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Project Erasmus+ № 561775-EPP-1-2015-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
Trans-Regional Environmental Awareness for Sustainable Usage of Water Resources

Институциональное партнерство в целях устойчивости трансграничного водопользования:
Россия и Казахстан»

STRATEGY FOR THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTS/PROGRAMMES

INTRODUCTION

This document describes the Quality Assurance Policy of implementation of Project Erasmus+ № 561775-EPP-1-2015-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP Trans-Regional Environmental Awareness for Sustainable Usage of Water Resources (TREASURE WATER). It is developed as part of WP 7 (Effective quality control and project monitoring) of the Project in accordance with the project description and all applicable rules and recommendations. The focus is on the assessment of quality assurance, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of project management, communication, dissemination strategies, working meetings and the activities of the steering group. In the document, the planned actions are considered and corresponding goals, roles and responsibilities of project participants are defined. A quality assessment plan is proposed including the accepted indicators, methodology and procedures for evaluating project activities and results. For each objective, a responsible partner (s), terms and implementation tools, expected results or outputs, as well as relevant quality criteria for project results are determined, within the framework of quality indicators approved by all partners. Monitoring of the progress of the project and quality of the outcomes and outputs in each work package are to ensure high quality of the project results and ensure that they are consistent with the project goals.

I. PROJECT MISSION

The mission of the project is to promote integration of knowledge, best practices and inter-institutional interaction in the field of transboundary water management, through development of high-quality re-training programmes to meet the needs of potential beneficiaries: enterprises and water user organizations, monitoring and oversight organizations in the field of water management, research and engineering institutions operating in transboundary water basins, to increase the level of professional competencies in the field of transboundary water management. In this context, the professional community is highly interested in creating a unified online platform for implementing retraining and advanced training programmes.

The project partner universities share a number of common principles and values that determine their approach to organizing and implementing re-training and LLL programmes:

- the concept according to which in modern conditions, when time is valued, the creation and promotion of distance and blended forms of continuing education and retraining programmes is a crucial problem in modern societies, where the development of information and computer technologies creates the need for complex and interactive content;
- confidence that a quantitative increase in the number of professionals with theoretical and practical skills in the field of transboundary water management and the interchange of world best practices for managing transboundary water bodies will create conditions for improving the quality of institutional interaction on sustainable transboundary water management at both national and international levels;
- a concept according to which, in the context of rapidly changing political, economic, legal conditions, the dynamics of the labor market, and the growth of individualization of education, flexible mechanisms for the elaboration of retraining education programmes are needed to create a unique particular student friendly educational product.

II. COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The project partner universities understand that the quality of programme implementation is an ongoing process that depends not only on adequate standards and resources, but mainly on regular monitoring and development. Therefore, we commit ourselves to continuously improve the quality of the project and the educational product, as defined in this document.

Quality assurance strategic guidelines and framework

- Quality of educational products/programs and training of attendees is determined by the demand scale of these products in the educational service market and recipients' satisfaction with the provided educational service.
- Quality assessment of the education programmes' content, academic teaching qualification, training methods and technologies, facilities available
- Establishing effective partnerships with education recipients
- Information systems development through the user-friendly Moodle eLearning platform (other platforms are also available)
- Focus on Lifelong Learning-Education and Training

III. TREASURE WATER QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

III.I Goals, priorities and objectives:

The overall goal of QA: enhance the teaching and resource potential at the partner country institutions to enable development and implementation of sustainable and competitive educational services,

Priorities:

- Continuous quality improvement of educational products in a competitive and dynamic environment.

- Collaboration with institutional partners for the purpose of knowledge update and transfer.
- Enhancing the quality of methodological, information and personnel support for educational activities.

Objectives:

- provision of high quality educational products in accordance with the requirements and the resources available.
- engagement of highly qualified professionals in the field of transboundary water management from various industries, academic centers, administrative authorities to dialogue, exchange of experience and information and to the process of organizing and implementing retraining education programmes.

Potential risks:

1. Unsustainable level of inter-institutional cooperation (lack of access to the governing documents on transboundary water management of partner countries at the inter-institutional level);
2. Organization barriers in bringing foreign experts for the implementation of additional education programs in the field of transboundary water management (employment, payment of funds, etc.);
3. Identification of technical capacities in selecting online platforms for implementing additional education courses between partner countries.

Benefits:

- Modular principle of educational programmes implementation (individualization for the customer);
- Highly qualified scientific and academic teaching expertise in sustainable and transboundary water management;
- On-going training and professional development of teaching staff providing educational products/programs;
- Applying distance-learning technologies;

- Development of partnerships with national and international educational and scientific organizations and enterprises of the real sector of the economy.
- Possibility to develop and implement relevant DOE programmes in cooperation with strategic partners, leading scientists, highly qualified experts from Russia, Kazakhstan and Europe, scientific and educational organizations, state corporations and high-tech companies in the field of transboundary water management.

III.II Assessment Levels

The project assessment plan is an integral part of the QAP. It outlines the components of project evaluation, a set of quality indicators by which progress and the quality of project outputs will be measured, as well as an evaluation mode and assessment tools to be used.

Quality assessment of activities for the implementation of the project and the quality of the final product (educational programmes) includes internal and external expertise:

III.II.I. Internal quality assessment

The internal project quality assessment consists of two main components:

- 1) Regular internal quality evaluation of the project, which is carried out by members of the international working group (WG).

An international WG was created at the first kick-off meeting. The group included project coordinators, contact persons of partner countries universities and EU countries partners. A full list of members of the international working group is presented in Appendix 1.

The international WG:

- monitor the project implementation process on work packages 2-6;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the events;
- coordinate interaction between partners at each stage of implementation.

Monitoring results are reported by the team members at coordination meetings, which are held quarterly in person or online. The international (trans-institutional) WG assesses the quality and representativeness of analytical materials (WP2, WP4 and toolkits (WP3, WP5, WP 6) prepared by partners.

- 2) Continuous internal assessment of the educational product quality (the project result) is carried out by the methodology WG-s formed for each thematic educational unit, which include leading experts from universities in partner countries, professionals in the relevant field from the EU countries and representatives from academic and industrial partner organizations: Institute of Water and Environmental Problems (Barnaul, Russian Federation), LLC Tyumen Vodokanal (Tyumen, Russian Federation), and external experts.

Methodology-focused WG-s:

- determine the list of educational modules according to thematic blocks;
- check their level in accordance with the EHEA FQ;
- ensure the compliance of created educational products with the internal requirements of the project, the needs of potential students, and the requirements of national and international regulatory documents in the field of education.

The coordination of the activities of thematic methodological WG-s is carried out by the International Methodological Board of the project, which includes experts from among the leaders of the methodological working groups (a full list of the methodological working groups' representatives is presented in Appendix 2). During the project, the International Methodological Board meets 6 times: in Barnaul, Thessaloniki, Tomsk, Khanty-Mansiisk, Freiburg, Nijmegen, Tyumen. The Board draws up reports and recommendations on a regular basis in accordance with the work on the project and QAP.

Internal monitoring of the quality of educational products and services provided at universities in Russia and Kazakhstan is carried out directly by the units engaged in this type of educational activity: continuous education centres (additional

professional education), institutes and other units eligible for this type of activity in accordance with the laws on the education of each country. Universities also have educational and methodological councils / committees, chairs / departments of quality control of educational services, educational and methodological departments, which are usually subordinate to the vice-rector for educational / educational activities, and who are required to monitor the conformity of educational products sold in their universities with current regulatory documents (a list of existing international documents is presented in Appendix 3). They determine the form of assessing the quality of knowledge and skills of students, the form of the final certification, appoint a commission to assess the level of development of competencies.

The list of centers for continuing professional education of partner universities, where individual modules and quality control of educational services will be implemented, is presented in Appendix 3.

III.II.II. External expertise

The external expertise of the Project includes the following components:

1) The external expertise of the entire project will be carried out by independent experts in the EU and PC. They will provide interim and final assessment reports. Peer review and inter-project coaching between other Erasmus + projects will be conducted via video conferencing or face-to-face meetings.

Erasmus + national officers in accordance with their project monitoring process schedule will carry out project monitoring.

2) The external assessment of the designed educational products, including an assessment of compliance with the needs of potential students and satisfaction with the quality of services provided. This assessment will be conducted through a survey, interview, discussion, questionnaire, benchmarking, testing, etc.

Institutional industrial (e.g. Tyumen Vodokanal, Tyumen, Russia; “Kazvodkhoz”, Astana, Kazakhstan), administrative and managerial (e.g. Water Resources Department of the Nizhneobsky Basin Water Administration, Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia; State Basin Inspectorate for Regulation of Water Use and Water

Resources Protection, Astana, Kazakhstan) partners will be involved in the external expertise of educational products

The assessment of quality assurance measures will be based on the analysis of qualitative data (meeting established deadlines, achieving goals and indicators) and quantitative data (number of activities undertaken, analysis of assessments of educational products obtained through surveys and questionnaires). Data will be collected from all project partners and key stakeholders.

III.III. Processes and tools

This section is devoted to the main processes and tools related to ensuring the quality of the project: meetings of working groups, feedback mechanisms, comparative analysis, adequate marketing strategies, use of ECTS concepts and guides.

➤ Regular meetings of working groups.

Regular meetings of working groups on particular stages of the project provide an opportunity to coordinate the activities of partner universities in the implementation of the project, identifying key problems and finding the best ways of solution, including those with participation of foreign colleagues and representatives of the industrial sphere.

The role of the working groups consists in timely identification of problematic issues in the project implementation at each stage; correction of medium-term action plans; search for compromise solutions in case of discrepancies between the requirements of educational standards, internal regulations of partner universities, national legislation; development of the structure of retraining education programmes and strategies for implementing educational programmes; development of general requirements for the design of educational modules.

➤ Feedback mechanisms

The feedback mechanism allows students and other parties interested to anonymously express their opinions about the needs for certain educational products, as well as about the quality of existing programmes, which makes it an important part of quality assurance processes.

Students should be given the opportunity to answer questions on the programme questionnaire. In the first year of the introduction of TREASURE WATER, a questionnaire was compiled, allowing to obtain an objective assessment of the needs of interested parties in the thematic content of the retraining education programme and the forms of its implementation, its relevance. After the first retraining programmes were implemented within the framework of the project, additions were made to the questionnaire to assess the compliance of the programme with expectations, to contribute to the development and transformation of thematic content of educational products.

➤ Comparative analysis

Comparative analysis is the mechanism used in the implementation of WP 2, WP 4, WP 5 and WP 7.

Maintaining competitiveness of the product and content created within the TREASURE WATER project requires programmes' monitoring that is targeted at the same potential candidates and / or share a similar approach to solving the problem of raising the awareness and qualification of professional working in the field of transboundary water management. A comparative analysis of similar projects will help identify possible risks and growth points.

A comparative analysis of retraining education programmes will determine the place of educational products in the ranking of similar programmes, improve quality, strive to constantly update and improve the content, and search for new methodological solutions.

➤ Benchmarking

The monitoring of the educational services market, the identification of competing companies and the study of their successful experience in order to constantly improve their own products to maintain competitiveness is carried out at least three times in the course of the project: in the beginning – in order to determine free "niches" for a more successful project; in the middle of the project – in order to identify ways to improve the quality of the product and services provided; at the end of the project – in order to find the best solutions for the successful implementation of educational programmes and product promotion.

The monitoring results of WP 2, WP5, WP6 are presented in Appendix 8.

➤ Use of ICT Environment

In the system of modern continuing professional education, the ability to communicate freely and efficiently with teachers, other students of educational programmes, and representatives of professional communities is crucial. Currently this can be achieved only through the use of information and computer technologies — online and blended learning on an interactive platform. This allows to virtually bring the consumer of an educational service to its “source”, and makes it possible to choose not only a course or programme, but also independently select the content, regardless of the territorial fragmentation of the desired authors of the modules / courses / programmes.

Online e-learning platform, video conferencing should be used intensively. Therefore, the frequency of visiting the platform should become the main criterion for assessing the quality of use of ICT environment.

➤ Use of ECTS Concepts and Guides

The use of ECTS concepts and guidelines is an important part of ensuring the quality of educational practice in the field of continuing education in general and joint programmes in particular. TREASURE WATER will strive to follow ECTS best practices as outlined in the ECTS Guide, especially in the proper use of the ECTS loan concept and in defining the level of competencies and learning outcomes acquired in programmes in accordance with the European competency framework.

➤ Development of quality assessment indicators

An important tool for assessing quality are indicators that provide an idea of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of project implementation.

Indicators must satisfy the following conditions:

- Accessibility of measurement - methods used should be easy to measure this indicator, without the use of complex calculation formulas and without the use of technological solutions.
- Comparability - the indicator should be evaluated on a unified methodological basis among all project participants and allow to

compare the results of the project over time and with other similar projects or activities.

- Repeatability - the indicator should allow taking measurements in dynamics, even after the end of the project.
- Ease of interpretation - the indicator should be accessible to all project participants.
- Reflect certain aspects of the project.

Indicators for assessing the quality of the project on separate results of the project are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Learning outcomes of education recipients:

Recipients	Expected results
Attendees	Professional potential update
	Career growth
	New competencies
Teaching staff	Personal self development
	Self-improvement
	Collaboration with industrial partners
University	Increase of competitive positioning
	Promoting a favorable image in professional environment
	Social development goals
Industrial partners	Increase of competitive positioning
	Re-evaluation of human capital
	Acquisition of new competencies, constant development of competencies and employees professionalism
	Social development goals

Table 2 -Evaluation criteria for the quality of educational products

№	Criterion	Score	Scoring scale
1.	Relevance	2	educational product complies with the requirements
		1	educational product is substantially non-responsive to the requirements
		0	criterion is not introduced; educational product is not adapted to the educational needs
2.	Innovation	2	availability of the innovative component; profound content and innovative potential
		1	innovative component affects subsequent fragments (structural components) of an educational product
		0	criterion is not introduced
4.	Consistency	2	all componets are interrelated, principal goals, objectives and the best means of achieving them are outlined (methods and technologies); the content is compliant with the requirements
		1	educational product is quite fragmented, not all submitted components of an educational product are interrelated
		0	criterion is not introduced
5.	Practical significance	2	practical significance is validated
		1	practical relevance not always takes into account global trends and real needs
		0	criterion is not introduced (practical relevance is not identified)