



Work Package 4 – Quality Assurance

Third Internal Evaluation Report

November 2021

This report includes contributions from all project partners.
Responsible project partner:
TU Dresden, Sandra Bohlinger, sandra.bohlinger@tu-dresden.de

Objectives of the internal evaluation

As part of W2–Quality Assurance, internal evaluations have to be conducted twice a year. The aim of the internal evaluation is to evaluate the project’s progress and co-operation between project partners regularly. Moreover, the evaluation aims at reviewing and improving communication and project results including the website, organization of meetings and issues related to COVID-19.

Against this background, this report provides an overview of the results of the Fourth and Fifth Internal Evaluation conducted in March and September/October 2021.

Data collection

The Internal Evaluation was based on an online questionnaire with 6 indicator groups and 50 items. Each item represented a statement. A five-step scale indicated the degree of agreement (between “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree”). A comments section in each indicator group ensured the option to add individual responses and remarks. The questionnaire was developed by TU Dresden; it was sent to the project coordinator for revision and feedback prior to the launch of the survey. After revision, the final version of the questionnaire covered the following issues:

1. Project co-ordination
2. Co-operation between project partners
3. Communication
4. Project website
5. Division of work-packages
6. Issues related to COVID-19

Suggestions for improvement

Findings were sent to all project partners. The results of the Fourth Internal Evaluation were presented to the project team in March 2021 during the monthly meeting.

LimeSurvey, a web-based online survey tool provided by the German partner TU Dresden, was used to conduct the survey, and the link to the survey was sent out to all partners by email.

Results

With a total of 14 responses (fourth internal evaluation) and a total of 13 responses (fifth internal evaluation) – including all project partners – the survey provides valuable information on the project’s progress and co-operation between project partners. The survey indicates which issues are running smoothly and which ones should be addressed in the upcoming reporting periods.

The results are presented along the above-mentioned issues. First, the findings of the fourth and fifth internal survey are compared, for they both took place in 2021. We will then relate them to the findings of 2020, where the second and third internal survey were conducted in order to identify any long-term changes and developments.

Project co-ordination

For the year 2021, project coordination is rated consistently good and very good. The participants rate the project management as clear and helpful; for almost all of them the division of the work-packages is clear and comprehensible. There seems to be no ambiguity regarding their own roles and tasks in the project and the cooperation as well as feedback and support from the project coordinator are praised. When asked whether deadlines are easy to meet and whether the scheduling is realistic, participants answered significantly less affirmatively and with larger standard deviation at the beginning of the year than at the end of the year (arithmetic mean 3.71 and 4.18, respectively). Ratings on organization and frequency of meetings also improved during the year. The open answers section highlights two points: On the one hand, there should be a quicker response to emails and – in case of doubt – a meeting for clarification should be arranged as soon as possible. Furthermore, it is pointed out that more personal contact and closer consultation are necessary to maintain nourishing relationships and achieve the best commitment.

Compared to the third survey in 2020, there is a slight improvement indicated in all items in this category. Only satisfaction with the frequency of meetings seems to vary among the project partners.

Cooperation between project partners

Almost all participants are (very) satisfied with the cooperation between the (inter)national project team. The project partners express that they are satisfied with the feedback from colleagues, their cultural sensitivity and openness as well as with the transparency of decision-making processes. The arithmetic mean of the positive ratings is consistently between 4.38 and 4.92. Satisfaction is slightly higher in the end than at the beginning of the year. Only the involvement of the associated partners is more frequently rated as unsatisfactory. This is explained in the open response format and is related mainly to restrictions regarding the fight against COVID-19. For example, the involvement of associated partners would depend on personal contacts, which is very important not only for cultural reasons. Since the problem of insufficient integration of associates has already been mentioned repeatedly, it is advisable to design a strategy for a better integration of these stakeholders.

The strong positive ratings from 2020 were confirmed in 2021 and increased slightly. It is only the satisfaction with the involvement of the associated partners that shows a relatively low arithmetic mean of 3.92, which was not much higher in 2019 and 2020 either.

Communication

The project partners are very satisfied with the communication. The positive ratings could even be increased during the year and are consistently at an average of 4.5 to 5 (arithmetic mean). Only in relation to the frequency of meetings and the weekly status emails stronger standard deviations were found. There is an equal distribution of people who would like more frequent updates and those who are satisfied with the current frequency. In the open response formats, the positions that consider the frequency of monthly meetings and status emails to be satisfactory clearly predominate.

As in the years before, communication in 2021 was predominantly good to very good. Compared to 2020, partners are even more satisfied with communication; in particular, they feel better informed about project's progress and the results of the individual work packages.

Website

Satisfaction regarding the design and information content of the website is predominantly rated as very positive. It is recommended to make sure that the information about the project remain clear and comprehensible. One person describes when trying to access the website, security alerts are triggered that will prevent cautious users from accessing the website if necessary. If possible, this aspect should be followed up by the administrators.

All project members should contribute to updating the website by immediately forwarding news about work packages, publications and presentations, activities etc. to the website manager at any time. Everyone should make sure that the information is ready to use and that pictures are available.

It matches the recommendation that the agreement with the statement 'The website provides sufficient information about the project' has slightly decreased in 2021, compared to 2020.

Division of work-packages

Almost all individuals are satisfied with resources and capacities of their own institutions as well as those of the EU. Satisfaction with the EU's resources has remained relatively constant during the year (4.29 and 4.23, respectively), while satisfaction with their own university's capacities increased slightly (from 4.41 to 4.46). Some partners would like to have more support from other project partners to fulfill their tasks and work packages (over 60 %). At the same time, all project partners are clear about whom to approach for help (93 and 100 %, respectively). One person states, "Items 1 and 2: impossible to answer in this covid 'interregnum'. I am totally unclear about where we go from here, given the one-year extension and how it will further impact on my prescribed (*name of the institution, delated for privacy reasons)-centred duties and responsibilities." This statement clarifies that the project extension is also related to existing employment relationships. At this point, further communication seems urgently needed.

While from 2019 to 2020 satisfaction with the resources provided by the EU decreased slightly, it increased in 2021, and the standard deviation decreased. All other data regarding this point remain almost unchanged.

Issues related to COVID-19

Measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in problems for the majority of partners in completing tasks and work packages within the given time (79 and 85 %, respectively). Partners state that the majority of them need to make significantly higher efforts to complete these tasks.

At the same time, they report that there is a high level of understanding between partners for any delays, but that they sometimes need more help from each other (50 and 62 %, respectively). Some of the partners need more resources due to the pandemic (26 and 54 %, respectively). In the open response formats, it becomes evident that COVID-19 led to numerous problems and delays at various levels. For example, various ministries in the partner countries are still not accessible or only partially available and are only working to a limited extent. Appointments and communication with relevant institutions, but also with students, teachers and trainers are still limited and sometimes the psychological pressure is described as unbearable.

Outlook

The results indicate that the majority of partners is very satisfied with the coordination of the project, the cooperation and communication as well as with the website and with the division of work packages. No indicators can be identified that would justify measures in these areas. Only the following two points should be reflected critically:

- The partners' contribution to the website must be increased. Even if the website offers plenty of valuable information and the design is highly praised, it must be ensured that all deliverables are continuously visible. For the external presentation of the project, a regular update including all relevant news is essential. All partners in the project are responsible for this.
- The involvement of the associated partners is still insufficient, according to some respondents. Acknowledging the difficulties under the current conditions of the pandemic, it is, nevertheless, important to ensure their successful integration.

**Work Package 4.1: Quality Assurance:
Periodic Internal Evaluations**

Internal Evaluation Questionnaire

(Template for the Online Survey)

Version 3 : September 2021

This concept was jointly updated by all project partners.

Responsible project partner:

TU Dresden, Sandra Bohlinger, sandra.bohlinger@tu-dresden.de

The objective of the internal evaluation is to evaluate the project progress and the co-operation between the partners. The evaluation aims at reviewing and improving project co-ordination, co-operation and communication as well as working with sharepoint, the website and more. The internal evaluation takes place twice a year. TUD will summarize and communicate the results to the whole project team. An online conference is arranged after each feedback to jointly agree on improvement strategies.

Third internal evaluation of CONTESSA

Please choose your university: KFJ, TUD, UCA, PUC, UOC, OUSL

Scale	Do you agree with the following statements? Please choose: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Somewhat agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Somewhat disagree 5 = strongly agree
Project co-ordination	
1. The role of the project management is clear to me.	
2. The role of the project partners is clear to me.	
3. The division of work packages is clear to me.	
4. Our role in each work package is clear to me.	
5. Deadlines are easy to meet and scheduling is realistic. -> doppelte Stimuli	
6. Co-operation with the project coordinator works well.	
7. Feedback and assistance from the project coordinator is supportive.	
8. Organization and frequency of face-to-face meetings is appropriate.	
9. If you disagree with a statement, please give us an explanation as to why.	
10. Comments or suggestions for improvement:	

Co-operation between project partners	
1. Co-operation among my national project team members works well.	
2. Co-operation among international project team members works well.	

3. If needed I receive sufficient and supportive feedback from the project partners.	
4. Co-operation among project partners is open-minded and straightforward.	
5. I can address all project partners whenever I need any information for my work packages.	
6. The process of decision making among project partners is clear and easy to understand.	
7. Project partners are aware of and respect national and cultural conditions and values that are relevant to the project.	
8. Involvement of associate partners in my country is sufficient.	
9. If you disagree with a statement, please give us an explanation as to why.	
10. Comments or suggestions for improvement:	

Communication	
1. Communication and information sharing is sufficient and easy to understand.	
2. More virtual meetings (than are currently being held) are necessary to stay up to date with the project.	
3. The e-mail communication amongst CONTESSA partners has been helpful and sufficient.	
4. Information on meetings and their results is sufficient.	
5. The preliminary findings/reports from work packages one and two are clear to me.	
6. I feel well-informed about the project's progress.	
7. I find the weekly status email to be useful.	
8. I feel the weekly status email should be sent less frequently, for example, twice a month.	
9. I find the monthly meeting to be useful.	
10. I feel the monthly meeting should be more frequently, for example, twice a month.	
11. If you disagree with a statement, please give us an explanation as to why.	
12. Comments or suggestions for improvement:	

Project Website	
1. The website is easy to find: https://contessa-project.eu/	
2. I have difficulties with accessing the website.	
3. The website provides sufficient information about the project (reports, publications, etc.).	

4. I actively participate in the updating of the homepage (e.g. by sending publications, reports, pictures etc. which can be placed on the homepage).	
5. The design of the website represents the project well.	
6. If you disagree with a statement, please give us an explanation as to why.	
7. Comments or suggestions for improvement:	

Division of Responsibilities and Work Packages	
1. Resources and capacities provided by my university are sufficient.	
2. Resources and capacities provided by the funding institution (European Union) are sufficient.	
3. It is clear to me what my project team has to do and how we will address our tasks.	
4. I would need more support from the project partners to fulfil our work packages and tasks.	
5. I know whom to address of the project partners when I need help to fulfil a particular task or work package.	
6. If you disagree with a statement, please give us an explanation as to why.	
7. Comments or suggestions for improvement:	

Issues related to COVID-19	
1. Due to COVID-19 measures, I could/cannot complete tasks in time.	
2. Due to COVID-19 measures, it takes me significantly higher effort in fulfilling our work packages and tasks.	
3. Due to COVID-19 measures, I often wait longer for deliverables from partners.	
4. Despite the limitations of COVID-19, I try to complete all tasks on time.	
5. The partners have sympathy for delays due to the COVID-19 measures.	
6. Due to COVID-19 measures, I need more help from partners in completing the tasks.	
7. Due to COVID-19 measures, I need more resources to fulfil the tasks.	
8. Please tell us in detail about how COVID affected your ability to work on the project and complete your tasks. Be specific and link to activities	

Suggestions for improvement	
Would you like to share any additional comments?	



Thank you very much for participating in our evaluation!
Please let us know, if you have/had any problems with the survey by e-mail to
christian.mueller13@tu-dresden.de