

# EXTERNAL EVALUATION- REPORT 2

Project Number: 2015-1-IT02-KA201-015118

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## Short description of the project activities

The project Stories has been implemented between September 2015 and August 2018 by a partnership consisting

The proposal IOs are:

IO1 - MANUAL OF BEST PRACTICES OF DST IN ECEC

IO2 - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

IO3 - TRAINING REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR DST IN ECEC

IO4 - ONLINE PLATFORM

IO5 - EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENTATION

IO6 - GUIDELINES ON MEDIA LITERACY THROUGH DST

Briefly, the macro-task of the project plan have been:

1° year (M1-M12): SoA research, teacher training course, design of educational activities

2° year (M12-M30): Research and experimentation of activities in kindergartens / scientific observation in parallel

3° year (M30-36): Documentation, analysis of practices, development of guidelines

## Description of the external evaluation activities

The external evaluation process has been carried out through different means:

a) An analysis of the working and final documents produced by the partnership as well as website and platform

b) Development of a questionnaire assessing project management including the transnational meetings.  
Evaluation Questionnaires: 5 organisations involved and 7 questionnaires processed

The result of the 1st M&E report issued in 2017 were focused on the results achieved by the partnership in relation to some of the outputs (in particular O1) and the key management documents produced during the first phase of the project.

This second report focuses on three main elements: an assessment of the dissemination activities, an assessment of all the Intellectual Outputs as well as the questionnaire to the project partners targeting

management as well as valorisation activities. When possible, the intellectual outputs have been assessed also on the basis of the criteria set out by the partnership in the Internal Quality and Evaluation Plan.

## Assessment of the dissemination activities

The dissemination activities of the project have been carried out following the dissemination plan elaborated by the partnership at the beginning of the project (see First evaluation report for details).

### *Sustainability and effectiveness of the plan during the project life cycle*

As pointed out in the previous report the plan did foresee a substantial number of activities at local level, and that was identified as a positive element which could strengthen the potential of the project in terms of reaching out a wide variety of audiences. In the previous evaluation report it was recommended to collect information about dissemination at regular interval by the partner in charge of dissemination or by the project coordinator.

### *Results of the Dissemination activities*

The partnership issued a final report pertaining dissemination in which it has outlined:

- The key elements of the dissemination strategy
- The main dissemination tools developed (promo-kit and website)
- The dissemination activities carried out in each country.

As pointed out by the report, and as it has been verified through the documents made available by the partners and the checks carried out on the sources of verification provided, the tools for dissemination have been delivered and wide set of activities has been implemented in order to spread the results and the achievements of the project.

The main target group reached by dissemination have been: practitioners (teachers and civil servants), decision-makers, researchers and university students, families. These groups have been reached thanks to a variety of activities (multiplier events, meetings, participation in conferences, publications, flyers, etc) which have been planned and successfully carried out through the involvement of all partners.

### *Conclusions*

In general, on the basis of the evidence provided by the partnership the dissemination activities of the project can be considered successful as the partners managed to inform targets locally and regionally (mainly Italy, Germany) but also nationally (mainly Turkey, Finland) and internationally (all partners). The partnership has ensured consistency between the dissemination plan and the implemented activities.

## Assessment of the Intellectual Outputs

The project STORIES has been aimed at the development of 6 intellectual outputs.

IO1 - MANUAL OF BEST PRACTICES OF DST IN ECEC

IO2 - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

IO3 - TRAINING REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR DST IN ECEC

IO4 - ONLINE PLATFORM

IO5 - EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENTATION

IO6 - GUIDELINES ON MEDIA LITERACY THROUGH DST

All 6 Outputs have been created and delivered by the partnership by the end of the implementation phase. The first Output "IO1 - MANUAL OF BEST PRACTICES OF DST IN ECEC" has been assessed in the first elevational report.

### IO6 - Guidelines for Digital Storytelling in Early Childhood Education

The document has been structured in five sections as indicated in the application form

- DST AND MEDIA LITERACY IN ECEC (PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY, SOA)
- DST IN EARLY CHILDOOD EDUCATION: A TRAINING MODEL FOR EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS
- SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS
- BEST PRACTICES FOR USING DST IN ECEC
- CONCLUSIONS

As a matter of fact the guidelines include the IO2, IO3 and IO5. As a result of this part of the assessment of the output will focused on the process it reflects as a whole.

The first chapter introduces the theme of Digit Story Telling in the scientific literature and the provides a general overview of the topic also by linking the literature to a set of practices identified in the initial phases of the project. The second and third sections refer to IO2 and IO3 respectively and will be dealt separately. The same goes for the fourth section (IO5) which summarizes the findings in relation to the best practices on DST identified under three main areas: (1) Teachers' Role, (2) Characteristics of the Setting, and (3) Planning the Process and Evaluation Activities of the Digital Storytelling Projects.

### Strengths of the Output

- The guidelines provide an effective overview of the results achieved by the projects in terms of research, training paths and the substantial practices identified and produced.
- The document addresses multiple target groups where both academics and practitioners can find elements of inspiration for further deepening research aspects as well as elements to consider in the daily activities carried out with children in ECEC services;

### **Weaknesses of the Output**

- As the main target group are early childhood educators a more descriptive approach to the best practices selected listed in the annex could have strengthened the attractiveness and the usability of the output for this specific professional profile.

### **IO2 - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

The scientific results achieved by the partnership relate to a set of research questions set out by the partnership:

- Which digital narrative elements occur in children's digital stories?
- What are the characteristics of the interactive process of building a digital narrative in a DST project in ECE?
- What are the educators and teachers' competences in ECEC DST on an individual and a collective level?
- How does children's agency manifest in the DST process?
- Developing young children's creativity: what can we learn from DST practice in early childhood settings?
- How do DST activities support children's social-emotional development, in terms of children's verbal and nonverbal group interactions and the narrative elements exhibited individually in story creation process?

As a result of the research activities carried during the project, all 5 research questions have been addressed. The results of the research have been based on an initial literature reviews which has set the basis for the development of training modules and the analysis of the stories developed as a result of the training.

### **Strengths of the Output**

- The research has been based on evidence derived by a large number of stories (174) produced by the partners and the pre-schools involved in the process;
- The complexity behind the process of production of the stories is well balanced by a clear overview and analysis of the elements that come into play
- All research institutions involved in the process contributed actively the development of the output thanks to the specific expertise they provided.

The replicability and applicability of the research results cannot be assessed in the framework in this report due to the fact that these elements can be evaluated over a period of time that goes beyond of the project implementation phase.

### IO3 - TRAINING REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR DST IN ECEC

The partnership has developed a training model for pre-school teachers based on a set of competencies they should acquire in order to develop an effective digital story telling.

The training model is divided into the following modules:

1. DST pedagogical approach
2. Technical training
3. Laboratory project work
4. Design of educational projects

#### Strengths of the outputs

- The high effectiveness of the modules as shown by the feedback provided by the teachers and the number of stories produced as a result of the training activities;
- A structure and content of the modules strongly oriented to competence acquisition;
- High potential for follow-up and valorisation activities in the four countries after the end of the project as the training could be replicated extensively;

#### Weaknesses of the output

- Lack of direct links to additional online resources and training course materials from the guidelines;

### IO5 - EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENTATION

The intellectual output consists of a report which addressed the elements emerged from the analysis of the activities carried out in the four countries following the training and the stories that have been produced at pre-schools involved.

Key elements of the output are:

A) The definition of "best practice"

B) The methodology followed and the elements observed in each country in particular: 1) individual characteristics of project implementation process, (2) individual characteristics of the products created by children and (3) composite items including characteristics of both process and product together

C) The analysis of the findings

D) Conclusions including a general assessments of the results and a set of features placed under three main categories: (1) Teachers' Role, (2) Characteristics of the Setting, and (3) Planning the Process and Evaluation Activities of DST.

#### Strengths of the output

- Effective and clear structure of the output
- The methodology is well defined and explained

- A definition of best practice is provided at the outset and as result of that an effective analysis of the evidence produced by the project
- Detailed description of the best practices
- A set of “to-the-point” features

#### **Weaknesses of the output**

- The description of the practices due to level of details provided should be presented in a more easy-to read way. This could enhance the replicability of the and the valorisation of the output in particular for the target group of ECEC educators/teachers.

#### IO4 - ONLINE PLATFORM

The project partnership has set up an online platform for sharing information and implementing project activities. The platform consists of the following sections

Main page  
Info  
Content  
Activities  
Communication  
Statistics  
Planning

The main activities foreseen in relation to the development of the output i.e. the A.1 Online platform design, A.2 Online platform development, A.3 Multimedia training modules online A.4 Platform management & content update have been carried out according to what stated in the application form.

#### **Strengths of the output**

- Provides a virtual space both for management and implementation of project activities

#### **Weaknesses of the output**

- More working materials should be published on the public pages. Alternatively, some level of accessibility should be granted to visitors of the website.

## Assessment of the management and of the implementation process

The assessment of the general management of the project and the implementation process has been based on two main elements

- 1) on a questionnaire distributed to the partners at the end of the project
- 2) meetings with the organization in charge of the project coordination

The questionnaire included the following sections:

- A. Implementation and involvement
- B. Outcomes
- C. Valorisation
- D. Sustainability
- E. Conclusions

### *A) IMPLEMENTATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT*

Overall the partners have been adequately involved in all project dimensions, with a significant participation in the development of project activities and valorisation. Also, the other two dimensions of project and quality management witness a positive score (about 70% between good and very good).

This can be considered as a good result achieved by the project as normally the management and quality assurance processes are mainly in charge of/centralized by the applicant/coordinator.

According to most partners, their participation and involvement have significantly improved along the project cycle and great progresses have been done, even if one partner indicated a somewhat lower degree of involvement

The operational structure of the project is considered as a FISHERMAN'S NET by the great majority of the respondents which means that most of the relations within the project have been between the project partners, with some partners also interacting directly. This can be seen positively if combined with the level of involvement as it indicates an active participation of all partners to the project activities and more in general ownership of the project.

### *Project management and communication*

There has been a sound project management, witnessed, above all, by:

- A good perception of communication standards and procedures (no negative opinions, 1 respondent judging communication as fair)
- Clearness of objectives and working programme, helped by an adequate circulation of information.
- The support of project coordinator (about 55% of very good marks).

The main weakness identified has been related to time management specifically related to product development: due to the tight schedule of the project it has not been always easy to respect the deadline set out at coordination group level this has led to delays in the implementation of some local activities. A closer monitoring of the some of the deadlines could have led to a smoother implementation of the project activities.

### *B) RESULTS*

#### *Accomplishment of project objectives*

This survey mainly confirms the outcomes of the previous reports and the homogenous level of accomplishment of the goals of STORIES. All partners have judged as good or very good the fulfilment of project's goals set in the proposal:

- a. Lay the foundation of a curriculum framework and related guidelines for educators in order to implement such methodology for the goal of media literacy;
- b. Make a scientific assessment of the activities on specific research focuses related to educational outcomes.

#### *Outcomes of the project*

The outcomes and results of the project were considered by the partners of good quality and they met their expectations. The quality and quantity of materials produced supports this assessment in particular in relation to the development of materials for teachers' training and for enriching the body of knowledge pertaining Digital Story Telling.

Overall, the survey confirms the analysis of the materials and the elements emerged from the meetings with the project coordinator:

- The most considerable impact of the project has been on pre-school teachers, educators and researchers, who benefitted from different approaches and models, gained a richer vision on Digital Story Telling and a widening of perspectives and opportunities, and increased their awareness and importance of DST in preschool contexts through the training received, the guidelines and the other video materials produced countries (50% very good- 50% good impact).
- From a research perspective, the research organizations participating in the project have got the opportunity through this project to raise awareness and knowledge about the theme addressed by the project (highest score).



- To note that the impact expected on families, has been judged fair by most of the partners. This is due to the fact that the focus of the project (and a result of that the impact) has been largely on the pre-schools teachers, pedagogical coordinators and researchers.

#### C -D) VALORIZATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

As far as the valorisation of project results is concerned the partners have identified as good (100%) the conferences and multiplier events as well as smaller restricted meetings in terms of effectiveness that have taken place in the framework of the valorisation activities carried out by the partners. The level direct engagement of stakeholders in project activities have been assessed differently among the partners (from poor to very good). This indicates that in each country of the partnership the typology of partner and the constellations of stakeholders have led to different degrees of direct participation of external actors.

To note also the convergence of several partners on the value and the quality of the training materials as well as the guidelines produced as drivers for future valorisation activities. In particular, it should be noted that the partners see as very likely the adoption the project's intellectual outputs by other organisations in their county/region/local area but there is somehow less positive attitude to the possibility of the integration of the outputs in the framework of the educational systems of the our countries.

An important element pertaining sustainability is also the willingness of the partners to cooperate further in the future in the same field or on other topics. Most of the respondents answers positively to the idea of continuing contacts in the future with most of the other partners of the STORIES project. All the respondents envisage some future cooperation with the rest of the partnership mostly in relation to other Eu funded project, partnership/collaborations in other local and national projects and networking activities. The partners would like to see their future collaboration extended to other actors.

#### E) CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of what has been outlined above some preliminary conclusions about the implementation process of the project, and the dynamics that have characterised it in terms of management, a number of elements can be outlined:

The process has led to the development of a set of intellectual outputs (in particular the guidelines and the training materials and modules) with high impact on the participants in the project activities. Such potential can be further extended to other relevant target groups and stakeholders in the participating. countries. This process however has started in some of the countries and will unfold in the coming weeks and months. On the research side the process has led to the production of a large set of data and a considerable amount of evidence which provides ground for further research related to different aspects of DST.

The process has been characterised also by some weaknesses (reflected also in the inputs provided by the partners) such as the respect of some internal deadlines which in turn has led to some more intense phases during the three year period.

Furthermore, it has been recognised as an element of weakness pertaining the difficulties in finding a common approach on some aspects due to the differences in pedagogical approaches and legislative frameworks. It should be noted, however, that this element is common to the large majority of the Erasmus+ projects. The quality of the products of STORIES seem to indicate that the impact of this issue has

been minimized by the partnership.

The External Evaluator

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