Work Package 4 – Quality Assurance

Second Internal Evaluation Report

September 2020

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 working with SharePoint, the website and organization of meetings.

Against this background, this report provides an overview of the results of the Second and Third Internal Evaluation conducted in March and August/September 2020.

Data collection

The Internal Evaluation was based on an online questionnaire with 7 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. SharePoint
5. Website
6. Division of work-packages

Additional comments

Findings were sent to all project partners. The results of the First Internal Evaluation were presented to the project coordinator in November 2019. Along with the results of the Second Internal Evaluation they were discussed with all partners at the Annual Meeting in July 2020 to further develop the quality parameters. In response to the suggestions of the first two surveys and in the course of the introduction of monthly online meetings and a weekly status mail, the questionnaire was extended to the following five items:

- I find the weekly status email to be useful.
- I feel the weekly status email should be sent less frequently, for example, twice a month.
- I find the monthly meeting to be useful.
- I feel the monthly meeting should be more frequently, for example, twice a month.
- How many times a month do you log on to SharePoint?

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 24 responses (second evaluation) and a total of 18 responses (Third 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 Second and Third Internal Survey are compared, for they both took place in 2020. We then related it to the findings of 2019, where the First Internal Survey was conducted, in order to identify any long-term changes and developments.

Project co-ordination

For the year 2020, project coordination is rated consistently good and very good. Overall, there has even been a slight improvement during the year. The participants rated meeting deadlines at the beginning of the year as more difficult than towards the end of the year. However, meeting deadlines is still considered difficult.

Compared to the first survey in 2019, there is a slight improvement for all items in this category.

Cooperation between project partners

Cooperation between international partners is consistently rated slightly better than cooperation between national partners. Cooperation is generally rated good and very good. During the year, supportive feedback has improved, but the decision-making process is sometimes considered difficult to understand . The involvement of associated partners is assessed less sufficient over the year. The participants praise the good communication.

The strong positive approval rates from 2019 were confirmed in 2020. It is only the satisfaction with the involvement of the associated partners that decreased slightly, which was not high in 2019 either.

Communication

The number of meetings is considered reasonable. During the year 2020, all items for the issue communication have been improved. The weekly status mail is seen as helpful, whereas the estimation of the frequency of this mail remains indifferent. Some participants expect more and others less frequent messages. As a result, it seems appropriate to maintain correspondence once a week. The monthly meeting is also seen as helpful; the estimation of the frequency of this meeting is also indifferent. Some participants would prefer a higher number of virtual meetings and others a lower number. A slightly higher number of participants tends to be satisfied with the frequency of meetings. We therefore recommend maintaining this frequency. All communication is rated slightly more positive in the Third Internal Evaluation compared to the second one.

As in 2019, communication in 2020 was predominantly good to very good. In contrast to 2019, in which not a single respondent took a more critical view into single items, in 2020 there are only few participants who rated communication as unsatisfactory.

SharePoint

Most of the participants use SharePoint regularly. However, there are also participants who do not use SharePoint at all. On average, the respondents access SharePoint four times a month, with some entering the platform from 1 up to 20 times a month. A slight majority of respondents find SharePoint to be helpful. Though participants state the platform serves its purpose, it is still not considered user-friendly. Participants also asked to what extent it was possible to use non-expiring passwords.

Compared to 2019, satisfaction regarding SharePoint has slightly decreased across all items.

Website

Satisfaction regarding the design and information content of the website has increased and is predominantly rated as very positive.

Compared to 2019, satisfaction has increased regarding the content and design of the website. Problems with accessing the site also seem to have been solved.

Division of work-packages

In 2020, respondents are slightly less satisfied with the resources provided by the EU. Nevertheless, the majority is satisfied or very satisfied. During the year, fewer people stated they needed more support from project partners. However, one third of respondents still needs more support from partners in fulfilling tasks.

On the one hand, satisfaction regarding the resources provided by the respective universities has been consistently high since 2019. On the other hand, the participants are less satisfied with the resources provided by the EU in 2020 compared to 2019. Satisfaction regarding the support provided by the project partners has increased since 2019.

Outlook

Results indicate that no major measures are necessary with respect to the above-mentioned aims of the internal evaluation. The project is on the right track from the point of view of all respondents. However, there is room for improvement, which refers to several issues:

–   As stated in the First Evaluation Report, a more specific description of tasks and roles of associated partners could prove helpful to ensure their involvement in the project.

–   Even if only very few respondents are dissatisfied with the communication within the project, the project team should develop opportunities and tools to communicate with the respondents more directly. Due to the small size of the consortium these opinions should be seriously considered.

–   Even if the work with SharePoint is criticized in some points, we do not propose any changes as to its application in the project. It seems as if the project partners have come to terms with the platform. The project coordination should maintain the support for using SharePoint. It may be possible to ensure that passwords do not expire within a short period of time, which is rather inconvenient. It seems, however, that not all partners have this problem.

–   Some partners still seem dissatisfied with the resources provided by the EU. The project

coordination team should address the partners individually and obtain a short statement on this. The item queried in the evaluation is far too general to draw any concrete conclusions.