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Evaluation and guidance services
for transnational projects in education

Final External Evaluation Report of the

POOLS-T

Producing Open Learning System Tools

Project

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Contents

Introduction

This is the final external evaluation report of the POOLS-T project. **An annex to this report will however, be produced after the final project meeting, at the end of September 2010** which will feature the results of a final survey of the partners involved in the initiative.

The purpose of the report, the main areas of evaluation, the outcomes and the sources of information for the evaluation are all described in detail in the Initial Evaluation Strategy document and in the Interim Evaluation Report, both of which are available on the POOLS-T site at: http://www.languages.dk/Pools-t and so that information will not be repeated here. Instead, a brief summary of approach and method is that the purpose of the external evaluation as contracted was to identify the relationship between the original aims and specific objectives of the project and the overall work progress, quality and added-value of POOLS-T results. In order to address these areas the external evaluation team has followed a specific strategy (see previous reports), **based on the External Evaluation plan presented in the initial tender**. The Final Evaluation Report that follows includes evidence to support the evaluation analyses and findings. A final questionnaire for project partners will be distributed at the end of September and results and statistics will be included in an annex to this report. Based on the findings and observations made periodically, at least at each three months, the evaluation team provided comments, constructive feedback and made recommendations about how to tackle the eventual challenges or implement changes in order to meet contractual objectives with quality results.

The POOLS-T project has consistently and impressively met and exceeded the aims and objectives set out in the original application and has done this on a number of levels. One aspect aimed at was a "babelfish-style" functionality to the online tool but this was exceeded through the Multidict interface and the Wordlink software, in terms of sophistication, reliability and accuracy. Another is that the application sought to ensure that key outcomes were available in **Danish, Dutch, Greek, English, and Gaelic,** whereas the results include these and Basque, **Lithuanian, German, Spanish and Romanian.** A third is the **constant and continuous refinement and improvement to the tools** that took place – not just the

specific tools themselves, but in terms of either responding to or anticipating the challenges faced in potential and actual contexts of use. At approximately the half-way point of the project, the evaluation team was concerned that this may be evidence of a concern expressed at the outset of the project – that the potentially "top-heavy" technical personnel ratio within the partnership could lead to excessive technical emphasis at the expense of finalising and testing products and maintaining progress in a two-year work programme. This concern was based on the experience of evaluating other projects in the education and technology field. However, POOLS-T proved this a misconception, as **the partnership has displayed a perfect balance and the constant search for improvement has been appropriate, responsive, excellently managed and driven by a real professional motivation and dedication.**

1. POOLS-T evaluation – Executive Summary

The 2-year project "POOLS-T" (Producing Open Learning System Tools) brings together leading vocational education and training institutions from Denmark, the Netherlands, Greece, and the UK - every partner experienced in the **innovative use of ICT and ODL in education, CLIL, languages** (Scotland's Gaelic College being the winner of 2007 European Award for Languages) and the European Forum for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET) as dissemination partner with a European-wide reach. **The partnership was joined and enhanced by the participation of University of Applied Sciences of Southern Switzerland.**

POOLS-T developed successfully all of the originally planned outcomes and currently provides; **free access to the 2 software tools - TextBlender and Wordlink; a CLIL guide and various resources (made using these tools), guides; Do-It-Yourself videos and other exemplary resources on the friendly-user website that supports teachers and students working with Content and Languages Integrated Learning and less-widely-used and taught languages.** The languages learners, teachers and their students in education and vocational training organizations, CLIL and LWUTLs teachers that want to develop on-line materials, are the primary beneficiaries of the Pools-tools that allow the user-groups to better understand and creatively improve their language learning using ICT and ODL.

The project succeeded to develop impressive **additional outcomes such as the translation of the main resources into six additional languages (German, Italian, Portuguese, Maltese, Turkish and Lithuanian) and the development of another tool - the Multidict - which supports 128 dictionaries and facilitates the use of TextBlender and Wordlink.** Additional materials and guidance were produced, such as a guide about how to use iPadio to create webpages with embedded audio. Additional Curriculum areas were identified in Switzerland, the UK, DK and the NL and several areas covered with additional materials.

POOLS-T has been addressing with relevance and high-quality results a number of objectives and priorities of Lifelong Learning and the Leonardo da Vinci action.

One month before the end of the funded 2-year period, the POOLS-T project presents excellent evidence that it is achieving the results in accordance with the original aims and has been effective in addressing the LLP and **Vocational Education and Training objective 3, with relevant solutions based on innovative applications and providing additional outcomes for the target users**. We note also an outstanding effort to test, disseminate and increase public awareness and to enhance the use of CLIL with the new CLIL guide and with free materials for CLIL teaching on the website http://www.languages.dk/tools/index.htm.

2. Products, Performance and Impact of POOLS-T

The POOLS-T products have been delivered professionally, in a timely manner and have been developed jointly by all partners. The tools are now in final versions and resources are now available in the 10 contractual languages. The software tools produced - TextBlender and Wordlink reflect best practice in linking software development, customer support and learning methodology.

The POOLS-T project focused specifically on how to provide support and hands-on resources to help develop attractive on-line languages courses and ODL materials in many areas and fields for vocational students and teachers and generally for language learning and LWUTLs.

As one of the main innovative aspects, the project developed 3 new software tools (CopyLeft) and produced guidance, materials and on-line resources for CLIL. These help to reduce the time spent by teachers on tailoring authentic materials for students, by using the three software tools that automate the process of converting web pages and texts to html pages linked word-by-word to on-line dictionaries. **The CLIL teachers can benefit from the web-based tool that enables them to create or use technical on-line materials and enable students working individually to convert text documents through instant access to 114 dictionaries,** and thus achieve a more rapid comprehension of the content.

The success of the software tools and of the guides and materials developed and the performance of POOLS-T can be measured by the impact they have had on the teachers and students participating in the testing and training activities. These performances and the additional results of POOLS-T were delivered by the highly committed members of the partnership.

A key feature of the project is the wide range of languages in which the products are available on the website and the number of unique-users (+ 2.700 in year 2) that downloaded, tested or used the products. The many dissemination actions and initiatives (also to take place beyond the funded period) increase the impact at both a European and national level. Concrete exploitation initiatives beyond the EU funding period are planned.

Overall, the project has more than met its objectives and **in fact has been used by the external evaluators as a model for this type of "extraordinary success" with other projects.** This is because the additional achievements cover so many areas – there has not been one area of **excellence**, there have been several. In terms of the **numbers of end-users**, students and teachers engaged, in terms of examples of **added value**, the engaging of additional associated partners who have not had a passive role but who have really provided extra dimensions to the work, the inclusion of several languages beyond those in the application, the "spill" into new curriculum areas as part of the momentum and significant level of interest in the project (due to its high profile in the field and its excellent dissemination and exploitation activity) and tangible working, reciprocally beneficial links with organizations

outside of the partnership (e.g. CLIL specialists) are all highly commendable achievements, each of which would be eye-catching in its own right.

The project has maintained its high level of performance after the successful submission process of the Progress Report and the very positive feedback received from its assessment; and the evaluators would like to emphasis how praiseworthy this is when it is not uncommon for some successful "first year" projects to rather drift in their second year.

As was identified in the interim evaluation report, **it is very positive that numerous refinements were made in direct response to both learner feedback** and technical issues, for example, one of the key areas reviewed was to resolve the problems presented by the Greek language characters, which was achieved.

The project blog was identified in the interim evaluation report as another strength, and again not just in terms of itself but based on a comparison with other such blogs in other projects evaluated. It was well-populated in terms of comments, both in terms of volume of posts and contributors at the mid-point of the project. **As was also noted in that report, it is positive that the blog is a long-established one with a genuine and diverse community of practice,** but it does make it not immediately easy to select the POOLS-T-specific contributions and whilst the projects do have synergies, they also quite clearly can exist as discrete entities in their own right and so greater separation may have been attractive to the visitor with a specific interest in the context of POOLS-T, POOLS-M or POOLS-2.

Connected to both the blog and website issue, the blog was used quite a lot for POOLS-T initially but rather reduced in the second year. There was a concern that there was a repetition between it and the main site, but for example, the dissemination section is sparse on the blog, and on the web-site it is flyers, leaflets and presentations, etc rather than a record of partnership discussion of dissemination strategies, most effective methods, success stories and so on, and so **the project is advised to ensure that the good work it has achieved in dissemination is available transparently** and publicly rather than restricted to the contractual report for the EACEA.

It can be clearly seen that the project has several examples of how dissemination activities have developed into **exploitation and transfer activities**, again indicting a very positive model of what a successfully-managed LLP project can achieve within its lifetime:

- **New languages** have been used beyond those of the partnership (the offer of materials in Luxembourgish highlighted in the first report being only one example)
- **New countries** being involved (the Swiss partner again being one example)
- **Personal and professional development** (for example, the contact made with the CLIL specialist, the contribution to the project of two CLIL experts from the Katholic University of Leuven)
- **New curriculum areas** (beyond languages) for continued testing, identified for example, as Healthcare, Nursing Procedure and Civil Engineering in Switzerland, ICT and Media / Music study in the UK, Electrical Engineering in DK and Marketing in the NL.

3.   The progress made towards the contractual outcomes, respect of the contractual work-plan and added value

The project finalized the originally planned results, producing, testing and adapting new software tools to target-users' needs, developing numerous on-line and ODL resources using these tools, providing hands-on support in manuals, DIY videos and website, with sustained dissemination and exploitation activities. **At the end of the contractual 2-year period, it is on course to meet all its foreseen objectives with concrete and high-quality contributions to:**

- implementation of computer assisted language learning for CLIL and reducing the costs of software by providing 3 CopyLeft (free) software tools, thus reducing the time and effort spent by teachers on tailoring authentic materials for students (POOLS-T OBJECTIVE 1);
- providing an user-friendly web-based tool and additional tool MultiDict with links to +114 on-line dictionaries, that enable CLIL teachers, especially those working with less widely used languages (LWUTLs) to easily create supported on-line materials and

enable students working individually to convert text documents through instant dictionary access and easier comprehension of the content

(POOLS-T OBJECTIVE 2);

- increased public awareness and contributes to enhance the use of CLIL by producing a clear and well structured CLIL Manual and by providing free-access to all project outputs on the website www.languages .d k/tools , with materials suitable for CLIL teaching in the planned 5 languages (Danish, Dutch, Greek, English, Gaelic) and 6 additional languages (German, Italian, Portuguese, Maltese, Turkish, Lithuanian) and by disseminating the results on national and European levels

(POOLS-T OBJECTIVE 3).

In terms of added value, **POOLS-T succeeded to develop additional outcomes and to increase the reach of its planned dissemination and exploitation.** An important development is the additional tool Multidict by Caoimhín Ó Donnaíle from SMO (UK). This tools supports 128 dictionaries and facilitates the use of TextBlender and Wordlink. It answers a need that was identified after the tools testing by +200 students and teachers and also the feedback of the external evaluators' team at Interim time.

Other additional materials and guidance were produced by POOLS-T partners, such as the online guide about how to use iPadio, blogging, to create web-pages with embedded audio, by Gordon Wells, or DIY video on the use of Dropbox.com for free Internet space to share files easily on Internet by DK partner, etc.

The synergies with the additional partner from Switzerland that joined the partnership and with the partners of the other two POOLS projects Pools-Methods and Pools-2 contributed to the following:

– additional Curriculum areas were identified in Switzerland, the UK, DK and the NL and several areas covered with additional materials, available also on the website.

– the translation of several resources in six additional languages (German, Italian, Portuguese, Maltese, Turkish, Lithuanian) such as the subtitles for Do-It-Yourself videos

– in addition to project's own ambitious dissemination, as additional outcomes we
observed increased dissemination in the additional countries, such as in Spain,
Malta, Turkey, Lithuania, Portugal, among the most active. For example, CECE, the
Spanish coordinator of Pools-2 project, disseminated through its large network the
information about the tools and resources produced to approximately 12.000 schools.

One month before the end of project, there is extensive evidence that the members of
POOLS-T developed successfully all originally planned outcomes, in very good relationship
with the original work-plan. **The project currently provides free access to the 3 software
tools TextBlender and Wordlink plus Multidict, to a CLIL guide and resources made
using these tools, guides, Do-It-Yourself videos available, other exemplary resources,
on the user-friendly website that support teachers, students working with Content and
Languages Integrated Learning and less-widely-used and taught languages.**

Several activities and results are planned for the last month, such as the dissemination and
exploitation activities foreseen for month 24, including the presentations to the EuroCall
European Conference on September 8-11, the interface in Greek of the tools to be available on
September 10th, the final project meeting in Hoorn, the Netherlands on September 27.
Sustainability activities beyond the funding period are also planned and covered with concrete
plans. The main outcomes and achievements are evaluated in more detail in the following part.

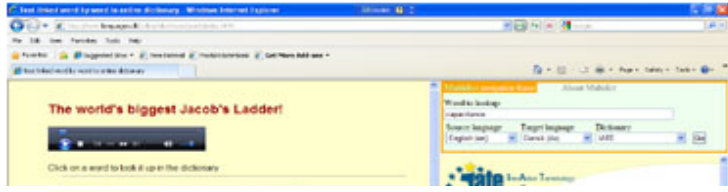### i. The TextBlender, an open-source application

TextBlender is in its final version 3.06. As foreseen, it is a CopyLeft software tool and can
convert texts into html documents where all words are hyper-linked to free on-line dictionaries
covering many combinations of European languages. It offers support for audio, video and
graphics to enrich and support the text content. **The value for the target-users teachers is
that it enables them to easily create supported on-line materials where each word has
instant access to on-line dictionaries.** The resulting materials are intended for individual
tutoring of students working with specialized texts in various education and training areas. In a
task-based learning context, the web pages created can be used for language learning through
CLIL.

The website offers a clear interactive view of the tool at http://www.languages.dk/tools/index.htm#The_Web_Page_Text_Blender:

The "TextBlender" is a software which will automatically convert texts to web pages where all words have been linked to online dictionaries. The produced web pages can have graphics, video, and audio to enrich the content.

Desktop version:

- **Download, unzip, install, and test TextBlender v 3.06** N.B. unzip all files to a folder and run the setup.exe from there. This version is from June 14th 2010. N.B. To work with Greek texts please follow the advice given here

- **DIY videos** demonstrating what the TextBlender can do for you (temptation), how to make the webpages available on the Internet, how to use the TextBlender, some case stories with the TextBlender, and how to work with Hot Potatoes from installation to ready to use exercises.

  - DIY videos with English subtitles
  - DIY videos with Greek subtitles
  - DIY videos with Italian subtitles
  - DIY videos with Maltese subtitles
  - DIY videos with Dutch subtitles
  - DIY videos with Danish subtitles
  - DIY videos with Portuguese subtitles
  - DIY videos without subtitles

- Download the feedback form to assist us improving the tools

- Download the algorithm with description of functions etc. (only suitable for programmers:-)

The project developed user-friendly support and examples in the form of DIY videos demonstrating the functionalities of TextBlender:

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POOLS-T has develop a range of tools to be used by CLIL teachers and their students, to assist you we have prepared Do It Yourself videos showing how to use the TextBlender. The videos have subtitles in English, Greek, Maltese, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, and Danish

- Do It Yourself videos for the TextBlender

- Do It Yourself videos for Hot Potatoes

The TextBlender with Italian subtitles

Make your web pages online with DropBox

Watch a video with text demonstrating how to put a web page online so it can be accessed from anywhere with web browsers like Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari. You can also watch the video from Youtube below:
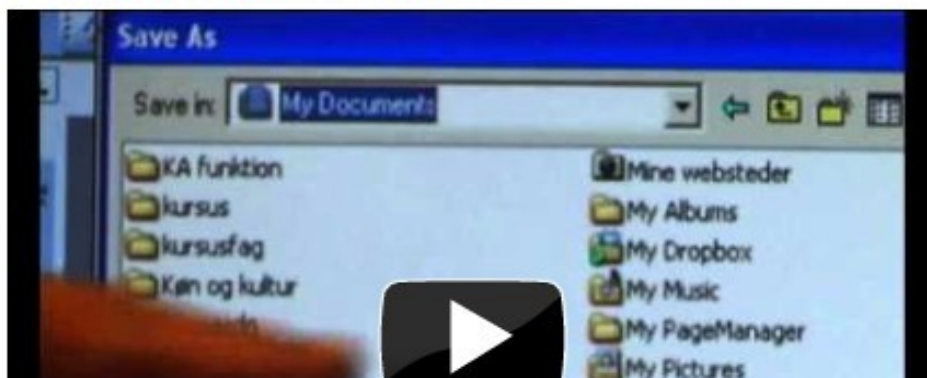
It offers multilingual support and information about how to make the web-pages available on the Internet, how to use the TextBlender, Hot Potatoes, Dropbox, iPadio, and it presents many examples made with the TextBlender, from installation to ready-to-use exercises.

http://www.languages.dk/tools/index.htm#Example_units_developed_with_the_TextBlender

Example units developed with the TextBlender

- Danish examples
- English examples
- Gaelic (Scottish) examples
- German examples
- Italian
- Portuguese examples

Danish

- Jul i Danmark followed by exercises
- Montering af et elektrisk stik. Followed by exercises
- En kinesisk studerende i Danmark
- A Danish college seen through Chinese eyes
- A Dentist surgery assistant at school
- A service trade basic training class
- Cykelyven
- Klinikassistenter på skole
- Lærlingevittigheder
- Kokkene - The Cooks
- 4More Productions

ii. The Wordlink – a browser based application for translation

The project developed software with functionalities like the "Babelfish" or Google translate but the resulting web page is linked to on-line dictionaries in a different way, i.e. word by word and not just translated. The additional value for teachers and students is that is including many combinations of less widely used and taught languages (LWUTL).

It is available at http://www2.smo.uhi.ac.uk/wordlink/
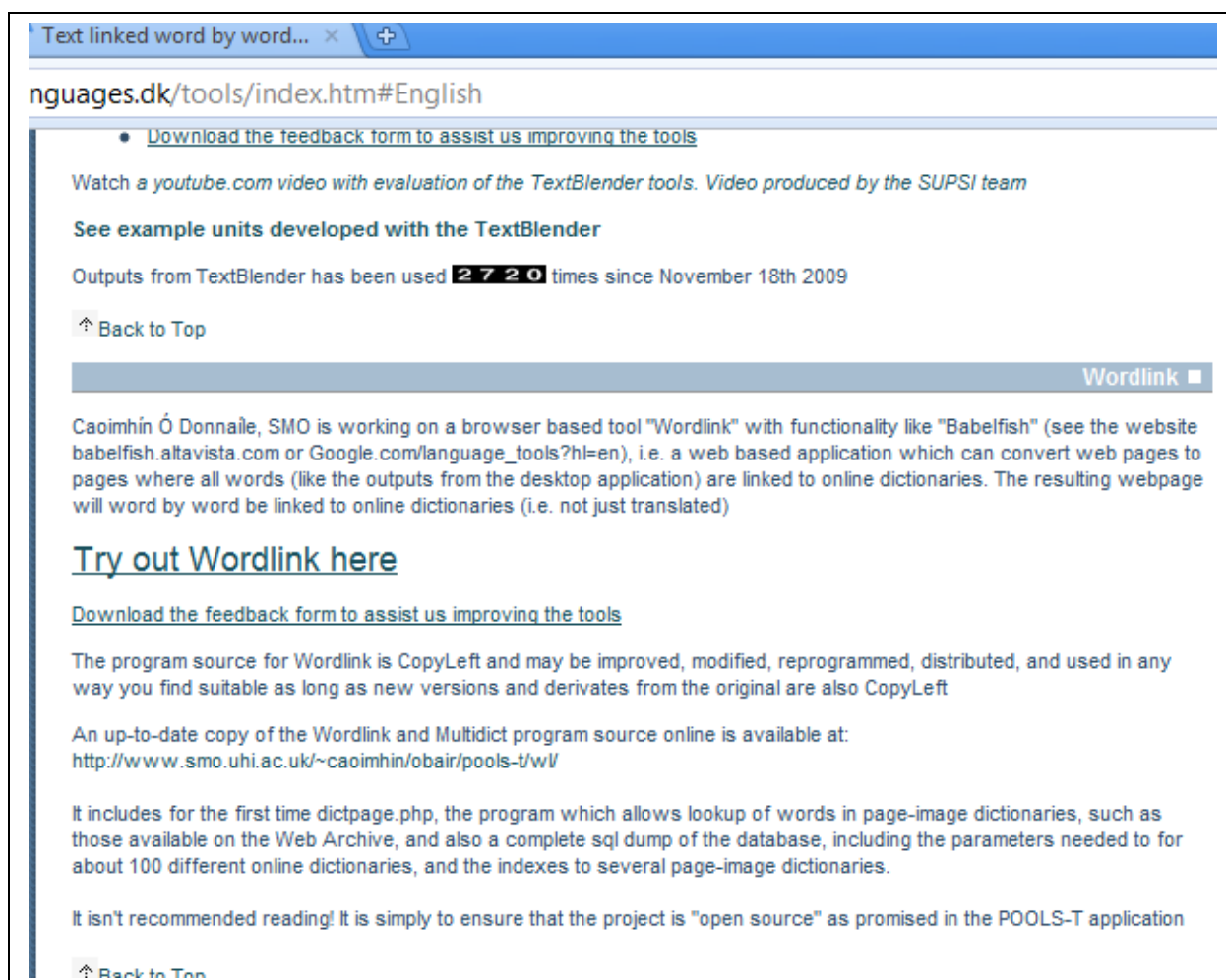
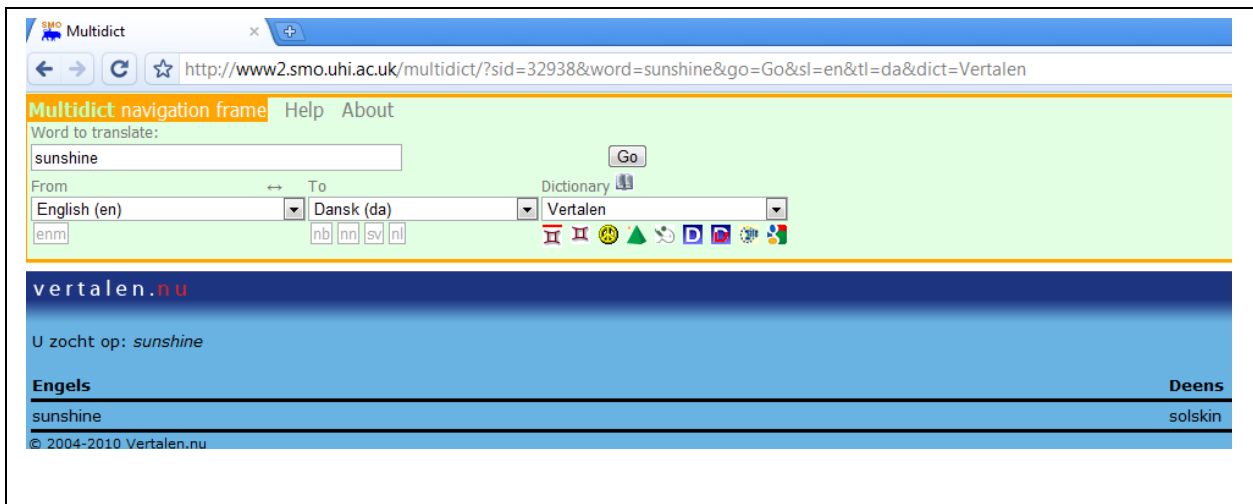### iii. Multidict – linking up to 128 dictionaries

A third and additional software tool Multidict , which offers access to a combination of 128 dictionaries has been developed by Caoimhín Ó Donnaíle at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig , UK, as part of the European funded POOLS-T project.

It is available at http://www2.smo.uhi.ac.uk/multidict/

iv. **The documented and commented open source scripts** that show the algorithm behind the produced software and enables portability and further development are available at http://www.languages.dk/archive/wptb/Rationale_Text_Blender.pdf

v. **The online instruction videos and training materials with subtitles** in Danish, Dutch, Greek and English. The CDs and DVDs produced include videos demonstrating the new tools.

Quality evaluation of the contractual tools

As for the previous versions, the evaluators' team tested the tools and evaluated very positively the functionalities and capacity of the contractual software applications:

• WordLink and TextBlender in intermediate and the final version – June 2010

• the user-friendliness of the interface, the development of users' support guides in target languages as per contract (EN, DK, NL, GR)

• the availability of on-line training materials and ready to use learning materials in the 4 contractual languages

• the progress regarding the tools' usability, based on feedback after the testing by students and teachers, which resulted in the development of a third tool, Multidict.

• the quality of the Manual for TextBlender available in final version.

After testing in Year 1 with + 200 students and teachers, the project continued in Year 2 to test and improve the applications with the help of teachers and students within the partnership, programmers, teachers, experts in CLIL, etc. from many other countries.

Inside the partnership, more testing and evaluation took place in the Netherlands, in the UK (including several teachers from Gaelic communities – the Irish and Scottish have responded with questions and suggestions regarding the tools) in Switzerland.

As the project wrote in its 4th Newsletter in March 2010:

> "as a result of the testing, the TextBlender has undergone a major restructure
> process. The new layout and function is based on feedback from the pilot
> teams in Switzerland, Greece and the Netherlands as well on assistance from
> the Scottish team."

The number of participants to the tests from the main user-groups, represented by students and teachers in VET, is approximately 300. The final number of end-users reached during the 2 years will be available after the end of the project. For this report we have received the following indicators for the first 6 months of Year 2 (until March 2010) in each country:

- The Netherlands - Horizon College: 50 students

- Greece – Athena College : 50 students and seven trainers

- UK – SMO: +40 students and teachers

- DK - SDE College: 40 students and 20 teachers.

- Switzerland SUPSI : 80 students and five new teachers

The website counting of the number of users of TextBlender from all user-groups (like programmers, other teachers, students, etc.) and in countries outside the partnership, **shows that outputs from TextBlender have been used 2.723** times since November 18th 2009.

vi. The project planned to develop a **methodology guide** in Danish, Dutch, Greek, and English, to show pedagogical consideration for potential CLIL applications of the software and its outputs.

The resulting manual 'POOLing Software Tools in CLIL V2.1' is available in English, Danish, German and Italian at the time of evaluation (August 27, 2010) and the Greek and Dutch versions are due before the end of September 2010.
http://www.languages.dk/archive/clil/CLIL-EN.pdf
http://www.languages.dk/archive/clil/CLIL-DK.pdf
http://www.languages.dk/tools/index.htm#A_manual German
http://www.languages.dk/tools/index.htm#A_manual Italian

The project produced numerous exemplary CLIL materials in the project languages and in additional languages Italian and German.

vii) A project website was created on the pools website to disseminate the outputs, keep in touch with end users, and archive projects documents. **The POOLS-T website extended the existing website http://www.languages.dk which reached +40.000 unique visitors per year.** The project website http://www.languages.dk/tools/ is evaluated in more depth in the following chapter.

viii) A suite of dissemination materials; brochures, quarterly newsletters, handouts for conferences, have been produced in accordance with the original plans. The project produced as planned the contractual outputs (six Newsletters, hands out materials, presentations) In addition, it enhanced the dissemination activities and reach of the events through the inclusion of new partners / countries (Switzerland), new curriculum areas (Health and Social Care), new sectors (a link from the UK Government website to POOLS) and new languages – all of these identified already in this report but repeated her as evidence of the ambition and success of the dissemination activities and an indication of how "live", dynamic and directly engaging with the state of the art they were.

4.   The quality of the ODL and ICT elements of the project activities.

This is one of the main strengths of this project. Early in 2010, the external evaluator was asked to give a presentation at the Erasmus project co-ordinators' meeting in Brussels, and he was asked to do this in the context of his experience as an assessor of projects but also as an independent expert in Open and Distance Learning. Some of the key points made in the presentation featured concerned that there apparently in many projects remains a confusion between what is an appropriate learner-responsive and learner-empowering ODL methodology – and too often, such a methodology is assumed to be provided by ICT. POOLS-T is an example of a project that features an outstanding use of ICT COMBINED with a wonderfully consistent and dynamic approach to ODL. **POOLS was cited as a very good web presence, especially in terms of synergies and featured in the presentation given at the meeting** (see "8. Common Strengths and Good Practices" at

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/events/2010/documents/erasmus_ccord_meet_02_10/evaluati on_of_erasmus_project_reports_gareth_long.pdf

i) The success of the web-site

Whilst the inclusion of numerous initiatives on one site is an option chosen by the projects involved, it is certainly not the case that this approach has in any way undermined the user-friendliness of the site. **It combines very effectively the necessary contractual**

requirements, such as logo, disclaimer, links to partner sites and so on, but does this in a way that does not undermine the site's main role – that of being a store of information and a conduit to more resources as well as a working tool for users in a variety of contexts. As with the project's great successes in "additional outcomes" described earlier, the web-site is effective on numerous levels. Its design is appropriate – it is possible to scroll through chronological outcomes and postings for all included initiatives whilst the right-hand side of the home page allows for quick links to specific information. Both options provide access in similar ways but through varying levels of detail so that users with different interests, or at different levels of knowledge can follow a path at their convenience (this is a key element that underscores the site's credentials in terms of simple but vitally important ODL characteristics such as flexibility of level, pace, time and environment).

### ii)	A successful transnational web presence

The design of the site encourages participation from experienced users in terms of expertise in online learning, language learning and European co-operation projects generally, as so many elements of the site reflect a successful presentation of transnational collaboration. **This may seem an obvious outcome for a project, but again, it is worth emphasizing that there are numerous projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme that may achieve effective results, but have problems in presenting them effectively in a web-page.** Often they fail to indicate that it is a collaboration project at all – the aim is instead to present a clear learning environment and the fear that background information on partners, programmes, funding sources, etc would interfere with this. Similarly, several projects go too far the other way and present sites with a wonderful EU feel to them, logos and work packages everywhere, but nowhere is there a "hook" for the interested visitor to identify and cling to. **The POOLS-T site is one of the best examples at an effective balance.** Furthermore, this balance is not based on compromise or dilution of any of the aspects that are required contractually or in terms of user-friendliness.

iii) The attractive and effective web interface

More examples that reflect this effectiveness: there is a lot of detail on the home page. The choice of font is quite small. The text is held in a central band with (blank) blue bands on either side. Many projects would have decided to broaden the text band and increase the size of the font to reduce scrolling. That would have been approach however, based on initial online appearance only. **By maintaining the space on either side, the significant detail in the centre does not become overpowering** – and by achieving this simple visual feat, the visitor then can scroll and see that in fact it is **not lengthy uninterrupted text, but small pieces of key information supported by frequent (but appropriate) links.** In other words, this is a very appropriate combination of the initial visual reality encouraging the "second impression" aspect of quick and easy (but very informative) information being available to the visitor.

iv) Immediate access to reliable live tests from the site

Another aspect is the directly "live" nature of the page – the inclusion of the "[Click here to link all the words in the page to online dictionaries](#)" is a brilliant idea, providing again **a direct and immediately useable feature** of the site that reinforces the value of exactly what the site is offering. There is no need to wade through pages and pages, or go through overly-protective passwords or registering procedures. Comparing this again to numerous other projects that ostensibly try (or try to be seen) to offer open access materials, **POOLS-T can be seen as a wonderful model that really does show immediately and clearly what such a transnational project when managed and participated in properly can achieve.** This links to yet another positive aspect, which overlaps with both the strengths of the web-site and the first-rate ODL methodology employed.

v) Consistency of presentation

Other projects feature references to the ongoing processes of the project on their sites, featuring minutes of meetings, pictures of happy project partners enjoying the social aspects of the meeting or being pictured around desks at a meeting's close and there is nothing initially wrong with this. The problem comes when the teaching and learning materials or project

products are accessed, and in several cases in the LLP and previously in the Socrates, Leonardo and Youth Programme, the style and content of the materials is largely very traditional. This is not to say that it is not the work of motivated experts, carefully researched, collated with attention to cross-cultural responsiveness and presented with care. But it is the style of traditional learning – and this links back to the earlier reference to ODL and ICT-based learning NOT being the same. This style tends to create an uneasy separation for the visitor / user between an informal context or setting (photos of smiling people and messages of welcome) and materials that are similar in content and style to those used in lessons or lectures in preceding decades.

vi) Synergy in style between outputs

In the case in POOLS-T and the external evaluators want to highlight strongly the credit due to the participants in the project for this. From the newsletters which welcome readers and invite them to participate and "join the team"; to the web-site with the same welcoming ideology and very user-friendly instructions and guides on not only all aspects of the project, but also on additional software that may be necessary / helpful to realise the use of the tools most successfully (and to have these also in languages additional to those foreseen by the original application); to the manuals themselves, the same methodology, tone and style is used. **To achieve such an open and consistent atmosphere is one thing, but to do so in the context of "behind the scenes" very hard work on any technical problems whilst ensuring a huge amount of immediately useful data is easily and reliably available, is simply outstanding.**

vii) Outstanding work

One brief anecdote from the experience of the external evaluators, highlights this extreme hard work to make the simple so effective – at one of the meetings it was noticed that the tool was not working in one web browser as effectively as in the majority of the others. One of the technical partners (Caoimhín Ó Donnaíle from SMO UK) immediately set to work quietly in the background to resolve the situation and was clearly disturbed that a more or less immediate solution was not at hand – at least not before the end of the meeting. **This person was joined**

in communication with other technical experts and a solution was found – and the other meeting participants were informed of this by email *on the way home from the meeting!* This is just one example of how the challenges of the project were embraced so wholeheartedly by all the partners and how each used their expertise immediately and effectively to resolve any issues. This has been one of the most committed partnerships the external evaluators have had the pleasure to work with.

viii)   The manual

Returning to the manual, this again is an excellent example of an effective ODL approach. Also again, it is outstanding on several levels; the processes behind it, its design and presentation, its content and its approach and methodology. It is appropriate to make a comparison in terms of the processes with other projects in the LLP. The challenges of managing a transnational partnership is well known – add to this a consortium that represents different sectors, and where educational and technical partners co-operate, and where often state of the art learning technologies are being featured and there the challenge is multiplied. **The fact that the manual has a consistent and culturally neutral look and feel to it and so clearly presents its purposes whilst providing immediate "usability" is a wonderful example of what such a partnership can achieve when so effectively managed.** Often partnerships experience difficulties even when motivated and with leadership of roles equitably distributed – if the final product reflects especially the skills and competences present ion one or two partners then almost inevitably they tend to have a dominating role in the finalisation and ultimate presentation of the product – it is so difficult to consistently ensure that all partners' input is effectively harnessed for final outcomes. **The processes behind the creation of the manual have been witnessed at first hand by the external evaluators** and they reflect a genuinely consistent two-year commitment from all involved, including frequent testing, quality checks, user feedback and all within the context of equality of opportunity amongst the partners to contribute, question, amend and enhance.

ix) A successful presentation of the philosophical change in learning

In terms of its design and presentation, this is particularly impressive. The evaluators have been involved with such projects for more than 15 years, including those in the predecessor to the LLP programme, such as in Socrates ODL. Then it was a challenge to deal with what can be seen as the "A to C via B" process. In this model, A is seen as traditional lecture-style based learning with the emphasis on the process on the teacher. B is the philosophical shift from this to more learner-empowered learning, where the teacher is more facilitator and the materials need to be re-designed and / or feature specific guidance tools for learners working in isolation, at a distance or in an environment different from the traditional learning model. C is the model that features ODL based on, supported by and delivered through, ICT. The majority of initiatives tried to "leap" straight from A to C, especially when new technologies were being promoted so extensively and where a failure to embrace them unquestioningly, was seen as a stubbornness / refusal to accept progress. However, the results of the A to C process, often witnesses at first hand by the external evaluators, were often state of the art learning centres where new computers sat little used, or where students were given traditional learning materials and told to take them home and send their work in by email, or where students tentatively accessed materials on-line only to print them and take them home to staple them together and wish they had simply been in a book format to begin with. The reason for this was a failure to grasp the essential nature of B. ICT is not most effective hen used as an alternative means to access traditional materials. **Where ICT is used to empower the learner and supported with specifically designed materials and content designed to be used at a time, place and pace that suits the user, the philosophical aspects of B have been realised. The manual of POOLS-T is a perfect example of this.** It is clearly a tool to be accessed on line and to lead the user to the Textblender and Wordlink tools; it includes attractive graphics and topical Web 2.0 elements as it indicates the links to, for example, ✓then merely presented online, instead its online personality and requirements have been central elements to its ongoing creation. 15 years ago the evaluators were involved in projects addressing ODL and ICT and the transnational context immediately displayed many difficulties. Terms such as "Teacher", "Trainer", "Tutor", "Facilitator" and "Mentor" varied significantly country by country in terms of envisaged duties, role and expectations. The use of informal and first person language was really received in different ways in different countries – in some, the

approach was popular as it "replaced" the face-to-face discussions with a teacher or group – in other countries it was perceived as overly obvious, pedantic and in some cases patronising.

x) The POOLS-T Manual as an example of best practice

Again, the processes behind and the design and methodological approach to the POOLS-T Manual is a perfect example of how something can remove all of these challenges. **It is not overly long, it is very open, friendly and inviting in terms of its "atmosphere" but at the same time it is not lightweight – there is clear depth and value that will be recognisable by any visitor.**

With regard to content and approach, the manual is very fit for its purpose. An attractive cover leads to a clear contents page (the only criticism of the Manual is that a final spell check is required – for example the "t" is missing from "Contents" on page 2 and "Leonardo da Vinci" is blended into one word on several occasions). **Whilst the appropriate reference to the funding source, logo and disclaimer are included, these do not interfere in the presentation or design of the manual** and the contents chapters have immediate simple descriptive relevance to the visitor interested in such language learning. Chapter 1 is a brief, clear exposition of the background to the project whilst Chapter 2 addresses some of the specifics of the POOLS-T project itself. Chapter 2 also introduces the reader to the chapter checklist approach and this is a brilliant idea. **By including "x" as well as "✓" as answers to each point, the reader (used to and fatigued by such lists being endless self-congratulatory seas of "✓") is immediately drawn to this, but instead of being an area not covered the "x" instead removes concerns such as high levels of ICT competence required, materials not only being suitable for CLIL, etc. This seems such a simple idea, but it is so effective and again, it is important to emphasise how well it links in with all the "public" aspects of POOLS-T where openness, friendly community and encouragement are so consistently central to the work being done.**

xi) The chapters of the Manual

Chapters 1-5 are simple one-page descriptions that also feature links to tools and tests that can be accessed as one progresses through and this is an example of the Manual's ongoing

interactivity. Chapter 6 and the subsequent chapters are longer and feature more activities to test, beginning with the use of the Webpage Textblender and Wordlink in a typical CLIL lesson format. **The stage-by-stage development featuring text combined with diagrams and numerous and appropriate links to interactive learning tools and test processes is very impressive.** It is also very good that there is not a single content style to the texts and exercises, they feature opening a bottle of champagne to nasogastric intubation, the use of crosswords and gap-filling exercises and sound files combining music and word tests. Chapter 10 features Using IPADIO and Acapela.tv which can also be regarded as additional added value outcomes to the project and also include access to "phlogs" of one of the project partners to see / hear more example and get advice. The Manual concludes with an annex of useful links.

5. The manner in which the partnership performs as a transnational collaboration

The project's partnership worked professionally for the whole duration of the two years. The project coordination and the transnational collaboration represented key strengths and enabled the realization of the planned results in time and with quality. The communication between the partners between the meetings was very frequent and used a wide range of tools: from e-mails, Pools-T blog, to Skype and Facebook. The transnational collaboration included also a strong dissemination aspect and effort to insure the impact of the project.

These key aspects – project management, collaboration between partners, innovative aspects, work progress and additional results of activities, the impact and dissemination, were evaluated by partners at every 3 months and at the end of the project. The on-going evaluation, both internally and externally, was an additional important element of the partners' collaboration and helped meeting the original milestones with quality results.

A key factor of the successful completion of the project was the professionalism and the commitment of the partnership. **The collaboration and participation to the project, the contribution of each team were aspects evaluated by partners their quarterly reports and**

at the end of the project. The answers to the external evaluation final questionnaire about these aspects will be included as an annex to this report after the project's final meeting.

From the beginning, the partnership was planned well to cover most of the areas needed by the project. We noted also a very good allocation of tasks and responsibilities among the partners, based on relevant expertise that proved to be successful. The original allocation of a small number of days to EfVET the partner leading the dissemination, due to the concrete reasons of its organization, was compensated by additional work of the members of this partner and extensive activities of all the other partners.

The enlargement of the partnership was beneficial, with the participation of the University of Applied Sciences of Southern Switzerland. There were many other additional activities performed by the core members that represented positive changes and the development of additional results.

Several of the additional activities/results have been presented in the other ("added value") sections of this report.

In conclusion, the partnership performed efficiently, based on shared management, active sharing of activities, effectiveness of communication, and ensured that work was delivered in a timely manner, with the variations from plan resulting in additional activities and/or outcomes.
The activities of the partners and results of the two years were in very good relationship with original objectives and with the contractual obligations, leading to results with innovative aspects, high quality, additional outcomes not foreseen in the original application and all of these in a context of real and immediate applicability that indicates there are no reasons why they should not be embedded in the mainstream of language learning provision in the long-term.

Taking all these aspects in account, we can conclude that the performance of the POOLS-T partnership as was excellent.

6.   Dissemination, exploitation and future development

Pools-T started in a strong position in terms of its profile in the field because of the previous POOLS initiatives, but the project partners did not "rest" on this starting position of strength and, looking at the area of dissemination at two levels, our own experience of it within the field of transnational co-operation projects and in terms of the way the project presents its activities on the web site. With regard to the former, **a whole range of media and tools have been employed from t-shirts to presentation of papers. As mentioned before, the same friendly atmosphere exists around all of the elements, inviting interested users to join the activities through the web-site, the Facebook page, via brochures or newsletter whilst at the same time providing a high-level pedagogical and technical content (technical without being complicated for the user) and this is a significant achievement.** The tools and products for dissemination have not been designed or employed in a standard fashion – their use has been varied and appropriate to the stage of the project and to the end-users being engaged. It was very interesting to note that the feedback from one project partner on the issue of dissemination reflected a concern to perhaps **be more careful than usual when presenting a draft or even final version of a tool because of the current economic climate. This added an additional level to what was already a strategically planned approach to dissemination,** a level that reflected current realities and sensitivities to the launch of new products during a time of crisis.

With regard to the second aspect, that of the way in which the project has presented its activities on its site, this is also very positive, although perhaps could be even more high profile because of the successes. The most recent (number 7) of the summary reports of partner activities included the following as dissemination activities:

- Two newsletter (Issue 24 and 25) prepared and mailed to our registered 761 users. The CECE network in Spain has mailed the newsletters to 2200 Spanish schools and colleges.
- The project will be disseminated with a paper presentation at EuroCall 2010. We received the acceptance letter

- Newsletters and information on project's progress were mailed to all vocational training centres, certified language trainers in vocational training and all the other organizations that already were familiar with the project (from previous contact).

- Presentation of the project and the tools to the Professor of the Medical school of the University of Thessaly, department of Hygiene and Epidemiology.

- Keynote address to NAACLT conference. For details see:
  http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~caoimhin/obair/pools-t/twitter.html

- Publication, online and in Project newsletter, of news of HMIe, the Scottish education inspectorate according Sector Leading Innovative Practice status to aspects of POOLS projects. Features in the Island Voices blog.

- Disseminated project description and outline of aims and objectives at this stage via EfVET website to members

- Direct e-mailing of same to members

- Promoted project through wider stakeholder database including EUCIS –lll – a platform of some 19 European networks involved in Education and Training and working directly with the Commission to stimulate creative and innovative developments such as evident in the Pools family of initiatives

- EfVET National representatives have also been engaged to ensure dissemination to national stakeholders in their own countries.

- Latest Newsletters have been sent directly to members as well as placed on website under Pools-T entry

- Presentation at AOC Clusius teams in Hoorn (follow-up from previous activity)

- We have been on contact with a UK coordinated project and assisted them with our materials. The project, LACE, is funded by UK regional government colleagues. The role of LACE through European Social Fund Technical Assistance is to support local delivery of language training.

- One of the purposes of LACE is to collate the English language materials which migrant workers can use to improve their level of English in order to improve their employment prospects.

- Other projects have agreed to make use of the Wordlink and TextBlender, this means that the software is now also being used in Portugal, Turkey, and Lithuania.

- The coordinators of training courses at Volos, for employees at shipping companies were very enthusiastic about the CLIL approach and the tools produced by POOLS-T. It is expected to use them from next year at their courses.

These are in themselves effective examples of good (and varied) dissemination practices and feature only those activities covered by the period of the summary report (Apr-Jun 2010). The numbers reached are impressive. **The numbers of student and teachers direct users at the time of this report were approximately 300 with circa 2700 unique visits to the web-site supporting this. The networks of the partners (including for example the link in ES to 12 000 schools)** means that the project is in a very strong position – clearly quite dominant in the field – to maintain its high level of impact. It is very strongly recommended that some detailed statistics of the number of users and visitors at various levels (and from identified groups) visit and use POOLS-T – the results will clearly be very impressive.

One of the results of the success of dissemination has been the genuine and detailed feedback all partners have received from those piloting and testing the tools – the example of the students in Switzerland giving detailed and critical where appropriate feedback by video was highlighted in the Interim Evaluation Report. As a result of all this, the partners have been able to highlight in the internal and external evaluation processes, the "velocity" of the project and the areas of potential continued development and expansion in the future. As well as the additional languages featured within the project lifetime, **the interest shown recently from teachers of Arabic could be a key future activity** – and the existing experience of working with varied characters in language will place the project in a strong position. There is also the growing feeling expressed that the tools, models and approaches **could be replicated in other non language teaching environments**. Several partners feel this is an area that could actively be investigated and would certainly be supported by the profile of the POOLS "brand" and the moves **for more contextualisation in a wider publishing platform**. The continuation (for at least one more year) of the "sister" initiatives POOLS-M and POOLS-2 will also clearly maintain the current growth and velocity of POOLS-T.

Referring again to the presentation on good practices made by the external evaluation team at the invitation of the EACEA at the Brussels meeting early in 2010, one of the key aspects was regarding the simple, yet often neglected aspects of dissemination that can make it successful. Looking at those key points again, the dissemination activities of POOLS-T have responded to them all (and supplied additional elements):

Key areas i) Dissemination & Exploitation

- vitally important, but can be generic and left until later stages
- ensure that there is a detailed and responsive strategy that involves all partners from the start and which is updated
- ensure that it is not a single or limited approach and that different forms, media are used for different target groups and /or for different outcomes
- ensure that resources meet the requirements
- a responsibility for all partners
- record its effectiveness – the responses to it, the results and impact
- ensure there is a dynamic web presence

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/events/2010/documents/erasmus_ccord_meet_02_10/evaluation_of_erasmus_project_reports_gareth_long.pdf

Finally, the external evaluators would like to commend all of the partners for their hard work. They will not be listed individually here for fear of an omission, but all have dedicated themselves throughout the project and also are clearly committed to continuing successes after the initial eligibility period. **Special praise should go to the main project co-ordinator, Kent Andersen,** who despite years of experience in the field still has such enthusiasm and dedication to language learning in Europe. The contribution of all involved, the inclusion of so many EU languages (including those less widely used) and the potential for Arabic to feature soon in the future means that the project has succeeded in making the words of Seneca closer to a reality:

"I am not born for one corner; the whole world is my native land"

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