**Producing Open Online Learning Systems-3**

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

**YEAR 1 QUALITY REPORT**

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# Introduction

**GLPM**

GLPM is a consortium of experts working in the field of transnational cooperation in projects in education and training. It was established by Gareth Long when he left his position as Minerva Project Officer at the Socrates Leonardo and Youth Technical Assistance Office in Brussels at the end of 2005. In the period since, he and his colleagues have evaluated 40+ projects from the Lifelong Learning Programme and other initiatives with EU funding. GLPM adopts an innovative approach to the evaluation work undertaken in that it covers all areas of project work. This includes, but is not limited to, the outcomes achieved, the progress toward the outcomes, the transnational dynamics of that progress, the consistency of the project in addressing its initial aims, the extent and consistency of the involvement of the target group in ongoing project work, the mechanisms built-in to ensure sustainability, steps taken to embed innovative outcomes into mainstream provision, consideration of, and complementarity with, the state of the art, and instances of added value.

For the POOLS-3 project, Gareth Long is the lead evaluator supported by Lydia Pavlopoulou. Gareth has worked in the Technical Assistance Office in Brussels as Project Officer for the Socrates Minerva action and now specialises in evaluation work as well as being an assessor for the EACEA for its Erasmus+, e-Learning, Minerva, Grundtvig, KA1, KA3, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Transfer of Innovation, ECET and Tempus actions.  He was asked by the Commission to present an expert view of the assessment of projects at the Erasmus co-ordinators’ meeting in Brussels in 2010 and was invited as an expert to shortlist best practice projects in the field of social inclusion. In 2013 he prepared and submitted a successful tender for a three-year evaluation contract with EUN Schoolnet for external evaluation of projects.

Lydia Pavlopoulou has 12 years’ experience in providing assistance and consultancy in European projects. From 2001-2004, she worked in the TAO as a GRUNDTVIG officer. Since then she has been an expert assessor of Projects for the EACEA, mainly in the field of Languages and Adult Education. She is a German teacher and has a University degree with a Masters in European Studies. She has coordinated YOUTH programmes in the field of environmental protection and has carried out numerous external evaluations of projects with Gareth. In addition to Greek and German, Lydia is fluent in English and Italian. Lydia has recently established her own German Language School specialising in course for adults for language learning for specific purposes: [DFE – Deutsch für Erwachsene.](https://www.facebook.com/pages/DFE-%CE%93%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AC-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%95%CE%BD%CE%AE%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B5%CF%82/375855702540193)

**External Evaluation methodology**

The external evaluation strategy is described in detail in the initial strategy document and report submitted in December 2013 and so it is not repeated here, however it is important to emphasise that the external evaluation outcomes are best regarded as related outputs as they re-visit aspects previously highlighted as well as identifying new achievements or challenges as the POOLS-3 project progresses. This report (September 2014) is the second main evaluation output in line with the contract between GLPM and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO – the project co-coordinator) and is the end of year 1 quality report timed to precede the project’s own Progress Report due for submission to the UK National Agency responsible for the management of Transfer of Innovation projects – ECORYS. As with the first evaluation report, one aspect will be to assess the way in which the project responds to the feedback and recommendations it receives from various stakeholders, including that from ECORYS.

As indicated, the project is approximately half-way through its total duration and to-date there have been three project meetings / workshops. The first, in October 2013 in Brussels was attended by Gareth Long from the external evaluation team; the second took place in Barcelona in April 2014 and the third in Brno in September 2014. Either Gareth Long or Lydia Pavlopoulou will participate in one of the remaining meetings / workshops likely to be in Barcelona and Belfast.

Whilst acknowledging that it is a generalisation, the approximate midway point of a project such as POOLS-3 can also be regarded as the period when preparation and development evolve into implementation and delivery and this aspect also will feature in this end of year report – although it needs to be noted now that POOLS-3 has already realised many significant tangible outcomes.

**About the Call and its Objectives**

POOLS-3 was an application submitted to the UK National Agency for assessment as a de-centralised (in other words, managed at the national level rather than centrally by the Commission itself) Leonardo Transfer of Innovation (ToI) project. This action emphasises therefore vocational education and training and the transfer of innovative outcomes or practices from one county or countries to others, or from one sector to another, etc. There are certain fundamental aspects associated with a ToI related to these expectations, including that the process is not simply a one-way one and that both parties in the “transfer process” benefit from the activities. It is also important to emphasise that development should be kept to a minimum (there is a separate “Development of Innovation” action) and the activities should reflect the preparation and implementation of the transfer, including in the context of sustainability.

There are also specific Priorities and Objectives associated with each Action and which vary from one year to another. For 2013, those identified as appropriate to POOLS-3 are included below as it is important for even an experienced partnership to remember these Priorities and Objectives and report on project progress reflecting its relevance to them.

D.2.1. PROGRAMME GENERAL OBJECTIVES

To support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices (LEO-SpObj-b).

D.2.2. PROGRAMME OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

To facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training other than at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others (LEO-OpObj-3).

To encourage the learning of modern foreign languages (LEO-OpObj-5)

To support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning (LEOOpObj-6)

D.2.5. HORIZONTAL ISSUES

Cultural and linguistic diversity (CulDiv)

**Expected Results**

The specific aims and objectives of the project, which are (taken from section B.4 of the original application):

“The project will promote and exploit CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in Catalan, Czech and Irish language VET contexts, building on the development work in nine other languages through the original UK-led POOLS project (2005-7, winner of 2009 European Silver Award for Innovation and Creativity in Lifelong Learning) and subsequent ES-led TOI to 3 more languages via POOLS-2 (2009-2011). The consortium will be led by the UK POOLS promoter with assistance from the DK partner, with a mix of private and public sector educational providers with a VET locus…

…The TOI will adapt and translate the core materials (course book, course manuals), produce multimedia source materials for use in CALL materials development in the three new languages, and pilot teacher training courses on CALL for these languages. (“…Specialised teacher training for language teachers in vocational education and training needs to be developed” – Languages for Jobs report for the European Strategic Framework for Education and Training, ET2020, p5.)

The project addresses recommendations 2 and 5 of the Languages for Jobs report, by promoting new methods of teaching languages in order to motivate learners to keep languages in their study programmes (2) and developing specialised language training modules and methodology for teachers and trainers in VET (5).

Irish, Czech, and Catalan language teachers in VET will be equipped with sample CALL materials. An in-service training programme for disseminating new skills and practices will be embedded in the teacher support infrastructure for these languages, supported by a locally appropriate course book and guide.”

**Type of Transfer**

The transfer process planned for POOLS-3 reflects the previous initiatives from which the project was drawn (and which are clearly identified in the project application and outlined in the evaluation strategy and first report). The ToI is from the UK (and DK, DE, ES, LT, NL and RO) to three new languages (Catalan, Czech, and Irish) and one new country (CZ), underlining the prevalence of bilingualism even within national borders. It is fundamentally a transfer within the same sector, identified as “P85.32 – Technical and vocational secondary education”. A strength of the application is the way in which it develops this initial transfer premise into more discrete consideration of the likely evolution in each “recipient” country; separate contexts for Irish, Catalan and Czech are outlined and the results of the project at the approximate mid-point reflect the accuracy of these considerations.

**I The milestone / work programme approach to recording the progress of the project**

The work plan has 11 work packages.

**WP1 Project Management** 10/2013 – 09/2015 (SMO, UK)deals with project management and runs throughout the project to monitor/ensure that the project is on track, achieves the aims and objectives, and delivers the planned outputs.

The project has been managed exceedingly well to-date and this reflects both the experience and approach to management of the SMO and SDE representatives but also the consistently high levels of performance of the partners. Delays have been minimal and more often outcomes and outputs have been realised ahead of schedule. Highlights of project management are the monitoring tools – both in terms of the six-monthly internal reports and the reporting processes with the UK NA (ECORYS), their transparency (they are immediately and clearly made available on the project web-site) and the frequency and depth of internal project communication, especially through email. All partners have been active throughout in terms of communication and perhaps due to the relatively small size of the consortium, it is clear that each participant feels empowered and motivated and that the project has real relevance to them and their institution. The lack of any real obstacles or challenges to management so far are not necessarily an indication of a “straightforward” project but more likely an indication of a very effective, calm and appropriate approach to management at the centralised and partner levels. All involved should be commended for this.

The positive approach to management by the coordinator and by the partnership as a whole is also reflected in the very effective meetings that have taken place so far, where the balance between coordination, hosting and lead activities has been achieved consistently and again it should be emphasised that the partners are very comfortable with their roles in the project and as a result are very proactive in achieving outcomes on time or even early.

The external evaluation strategy also includes reference to a consideration of how the project responds to the ongoing feedback it receives from a number of stakeholders throughout its lifetime and not least of these is the monitoring feedback from the UK NA, ECORYS. ECORYS have a “hands-on” approach to monitoring projects, combining regular email, phone and if possible face-to-face visit contact, with the projects it manages and for some projects more used to the centralised approach, where the main focus is on the Progress and Final Reports monitoring milestones, this can be a challenge. However the participants in POOLS-3 have again been effective in meeting the monitoring requirements and providing detailed responses to any requests for further information and / or clarification. “Standard” requests for updated dissemination and valorisation plans were provided which were accepted quickly by ECORYS, whilst more searching queries related to the possibility for further translation into Danish, French and Flemish (in other words, a concept of translation into all partner languages of the consortium beyond those foreseen in the application) were addressed effectively. It was very clearly outlined that the BE partner – EfVET – is not a partner like the others involved in the main transfer processes of the project, but a partner focused much more on dissemination, using its EU (and beyond) networks for this purpose. Essentially, it is a European network organisation based in Brussels rather than a Belgian organisation, so the issue of translation into French and Flemish was explained and clarified. Clarification was also made on the issue of translations into Danish – DK teachers already have EN as a language and DK outputs were achieved in the “forerunner” projects to POOLS-3. Essentially, the discussions that took place between POOLS-3 and ECORYS confirmed that the approach outline in the application and the intended levels of translations – were the appropriate ones for this initiative, but it was useful for both parties that this issue was clarified and will not therefore be an issue in either the Progress or Final Report assessment.

**WP2 Quality Management** 10/2013 – 09/2015 (SMO, UK) is based on both internal and external assessment. The external assessment delivers the QM report prior to the project conclusion to enable final adjustments in order to deliver best possible content quality.

Most of the comments made on project management are also valid for the approach to Quality Control. The strategy was well-conceived at the application stage and planned for a balance between internal and external measures and has been pursued well by the partners individually and collectively. One additional comment to be made at this stage is that the quality process has been assisted greatly by the very proactive approach to working with teachers and students undertaken by the partners, ensuring there is an in-built informal quality process behind the creation of the videos and other tools that both augment the other more formal tools very well and ensure that the project is effectively engaging with the main target groups during the creative processes rather than only delivering a final product to them after its completion.

The project web-site design is one long-established and acknowledged as very effective from the previous POOLS, TOOLS, etc, initiatives. All project details and outcomes are recorded clearly and effectively here and the approach reinforces the comments and positive elements identified for both project management and overall quality control. For example, this is the way in which the ongoing evaluation activities and processes especially associated with the three meetings / workshops to-date are presented:

## Workshops, meetings and schedules (including milestones)

* [3rd workshop minutes](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Brno/POOLS3MinuteBrno.pdf)
* [3rd workshop evaluation summary](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Brno/BrnoSeptember14EvaluationSummary.doc)
* [3rd workshop agenda](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Brno/POOLS3agendaBrno14.docx)
* During the 3rd workshop the following presentations were used:
	+ [Pilot Course Aims and Structure](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseMaterials/Pilot%20Courses_Aims_%26_Structure.pdf)
	+ [Pelican Presentation on Dissemination](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Brno/PPT%20Brno_PELICAN.ppt)
* [2nd workshop minutes](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/Pools%203%20Barcelona%202014%20Minute.pdf)
* [2nd workshop agenda](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/POOLS3agendaBarcelona14.docx)
* [2nd workshop evaluation results](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/BarcelonaMarch14EvaluationResults.doc)
* During the 2nd workshop the following presentations were used:
	+ [Finance & Administration](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/Taisbeanadh%20ann%20am%20Barcelona.pptx)
	+ [eBook requirements](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/making%20the%20e-book.pdf)
	+ [Pelican benefits from the project](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/PPT%20Barcelona_Pelican.ppt)
	+ [Presentation of WP3 Presentation Platform](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/PPT%20Barcelona_WP3.ppt)
	+ [Creating audio/video source materials](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Barcelona/Creating%20Audio%20and%20Video.pptx)
* [Kick-off meeting Agenda](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/POOLS3KickOffBrusselsOct2013.docx)
* Minutes from the kick-off meeting. [*Click here to download*](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/POOLS3Minute.docx)
* Presentations from the kick-off workshop
	+ [Presentation of SMO](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/SMO.pptx)
	+ [Presentation of EfVET](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/Presentation_%20efvet.pptx)
	+ [Presentation of Stucom](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/POOLS3-STUCOM.pptx)
	+ [Presentation of Pelikan](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/2013_24_10_PPT_POOLS.ppt)
	+ [Presentation of the external evaluation](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/GLPM%20POOLS3%20presentation%20meeting%201%20Brussels%20Oct%202013.ppt)
	+ [Presentation of iPadio](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/Ipadio%20for%20POOLS-3.pptx)
	+ [WP 3 dissemination ideas](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/2013_24_10_PPT_POOLS_wp3.ppt)
	+ [Financial aspects for participants: Presentation by Kent Andersen](http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Kick-off/Financial%20Items.ppt)

The only recommendations to be made in this context are to provide a higher and clearer profile for the six-monthly internal quality reports and to consider elements that were emphasised in the application in terms of how they are presented on the web-site. For example, in the application in the text on the second work package on quality management, it is stated that the second project workshop would be “dedicated” to QM. Whilst the five items listed under workshop 2 (above) do feature issues concerning quality and whilst the minutes do feature detailed reviews of the ECORYS feedback and actions in response to the external evaluation strategy, the profile of QM should be higher if that was the focus of the workshop. As it stands, this profile is implicit rather than explicit. It is likely that Quality aspects featured highly in the video demonstrations and initial “drafts” and the minutes do suggest this, but still, the attention to detail to quality issues would benefit from a higher profile.

**WP3 Communication Platform** 10/2013 – 09/2015 (Pelikan, CZ) and **WP5 Dissemination** 10/2013 – 09/2015 (EfVET, BE) **deal with dissemination**.

Project communications (both internal and with the target groups and stakeholders) has already been identified as a strength and this is due jointly to the successful “merge” of POOLS-3 to the “languages.dk” web presence and the consistently dynamic input from Pelikan. This was reflected most recently in the presentation given on dissemination at the Brno third project workshop in September 2014:

<http://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-3/Meetings/Brno/PPT%20Brno_PELICAN.ppt>

This has positive implications both in terms of enhancing the existing languages.dk web presence by providing POOLS-3 with an identifiable existence in its own right and through providing additional information on the evolution of dissemination in the project in-line with the requests for additional information from ECORYS and the subsequently created and agreed upon strategy.

Furthermore, whilst the use of Facebook, Twitter et al are fairly standard practices for projects currently, the POOLS-3 use of them has been a model of excellent practice – the Facebook presence in particular is very dynamic and focuses on the fun and enjoyable collaborations that have taken place particularly when it comes to the video creations:

<https://www.facebook.com/projectpools3>

It is a very up-to-date and dynamic presence with very numerous and consistent entries, posts, comments, pictures and news throughout the project lifetime so far. It also indicates (and again the external evaluators wish to emphasise this in the context of the project’s acknowledgement of ECORYS’s guidelines on dissemination) clear evidence of reach beyond the project consortium to new countries and to new sectors, see the postings on:

* September 18th 2014 “Capacity Building for Lifelong Learning – International Conference in Athens”,
* September 29th 2014 “EUROPEMOBILITY NETWORK – International Conference “ Learning Mobility for Youth, Education and Employment in Cagliari”
* December 2nd 2013 “the EfVET team at the European Parliament for the EUCIS –LLL week.”

As just three examples. These are evidence not just of the relevance of the POOLS-3 aims and objectives but also if the attractiveness and “impact” of the dissemination tools such as t-shirts, newsletters, etc.

Whilst work packages 3 and 5 are discrete, there is a clearly very effective relation between the two. As the dissemination strategy created in April 2014 indicated, Pelikan are “leading by example” when it comes to the social media aspects whilst EfVET are using their umbrella network organisation and extensive experience in European projects to ensure that the “traditional” dissemination tools and targets are fully utilised also. It is very positive to see such “bilateral” cooperation in this respect, although given the motivation of all partners with regard to the use of social media and general dissemination activities, it is probably more accurate to say that it is very positive to see all partners effectively contributing so substantially to work packages and activities where they do not have the lead.

As already identified, as part of the early communication and monitoring process with ECORYS, the POOLS-3 partnership prepared a detailed dissemination strategy that was presented and agreed around April / May 2014. The project is fulfilling the expectations and requirements of that strategy as it reaches its mid-way point. Building from the successes of previous projects, a very useful and attractive project newsletter is produced 4 times a year and is very well “overseen” and prepared by the DK partner, SDE. The content includes POOLS-3 updates but is prepared more in a context for widespread use and therefore includes state of the art references to activities and events in the field as well as to other related initiatives including some or other of the POOLS-43 consortium. The newsletters are supported by flyers and brochures prepared in English, Danish, Irish, Catalan and Czech. There are also t-shirts and other promotional materials and their use at both national and international events can be followed particularly on the POOLS-3 Facebook pages, the links are included above.

Other strengths of the revised dissemination strategy include that attention to detail on a nation-by-nation basis, particularly in terms of the specific identified targets for each of the importing countries; the means by which these bodies are contacted and engaged will be an important aspect to report upon at the project’s close. There is reference to “clustering / kindred” projects which is another positive aspect, although it is noted that these are project featured also on the languages.dk site and therefore features some of the same partners – additional cooperation with outside initiatives would strengthen the project’s claim to be “state of the art”.

An additional recommendation with regard to the approach to dissemination is one that echoes a comment made at the first project meeting. During a presentation on the templates to be used to record dissemination, the recommendation from the external evaluation perspective was made to include some additional text fields to encourage the recording of the impact of the dissemination tool and approach. Numbers of web-site hits and numbers of brochures distributed at events is useful but is only part of the picture – the suggestion is to include more measures of the impact of the hits, distributions, etc.

**WP4 Exploitation and impact** 12/2013 – 09/2015 (SDE, DK) – to ensure real use of outcomes.

The envisaged activities associated specifically with exploitation and impact were well-conceived in the application and have been pursued from the project outset; the main measures for success were indicated to take place in the second year of the project, including exploitation being the emphasis of the fourth project meeting in March 2015 where a strategy for the remaining six months of the project will be finalised and include the means to calculate registrations, numbers of participants and the likely momentum of the project post-funding.

From the project application, there are in addition two elements concerning exploitation athat are important to note:

“The project partnership will also search for other language projects and networks that may cluster with our efforts and benefit from the POOLS‐3 outcomes.”

“Using national representatives, EfVET will assist with disseminating information on the results to the project target groups to attract these to the course, but also, more importantly, to offer similar courses based on our results.”

These are cited here as the first emphasises the recommendation made in the context of dissemination and the state of the art to increase contact with initiatives involving organisations outside of the consortium and the second illustrates the close link between dissemination and exploitation and how the former can increase the impact of the later especially in the second period of a two-year initiative.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the main consideration of exploitation is intended for the second year, the recommendation is to include some consideration of what has been achieved to-date in the project’s own Progress Report.

**WP6 Adaptation and translation of the POOLS course guide** 11/2013 – 08/2015 (STUCOM, ES), **WP7 Adaptation and translation of the POOLS course book** 10/2013 – 06/2015 (Pelikan, CZ),

With regard to the progress in relation to the Course Guide and Course Book, these are clear strengths of the project so far and whilst the respective work packages duration indicate that they are designed for ongoing modification in the light of feedback and comment, high quality versions were produced, translated and widely circulated and made available on the web-site at a relatively early stage. They are clearly a key part of the project’s web-site presence:

## “pools-3 course book

The pools-3 course book is a supplementary DIY material (a reference book) that may be used during and after the method and materials production courses.

(pictures of the front cover of the book and guide are included on the site)

Download the course book as .pdf version in:

* [Catalan](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/call_CAT.pdf)
* [Czech](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/call_CZ.pdf)
* [English](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/call_UK.pdf)
* [Irish](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/call%20GA.pdf)

Download the course book as .ePub (eBooks for iPads and other tablets) version in:

* [Catalan](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/call_CAT.epub)
* [Czech](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/call_CZ.epub)
* [English](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/Call%20UK.epub)
* [Irish](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseBook/call-GA.epub)

## pools-3 course guide

The pools-3 course guide contains all the units that the pilot teams can offer with guidelines on how to run the courses (in-service, online only, or blended courses).

Download the course guide as a .pdf document in:

* [Catalan](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/CG%20CAT.pdf)
* [Czech](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/Course%20Guide_CZ.pdf)
* [English](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/Catalogue%20UK.pdf)
* [Irish](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/Catalogue%20GA.pdf)

Download the course guide as .ePub (eBooks for iPads and other tablets) version in:

* [Catalan](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/CourseGuide%20CAT.epub)
* [Czech](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/Course%20Guide_CZ.epub)
* [English](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/CourseG%20UK.epub)
* [Irish](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/CourseGuide/CG%20GA.epub)

Course evaluation form in

* [English](http://languages.dk/archive/pools-3/evaluation/Evaluation_for_participants.doc)”

The presentation of these two key outcomes is clear and attractive on the site and the discussion that took place at the kick-off meeting with regard to clarifying clearly concepts of “Guide” and “Book” in terms of support materials and the brief explanation of what each outcome is, and is intended for, is very well-conceived in the context of clarity for the interest visitor to the site and potential user. Even so, the link to the former states “Course Book” whilst the title of the downloaded document is “Introduction to CALL” and the latter “Course Guide” leads to the document called “Course Units Catalogue”. A more consistent approach should be adopted to make sure there is no misunderstanding for the interested visitor.

With regard to the form and content of these two outcomes, they are of high quality. The Guide makes it clear that it has its origins in an initiative approximately 10 years ago and that it has been enhanced and updated on several times since then. This is appropriate in the Transfer of Innovation context (i.e. the appropriate balance being met between development and transfer of new and existing content) although some specific information on how the POOLS-3 team have actually added to it or amended it would be useful – not in the foreword or introduction of the outcome itself, but in the reporting mechanisms elsewhere or internal monitoring data. It would be useful to see particularly how the Catalan, Irish and Czech partners have added or amended aspects for more effective use in their national context and / or to see how the other UK and Danish partners have amended aspects in the light of the importing partner feedback for improved use in their own national contexts (this of course alludes to part of the external evaluation methodology of a ToI initiative addressing the need for the transfer to be of reciprocal benefit).

A further strength of the outcomes in relation to their quality is their emphasis on the how’s and why’s in methodological terms as well as in the technical – they even come first chronologically to help ensure that pedagogical good practice is the driver and the technical aspects the means to a clearly-understood and appreciated end.

**WP8 Digital video/audio source materials** 03/2014 – 10/2014 (SMO, UK) and **WP10 Instructional DVDs** 10/2013 – 08/2014 (SDE, DK) deal with the adaptation, translation, and preparation of the project outputs to ensure these can be used with the Catalan, Czech, and Irish languages.

Again, the project has been successful in achieving the outcomes associated with work packages 8 and 10 on time and in a manner that ensures successful impact on other work packages; the test and evidence for this is the successful creation of instructional videos that are available on the web-site and through the Facebook presence. The “export” concept has been pursued and delivered in a clear and supportive way by SDE and SMO, but also embraced very positively by the importing partners, resulting in a very strong position of preparedness for the continued pilots and in-service teacher course in the final period of the project.

This is again reinforced by the presentation of such materials on the web-site not just as a stand alone, but in the context of a learning process. During the third meeting / workshop in Brno, new aspects were created and soon after the meeting the web-site was updated to include the following:

“Learn Irish through a sequence of video with text linked word by word to +100 languages and language exercises lige fill-in the bland, mixed words, crossword puzzles, and more: <http://multidict.net/cs/2248>

Learn Catalan through a sequence of video with text linked word by word to +100 languages and language exercises lige fill-in the bland, mixed words, crossword puzzles, and more: <http://multidict.net/cs/2247>

Learn Ccech through a sequence of video with text linked word by word to +100 languages and language exercises lige fill-in the bland, mixed words, crossword puzzles, and more: [*http://multidict.net/cs/2246*](http://multidict.net/cs/2246)

The course catalogue/guide\* has been updated and is now available as .pdf and .ePub (as eBook for iPads and other tablets). [*Download the catalogue in Catalan, Czech, English, and Irish*](http://languages.dk/pools-3/index.html#pools-3_course_book)

The course book has been updated and is now available as .pdf and .ePub (as eBook for iPads and other tablets). [*Download the book in Catalan, Czech, English, and Irish*](http://languages.dk/pools-3/index.html#pools-3_course_guide)”

* *NB in this instance both names (catalogue and guide) are provided for the outcome*

**WP9 In-service pilot courses/workshops** 10/2014 – 08/2015 (UU, UK**)** is used for piloting, evaluation and adjusting the outputs. It tests the adapted materials through in-service courses (workshops followed by peer reviews).

**WP11 Final edits of outcomes** 07/2015 – 09/2015 (SDE, DK) – final editing, adaptation and compilation of the project outputs based on the pilot testing and the external quality expert’s recommendations.

As these two work packages deal with events in the second year only of the project they will be addressed in the final external evaluation outcome.

**II Key Progress Indicators**

This brief section re-visits the key project elements – some specific to POOLS-3, some generic for all transnational initiatives – identified in the initial external evaluation strategy and report on the first project meeting.

**The progress of the initiative as a contracted project**

Challenges and problems that are faced by many transnational initiatives have been avoided so far in POOLS-3. There have been no partner withdrawals or changes to key personnel – in fact the institutional commitment of each partner organisation has been excellent as evidenced by the individual and collective meeting of deadlines and the hosting work done by the three partners where meetings have so far taken place. No amendment in terms of changes to the work programme has been required and no significant divergence or delay has occurred. There have been no “sleeping” partners or a lack of clarity about partner role or partner expectations.

The reason why problems that have not occurred is being emphasised is that it reinforces and observation made in the initial evaluation report – that the planning of the application and the selection of the partners was exactly appropriate to achieve the project outcomes. These comments reflect the “logistical” performance of the project to-date, let alone the more “outward-looking” aspects concerning the relevance of the project’s outcomes to the sector as a whole (considered in more detail below).

**The actual outcomes as they are likely to benefit the end-users and wider education and training sector**

This is one of the elements that it is sometimes hard to do justice to within the confines of the standard project reporting processes. The reason for this is that aspects such as accreditation, numbers of course registrants, courses, course guidelines, etc are straightforward to identify but their impact especially in the long-term is harder to qualify and quantify. This can be due to the, by definition, temporary nature of such projects, or it can be due to the way in which constant innovation and technical development in education can render a “new” process relatively obsolete relatively quickly. The strength of POOLS-3 is that it has a clear central methodology which is continuing the process initiated in previous POOLS and TOOLS projects and which addresses pedagogical and educational philosophical change as well as the innovative use of technologies for learning. The test of this is that the technologies could be removed from POOLS-3 and valuable activities and outcomes would remain because the approaches and results are learner-centred and learner-focused; they achieve, promote and support this philosophical shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred learning.

The proactive, collective collaborative creativity emphasis in POOLS-3 means that the results and processes are readily transferable to any learning environment for any age in any cultural or national context. The immediate focus is on a limited number of countries in the language learning field, but essentially the environment could be any. The pilot phase is eagerly anticipated by the external evaluators as the results are expected to be very positive and the evidence of further transferability are likely to be immediately evident. The only recommendation in this context is to ensure that the project partners have flexible enough monitoring approaches to do justice to the positive feedback likely to be obtained – certainly some anecdotal record would be valuable as the evidence so far is that those involved in the video creation have thoroughly enjoyed the process and seen application to their own work environment immediately.

**The responses the project makes to the feedback from ECORYS on the Application and Progress Report.**

This has already been largely addressed in the previous comments on WP1 Project Management in this report and in the first evaluation report where consideration was included on how the project had responded positively to the table of recommendations provided by ECORYS at the project outset. The project is performing well in terms of acknowledging and addressing the comments and recommendations received from the managing agency.

**The responses the project makes to the internal evaluation mechanisms and to internal monitoring procedures**

This is a little more challenging in some respects but also at least in part for good reasons. A quick review of the latest 6-monthly update reports from the partners (coinciding with approximately the same time as this report) indicates a very positive view from partners of the project state of play, management, clarity of targets and situation in their own country. The outlines of dissemination activities that have taken place reflect those featured on for example, the Facebook presence (e.g. the update from STUCOM includes reference to the Barcelona event that reached 400+ students and which is highlighted on Facebook). The reason why the review of the responses to internal monitoring measures is more challenging is that the comments from partners are very positive. Of course, it is unrealistic and in no parties’ best interests to recommend “finding something to criticise” and it is clear that, for example, the three meetings to-date have been extremely well organised and very rewarding for the partners but perhaps a consideration could be to amend the internal form to allow for more anecdotal observations especially as the project moves into the more implementation-based pilot phases.

In many projects the external evaluators have witnessed thorough internal monitoring processes and yet at meetings, there are many occasions when a partner may add something like “we had one tutor who was so impressed that they have already implemented the tools in all of their learning programmes”…..” or “a student was so motivated by the new processes that they decided to start on a Masters course when otherwise they would not have”; and it is comments and observations such as these that are not always “caught” in standard monitoring documents. So, the recommendation is to ensure a flexible and open approach so that the impact of POOLS-3 on individuals is recorded.

**The responses the project makes to the feedback from the external evaluation process.**

In an effective, well-managed project such as POOLS-3 with very motivated and engaged partners working collaboratively to realise very relevant results, the external evaluation can be a challenge. Simply put, no significant weakness either in terms of results or performance can be identified. The initial report and strategy identified some possible challenges (e.g. some risks associated in work package duration leading to time pressures at the project’s close) but at the mid-point, such risks no longer seem apparent as all activities are on schedule or ahead of schedule. In such circumstance the role of the evaluation can be adjusted to support the project in ensuring that it promotes itself as well as it can and to assist in the validation of its successes. It is in this context that the recommendations made for a higher profile for the internal monitoring procedures (to emphasise the rigour with which the project self-evaluates which adds gravitas to the outcomes) and for more impact measures for dissemination activities (to promote their very effective, proactive and “celebratory” nature) are made. The point is repeated here to emphasise that these aspects are not weaknesses but areas where the project could perhaps do more justice to its achievements.

It should also be emphasised that recommendations from the external evaluation process have been specifically addressed and included as agenda items in the meetings to-date, as with the recommendations from ECORYS.

**The performance of the project as a Transfer of Innovation initiative with particular reference to the 2013 ToI Priorities**

The initial external evaluation report featured an observation regarding the fact that POOLS-3 is the latest in a series of (related) initiatives featuring the DK partner and in some cases, some of the other current partners. The comments made were in the context of ensuring that the project emphasised the fact that whilst related to these past activities and drawing from them, POOLS-3 was a discrete and justifiable project in its own right and this “identity” has been confirmed by the first year of activities. The participants were clear and precise in describing in the application which elements of POOLS initiatives were being exploited and which elements would be new; furthermore, this was done very precisely in the context of the requirements of a Transfer of Innovation initiative.

The development work has been kept to a minimum and has been specific to POOLS-3 and especially the preparation and adaptation measures required by the “importing” countries. The importing partners have in now and at no time been passive recipients only, instead they have been dynamic and engaged from the outset providing innovative and energetic ideas and examples that have added value to the existing UK and DK “owned” processes and tools which in turn provided new impetus and innovation to the exporting partners and their practices. This is how a ToI project should work. The realistic and tangible process of transfer described in the application is being achieved and in such a way that lasting impact and sustainable change (at the professional and institutional levels in terms of the embracing of new teaching and learning models and paradigms) is very likely.

With regard to the specific Priorities and Objectives of the ToI 2013 Call, matching these with the “real life” experiences of a project is on occasion, reflective of subjective opinion – for example, when terms such as “quality”, “innovation”, “development” and “encourage” are featured. In POOLS-3 however, the match is a very real and clear one. “To support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices (LEO-SpObj-b).” is at the heart of POOLS-3 and it is again in this context that the recommendation is for the (importing partners especially) to do justice to this in their internal reporting back to SMO in the project second year and based on the experiences of the pilots. Impact on their systems, institutions and practices is already evident and it would do no harm to record progress explicitly against this Specific Objective.

“To facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training other than at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others (LEO-OpObj-3).” Again, this could almost be a sub-title for the work and achievements of POOLS-3 to-date. The exporting UK and DK partners have performed exceptionally in the context of the facilitation process (again it needs to be emphasised that they have been joined in this by the importing partners who have not wanted to be passive but actively engaged in this preparation process) and the entire transfer process is one that is an exemplary model of balance between preparation, planning, adaptation, quality and means of sustainability.

“To encourage the learning of modern foreign languages (LEO-OpObj-5)” and “To support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning (LEOOpObj-6)”

The recommendation concerning ensuring that the internal monitoring measures record target group and end user feedback on their experiences reflect the aims of these Operational Objectives. The active involvement of students in video production is evidence already of relevance to these aims, but it is also clear that the partners themselves have “re-found” a desire to improve language skills and have enjoyed sharing information in each other’s languages – to the extent that the project participants themselves have been involved in a form of pilot of the tools and processes in the project’s first year. They have also exchanged valuable knowledge and experience on the use of technologies in learning with the potential added value clear from the outset.

**III Conclusions and Recommendations**

The POOLS-3 project has made excellent progress in its first year. No significant problems or delays have been encountered and the progress has been in accordance with the planned work programme with the only variations being achievements ahead of deadlines and additional valuable activities taking place.

This progress is at least in part due to the quality of the original application which reflected the experience of the applicants but also embraced the enthusiasm of the newer participants. Commitment and motivation have been evident and have been matched correctly to the original targets and milestone. It is also clear that the consortium selection was an excellent and entirely appropriate one; the working dynamics of the group is one of the most effective ones the external evaluators have witnessed.

Management at the central level has been excellent, emphasising clarity of role and support when needed; there is an informal atmosphere supported by formal monitoring procedures which has resulted in a “joie de vivre” working atmosphere tied to clear expectations and commitment – again, a perfect balance. Credit should also go to the partners in management terms as they have been enthusiastic and committed from the outset meaning there has been no need for repeated reminders or requests for updates.

The relevance of the aims identified at the application stage has actually increased in the period since due to again the in-built flexibility within the planned activities to embrace innovation and the “ahead of schedule” availability of course books, guidelines and instructional videos that had led to impact at the (especially importing) partner institutions already.

Some confusion existed in the early stages based on some of the recommendations received from ECORYS (regarding translations, role of ICT experts and dissemination strategy) but these were useful as a) they provided the project with the opportunity to review after 6 months where they stood, b) the project response was quickly accepted by ECORYS and both parties were clearer on some of the aims of the project and how they were perceived and c) they acted as a reminder to the project of how it is important to be aware of and appreciate possible gaps between the understanding of the project from the point of view of those engaged in it on a day-to-day basis and those viewing it from outside.

The recommendations from this report are relatively few in number and as already explained reflective more of a suggestion for the project to promote certain aspects of its achievements more, than of any significant weakness. This is certainly the case in terms of the profile of the internal monitoring mechanisms and the recording of impact of dissemination.

Other recommendations are much more in-line with more general “housekeeping” suggestions, such as a quick check of language and typos on the web-site, consistency of terms used between links and titles of documents on the website and the minutes of meetings to reflect more clearly (even if in only a summary) the focus of the meeting as presented in the application (QM in the second project meeting and in the future, exploitation in the fourth).

POOLS-3 is a pleasure to be participating in and the evaluators look forward very much to the project second year and in particular anticipate high quality results from the project pilots and very positive feedback from the target groups.

Gareth Long and Lydia Pavlopoulou, GLPM, October 2014