

# WISAR

Wirtschaftsnahe Strategien für lebenslanges  
Lernen in der Region

-

Regional Economy oriented Strategies for Lifelong Learning

## PRODUCT EVALUATION REPORT

*Research by*



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## 1. Background and Methodological Approach

Towards the end of the project *LLP Key Activity 1 project WISAR - “Wirtschaftsnahe Strategien für lebenslanges Lernen in der Region”* (project number: 167140-LLP-1\_2009-1-AT-KA1-KA1ECETB) initially planned from 01.03.2010 to 28.02.2011 and prolonged during the project lifetime to 31.5.2011, the external product evaluation report presents the results and interpretation of the external evaluator having its main focus on the success of the partnership to develop regional economy-oriented strategies for lifelong learning on a cooperative basis.

The present Product Evaluation Report was prepared by Auxilium for “Wirtschaftsnahe Strategien für lebenslanges Lernen in der Region”, a LLP Key Activity 1 project, proposed by *SZF, Austria*.

Apart from the coordinator *SZF (P1)* the following institutions participate in the project:

- P2 - Dimitra Institute of training & development ITD, Greece
- P3 - IteE, Instytut Technologii Eksploatacji - Panstwowy, Poland
- P4 - School Center of Ptuj, Slovenia
- P5 - COOP, Slovakia

This report was developed by Auxilium within its work package “Quality Management and Evaluation Strategy” (WP 2) of the *WISAR* project.

In the process of ensuring the quality of the *WISAR* products, all participating partners were assigned the identification of applicable quality indicators. *Auxilium*, the project partner in charge of quality control and quality assurance, was entrusted with the collection and analysis of data provided by all organisations involved in the development of the *WISAR* products.

In the initial phase of the evaluation process at the very beginning of the *WISAR* project, a *Quality Indicator Matrix* was sent out to the partnership with the request to provide quality indicators they considered relevant for the evaluation of the product. Based on this partner’s agreement the evaluator analyzed the different outcomes and products of the *WISAR* project presenting his comments in the present report.

## 2. Evaluation of Wisar Products

### 2.1. Project Memorandum

At the very beginning of an international project like *WISAR* the partners should make a clear and comprehensive plan of the realization of the project indicating especially the aims (including expected results), the different tasks of the project partners, the expected outputs and their deadlines of realization as well as information about how quality management could be guaranteed.

The present paper meets all these demands by giving an exhaustive presentation of the five project's targets and the expected results. Furthermore, the different workpackages are carefully described presenting detailed information in this early stage of the project and offering a structured graphic representing the partner's responsibility for the different workpackages. The expected outcomes are all listed indicating also the deadline for their finalization in order to guarantee that the foreseen schedule will be respected.

The description of the different communication methods during the project lifetime (meetings, electronic communication and telephone) makes sure that the cooperation among the partners will be active and that mutual reliance and intercultural comprehension will be guaranteed during a project lifetime.

At the end of the memorandum essential information about the different partners including their organization name and address as well as the contact person and his/her e-mail address and telephone number are indicated. It is very important to write down these data in the first official documents, as in the very beginning of a project partners may need some time to save all the details of their partners on their personal computers.

### 2.2. Project Newsletter

The development and distribution of newsletters play a crucial role within the dissemination of a project. The *WISAR* partnership published three newsletters during the project lifetime:

- first newsletter: December 2010
- second newsletter: July 2011
- third newsletter: March 2011

It can be seen that the newsletter was published periodically and that the quantity of three editions was the right number to give interesting and relevant information on the project activities and the project results during the *WISAR* project time of one year.

Furthermore the dates of publication were chosen carefully reflecting respectively the actual status quo of the project. In fact, the first newsletter (published about 4 months after the beginning of the project) presented not only the main objectives but could also give a short overview over the present situation as well as the description of future prospects. The second newsletter (published about nine months after the project start) could present the first results like a strategy paper or the preparing of the methods and the third newsletter (published at the beginning of the accorded prolongation period) gave an overview of the closing conference held in Fohnsdorf/Austria.

Generally speaking the *WISAR* newsletters present a homogeneous structure giving first an general overview over the actual status quo and the next steps in the project, stating then the duration of the project (considering also the prolongation of the project duration in the last newsletter) and citing the project team as well as the project partners at the end of each newsletter. All newsletters also represent the necessary disclaimer at the end.

One little mistake (misprint) was made in the first two newspapers, as the end of the project was fixed with 2010 instead of 2011, but this mistake was corrected in the third newsletter, where the date had to be changed anyway as the prolongation of the project was accorded.

The newsletter is available in all partner languages and it has been distributed to relevant stakeholders by all partners in all the partner countries.

All in all, the dissemination tool “newsletter” was successfully realized within the *WISAR* project. If, however, there is one suggestion to be made, it concerns the layout of the newsletter as the positions of the headlines within the newsletters are not homogeneous. In fact, some of them are detached from the text and others are directly attached to the text, which makes it more difficult for the reader to repair them instantly.

### 2.3. Promotional Materials

The main aim of a **project folder** is to inform interested persons about the most important things of a project using a short but precise form of presentation. The *WISAR* folder is meeting this demands as it describes the content, methods and targets using few words, gives information about the project duration as well as about the partnership and shows the reader where to get more information in case of interest. Of course the European Logo and the disclaimer are also integrated in the folder which - as requested - is available in all partner languages.

The **poster** created for the promotion of the *WISAR* project shows three jigsaw pieces. One is called “*people*”, the other “*region*” and the third piece is called “*economy*”. These pieces are placed in such a way that the two pieces “*people*” and “*economy*” are both linked with the piece “*region*” representing therefore the central point where “*people*” and “*economy*” meet and indicating at the same time the interdependence of these three elements.

Having only one look at this picture, the interested person recognizes at a glance that the *WISAR* project deals with “*people*” in different “*regions*” concerned by the “*economy*” of this region. In fact, there was no use to add words to this picture. And the interested reader will also quickly perceive the *WISAR* website address [www.wisar.eu](http://www.wisar.eu) where he/she will find further details about the project.

Concerning **informative articles** to be published by the partnership, it has to be said that every single partner made publications about the *WISAR* project in his/her own country, even if the number of publications is rather varying:

- Austria: 6 publications
- Slovenia: 5 publications
- Slovakia: 3 publications
- Poland: 1 publication
- Greece: 14 publications

As there wasn't fixed any minimum number of publications, the task of publishing information about the *WISAR* project was successfully fulfilled. However, it would have been better to fix an - even small - minimum quantity of publications in order to avoid such big differences among the partnership.

## 2.4. Project Website

A project website should at the one hand give some short information about the project aims and objectives, about partners and about the activities planned and realized.

Under the icon “*objectives*” on the first page of the website the reader gets clear and exhaustive information about the aims fixed by the partnership like regional development, regional LLL strategy development, methods development, networking and sustainability. The different descriptions of the five objectives allow the reader to have a clear idea of what is the project about and what it tries to achieve. This information is completed by offering information about the “*outcomes*” and the “*target groups*” of the *WISAR* project.

The “*partners*” are also presented in a very structured way offering not only the name of the partners but describing also their different tasks.

The activities of the partnership are partially described under the icon “*meetings*”, since the reader can find there the different dates, the agenda and some pictures of the partner meetings. Another information source about activities of the *WISAR* partnership is represented by the icon “*products*” as all relevant outcomes like newsletters, method papers, strategy papers or press articles are available in this website area.

In order to foster mutual exchange between the partners a forum called “*LLL-Network*” was also installed at the *WISAR* website which allows communication and exchange of ideas among them and permits to keep the project alive even beyond the project closure. Furthermore the forum is not only destined to the partnership itself but is open to all those who share their interest in this topic.

Access and download of all major project outputs can be found under the download section called “*products*”, where interested people can find the main documents of the *WISAR* project. The only point to criticize in this area is the fact that the structure of the representation of the different products is not homogeneous. In fact, the position of the products is not the same for all the languages, which means that when changing languages it is rather difficult to find the right product at a glance (e.g. different position of “*newsletters*” and “*press/articles*”). Furthermore, the writing of headlines is not homogenous in this website area, not even within one page (see the different writings of headlines in the German version).

The last critical comment concerns the fact, that in some languages are represented pictures of events concerning the *WISAR* project, which, of course, is a very good idea. But

it would have been better to create an extra file containing these pictures for people interested in regarding them, because for all others it is a bit confusion to see the representation of pictures directly in the table of content and makes it more difficult to read the text and repair the interesting things.

Of course the project website is available in all partner languages and meets all official requirements to project websites made by the Executive Agency including funding disclaimer and programme logo.

All in all, it can be said that the *WISAR* website is convenient to navigate as it has a clear structure and permits the user to recognize at one glance where to find the information he/she is interested in. Merely the different writing in capital and small letters is a little bit disturbing on the front page as all topics are written in capital letters and only the word “link collection” begins with a small letter. This affects a bit the perfect harmony of the first page of the *WISAR* homepage.

## 2.5. Strategic Papers

Analyzing the five Strategic Papers for “Regional Economy-oriented Lifelong Learning” (one for each partner country) from a general point of view, it can be stated that they are all available in hard copy and .pdf format (to download under the icon “products”). They all have been published in English as well as in all partners’ languages.

All Strategic Papers are quite voluminous going from 24 pages (Slovenian paper) up to 40 pages (Austrian paper). All papers represent the logos of the *WISAR* project as well as of the lifelong learning programme of the European Commission, whereas some of the papers are missing the disclaimer.

Concerning the formal representation of the paper, it can be stated that generally speaking they are clearly structured offering many demonstrative graphics and statistics, relating best practices and concrete examples and giving an overview over the literature and sources used for the realisation of the paper. Merely the Slovakian paper misses the numbering of pages, the table of content and some references, which makes it more difficult to read this paper.

Referring to the concrete content of the different papers, it is evident that all of them are meeting the demand of offering relevant national strategies and developments. In fact, the papers all contain:

- The European Guidelines and national policy for lifelong learning
- Characteristics of the local economy, strengths and weaknesses and main axes of the developments
- A representation of the quality and quantity of human resources in the region as well as the providers of education and training
- The way in which regional LLL strategy should be attuned to the regional development strategy
- The development of an informal network of lifelong learning

All in all, the five Strategic Papers incorporate all relevant national strategies and activities to be foreseen in order to guarantee a sustainable regional development and to safeguard the regional competitiveness.

## 2.6. Method Paper - Round Table

One of the main targets of the *WISAR* project was the development of a set of methods to adjust regional LLL opportunities to economic requirements. The methods therefore used are:

- *the round table method*
- *the panel method*
- *the delphi method*

Analyzing this first document (*Method Paper - Round Table*) from a general point of view it can be stated that it is available in hard copy and .pdf format (to download under the icon “products”). Consisting of eleven pages the “Method Paper - Round Table” meets the demand of at least 10 pages and has been published in English. The publication in the partner’s languages has been foreseen and has been done by the partners.

The “Method Paper - Round Table” has been elaborated and published by the Austrian partner “SZF - Schulungszentrum Fohnsdorf”.

From a general point of view, the Method Paper has a clear structure and allows the reader to identify very quickly the most interesting points of interest. After a short historical and conceptual introduction about round tables there is following a description about how to use the roundtable method for the purposes of *WISAR* projects. Based on the scientific

“Ishikawa Method”, the present Method Paper demonstrates how the roundtable method can be used within the *WISAR* project providing also a clear step-by-step demonstration offering herewith the possibility to use this tool as guideline for the organisation of further roundtables. The Method Paper is completed by a short description of the advantages of the roundtable method as well as by a short description of the role and expected behaviour of the moderator.

Thus, the “Method Paper - roundtable” contains also all necessary information to adapt the roundtable methods to the aims fixed by the *WISAR* project.

## 2.7. Method Paper - Panels

Analyzing this second document (*Method Paper - Panel Discussion Method*) from a general point of view, it can be stated that it is available in hard copy and .pdf format (to download under the icon “products”). Consisting of ten pages the “Method Paper - Panel Discussion Method” meets the demand of at least 10 pages and has been published in English. The publication in the partner’s languages has been foreseen and has been done by the partners.

The “Method Paper - Panel Discussion Method” has been elaborated and published by the Slovakian partner “COOP Institute of Education” and the Slovenian partner “School Centre Ptuj”.

After a short general introduction to the topic of panel discussions, the present Method Paper demonstrates very precisely how to realise a panel discussion. The function, rules and purposes of a panel discussion are described, followed by an exact description of the important role and the tasks of the leaders, speaking then about the preparation and implementation of panels and specifying exactly which important rules have to be followed in order to guarantee the good application of a panel discussion. At last, the Paper is completed by indicating the area of use of a panel discussion, its advantages and shortcomings and by citing some examples of good practices of panel discussions.

All in all, the “Method Paper - Panel Discussion Method” offers a very good and precise overview over the panel discussion methods, but is sometimes missing the concrete connection with the *WISAR* project and the question how to apply the present method on the *WISAR* project conditions.

## 2.8. Method Paper - Delphi

Analyzing this third document (*Method Paper - Delphi Method*) from a general point of view, it can be stated that it is available in hard copy and .pdf format (to download under the icon “products”). Consisting of 20 pages the “Method Paper - Delphi Method” meets the demand of at least 10 pages and has been published in English. The publication in the partner’s languages has been foreseen and has been done by the partners.

The “Method Paper - Delphi Method” has been elaborated and published by the Greek partner “Dimitra Institute of training & development ITD” and the Polish partner “IteE, Instytut Technologii Eksploatacji”.

What is really striking in this Method Paper is the very good structure of the content offering first some general information about the Delphi Method (background, methodical assumptions, criteria of selection of the experts, organization of the survey) including a short and precise summary of the most important steps. After this general introduction to the Delphi Method a concrete description follows of how to apply the Delphi Method in the *WISAR* programme. The precise presentation of this application is completed by some appendixes representing a clear and comprehensible example of such an application of the described Delphi Method to the needs and conditions of the *WISAR* project.

All in all, the “Method Paper - Delphi Method” is a very successful example of how to apply a certain method to a concrete situation and concrete preconditions.

The general paper describing and including all the three methods described above contains the European logo as well as the disclaimer.

## 2.9. Wisar Materials

### Material Paper

Analyzing the document “**Material Paper**” from a general point of view, it can be stated that it is available in hard copy and .pdf format (to download under the icon “products”). It has been published in English as well as in all partners’ languages. Materials for all three tools (Round Table, Panels and Delphi) have been designed and the Material Paper contains the European logo as well as the disclaimer at the end of the paper.

Having a look at the content of the material paper it has to be said that it would have been good to make some kind of introduction to this paper in order to inform the reader

about what he/she is about to read. In fact, there is no kind of accompanying text that might guide the user through the document nor is there any table of contents.

Apart from this side note, the evaluator thinks that the paper is well structured and offers the reader a very good overview over the most important materials to be used during the *WISAR* project:

#### Materials for Delphi Method:

- *Invitation letter:*

The invitation paper sent to experts in order to have the contribution of experts is well structured as it offers all necessary information about the *WISAR* project like background, aims and objectives, the reason for having been chosen as expert as well as a short description of the way how to participate. Despite this sufficient information, the letter is not too long so that there is no risk to discourage the expert from reading it until the end. It is written in a polite way making sure that the participation in the survey is voluntary and underlining the valuable contribution the expert can make by dedicating some minutes to the questionnaire.

- *Questionnaire example:*

The two questionnaires sent to the experts are quite inviting and convince the expert to fill them in as they are conceived in a way that permits the user to write as less as possible by ticking the appropriate boxes or by writing some short notes in pre-assembled boxes. The structure of the single questions is clear and they can be answered without a big effort. At the end of each questionnaire the author repeats that the expert should answer to all the questions in order to guarantee valuable results and that the survey is anonymous guaranteeing that the opinions of the person answering aren't identifiable.

#### Materials for Panel Method:

- *Invitation letter Example 1:*

This invitation letter is directed to people that should participate to the panel discussion as audience. Therefore the letter contains the most important points like place, time and topic of the event referring also to the target group that might be interested in the specific topic. The reader of the letter gets also a list of the speakers and of the leader of the discussion and can quickly see if the planned event is interesting to him/her or not.

- *Invitation letter Example 2:*

This invitation letter is directed to the experts being invited as speaker of the planned event. They are informed about the place, time and topic of the event and are kindly invited to participate as expert underlining the big importance of their participation.

- *Questions example:*

Disposing in advance of the questions to be treated during the panel discussion, the experts can do a proper preparation and therefore will be well prepared for answering the questions of the public.

#### Materials for Round Table Method:

- *Invitation letter:*

This invitation letter is directed to experts invited to participate in the round table discussion. At the very beginning of the letter is represented the discrepancy between the importance of knowledge advantage and the fact that very little enterprises are able to judge their „return to education“ of training measures. Herewith the attention of the reader is quickly awakened. As the method that will be applied during the round table (the “method of Ishikawa diagrams) is also described in the letter, the expert knows what he/she will have to do if he/she decides to participate in the development of regional strategies for lifelong learning in the region.

- *Round Table - short description:*

In this material paper the methods of round tables (adapted to the aims of the *WISAR* project) as well as the procedure of round tables using the Ishikawa Model are described offering a clear idea of all the necessary steps and the advantages of the Ishikawa Model.

- *Graphics model of Ishikawa:*

As the Ishikawa Model may not be known by all participating experts or by the audience it was a good idea of the *WISAR* partnership to publish also the graphical representation of this method. In fact, having a look at the graphic it is easy to see which different factors are working together and in which way they interact.

All in all, it can be stated that the above mentioned materials are valuable documents for the preparation, application and for the analysis of the different methods and can serve as basic documents capable of being adapted to more specific situations.

## Report of the pilot phase

Analyzing the document “**Reports of the pilot phase**” it can be said that it contains 81 pages, that it is available in English and exists in hardcopy and pdf.-format and can be downloaded from the homepage of the WISAR project. It also meets the necessary demands of presenting the WISAR logo and the disclaimer.

The “Report of the pilot phase” is a very clear and well structured document divided into the presentation of the results of the five participating countries and the appendix containing the different questionnaires used for the survey.

All surveys conducted by the partners are equal and are composed of the following structure:

- \* *Organisation*: here appears the name of the organisation conducting the survey
- \* *Method*: the name of the method (Delphi or Round Table) is indicated
- \* *Date*: the date or period of the survey is indicated
- \* *Target group*: at this point are described the composition of the target group as well as the number of participants
- \* *Starting point*: in this section is especially represented the actual situation from which on the survey is starting
- \* *Description of procedure*: here the reader finds an exact definition of how the participating countries carried out the different surveys
- \* *Outcomes*: in this section the results and conclusions of the survey are represented
- \* *Strengths and risks of the method when compared to the aims of WISAR*: in this column the partners evaluated the results in order to know if the respective method is appropriated for the aims of the WISAR project or not
- \* *Recommendations*: in this section the partners give their comments about how to adapt the respective method to the needs of WISAR and which changes are necessary to make a better use of the method

All in all, the present report of the pilot phase contains the requested results and experiences of the project partners concerning the implementation of the chosen methods and is adapted for being used as basis for a further adaptation process.

### 3. Summary

The present *Product Evaluation Report* gives a detailed description of the quality of the products realised by the *WISAR* partnership based on quantitative and qualitative requirements of the project's proposal as well as of their final real life use.

First of all, it has to be said that all products required for a successful finalization of the *WISAR* project have been delivered in time and - if required - translated into the partner's languages and distributed to the relevant stakeholders.

All products dispose of a very high quality and are therefore capable of being used and applied even after the project's lifetime, so that the evaluator believes that the *WISAR* products will surely achieve their objectives and will contribute to develop the regional economy-oriented strategies for lifelong learning even in the future.

Naturally, a project like *WISAR* will require the commitment and involvement of administration, schools, universities, vocational training centres, regional companies as well as people themselves to make changes possible.