

Check List for Project Designers

**Sustainability of European
cooperation projects in the field of
vocational education and training**

Introduction

The implementation of European cooperation projects should lead to generating added-value in vocational education and training in Europe. In order to achieve this, the improvement or solution should be sustainable. Sustainability means that crucial activities and results of the project are maintained and continue to deliver benefits to the target group, structure, sector or system after the end of the EU funding. Ideally, the sustainability of a project should also generate impact, meaning direct or indirect long-term effects on actors, structures, sectors or systems beyond the original project environment.

Sustainability may not concern all the aspects of a project. In each project some activities or results may be maintained, while others may not be possible/necessary to maintain. A project can therefore be considered as sustainable if relevant activities are pursued and results are maintained or developed after the end of the EU funding. Factors that support/ favour sustainability, and even impact, are the following:

Project level factors:

- Quality of project design regarding the needs of target group/s and/or sector/s
- Involvement of partners: sense of ownership and motivation
- Effective management and leadership
- Active participation of the target group/s and/or sector/s
- Capacity for securing adequate resources for continuation

Context level factors:

- Institutional support
- Political and administrative support
- Socio-economic support

This check list provides project designers with guidance on how to address these factors.

The check list is structured (1) around conclusions from a European Commission study on the sustainability of international cooperation projects¹, and (2) practical recommendations how to ensure, factor by factor, the sustainability of project activities and results.

¹ "Sustainability of international cooperation projects in the field of higher education and vocational training", November 2006, European Commission, Directorate-General Education and Culture: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/publications_en.php

Project-level factors

1. Quality of project design meeting the needs of target group/s and/or sector/s		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C1.1. Projects matching the needs of learners, socio-economic actors and the labour market are more likely to attract target groups/end-users, funding and support after the end of EU funding.	Undertake an in-depth assessment of the needs of the target groups (research analysis) in order to match existing or future requirements more satisfactorily. Ensure to anchor your proposal in key future issues of reform in your institution or country.	
	Analyse long-term labour market trends in order to estimate the potential beneficiaries in the coming years and argue on the future attractiveness of the curriculum.	
	Sustainability issues must receive more attention in case of more far-reaching projects such as setting up completely new courses, which involves more than reforming or extending existing programmes.	
	Develop links to the labour market (to business and/or to public authorities depending on your project)	
C1.2. The projects that present a high level of innovation for the "importing" Partner country require closer examination of accreditation procedures and existing quality standards.	Where possible, embed innovative training materials/practices within existing accredited programmes or in line with the evolution of accreditation criteria.	
C1.3. Provision to maintain and enhance the high level of innovation of the project for all "importing" partners is a key factor of sustainability.	Implement innovative tools and practices in the project (continuous quality evaluation, benchmarking activities...) if they match the needs.	

C1.4. The existence of substantial benefits for the learners participating in the project is a key element for sustainability. These benefits concern training content and professional or international recognition which can improve their motivation to take part in the courses/project.	Be sure that the project provides sufficient benefits for learners (cutting-edge knowledge, accredited courses, professional recognition etc.).	
2. Involvement of consortium members: sense of ownership and motivation		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C2.1. The individual involvement of the consortium members is one of the most crucial factors of sustainability; it may counterbalance a lack of institutional support.	Analyse the sources of the consortium members' motivation, their capacities and develop a shared interest based on mutual benefits for all the partners.	
C2.2. Provisions for a maintained and continuous commitment of all the consortium members are important factors for ensuring sustainability: "commitment is necessary, enthusiasm is not sufficient".	Try to create a shared interest based on mutual benefits regarding future outcomes. Organise participative management with clear decision-making procedures and regular reporting (e.g. regular meetings).	
C2.3. The experience of cooperation amongst the consortium partners is a factor of sustainability.	Highlight existing cooperation relationships between consortium members (outside any EU programmes).	
	If possible, define a consortium around a limited number of members who have already worked together (in other than EU projects).	
	If possible, involve European partners who already know the other partner countries or are really willing to discover them.	

C2.4.	A moderate turnover within the consortium members can reinforce the continuity of the project (new dynamic); a turnover that is too high can hinder it.	Demonstrate how the partners' capacities and resources will contribute to the project purpose and ensure that there is a limited renewal of project's team members in each partner institution (by introducing contractual provisions)	
C2.5.	The particular importance of a precise definition of the roles within the consortium is evident.	Draw up an organisational chart of consortium members.	
C2.6.	Respecting the others' values is particularly important: the lack of mutual consideration between the partners can hinder sustainability.		
3. Effective management and leadership			
Conclusions		Recommendations	Done
C3.1.	Effective management can favour the involvement of partners, fundraising and the capacity to anticipate sustainability issues. Experienced project managers can ensure it.	Be sure that there is at least one experienced leader (in international projects) in the consortium.	
C3.2.	Sustainability can be linked to the fact that the project leadership combines institutional influence and professional interest.	It is important to involve the most influential persons in the own and in the partner organisations as well as the most active ones.	
		Ensure that project leaders are formally accountable and that the roles and responsibilities of the consortium members are clear.	
		Ensure that the involvement of project leaders will be fully integrated by their institutions into their professional assignments and that that is compatible with their other tasks and overall workload.	
C3.3.	The project is potentially sustainable if it fits the career aspiration of the project leaders in the partner organisations	Be attentive to the personal interest of project leaders in the success and the sustainability of the project (integration of project activities in their professional tasks and responsibilities).	

4. Active participation of target groups		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C4.1. The help of target groups and end-users on the project activities can be useful.	Foresee formal involvement of target groups and end-users in project activities	
	Promote participation of target groups and end-users in the implementation of activities.	
	Use risk analysis to identify any obstacles to target group and end-user participation (linguistic, financial and cultural gaps) and plan possible remedies.	
5. Capacity for securing adequate resources for continuation		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C5.1. In most cases, the continued financing of project activities after EU funding has not been foreseen, even when only a part of the activities continue and need adequate resources. In sustainable projects, the coordinators have anticipated continued financing since the beginning of the project.	Identify precisely which activities are going to be sustainable and their costs during the <u>project design phase</u> .	
	Identify beforehand precisely which actors (private, public) could help you to finance the relevant project activities after the EU funding and try to obtain some kind of formal agreement for future support.	
C5.2. Securing continued financing is linked to institutional support (see below C6.1). Some projects have found interesting solutions by mixing different sources of financing: public, private and international.	Actively lobby your own organisation to secure the main resources and do your best to create an autonomous entity in charge of implementing the project.	
	Actively lobby private and/or local organisations in the partner countries to support the project activities after the EU funding has come to an end.	
C5.3. The sustainability of projects is linked to continued international cooperation where direct relations and exchanges are maintained.	Foresee and promote the various other (than EU support) opportunities to maintain the cooperation with your partners.	

Context-level factors

6. Institutional support		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C6.1. An important factor for sustainability is if the project is supported by the hierarchies of the partner organisations because this is a precondition for later financial commitments (see C5.2 above)	Actively seek the support of the hierarchies of the partner organisations by demonstrating how the project adds value to their development strategies.	
	Organise regular (not continuous) involvement of the hierarchies in the project life (in the steering committee for example).	
	Identify precisely the types of activity that can benefit from support (material, financial and human) and obtain formal commitment regarding resource allocation.	
C6.2. Gain the interest and political support of the local and regional (or even national) authorities.	Look for the support of influential players in Ministries, parliament and key education and training organisations (e.g accreditation bodies, national umbrella organisations).	
C6.3. Existing cooperation with partners is an advantage for institutional support (see C5.3 above).	Identify existing cooperation relationships between consortium members.	

7. Administrative and Political support		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C7.1. Political support and support by the authorities or authorised bodies is a key factor for the sustainability of project results. It is important to find the right level of support: local, regional, national or professional organisations.	Identify precisely the right level of support and try to obtain it by various means (see below).	
C7.2. Support by the authorities or by accreditation/certifying bodies in the countries of the partners is a key factor for curriculum modernisation or development projects.	During the project design, test the opportunities and risks, establish relevant contacts (see C7.3) for future accreditation or recognition.	
	Pay attention to publicising the project in order to enhance added value for authorities and public institutions: e.g. project presentations, leaflets and newspaper interviews.	
C7.3. Administrative and political support can be favoured by direct links between the project team and the authorities.	Try to create individual contact with decision-makers in the authorities and to do active lobbying at this level.	
C7.4. Integration in existing national and international networks and associations is important.	Ensure contacts between consortium members and national and international networks throughout the life of the project and maintain them after the end of the EU project.	
8. Socio-economic support		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Done
C8.1. Depending on each project and context projects can be relevant to the local socio-economic communities around the project partners.	If relevant for your project, try to obtain support from local (private or public) actors to ensure sustainability.	
	Identify cultural gaps or economic impediments to socio-economic support in order to facilitate active lobbying.	

<p>C8.2. The more a project corresponds to socio-economic needs, the more it will be able to obtain support from local actors.</p>	<p>Check that your project really corresponds to the socio-economic needs. They can be identified through a study of needs.</p>	
<p>C7.5. Integration in existing local and regional networks and associations is important.</p>	<p>Ensure contacts between consortium members and local and regional networks throughout the life of the project and maintain them after the end of the EU project.</p>	