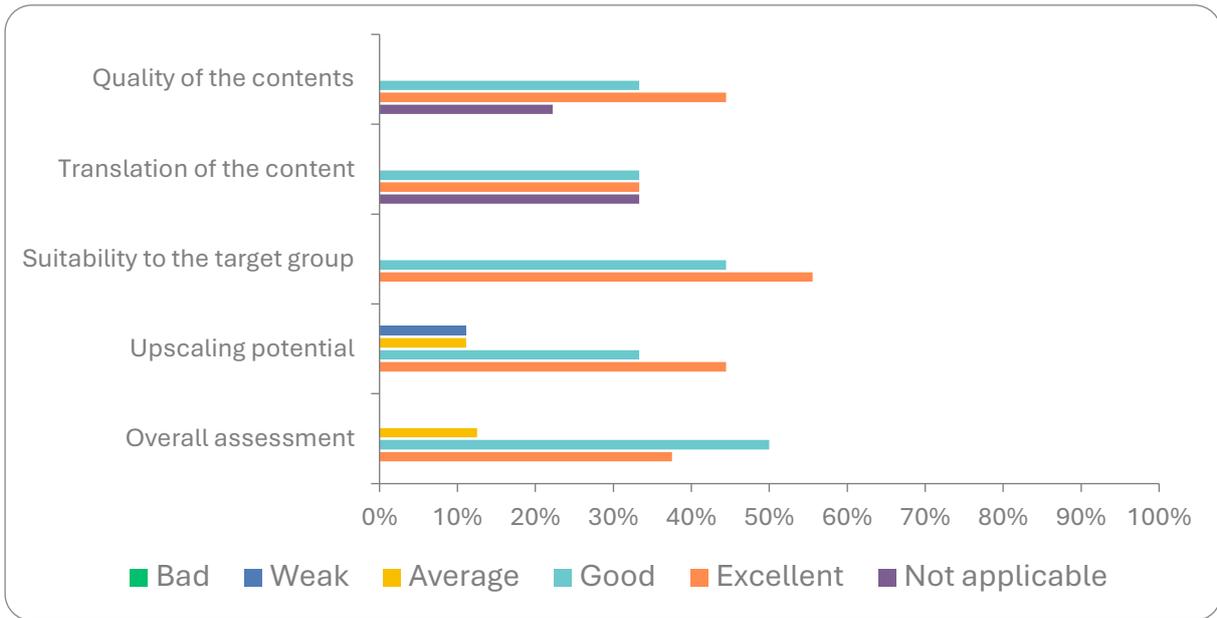

Result: Dual Study Course Energy & Climate - how do you evaluate the following criteria?

	BAD	WEAK	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT	NOT APPLICABLE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Quality of the content	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 3	66.67% 6	0.00% 0	9	4.67
Suitability to the target group	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	44.44% 4	55.56% 5	0.00% 0	9	4.56
Translation of the content	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	44.44% 4	22.22% 2	33.33% 3	9	4.89
Upscaling potential	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	44.44% 4	44.44% 4	0.00% 0	9	4.33
Overall assessment	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	44.44% 4	55.56% 5	0.00% 0	9	4.56

Result: Further Trainings Energy & Climate - how do you evaluate the following criteria?

	BAD	WEAK	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT	NOT APPLICABLE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Quality of the content	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	22.22% 2	66.67% 6	11.11% 1	9	4.89
Suitability to the target group	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 3	55.56% 5	11.11% 1	9	4.78
Translation of the content	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 4	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	8	4.88
Upscaling potential	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	33.33% 3	44.44% 4	11.11% 1	9	4.56
Overall assessment	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 3	55.56% 5	11.11% 1	9	4.78

Result: R&D Promotion - how do you evaluate the following criteria?

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Legend: Bad, Weak, Average, Good, Excellent, Not applicable

8. On the scale 1 to 4 (where 1 means poor quality and 4 – high quality), how would you rate the quality of all project measures developed so far?
The majority of respondents indicate high quality (4 points), with only one partner rating the quality at 3 points.

9. In your opinion, can the developed project products be used successfully by you and other interested parties after the project ends?

With the exception of one person, all are convinced that the developed project products will be used successfully after the end of the project.

10. To what extent can the project results (in their entirety or partly) improve the services offered by your institution?
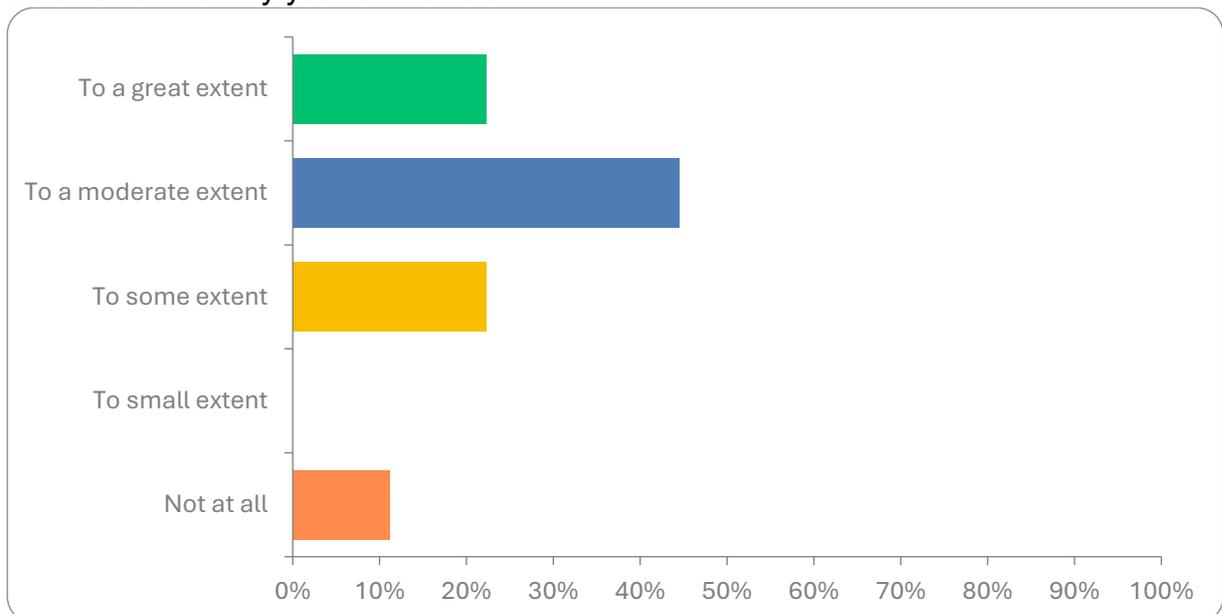

11. Has all necessary support been provided within the project to enable you/your institution to use the project results independently?

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All partners state that they have received all necessary support within the framework of the project so that they/their organisation can use the project results independently.

12. All partners rate the management tools developed by the lead partner (activity plan, dissemination plans and project accounting) as very important and extremely effective.

13. How do you assess the assistance and support by the Lead Partner?
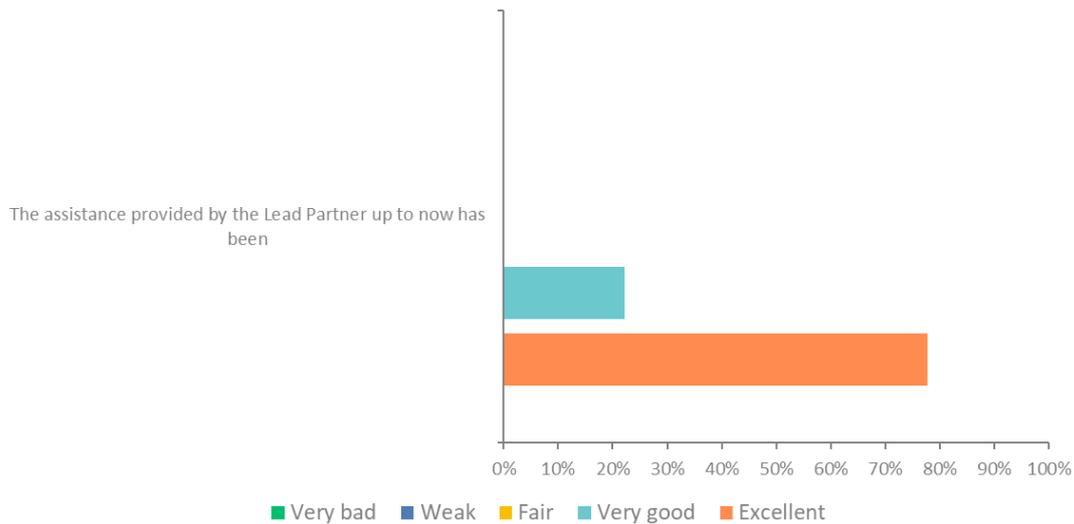
14. How do you rate the communication with the Lead Partner? (Multiple answers possible)
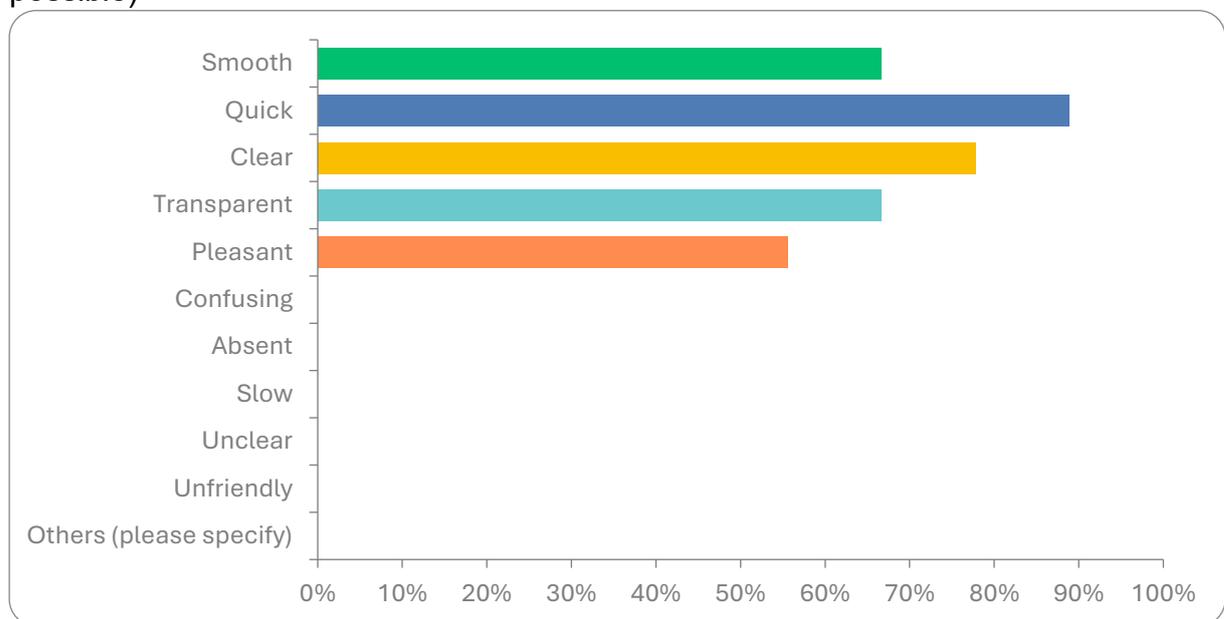
The communication between the project partners is rated similarly positively.

15. The partners see no or only very few bureaucratic hurdles in the realisation of the project. The reporting and accounting system in the project is also described as simple.

The evaluation of the project implementation and results by the project partners is very positive overall. Only a few suggestions for improvement were made, which are listed in chapter 2.37 Summary of evaluation results and recommendations.

2.35 External evaluation of the project results[4]

Results of work package 1

The results of WP1 are a highly professional and strategically important foundation for the entire BA&VET project. WP1 provides a robust quality assurance architecture that is fully aligned with the project's ambition to deliver transferable, implementable and widely disseminated outcomes across the Baltic Sea Region. The combination of Result 1.2 ("Quality manual") and Result 1.3 ("Report on the results of all evaluations and quality assurance") demonstrates that the consortium has approached evaluation not as a formal compliance exercise, but as a continuous management and improvement tool embedded throughout the project lifecycle.

Result 1.2 is a strong guiding framework for both educational quality and process quality. It clearly defines goals, methods, responsibilities and evaluation areas, covering the full scope of project activities-Train the Trainer provision, further vocational training courses, Bachelor's degree programmes and the project's management and transfer processes. From an evaluation viewpoint, this breadth is a major strength because it ensures coherence across very different output types and partner contexts. The manual also demonstrates methodological soundness by articulating evaluation goals and tools in a structured manner, thereby enabling comparable evidence collection and continuous monitoring across countries and institutions.

Result 1.3 provides a consolidated and transparent overview of how quality assurance and evaluation were implemented in practice and what conclusions can be drawn from the evidence collected. The report is particularly valuable because it explicitly addresses not only the quality of developed measures and results, but also the quality of cooperation, management and transfer. This reflects a mature understanding that impact depends as much on governance and stakeholder engagement as on curricula or teaching materials. The inclusion of multiple data sources (e.g., partner surveys, external evaluation elements and interviews) strengthens credibility and triangulation. From an external evaluator's perspective, the structured summary of results and recommendations is well suited to support future replication and scaling of the BA&VET approach.

WP1 makes an important contribution to the project's excellent impact and dissemination performance. By establishing clear quality standards and evaluation routines early on, the consortium created a strong basis for producing outputs that are fit for transfer and adoption by universities, chambers and VET providers. This quality-first approach is evident in the consistently high level of documentation and implementation readiness across the project results and has clearly supported the project's broad dissemination activities and the strong stakeholder acceptance

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[4] Done by Artur Malikov, Hamburg

reported in later work packages. Overall, WP1 can be evaluated as an exemplary quality assurance and evaluation framework that significantly strengthened effectiveness, credibility, and the long-term exploitation potential of the BA&VET project.

Results of work package 2

The results of WP2 represent a highly coherent and practice-oriented foundation for the overall BA&VET approach and can be assessed as being of very good quality and usability. From an external evaluation perspective, WP2 succeeds particularly well in linking evidence-based analysis with directly applicable implementation support, which is essential for permeability solutions between vocational and higher education in different national contexts. The results are clearly structured, professionally presented, and follow a consistent project logic. The results begin with a robust diagnosis of framework conditions and skills needs and translate these findings into concrete, transferable capacity-building measures for partners and associated stakeholders.

Result 2.1 (analyses of economy, demography, education and labour markets in the Baltic Sea Region) provides a comprehensive and well-documented baseline. The use of Eurostat as the main data source strengthens reliability and comparability across countries, while the structured presentation (demography, macroeconomic conditions, labour market development and education markets) supports strategic interpretation. The report offers a valuable reference for both project partners and external users, as it contextualises the need for action and underpins the relevance of the project objectives with transparent evidence.

Result 2.2 (analyses of skills needs in the green economy) complements the macro-level findings with a focused, sector-oriented competence perspective. The report convincingly demonstrates where qualification gaps exist and translates them into education recommendations and competence profiles that are directly meaningful for SMEs and training providers. Its strong relevance lies in connecting environmental sector requirements with concrete qualification needs, thereby creating a clear bridge between labour market demand and curriculum development.

Result 2.3 (national and legal conditions and alternative solution models) is assessed as a particularly important enabling output. It addresses one of the main barriers for cross-border transfer and sustainability: the diversity of legal frameworks and VET/HE structures. By providing country-specific analyses and alternative solution models, it supports realistic implementation pathways and reduces risks related to regulatory incompatibility. This result substantially increases the transferability of the BA&VET outputs beyond the partner institutions.

Finally, Result 2.4 (Train the Trainer concept, curriculum and teaching materials) and Result 2.5 (qualification of teachers, counsellors and university lecturers) provide a strong capacity-building package for multipliers. The materials are well designed for practical use, and the qualification approach ensures that the developed educational

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measures can be delivered with high and comparable quality across institutions. Overall, WP2 delivers excellent, mutually reinforcing results that not only meet but clearly exceed typical expectations for Erasmus+ cooperation partnerships in higher education, especially in terms of transfer potential, clarity of documentation, and immediate applicability for partners, SMEs and further stakeholders.

Results of work package 3

The results delivered under WP 3 constitute a highly mature, coherent and practice-oriented package for implementing permeability between vocational education and higher education through a three-cycle dual Bachelor pathway in the field of "Business Administration & Sustainable Management of SMEs", complemented by a recognised continuing vocational training route. From an external evaluator's perspective, WP3 demonstrates excellent alignment with the project's objectives and target groups and provides a rare level of completeness: the outputs do not stop at conceptual descriptions, but include the essential implementation instruments (curricula, module handbook, examination regulations, evaluation concepts and implementation reports) needed for real adoption by higher education institutions, chambers and other VET providers.

A particular strength is the systematic architecture created by Results 3.1 and 3.2. Result 3.1 ("Solution concepts for the integration of vocational training and further vocational training") provides a clear and transferable framework for how permeability can be operationalised across educational subsystems, including recognition pathways and the practical use of already achieved learning outcomes. This is a decisive enabling factor for transfer across countries and institutional settings, because permeability mechanisms must function under different legal and organisational conditions. Result 3.2 ("Examination regulations 'Sustainable Management' with recognised continuing education qualification") is assessed as highly valuable for ensuring credibility, comparability and long-term sustainability. By establishing examination rules and referencing international recognition aspects, the project strengthens trust among stakeholders and significantly increases the likelihood that the continuing training route will be accepted by SMEs and utilised by learners seeking formalised qualifications.

The central academic output, Result 3.3 ("Concept, curricula and module handbook for the three-cycle dual study program"), stands out for its professional level of documentation and its strong didactic and structural clarity. The module handbook provides detailed guidance on learning outcomes, sequencing, and the balance between interdisciplinary, core, elective and practice-integrating modules. From an evaluation perspective, this level of specification is essential for successful replication: institutions aiming to implement similar dual programs typically fail due to insufficient operational documentation, whereas this handbook offers a comprehensive blueprint. Particularly noteworthy is the explicit treatment of transition and crediting between the VET program and the Bachelor program, which directly supports the project's key objective of increased permeability and provides a concrete mechanism for recognition of prior learning and modular progression.

The implementation-oriented results (3.4, 3.6) provide strong evidence of feasibility and quality assurance. Result 3.4 ("Implementation and evaluation course Business Administration & Sustainable Management and qualified students") documents the practical testing of core modules with clear attention to admission, organisation, participant profiles and student support. The inclusion of aspects such as data privacy compliance strengthens the professional standard and demonstrates that implementation was managed responsibly and in line with institutional requirements. Result 3.6 ("Evaluation concept and reports Training program Sustainable Management and prospects of further implementing") is particularly important from a sustainability standpoint: it shows that evaluation has not been treated as a formal requirement, but as a structured instrument for continuous improvement and for planning continuation beyond the project period. This strengthens credibility for decision-makers who consider adoption of the program and supports the long-term integration into partner portfolios.

Finally, result 3.5 ("Concept, curricula and teaching materials Training program Commercial Specialist in Sustainable Management") complements the dual Bachelor pathway with a labour-market-relevant continuing vocational training route that is especially suitable for SME owners, managers and professionals with limited time resources. The existence of both routes-an academic degree program and a formally structured continuing training program-reflects an excellent understanding of the heterogeneous needs of the project's primary target groups and increases the reach and practical impact of WP3.

WP3 is delivering strong, comprehensive and transferable outputs that are fully consistent with the BA&VET project logic. The results combine strategic permeability concepts with operational documentation, tested implementation elements and robust evaluation instruments. In terms of usability, clarity and sustainability, WP3 clearly exceeds typical expectations for Erasmus+ cooperation partnerships and provides a solid basis for large-scale dissemination and adoption by higher education institutions, chambers and further stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond.

Results of work package 4

The outputs delivered under WP4 can be evaluated as coherent, professionally documented and exceptionally relevant to current and future labour market needs in the energy and climate protection sector. From an external evaluator's perspective, WP4 succeeds particularly well in combining a complete, practice-oriented dual higher education pathway with a formally recognised continuing vocational training route. This integrated approach directly supports the project's overarching objectives: increasing permeability between VET and higher education, strengthening universities' role in continuing education, and providing SMEs with highly qualified professionals who can translate climate and energy goals into concrete operational improvements.

Result 4.1 ("Concept, curricula and module handbook for the three-cycle dual study program 'Engineering in Management of Renewable Energy Technology in Buildings'") provides a strong and transferable blueprint for a dual Bachelor programme. The

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documentation is clear, structured and sufficiently detailed for implementation by other higher education institutions. In particular, the module handbook demonstrates a well-balanced design that combines technical competences (renewable energy technology in buildings) with management-oriented capabilities, thereby addressing a key challenge in SMEs: the need for staff who can both understand engineering solutions and manage implementation processes. The explicit description of programme goals, target groups, didactic concept and the share of practical components ensures that the course is genuinely work-based rather than only "practice-related" in theory. From a transfer perspective, the structure is a major asset because it enables institutions to adapt the programme to national conditions while retaining the core competence framework.

Result 4.2 ("Evaluation, reports and qualified students Renewable Energy Technology in Buildings") strengthens credibility by providing evidence of testing, implementation experience and a structured evaluation concept. The focus on tested modules and subjects, testing procedures and conclusions provides a convincing proof of feasibility. Importantly, WP4 does not treat evaluation as a formal add-on, but as an integral component of quality assurance and continuous improvement. This is fully consistent with the project's overall quality approach and significantly increases the likelihood that the study programme can be sustained and scaled after the project's end.

The continuing vocational training route is equally strong. Result 4.4 ("Concept, curricula and teaching materials 'Energy Consultant' training program") is assessed as highly relevant and well grounded in existing qualifications and labour market demands. The curriculum is logically structured, introduces core concepts (renewable energy, energy services, renewable energy technology in buildings) and positions the training in relation to existing programmes in the sector. This benchmarking increases transparency for learners and employers and supports acceptance of the qualification. Moreover, the training content clearly targets practical application, which is essential for SME staff with immediate operational responsibilities.

Result 4.3 ("Examination regulations 'Energy Service Manager/Energy Consultant' with recognised continuing education qualification") is a key enabling deliverable for sustainability and recognition. By providing examination rules and clarifying areas of application, the project supports comparability, trust and potential cross-institutional uptake. In external evaluation terms, this result is particularly valuable because it addresses a common weakness of project-based training developments-namely, the lack of formalised assessment and certification frameworks that would allow the programmes to survive beyond a pilot phase.

Finally, Result 4.5 ("Evaluation concept and reports Energy Consultant and prospects of further implementing") provides a strong quality assurance package for the continuing training programme, including structured feedback from participants and trainers, strategic conclusions and prospects for future use. This combination of evaluation reporting and forward-looking implementation perspective demonstrates maturity and readiness for further roll-out. Overall, WP4 delivers an exceptionally complete set of outputs that cover concept development, implementation, evaluation and formal recognition. In terms of relevance, usability and transferability, these results

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can be assessed as exceeding typical expectations for Erasmus+ cooperation partnerships and provide a robust foundation for sustained capacity building in SMEs and education institutions in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond.

Results of work package 5

The results delivered under Work Package 5 can be assessed from an external evaluator's perspective as highly relevant, well-structured and strong in terms of practical impact for SMEs. WP5 provides a convincing operational bridge between education and innovation. It does not only develop qualification pathways, but also demonstrates how dual study programmes and further training can be systematically used as vehicles for technology transfer, innovation promotion and manageable R&D projects in companies. This is fully consistent with the project's core rationale that permeability and work-based learning should generate direct value creation for SMEs while simultaneously strengthening regional competitiveness and the green transition.

Result 5.1 ("A coordinated approach to promoting innovation by SMEs") offers a clear and transferable concept for innovation promotion in conjunction with both continuing vocational training and dual Bachelor programmes. The strength of this output lies in its structured process orientation: SME needs are addressed in a coordinated way, and the innovation promotion approach is embedded into the learning pathways rather than treated as a separate add-on. In evaluation terms, this is a decisive success factor, because it increases stakeholder commitment and ensures that innovation activities are closely linked to real operational challenges. The concept provides a sound basis for replication in different institutional environments, as it describes how universities, chambers and SMEs can cooperate in an organised and efficient manner and how innovation support can be aligned with educational delivery and supervision structures.

Result 5.2 ("Evaluation concept and report for innovation support and R&D projects carried out in SMEs") provides particularly strong evidence of implementation and feasibility. The report not only presents an evaluation framework, but also includes concrete summaries of R&D projects implemented across partner countries and sectors. This practical evidence significantly enhances credibility: it demonstrates that the innovation promotion concept can be translated into real company-based projects that generate tangible outcomes and learning effects. A major strength is the documented scale of engagement: while the project application planned innovation funding for 50 SMEs, the project succeeded in involving 111 SMEs. This indicates very high acceptance by enterprises and strong mobilisation capacity within the consortium and its networks. Furthermore, the project handled the realistic constraints of SME cooperation in a professional way, acknowledging confidentiality requirements while maintaining documentation and oversight through the lead partner. This demonstrates responsible project governance and an understanding of business realities, which is essential for sustained cooperation beyond a funded project period.

From an external evaluation perspective, WP5 stands out for integrating quality assurance with implementation. The inclusion of an evaluation concept, an evaluation report and an evaluation questionnaire strengthens transparency and enables future

users to replicate the approach with comparable standards. The reported examples across countries illustrate that dual students can apply scientific methods to practical business challenges and that universities can act as key innovation service providers for SMEs, thereby strengthening knowledge transfer and organisational learning. Overall, WP5 delivers outputs of high quality and excellent relevance, combining a robust conceptual model with demonstrable real-world uptake and measurable reach. In terms of transfer potential and direct benefits for SMEs, the results can be assessed as exceeding typical expectations for Erasmus+ cooperation projects and provide a strong foundation for further scaling and regional dissemination.

Results of work package 6

The results delivered under Work Package 6 are exceptionally strong in terms of dissemination quality, transferability and sustainability. WP6 demonstrates that the consortium has not treated dissemination as a formal requirement, but as a strategic, well managed and impact-driven work stream. The combination of a comprehensive handbook, a detailed dissemination and implementation consulting report, and a binding continuation plan with financing elements provides a robust "end-to-end" exploitation package that significantly increases the likelihood of long-term uptake of BA&VET results in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond.

Result 6.1 ("Handbook with all project results") is a particularly valuable consolidation output. Its scope and structure make it highly user-friendly for external stakeholders: it provides a complete overview of the project logic, the developed solution concepts, the educational programmes, the examination regulations, the evaluation and quality assurance approach, and the innovation promotion and R&D elements. From an evaluation standpoint, this handbook clearly exceeds typical project deliverables, because it enables replication without requiring extensive additional interpretation or partner-specific knowledge. The handbook functions as an integrated implementation manual, allowing higher education institutions, chambers and VET providers to access the full set of methodological and operational materials in a coherent format. It also strengthens transparency for policy makers and administrations by presenting outcomes in a well-organised and professionally documented manner.

Result 6.2 ("Report dissemination activities and implementation consulting") provides strong evidence of systematic dissemination planning, monitoring and targeted outreach. The report demonstrates that dissemination activities were aligned with clearly defined objectives, target groups and indicators, and that a broad mix of channels and formats was used (events, websites, newsletters, social media, partner publications, umbrella organisations and policy-related outreach). Particularly noteworthy is the explicit inclusion of result transfer and implementation consulting, which represents a higher level of dissemination maturity: instead of merely informing stakeholders, the project actively supported external users in understanding and applying the results. The reported further development and utilisation of project results by eight COVE structures is an excellent indicator of impact and institutional anchoring, showing that the results have already entered wider European cooperation contexts and can continue to evolve beyond the consortium.

Result 6.3 ("Binding action plan with financing plan for the continuation of activities after the end of the project") is assessed as a highly credible sustainability instrument. Too often, projects present general intentions for continuation; WP6, in contrast, provides a binding action plan combined with a financing perspective. This significantly strengthens confidence among stakeholders and potential adopters, as it signals that continuation is planned in operational terms and not left to informal goodwill. The existence of such a plan is also a strong indicator that the consortium has developed ownership structures and realistic pathways for the institutionalisation of activities, including the ongoing provision of training offers, further implementation support and continued dissemination.

WP6 demonstrates excellent impact orientation and provides a comprehensive exploitation package that ensures visibility, accessibility and long-term use of the BA&VET results. The deliverables show high professionalism, clear stakeholder focus and a strong commitment to transfer at regional, national and international levels. From an external evaluator's perspective, the dissemination approach and the achieved reach can be assessed as exemplary for Erasmus+ cooperation partnerships, as WP6 not only documents communication measures but convincingly supports the sustained uptake and scaling of the project's innovative permeability model.

2.36 Interviews with project partners[5]

The interview related to key questions is also called a guideline-based interview that means, a set of questions is prespecified by the interviewer before the interview. However, this set of questions should give a guideline through the interview and not kind a strict order, so the interview is more of a fluent, relaxed conversation by freely and openly answering questions. This method makes it possible to act less strictly than with other survey methods, so he / she conducts the interview considering the conversation flow, the set key questions or certain topics not considering the sequence of the questions, for example, or omitting some questions at all.

From March to May 2025 an external expert conducted interviews with the BA&VET project partners. These interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes each. The interviews followed a generic set of questions but allowed also for free conversation to hear the opinions of the partners. The interviews focused on the following topics:

- The quality and usefulness of the project outputs

- The involvement of and communication among the project partners

- The design and implementation of the project workshops

- The dissemination of project results

- The administration processes of the project.

1. Was the project important for you? Why did you take part in it?

For all the partners, the project was very important because it has taken up a very big challenge for the vocational education and the economy in general as well as for small

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[5] Done by Artur Malikov, Hamburg

and medium-sized enterprises in a future-oriented manner. The main motives for the partners to participate were:

- The essential improvement and enhancement of vocational training.
- The combination of practical and theoretical qualifications in higher education.
- Development of tailor-made professional further education programmes and dual bachelor's degree courses for SMEs.

2. Various results were developed in the project. How do you assess them?

a) Result: Concept, curriculum and teaching materials for a Train the Trainer program and corresponding foundations and analysis

The 'Train the Trainer' program is highlighted as a central component of the project, as it trained multipliers and lecturers within the consortium to integrate the best practices into curricula and training programs. The event, which took place in Hamburg in 2023, was particularly noteworthy, as it facilitated close collaboration and the involvement of various stakeholders, including representatives from SMEs. It supported targeted knowledge transfer by trainers, provided opportunities for reflecting on teaching methods, and promoted exchanges between universities and chambers of commerce, which improved teaching methodologies. The program is available online free of charge. It is supplemented by extensive analysis, that build the foundation of the project.

"I also consider the 'Train the Trainer' program very important, as it trained educators and consultants within our project consortium."

"My evaluation of this result is also high. I particularly rate this outcome highly because a variety of stakeholders participated in the 'Train the Trainer' program."

"The participation was helpful. The chamber was represented by a trainer who also served as a multiplier."

"It is crucial to have trained personnel as educators who can pass on knowledge effectively."

"I found it very helpful to reflect on my own teaching at university and question how it translates into practice on the construction site.

b) Results: Concept, curricula and module handbook for three-cycle dual study programs "Business Administration & Sustainable Management of SMEs" and "Engineering in Management of Renewable Energy Technology in Buildings"

The results are evaluated by all partners as central results with outstanding importance, because the module handbooks contain all the necessary information about the courses of studies. The most popular programs are those that address topics related to green economy, i.e. energy/resource efficiency and renewable energy.

All project partners are very happy with the quality of the educational programs developed in BA&VET: The curricula and concepts are of high quality and relevant to the partners, their students and SMEs. Nonetheless, the programs need to be adapted to the national/regional requirements, but many partners emphasized, that the BA&VET project offers great flexibility to make these amendments.

With regard to adaptation to different national conditions, reference was made to Result 2.3 Report on results on national and legal conditions in the partner countries and alternative solution models. This result was rated as very helpful by all partners and is considered an indispensable basis for all further work.

The results were very important for us because it shows us how to proceed when we want to implement dual studies in our field. So how to make the background, how to divide the classes and practical things. We did a lot of research among students and companies and teachers as well. So that was important to find out about the real needs that are and which of the models are better for the Polish conditions in general.

The degree programmes are all very good and of high quality, which is also a result of the Bologna criteria. Adaptations to the respective country specifics are of course necessary.

Every programme is of very high quality. And although they stem from different countries with different legal frameworks, they are very easy to adapt to our national needs. This flexibility is fantastic!

The topics are very important, green economy, resource efficiency, entrepreneurship - the programmes are very relevant for all companies!

The dual degree programmes are certainly most important to our university.

c) Results: Concept, curricula, teaching materials and examination regulations Training programs "Sustainable Management" and "Energy Consultant"

All project partners agree that continuing vocational training must be greatly intensified in the future. There are particularly large skills gaps in the green economy. Accordingly, all project partners welcome the two continuing training programs developed in the BA&VET project. One partner mentioned that the volume of the programs is too high for further education purposes – SME staff is often short in time – further education programs need to be adapted to that, e.g. through a modern structure ("micro-learning").

All partners particularly emphasize the fact that both continuing education programs lead to an official qualification. Such continuing education qualifications at EQF Level 4 open up new career paths and enhance the attractiveness of vocational education and training.

Green skills are the most important.

New and very valuable for us are the programmes on renewable energy.

The quality of the curricula and concepts is very good throughout.

The structure, curricula and teaching materials are very good and useful.

For further education we need programmes that are shorter or that are split into small packages that the participants can use and integrate into their work schedules. We call this Micro-learning. Time is extremely scarce in most SMEs; therefore, we need to adapt the training programmes to the reality.

d) Result: A coordinated approach to promoting innovation by SMEs and R&D projects carried out in SMEs

When universities and companies cooperate with SMEs within the framework of dual courses of study, this results in particular intensive networking, direct technology and knowledge transfer and excellent opportunities for tailor-made research and development work, which is carried out in the company by students supervised by professors and lecturers.

Universities are the key innovative service providers giving small and medium-sized enterprises the necessary tools and guidance, company specific and reliable, and offering them monetary benefits.

The R&D projects presented demonstrate the strong potential of dual study programs to drive innovation and organizational learning in SMEs. Across industries, common findings include the positive impact of teamwork, communication, and leadership on efficiency and employee satisfaction.

Each F&E project illustrates how dual students apply scientific methods to real business problems — exploring leadership, teamwork, efficiency, and innovation within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The projects provide valuable insights into how work-based learning fosters innovation, employee development, and sustainable business practices.

Digitalization, diversity, and intergenerational collaboration emerge as key drivers for sustainable business transformation. The BA&VET initiative thus highlights how integrating academic and vocational education can foster innovation capacity, strengthen regional economies, and prepare future professionals for complex, rapidly evolving work environments.

This means that most of our theses are following the process presented and tested during the project BA&VET. Out of these theses the processes of 76 Bachelor's and 6 Master's theses can be counted to be directly in accordance with the process presented during the BA&VET-project.

3. Can you use the project results in your future work (e.g. curricula, etc.)?

All project partners are planning to use training/study programmes in the future or are already using these results. Some partners are implementing entire study programmes

of further training programmes developed in BA&VET, others are using parts of the curricula or parts of the materials for their work.

Yes, we can and will use the training programmes and materials for further trainings.

Yes, we will use the study programmes and modules to integrate them into our portfolio. We have implemented some of the study programmes already and we will continue to do so.

The dual degree programmes are interesting. We will use them, as we have to adapt them to our legislation.

Yes, we want to continue offering the study programmes we are developing. We will also continue to use materials and modules from other educational programmes in our educational offers.

The project results are very valuable for our future work.

4. How do you evaluate the communication between the project partners with a grade of 1 (very good) to 5 (unsatisfactory)?
The partners have rated communication and cooperation as "very good" or "good".

The exchange between the partners was very good. The exchange was based on the partners' own initiative both via e-mails and in personal meetings.

a) Did you - as a partner - communicate with other partners?

All partners have answered this question with "yes" and they have specified the significance of international exchange and cooperation among diverse institutions.

It depends on the product developments. A relatively large amount goes through the partner Hanse-Parlament. But there is also a lot of communication between the individual project partners, especially when it comes to partial products, for example between the Universities and us, there was a lively exchange.

Yes, since some of the training programmes were designed for mutual communication. This worked very well.

b) Was the communication of the lead partner fast, clear and satisfactory overall?

All the partners emphasized over and over the good cooperation and excellent communication.

Always very effective and very useful. And we send relatively many questions, and the lead partner is always very patient.

I am satisfied with the communication. The Lead Partner is really quick and tells us what to do.

Very clear and fast.

c) What could be done to improve communication?

All partners have been very satisfied with the area's "communication" and "cooperation", two partners stating a same suggestion for improvement.

It works wonderfully.

Communication in the project faced minor challenges due to different preferences among partners regarding digital tools like Google Drive or OneDrive, which stemmed from national and institutional differences but were managed well.

In an ideal world, there would be a single system like OneDrive or Google Drive that all partners could use. In reality, however, some partners struggle with specific systems. It is only a minor challenge that needs to be handled.

We suggested some improvements mainly related to the use of digital tools for document creation and scheduling. These changes have already been implemented.

5. Semi-annual project workshops were conducted either in person or online to discuss tasks and project execution.

a) Was this sufficient in your opinion? Were the time intervals between meetings appropriate?

The meeting intervals were considered suitable and well-structured, with institutional meetings focusing on training implementation. The intervals were well chosen due to continuous interim communication and flexible organization, allowing partners to stay updated through meeting records and individual consultations in case of scheduling conflicts. The organization was rated excellently, as schedules and dates were clearly communicated during the kick-off meeting and adjusted flexibly when necessary, ensuring a comprehensive overview of all meetings.

In my experience, the intervals between meetings were appropriate, and each meeting had a clear objective. It made sense that these meetings took place within institutions.

The gaps between meetings were appropriate since there was continuous interim communication. Thanks to modern online communication, a quick and efficient exchange was always possible.

The organization was really good, as all schedules and dates were explained in the first kick-off meeting.

It was very helpful to have an overall overview of the online and in-person meetings in advance. Overall, the organization was excellent.

"Yes, they were absolutely sufficient."

b) The workshops were mostly half-day; do you see any need for changes? Should they be longer or shorter?

The duration of the project meetings and workshops was considered appropriate. There were no unresolved questions, as any need for clarification was addressed promptly. Overall, there was no need for changes.

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The meetings and workshops had an appropriate duration. Standard workshops usually lasted a full day or a maximum of half a day. The online workshops were scheduled for about four hours.

I found a longer session necessary only for the Train-the-Trainer workshop, as short breaks between learning phases are important.

From my perspective, there were no unresolved questions. If further clarification was needed, it was addressed promptly.

If a broad topic requires us to produce something, a half-day is sufficient and does not need to be longer. Half a day would be the maximum, and sometimes we need even less time.

No need for changes.

c) Is there sufficient time for communication and consultation on individual points during the project workshops?

The discussion time in the project was generally sufficient, with online follow-ups mainly covering organizational aspects such as workshop planning. Overall, the time was considered appropriate. Challenges arose due to different perspectives.

In general, there was enough time for discussions. Sometimes online follow-ups were necessary, but these mainly concerned organizational matters.

It was okay, but sometimes we needed more time for certain topics, which meant cutting time from other activities.

In some cases, more time would have been helpful, but overall, it was fine.

d) Are all partners sufficiently involved in the work during the project workshops?

The intercultural and international aspect of the project was seen as an advantage despite occasional challenges, as the diversity of perspectives from different countries introduced valuable new approaches. This benefit became particularly evident after in-person workshops. The workshops were interactive, featuring group work, brainstorming, and problem-solving activities, ensuring all partners were included. Everyone had equal opportunities to participate, supported by preparatory tasks introducing partners to one another so that no one was left out.

The intercultural or international aspect can sometimes be challenging but is seen as an advantage. The variety of perspectives and working methods from different countries bring valuable new approaches.

Yes, everyone was involved, and no one was excluded. Often, there were preparatory tasks to introduce our own partners.

During discussion sessions, everyone had the same chance to contribute.

Absolutely, everyone had the opportunity.

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e) Online workshops were also conducted. How do you evaluate online meetings? Can online meetings replace face-to-face meetings? Do you have any suggestions for improving online meetings?

Online meetings provide fewer opportunities for informal exchanges than face-to-face meetings, where breaks and conversations often foster valuable ideas and closer collaboration, even for future projects. However, online meetings are efficient for monitoring tasks and deadlines, while face-to-face meetings strengthen interpersonal connections that are irreplaceable in long-term projects. The balance of one to two in-person meetings per year alongside regular online workshops was considered successful, supported by meeting minutes. Improvements such as group work and tools like Padlet's enhanced the effectiveness of online sessions. Face-to-face meetings significantly strengthened collaboration through informal interactions.

Online meetings do not offer the same 'soft' communication time as face-to-face meetings. During a workshop, breaks allow participants to have informal conversations that can generate valuable information and ideas.

The online meetings were good and could partially replace in-person events, particularly due to lower workload and time commitments. However, personal contact in a long-term project cannot be fully replaced.

Both virtual and in-person workshops worked well. Online workshops can be organized more frequently, but face-to-face meetings are important for strengthening project collaboration.

The online workshops were helpful, but the interpersonal exchange that took place during in-person meetings, such as over dinner or breakfast, was particularly valuable.

f) How do you assess the workshops overall (atmosphere, time, communication, participation of all project partners, structure, etc.)?

The atmosphere was very positive, characterized by mutual respect despite cultural differences, supported by icebreaker sessions at the beginning. Technology and locations were appropriate, and the inclusion of site visits elevated communication to a new level, enriching collaboration and knowledge exchange. Overall, the workshops were rated highly.

In my opinion, the face-to-face workshops were conducted efficiently, combining information-sharing, group work, presentations of results, and discussions.

I found the atmosphere to be very good.

There was always a good mix, everyone was involved, and the technology and locations were suitable for the conferences.

g) Do you have any suggestions for improving the workshops?

The workshops were positively received, and no immediate improvements were suggested. However, it was proposed that each workshop should include an outstanding business example. While this had already been implemented in some

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cases, consistently incorporating such examples could enrich the workshops and provide new impulses.

No suggestions.

Nothing for now.

Perhaps we could invite an outstanding business example for all workshops. We have done this occasionally but not consistently.

I think it would be beneficial to involve a business in every workshop – just a small suggestion.

6.Concept and curricula for the projects were developed by some project-partners, sent to all partners for comments and were intensively discussed on workshops.

a) Is this procedure expedient / effective?

The approach of collecting ideas and suggestions by all project partners, project developing by one or by a few partners and final consultation, conducted by all parties involved, was rated unreservedly positively and was particularly well appreciated.

I think this is a very good approach and I think it should be done like this!

b) Were you able to sufficiently contribute your ideas to the development work?

Partners had ample opportunities to actively contribute to the project, as regular updates allowed ideas and comments to be integrated at every stage without the need for direct intervention. Some partners who naturally provided suggestions and development ideas effectively utilised this capability, enhancing collaboration.

Yes, we could. There were always plenty of updates, so we could provide input at almost every stage of development.

Yes, absolutely.

Yes, we are the type of partner that usually contributes our own comments and development ideas. We are capable of doing so.

c) How could all partners be better and more intensively involved in the development work?

The division of tasks and information flow in the project were well organized, ensuring that each partner knew their focus areas and communication remained efficient without unnecessary interference in others' domains. The collaboration was seen as successful, but it was suggested that partners be more involved in curriculum development.

In principle, it was sufficient since everyone knew their focus areas. The task distribution and information flow were well organized.

No, I think we worked well.

One possible approach could be to actively involve other partners in the process. For example, each partner could take responsibility for specific parts of the curriculum, allowing everyone to contribute their expertise.

7. Dissemination of Project Results

Dissemination of project results is very important. Below are a few questions regarding the dissemination of project outcomes.

a) Have you conducted dissemination activities yourself?

The project results were disseminated through various channels such as newsletters, social media, traditional media, and blogs, including platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Measuring success is difficult; however, interest in the best practice catalogue and increased awareness of industry-relevant topics indicate a positive impact. Some partners relied on traditional media such as TV discussions, while others exceeded expectations with monthly blog posts. The perspective from higher education institutions proved particularly valuable, encouraging businesses to reflect on future developments and initiate changes.

The project results were presented on various platforms, including newsletters and social media. In the future, we plan to integrate additional channels like Instagram and TikTok.

Success is hard to measure, but we reported on the project's progress in in our magazine. After publication, we received enquiries via phone or email.

We did much of the dissemination ourselves, as we are a rather traditional organization. Instead of social media, we focused on traditional media like television.

We are very active in disseminating information across all our projects. For instance, we run a blog where we regularly, about once a month, write about our project.

The success of the project is difficult to measure, but it has encouraged discussion among stakeholders about important topics. The perspective from higher education institutions provided an additional motivational factor for businesses, making it particularly valuable.

b) Do you believe that third parties (institutions that were not project partners) in your region/country will use the project results in the future? Please provide an estimate and briefly justify your response.

The project results have been utilised by regional partners, particularly for training, where they have been incorporated into educational content. The materials are freely available and have also been provided to third parties, with the hope of broader adoption by decision-makers. The impact is more significant in active project countries, while in Germany, networks such as working groups between trade and universities facilitate knowledge exchange. However, success depends on the availability of resources for practical implementation.

I can well imagine that the project results will also be used by third parties.

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Yes, I believe the materials are freely accessible. I am confident that vocational trainers will benefit from these materials.

The success of the project results has a greater impact in the active countries, especially since language barriers do not play a role there. In Germany, on the other hand, knowledge exchange is being initiated. However, the success of the project results depends on whether the necessary resources are made available to implement the findings.

8. A few final questions on project management, particularly the coordination and execution of the project.

a) How do you rate coordination and management by the lead partner? Scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (very good).

Overall result: 5

All partners were consistently informed about the progress of the project and its direction. The lead partner was easily accessible through various channels, provided precise instructions, reminded participants of deadlines, and fostered active collaboration, which facilitated project management.

"The online conferences organized by the Hanse Parliament, as well as the internal communication, were very well structured."

b) What was particularly good? What was particularly bad?

The project brought together highly competent individuals and was smoothly and professionally led by the lead partner. The active involvement of the lead partner in discussions, through their own comments, was especially appreciated. Communication was consistently effective, with regular meetings, calls, and emails that covered not only project-specific topics but also insights into parallel projects, enhancing overall understanding and exchange.

They are truly experienced leaders, and everything went smoothly.

I particularly appreciate that the lead partner regularly contributed their own comments to discussions, which led to stimulating exchanges. In my opinion, that was excellent.

Communication with the lead partner was always very good. There were regular meetings, phone calls, and emails where not only project-specific topics were discussed, but also information about parallel projects was shared.

c) How do you assess the activity planning as a central management tool?

The activity plan was considered extremely useful and necessary, as it was provided during the kick-off meeting and updated when changes occurred. Based on biannual meetings, it set clear timeframes for each activity, ensuring that all partners knew exactly when tasks needed to be completed. This allowed for pre-evaluation of topics and focused discussions during meetings. Although strict deadlines occasionally caused frustration, they facilitated efficient processing and prevented unnecessarily long debates.

Very useful.

This is a really good tool because we already have the activity plan at the kick-off meeting, and it is updated accordingly when changes occur.

The activity plan, based on the biannual meetings, was a very helpful instrument for setting clear timeframes for each activity.

This ensured that all partners knew exactly when tasks had to be completed, allowing for pre-evaluation of topics and active discussions during meetings.

d) Do you have any suggestions for improving project management?

No further suggestions.

e) How do you assess the bureaucratic effort involved in implementation, reporting, and project accounting?

The bureaucratic effort was not perceived as particularly burdensome.

The effort was manageable as past experiences helped ensure everything ran smoothly.

f) Which tasks were particularly bureaucratic and time-consuming?

There were no major complaints.

Nothing particularly noteworthy.

g) How could bureaucratic efforts be further reduced?

One challenge is EU regulations on working hours, which limit daily working time to eight hours. In Finland, more flexible working hours (e.g. 7 or 10 hours) are common, making weekend work difficult to account for. Adjusting these regulations would be beneficial. Additionally, further digitalization of time tracking was suggested to improve efficiency in allocating hours to project activities.

It is not a major burden, but an improvement would be if we did not have to use the online reporting system but could instead use our own system.

Another issue is the EU's working time regulations. In Finland, we can work flexibly, but EU regulations limit working hours to a maximum of eight hours per day. This is a challenge caused by EU rules rather than the partners themselves. Adjusting the working time regulations would be helpful.

h) Did the lead partner relieve you of administrative tasks? Or what support would you like from the lead partner?

The lead partner provided clear instructions and standardized forms for time tracking and reporting, which were uniform across all partners and simplified the process. This system, also used in other projects with the same lead partner, proved efficient and effective.

I received all the information I needed, including the last one this morning. The communication in the project was very good.

We received very clear instructions.

The lead partner provided us with forms for time tracking and task reporting, which were uniform for all partners, simplifying the process.

The system is similar in almost every project, as we work with the same lead partner in other projects, using the same system. It works very well.

9.How do you generally assess the project?

a) What was particularly good about the project and its implementation?

The opportunity to engage in international exchanges was considered particularly valuable, as differences provided new perspectives. Furthermore, collaborating with micro-enterprises, as opposed to large corporations, broadened the horizon. The results are highly relevant for the member companies and can be implemented in their respective fields. The cooperation was based on trust and proved to be highly effective.

For us as a chamber, international engagement was particularly beneficial as it allowed us to see how things work in other countries and to recognize the differences.

It was practical that we worked with micro-enterprises in the craft sector, while others were involved with large corporations. This helped to broaden our perspective.

The collaboration was based on trust.

b) What was less favorable and should be improved?

For future projects, it is recommended to allocate interpreters for the main languages, as the exclusive use of English – especially among Polish partners – created language barriers that complicated communication. Another suggested improvement is the establishment of a separate budget for communication. However, overall, there were only a few points for improvement.

A recommendation for future implementation would be to plan for interpreters for the main languages next time. There were challenges, particularly with our Polish partners, where the language barrier was noticeable.

A minor note: This project did not have a separate budget for communication. It would have been easier if one had been in place.

c) If you had to rate the project on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (very good), what score would you give?

All participants rated the project with five points, except for one individual who was awarded four points. This participant would have preferred a more detailed structure to optimize collaboration. The lower rating resulted from significant differences between partners, as universities operated on a different level compared to small businesses, making adaptation more challenging.

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Overall, I would rate the project a 4. The lower rating is due to the fact that a more detailed approach might have been beneficial. University-based partners worked on a different level compared to small businesses, which may have made adaptation more difficult.

10. Do you have any further assessments, evaluations, comments, suggestions, etc., regarding the project and its implementation?

The concepts for material evaluation and feedback collection, particularly the electronic recording with translation into various languages, were highlighted as very useful. This facilitated feedback collection even from partners with limited English proficiency.

There are not many aspects that need improvement, but we can further develop the concepts for material evaluation and feedback collection from this project in other ongoing projects.

We are very satisfied with the project and its outcomes, and we will further develop the materials and use them in future work.

Many thanks for this great project!

2.37 Interviews with transfer partners[6]

In separate projects with a limited number of project partners, the Hanse Parliament develop support measures for SMEs, e.g. vocational training, further training or consulting, promoting tools, Best Practices ect. After testing and evaluation, the developed and successfully tested products are transferred to 50 chambers and associations as well as to 20 colleges/universities from 11 countries, which were involved as transfer recipients and implementation partners in the BA&VET project from the very beginning. Right from the start, the associated partners were involved on a project-related basis; they gathered all the information, submitted their proposals and offers, which were continuously included in further work. The transfer partners as well as the transfer activities have already been discussed in written evaluations and also in interviews with the project partners.

The interviews with transfer partners that have received results and products of several projects of the Hanse-Parlament in recent years lasted between 20 and 30 minutes each. The interviews followed a generic set of questions but allowed also for free conversation to hear the opinions of the interview partners. The results of the interviews can be summarised as follows.

How would you evaluate the approach of the centralized development and decentralized dissemination and use?

The applied development and transfer model is very positively evaluated by the transfer recipients. The discussion partners especially emphasize that they are thoroughly involved in the performance of the project, they do not contain products which are strange to them but contain results in which development they have

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[6] Done by Artur Malikov, Hamburg

cooperated themselves and correspond to their requirements and regional conditions as much as possible.

a) How do you assess this approach of central development and decentralized distribution and use?

I think it's very important, but throughout the whole process we have already been in contact with our local organizations and companies, so they know what we have been doing and they can utilize all the materials. What we do, when models are ready – we integrate this model into our universities.

I think this is a good approach. It´s of course important that the partners are effectively involved in the project to achieve immediate results. I don't believe that results implementation may work by merely transferring them.

Maybe it is advisable to introduce additional subsequent transfer implementation projects, following proper implementation of a project, with specific assistance/guidance. Unfortunately, implementations and testing are no longer included in many support programmes, which, as I believe, is essential.

In Poland, there is no chamber membership requirement for companies. By dissemination of results and products, we are also able to reach out to new and innovative companies, thus shaping our own profile and reviving interest in chamber membership.

I think it´s a very good approach. Thanks to chambers, the lead partner can meet the needs of e.g. SMEs, or it may target regions more effectively. At the same time, very good cooperation between the project partners and chambers/universities allows for effective dissemination of the project results.

b) Has this approach proved successful?

It is successful because we know what our companies need. We are not transferring the whole packages but the parts that fit the different companies. And that is a good way.

c) Do you feel adequately informed about the projects and the outcomes, even if you are not involved as a project partner?

Yes. It all depends on you. If you are active for yourself. It´s available and you can get the information's you need.

Yes. We have access to very large documentation and sources. Both cover the online platforms containing all relevant results, as well as the readiness of the lead partner to put online all relevant content. They are pretty good at it.

Absolutely. We're regularly updated on the projects and their current state, while the Chamber receives information on upcoming events with our participation. The information is adequate.

d) Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

No. You cannot do much better. Even if you have the desire to implement something yourself, the lead partner would be ready to make and help you. It's just - as I said in the beginning - not a self-runner.

We have no suggestions for improvement. The cooperation works perfectly and it's always a pleasure to participate in projects and events. All partners are very satisfied.

I have no suggestions for improvement or what could be done better. Even if we wish to implement something on our own, the lead partner is immediately ready to establish contacts and to assist us.

As a member of the Hanse-Parlament, you will receive the completed products for promotion of SMEs.

The interviewed transfer partners describe very vividly and lively how they use the transferred products and give examples thereto. It is remarkable that the transferred results are equally used by chambers as well as high schools and universities. As a specific challenge, it is emphasized that considering huge development gaps between the countries of the Baltic Sea Region the transfer recipients have undertaken targeted adjustments and modifications in order to correspond to the needs of their target groups and to achieve as much benefit as necessary during further utilization.

a) Do you look at these results/products and evaluate those for your own work?

Yes. We look at them and utilize them according to the needs of our companies.

I also utilize the materials in my education courses. So, I can also do that one. Both for companies and individuals. So, the products are very useful in that sense. Those are the kind of materials that is not normally traced by Finnish companies.

b) Are these project results interesting for your own work?

Yes. We´re monitoring all topics that are interesting to us.

Thanks to a very close cooperation with chambers and universities, many valuable solutions for results´ transfer to our companies or even to individual persons can be obtained in the course of further training or during consultations.

c) For what purposes of your own work do you use the results?

Mostly, we take the results into account at branch meetings, where we can better reach our target group.

Educational courses, which we obtain from projects, are offered by the Chamber in our education establishments and they are also transferred to further education centers that are using them at their disposal.

d) What improvements do you propose for the entire transfer process?

It depends on how wide you want to spread. Because now we have mainly concentrated on our own area and of course through the university network we can spread into whole Finland, but I would say that our main task was to spread it in our local regional network. That is the best way to promote things for us.

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We are regularly provided with up-to-date information from the Hanse Parlament about projects and products – this is a great success. My desire is to react faster and to initiate the implementation process.

Do you get all the help and support that you need for your own use of results/products?

Once the opinions of the transfer partners have been obtained, the transfer and implementation process are perfectly organized, both for the chambers and for the universities. Transfer recipients receive all information, documents, instructions for use and help. They expressly stress that written and electronic transmission alone is not sufficient in any way; only personal exchange at conferences and workshops as well as individual advice are of decisive importance for the actual permanent use of the transferred products. Cooperation is an important part of many projects. In their assessments and evaluations, the interview partners refer to their many years of experience in various projects.

a) Do you feel well informed?

Absolutely. We regularly receive information about the project and the status of the projects. The chamber also receives information about upcoming events in which we can also participate. The information is absolutely sufficient.

Yes, this works very well, the lead partner handles this issue very professionally.

The support works very well. Hanse Parlament is always ready to support us. The only sad thing is that the Chamber rarely receives feedback from companies that benefit from the results.

b) Are the documents obtained sufficient? Are there any missing?

Yes. They are sufficient. In case you need some further clarification, you can always contact the lead partner. But I think the documentation is good. And I also like all the so-called research books, which indicate the situation, for example with vocational education in different Baltic Sea countries, because you can learn from others.

Yes, very extensive and adequate.

The data provided is sufficient. The Hanse Parlament always provides us with assistance and offers.

c) Do you want comprehensive individual consultations for your own use and realization of the received promotion measures?

We get along very well. Personal consultations are of immense importance to the transfer partners.

Cooperation is very strong. For instance, project were presented yesterday. Another barrier to implementing all necessary measures is the lack of sufficient chamber personnel.

d) What additional assistance would you like?

But on the contrary. We get regular information about projects and products from the Hanse Parlament. The desire would be rather than responded by the Chamber of Craft faster to the news and implementation would be initiated.

Basically none. We have been in projects long enough. I know pretty well how Hanse Parlament work. And everything goes smoothly. Maybe there is one thing: The partners should get the final application if you apply something. Of course, we get it when we have meetings, but for example concerning our administration and our university – they need this kind of documentation immediately.

How can the project work be better suited to your needs?

The transfer partners describe optimal cooperation processes. The development of project topics for which funding is applied for takes place jointly; all chambers, associations, colleges/universities/universities of applied sciences can present their wishes and suggestions in detail. The transfer recipients are involved in the implementation of the projects right from the start, the transfer process is exemplary and comprehensive and, according to the transfer recipients, leads to high utilization rates. Due to intensive inquiries, only one of the interviewees can make suggestions for improvement.

a) Do you have enough opportunity to contribute your needs, topics and tasks to the design of the projects?

Yes, you definitely have it as a transfer partner. To be honest, as a transfer partner, we have not tried this so far, because we strive to be a project partner for the issues, we consider central.

Yes. If we want something extra, we can always propose. I would say that our intention is not steer the program towards our needs – it´s better to steer the project according to the local needs of the Baltic countries. What we could do is to bring more case examples to these countries.

b) The topics and tasks to be carried out in the projects are developed jointly at member meetings, acquisition workshops or Hanse conferences. Are you able to contribute to your subjects and tasks adequately?

Yes, we are. And we can always propose some new topics.

c) How can the process of idea-making, the acquisition of projects and elaboration of funding proposals be improved?

Collaboration usually goes so far that HP introduces various ideas to the Chambers of Crafts and thus offers the partnership in projects. So, the HP is the main initiator here and the Chamber would like to work on improving the collaboration after the board election.

We do a sort of workshop during the conferences. Or we could invite companies for morning coffees where you can discuss what kind of topics are raising. But basically, we know what the megatrends are.

Obviously, this is a very difficult matter, we´re constantly keeping a close eye on the programs. The lead partner is rendering an outstanding and highly important service for us – a service that we would hardly be able to carry out.

During development of the project proposals, the Hanse Parlament are doing the main work. As far as this issue is concerned, it might be helpful to get the partners more involved.

Usually, cooperation is structured in such way that the Hanse Parlament propose various ideas to craft chambers, thus inviting them to partnership in projects. In this way, these two organizations are the principal initiators. We as a chamber are currently working on seizing the initiative more proactively in the future.

d) Do you feel sufficiently informed about the preparation and acquisition of projects?

Yes, because we attend this kind general meetings – and all the workshops usually. And I find it a very nice thing that they combine different projects together at the same time – so there is a chance to discuss about other projects with other partners. I think that this kind of general conference and workshops are the best places to raise some topics. And also, we can utilize the partners from other projects – if we are planning some kind of project in our country – which we have done within a couple of projects.

Yes. This is especially true for ongoing projects, when we learn of new activities in personal contacts. Networks are key in this regard.

Definitely yes. Sometimes there is almost too much information.

e) Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Maybe some more time is needed. Workshops have only a few moments for some kind of brainstorm. I think you should have at least two hours for brainstorming sessions. So, just a little bit more time to have discussion with other partners. But otherwise, it has worked quite well.

How do you assess fundamentally …

a) … design and implementation of projects?

The cooperation is excellent. Communication is a great strength and at a very high level. The way of planning is always very clear - the partners know exactly what they should deliver. Also, the type of billing is much easier compared to the projects in Poland. There it is very bureaucratic. The bureaucratic workload of the projects implemented by the Hanse Parlament is much more relaxed.

The coordinator does a pretty good job. Works well.

Project execution is rigorous. All partners agree on the activity plan, thus ensuring systematic and effective processing of the projects.

Goes smoothly – because the main coordinator regularly reminds you - and this kind of scheduling for coming events is very good. We now know what is going to happen in one year. So, it´s easy for us to combine different projects together.

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b) … broad transfer and use of results?

For our country, it is good. Don´t know about other countries. I always send our companies message when there is new material available. For their use when they need it.

Transfer and use of the results cover a very wide range, and they are well-processed. It is only up to the partners in each country what they´ll make of it.

The manuals and results published in the book volume of the Baltic Sea Academy are highly popular in our region. The topics covered are very up-to-date and excellent. The Chamber´s partner organizations also recommend many of these manuals to their peer organizations. These publications are particularly important!

The Hanse Parlament has contributed several articles, and it has participated in conferences in projects under the Chamber's umbrella. These publications are prepared by the Chamber for Poland, and they are sent to all state libraries across the country.

Do you have any further suggestions or wishes for future work?

No. I am very satisfied with the work. I like especially the fact that you can have long-term cooperation with the same key personnel. If people are changing all the time it doesn´t work. I like this very tight cooperation. You know whom to contact if you need help.

The value of this kind of cooperation is that the key actors are there.

2.38 Summary of evaluation results and recommendations

Various results demonstrate exemplary management, cooperation and implementation of the BA&VET project. The control and information tools developed and used by the lead partner have proven to be particularly effective and are also used by individual partners for their own purposes, regardless of the project.

The broad transfer and implementation of the project results went very well. The transfer recipients were optimally involved in the project work, including a high level of re-use.

The project has succeeded in creating a good team spirit and turning the entire project consortium into a kind of learning organization and project implementation into a continuous learning process. The evaluation results were continuously incorporated into further project work so that continuous improvements could be achieved.

The remarkable project results are achieved due to the high commitment of all project partners and the excellent project management. The developed results are evaluated very positively by the project partners and the transfer partners and will continue to be implemented on a large scale within the scope of their service offer.

The management and work instructions developed and implemented by the lead partner, in particular activities planning, dissemination planning and forms for reporting and accounting have proven their worth. The lead partner carries out strict, strong

project management, which is surprisingly appreciated by all partners. The lead partner takes on very extensive organizational and management tasks, relieves the project partners as much as possible so that they can focus on the content.

The cooperation within the consortium is assessed by all parties as constructive, target-oriented and harmonious. The exchange of information and communication is positive. The project and transfer partners spoke in written surveys and detailed personal interviews about very successful transfer and implementation processes, which are described as exemplary. The implementation of these activities with intensive personal exchange and individual implementation consulting is associated with very high costs, especially for the lead partner, in order to achieve broad regional dissemination and high implementation results.

The performed evaluation results as a summary lead to the following suggestions for improvements for the further project work and for the future performance of projects:

- Online meetings have certainly proven their worth, but they can by no means replace face-to-face meetings. In future, regular face-to-face meetings will be supplemented by online meetings with the entire consortium at least twice a year. In addition, online meetings will be held with individual partners as needed.
- To further improve communication and cooperation, implementation of online meetings between the semi-annual project meetings. For face-to-face workshops every 9 months it is perfect. But it will be good to add online workshops in between to foster discussion and communication among the partners.
- Especially at the beginning of the project, there is more time for the lead partner to convey the extensive information on project implementation and, after the kick-off workshop, for all partners to be provided with a clear manual for processing all tasks.
- More time should be set aside in the face-to-face workshops for informal discussions and activities. This time is necessary to build networks with international partners, to build trust and to become creative together.
- In each workshop more time should be planned for brainstorming; individual partners would like two hours for this. The use of skype or other online tools for short meetings between the official workshops can also reduce the time needed for the biannual project meetings and further improve communication.
- The contact details provided by the lead partner for all project partners should be supplemented with brief profiles of the background, skills and professional interests of the individual partners and individuals. This would make it easier to match potential project partners with the project requirements.
- In the design of EU programs, strong financial incentives should be given for successful dissemination and implementation. Support for dissemination and implementation of project results could also be encouraged by providing 5 – 10 % of an approved budget for each funded project as an additional performance bonus in the event of a successful transfer/implementation.

- Individual partners raise concerns that the calls for proposals and the Commission's selection and funding criteria may limit the focus of projects on popular topics; potentially more innovative but not yet popular topics may be overlooked.
- The EU should review and redesign the system for accounting for personnel costs. Limitations on daily working hours (8 hours max) and no working hours on Saturdays and Sundays are no longer valid since people work sometimes more than eight hours a day and/or during weekends. The classic working week (Monday to Friday) is somehow outdated. What is needed is more flexibility in working hours, which is reflected in timesheets.