

I³ EU Leonardo da Vinci Project

Interim Evaluation Report Two: Partner Meeting and TNA Work Package

Contents

Context	2
Questionnaire Feedback and Analysis	3
TNA Work Package	7
Commentary	9

I would like to thank the representatives from the seven partner organisations who completed this questionnaire.

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Context

Partners attending the I³ Partner Meeting in Lithuania in July 2003 were asked to complete a short questionnaire drafted by the external evaluator.

The aim of this questionnaire was to record how the partners thought the meeting had gone, what they found valuable and lessons that could be learned for future partner meetings.

Questionnaire Feedback and Analysis

This section of the report provides the feedback from the questionnaire completed by partners during or shortly after the partnership Meeting in Lithuania in July 2003.

Expectations

The first question asked partners for their expectations from the Partnership Meeting in Lithuania; and the extent to which these expectations were met.

Table One: Expectations

Partner expectations from the Meeting	Extent to which expectations were met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TNA methodology finalised • Finalise TNA • To get TNA sorted out • To make decisions about the finalisation of the TNA • Evolution of TNA • Clarification of TNA including deadlines for completing work package • Deadlines for reporting and finalisation of TNA established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully explored and decision made • TNA not finalised but deadlines put in place to achieve this • To a large extent although this will require follow up and adherence to deadlines • Deadlines have been set for the finalisation of the TNA • Very well • Fully • Expectations have been met to a great extent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the topics for Materials development • Discuss materials development phase Define the procedures / processes that should be followed in order to get on with material development and technical realisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully explored and decision made • There was a discussion about the form of the material (training / informative)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on whether the product will be an information resource or formal training tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully explored and decision made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide preferred design for website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully explored and decision made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get a handle on Technical realisation, Dissemination, Evaluation and Project Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a large extent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To decide dissemination activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some decisions on data analysis and collection issues made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations have been met to a great extent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify objectives, targets and methods for next tasks. • Verify progress of tasks to date. • Review project progress. • How can TNA task add value to the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70%

To a large extent partners had similar expectations; and most expectations were fully met during the meeting. The one area of concern for some was that the TNA Work Package had not been fully completed; but partners hope the deadline set will rectify this situation.

Enjoyment, or otherwise, of the meeting

The partners were asked to identify what they had enjoyed about the meeting, and what they had not enjoyed. Their responses to both are shown in the lists below.

What the partners enjoyed about the meeting:

- Meeting colleagues (2 replies)
- The brainstorming session on training topics was very productive and enjoyable. This represented a substantive step forward with the project.
- Team work
- Discussing training program, content and presentation of the multimedia material
- Good atmosphere
- Social interaction
- Work done for material development
- Brochure comments
- Website comments
- Exchanges

What the partners did not enjoy about the meeting

- Nothing I didn't enjoy (6 replies)
- Financial aspect – demonstration of spreadsheet was not a productive use of time and resulted in some degree of conflict as no partner wishes to use this system but it is being enforced by the lead partner
- Can't say I enjoyed it as I was concentrating on the task in hand and found it tiring

Generally the partners enjoyed the meeting, and found opportunities to network and develop the partnership. The issue about the financial spreadsheet has been raised in the first interim evaluation report.

Learning gains

The partners were asked to state what they had learnt during the meeting. The lists below show their responses;

- That the majority of partners are willing to commit resources in terms of time and money into this project.
- The partnership is to explore rules relating to commercialization and copyright
- Address arising issues and problems in team work
- How to work in a team
- Clearer grasp on the project and what I have to do next
- That each partner has a key strength and that they are willing to offer help – the key however is to ask the right person. Without the key strengths the project would have difficulty in succeeding

It is evident from the responses to this question and the question above that the partners feel that they are starting to work together as a team; and that there is commitment to the I³ Project. The point about identifying key strengths is valuable; and one of the keys to success is to ensure that partners are asked to contribute within their particular area of expertise.

Partners felt that the partner meeting in Lithuania set a good example for future partner meetings; and expected this meeting to focus on the quality of the content of the materials and the interactivity format proposed.

Key activities

Partners were asked to list the key activities in which they have been engaged following the first partner meeting.

Table 2: Partner activities

Partner activities	No. of responses
Development of TNA questionnaire (including translation)	5
Press release	2
Conducting Desk research	2
Dissemination	2
Effectively designing the Desk research template	1
Conducting some TNA field research (majority undertaken by OECL)	1
Project managing website design	1
Providing input into materials development	1
Development of reporting templates	1
Data collection and analysis	1
Brochure	1
E-Zine	1
Gathered activities reports	1
Decided on external evaluator	1

Partner activities continued	No. of responses
Filled in financial reports	1
Project management	1
Consultation on internal evaluation / quality control	1
Evaluation and monitoring issues	1
SME interviews	1
Focus groups	1
Providing information to initiative for analysis	1

Partners have listed a range of activities; and based on the feedback to the general partner questionnaire it is likely that considerably more activities have been undertaken than listed in the table above.

Partners were asked what they were going to do as a result of discussions and agreements made at the Partner Meeting.

Table 3: Partner activity following the meeting

Activities proposed by partners following the meeting	No. of responses
Complete TNA Work Package	3
Dissemination	2 (+3)
Finalise TNA report	2
Ensure materials development is commenced	2
Draft press release and distribute	1
Design and promote information brochure	1
Take website development forward and upload publicity materials	1
Keep an eye on technical realization, and project management issues	1
Continue consultation on internal monitoring and quality control	1
Revise the reporting methodology and reporting templates	1
Comment on dissemination feedback	1
Comment on material development	1
Comment on technical realisation	1

The focus of the activity is on completion of the TNA Work Package and starting the development of the second Work Package on materials development and dissemination.

TNA Work Package

The partners were asked to complete a matrix which showed their progress and experiences with the TNA Work Package. The feedback is shown below.

Much of the work agreed under the TNA Work Package was completed by the partners. Activities included are shown in the list below (note, not all partners were expected to undertake all activities, which were allocated in accordance with expertise and contacts):

- Interviews with Business / Enterprise Incubation Centre Managers
- Focus Group with staff from two Business / Enterprise Incubation Centres
- Interview with representative/s from appropriate Government Agency
- BIC/Incubator client companies to be consulted
- Desk research
- Interview with representatives of BIC / incubator networks

The activities that some partners found difficult to achieve in full were the interviews with Business / Enterprise Incubation Centre Managers and in one case consultation with BIC/Incubator client companies.

Partners were asked to identify positive and negative experiences that they encountered during the execution of the TNA Work Package. Feedback is given in the tables below:

Table 4: Positive experiences during the execution of the TNA Work Package

TNA Work Package Activity	Positive Experiences
Interviews with Business / Enterprise Incubation Centre Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managers of BIs were very positive about this Project initiative (2 replies) ▪ Quite positive about use of product ▪ Those who agreed to participate also offered to participate in the pilot phase
Focus Group with staff from two Business / Enterprise Incubation Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two questionnaires completed (rather than just one) and collated by us ▪ General welcome but most incubation centres seemed only concerned with providing space and provide very little in the way of business support
Interview with representative/s from appropriate Government Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We got a response, but need to get back to them for a more accurate response ▪ General welcome
BIC/Incubator client companies to be consulted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive response, enthusiastic and interested in learning more ▪ No great difficulty in securing information apart from the need for patience
Desk research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A lot of information in-house ▪ Good availability of relevant research given the topical nature of innovation and incubation ▪ A lot of material on the web ▪ Contacted the main agency in this area and enquiries were dealt with quickly

Table 5: Negative experiences during the execution of the TNA Work Package

TNA Work Package Activity	Negative Experiences
Interviews with Business / Enterprise Incubation Centre Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficult to arrange interviews with BIC managers ▪ Some were not easy to reach and showed no interest (some did not respond at all to phone calls or email) ▪ Delays and difficulties in getting people to respond
Focus Group with staff from two Business / Enterprise Incubation Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus group discussion tended to drift off on tangents and areas of interest to participants, rather than focusing on the project
Interview with representative/s from appropriate Government Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The department was only established a few months ago and representative was not well acquainted with the current situation ▪ Aide memoire not available when interview took place, so will be repeated ▪ Difficult to get them to commit their views on record ▪ Certain questions could not be answered – suggested we talked to incubator SMEs
BIC/Incubator client companies to be consulted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reluctant to fill in questionnaires ▪ Difficult to identify and target most appropriate companies – hence the relevance of the tool ▪ Slow in getting feedback; with feedback ranging from very good to relatively poor
Desk research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No official materials published (2 replies) ▪ Too much broad information on international experience ▪ Difficult to know if collating appropriate information in appropriate format due to non-receipt of template as formerly agreed ▪ Not all questions answered ▪ There seems to be very little in terms of a consistent policy

Comment:

This feedback should be useful to partners when undertaking similar consultation exercises in the course of their work.

Some of the key issues include:

- The need for project partners to deliver templates and aide memoires at an early stage in the development of a Work Package
- The difficulty in arranging interviews (time consuming)
- The need to ensure that the questions asked are relevant and to the point, such that the desired information is gained (and always consider why a question is being asked and what will be done with the information)

People who expressed an interest in I³ seem to be very interested. It is possible that some of the BICs who participated in the interviews would participate in the pilot of the tool developed.

Commentary

The Partner Meeting in Lithuania appears to have gone well; with partner expectations by and large being met, often in full. The partners seem to be working well as a team. The greatest frustration was that the TNA Work Package had not been fully completed. However, the responses to the TNA Matrix are valuable, both for this project and future related work.

Partners enjoyed the Lithuanian Partner Meeting experience; and feel that the next Meeting in Madrid could follow similar lines. However, it should be noted that generally transnational partner meetings are all very different in content and the nature of the work that needs to be done.

One of the keys to the success of the next meeting is that activity and tasks agreed to be done by each partner are undertaken within the deadlines set. If partners can commit themselves to meeting the deadline in full the next partner meeting will be even more effective.