



ICT BASED EVALUATION METHODOLOGY TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL  
IMPACT OF WORK-LINKED TRAINING

ATWORK / Ref.: 2017-1-ES01-KA202-038537

## **Task 5. Testing and validation – Report on results**

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September 2019



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

**ATWORK PROJECT 2017-1-ES01-KA202-038537**

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## 1. Introduction

This document contains a summary of the Intellectual Output 1 testing and validation activities carried out by the ATWORK project partners in their national contexts. The testing and validation activities were aimed at obtaining feedback from experts and final users and beneficiaries, in order to adapt the final producer to the needs of these groups.

This document is a synthesis report containing the most important elements that have served as a basis for carrying out the testing and validation work. Therefore, it contains only the most important data, both from the methodological framework followed to carry out the activities and from the data for each country.

In order to understand the scope of this report and its conclusions, we have to take into account the following aspects:

1. It must be borne in mind that this is a phase in the development of the intellectual result, which is done using a "beta" version of the different elements that make up the intellectual result. This is why there are often technical problems which the participants include in their conclusions, and which have been taken into account within their context.
2. The users have tested the platform in their own languages, so they start from a translation from English into the national languages. We have therefore reflected the language-centred conclusions (extension of questions and indicators, development of indicators) exclusively for that particular version.

In the following pages, starting from a short summary of the methodology used for validation and testing, a summary of the activities carried out by each partner in their country and a final set of conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

## 2. Summary of methodological guidelines to develop the testing and validation activities of ATWORK Project

This section contains a summary of the guidelines used to implement testing and validation activities. These guidelines were prepared to have a common methodological approach to assess the beta version of all the elements of the IO1 and to create some common instruments to support partners in this task.

### 2.1. Objectives

Pilot testing and validation are two activities intended to evaluate the different elements that form the Intellectual output:

- ATWORK theoretical framework for evaluation
- ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform
- ATWORK handbook

The goal of the testing and validation activities was to improve them considering the target group needs and experts' expectations. The main **aims** of testing and validation activities were:

- \* To involve the final users in the development of the ATWORK project;
- \* To experiment the practical application of ATWORK IO1;
- \* To evaluate the results of the practical application;
- \* To adapt the ATWORK IO1 to the real requirements of the users.

### 2.2. Structure of the testing and validation process

In order to achieve these aims, partners conducted a series of **activities**:

**a. Elaboration of guidelines for testing:** Guidelines (this document) was elaborated by AGENCIA PARA EL EMPLEO DE MADRID and DRAMBLYS and contains all the instructions about the actions to be implemented by partners in order to proceed to assess ATWORK IO1.

**b. Implementation of testing activities** in all countries: according to the plan, each partner implemented validation activities at national level, namely:

**Testing among users:** each partner tested the **ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform** between final users namely:

- Trainees
- Trainers
- Training providers

Also, **ATWORK handbook** was evaluated by final users accordingly:

- Trainers
- Training providers

**c. Testing among experts:** experts evaluated the following project outcomes:

- ATWORK theoretical framework for evaluation
- ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform
- ATWORK handbook

**d. Analysis of results:** each partner will compile the results obtained during testing activities – using the templates created for that.

**e. Reporting:** For the conclusion of testing activities, the coordinators of this task (AGENCIA PARA EL EMPLEO DE MADRID and DRAMBLYS) have elaborated a Report on testing and evaluation activities.

### 2.3. Evaluation criteria

CRITERIA	MEANING
<b>Efficacy</b>	Is the ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform able to assess to social impact of training?
<b>Efficiency</b>	How well do ATWORK IO provide some evaluation tools to assess the social impact of training?
<b>Usefulness</b>	Is ATWORK main outcomes useful for the target groups (trainees/trainers/training providers)?
<b>Quality</b>	Does ATWORK IO have quality in order to fulfil the objectives?

<b>P r o d u c t</b> <b>transferability</b>	How easy is it to transfer ATWORK main outcome to other training contexts?
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The above table contains the five principle that have consider to evaluate the results from the testing activities.

## 2.4. Actors of testing and validation

In the process of validation and testing we find two main types of actors:

⇒Final users

⇒Experts

### Final users

End users are those who are direct recipients of the ATWORK project's intellectual product.

- Training providers;
- Trainers;
- Trainees.

Each of the collectives referred above assessed different characteristics of the platform and handbook.

**Trainees:** They evaluated the ATWORK ICT based evaluation tool. They only assessed usefulness of the platform.

**Trainers and training providers:** They tested the following components of the ATWORK IO as follows:

- ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform
- ATWORK handbook

They evaluated the following criteria: efficacy, efficiency, usefulness and quality.

### Expert

Within the framework of the ATWORK project, we consider experts as those professionals who work in the field of training evaluation. They have evaluated the three components of ATWORK IO:

- ATWORK theoretical framework for evaluation
- ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform
- ATWORK handbook

According to the following evaluation criteria: efficacy, efficiency, usefulness, quality and transferability.

### 3. Summary of countries' reports on testing and validation

This section contains a summary of national reports implemented by partners in each participant country.

#### 3.1. Spain

In Spain testing and validation activities were developed in September in two different moments.

##### Experts' validation

On September 10th Agencia para el Empleo de Madrid and Dramblys organised a validation session in Madrid. Seven experts were contacted and five confirmed their participation in the session. Due to different reasons, only 3 experts (from the 5 confirmed) participated in the validation session.

The profiles of the participants belong to different areas of expertise, but all related to the training activities:

- ◆ 1 expert on training evaluation design from the University of Castellon;
- ◆ 1 expert on training evaluation from a professional organisation - Fundación Laboral de la Construcción; and
- ◆ 1 expert on training design - Freelance.

Before the testing session, they received all three resources to evaluate. And during the session the group had the opportunity to discuss and exchange their opinions about the resources evaluated.

##### **Results and conclusions**

In general they assessed very positively the theoretical framework and the design of indicators. Also they evaluated very positively the use of Likert scale to measure the indicators. The version of the handbook and the

The most controversial part of the validation activities was that some of the questions to assess the indicators need revision. Because sometimes the questions are not very specific and it's difficult to understand (the meaning) or can be confused because they can contain two questions in one.

As main conclusions, and according to their feedback the ATWORK project result is a very positive contribution to improved the environment of training evaluation, and it will be a very useful tool for any of the agents that work in training activities.

### **Testing activities**

the testing of the ICT-based assessment tool, ATWORK, has taken place at the Usera Trades Training Centre. The total number of participants in the test, among students, tutors and companies providing training was 51.

Trainees: 41.

Training tutors: 5.

Training providers: 5.

The testing activities was developed using two real cases, that is, participants (trainers and trainees) in five professional certificates tested the platform. Training companies tested in a adapted environment. They received a mail with some indicators as well as username and password to work in the platform.

Here some conclusions obtained:

### **Limitations**

In the application of the ATWORK evaluation tool test, it has been possible to contrast some limitations that can make the process difficult:

- ▶ Both training providers and tutors who form the test have to know the methodological principles and aims of the evaluation tool in order to understand well what is asked of them with the usability questionnaires.
- ▶ At the same time, the students have to understand the purposes of the evaluation in order to respond coherently and that it does not remain as a punctual evaluation but as a process.
- ▶ Depending on the population to which the evaluation is directed, they would need more or less accompaniment at the time of carrying out the questionnaire.
- ▶ Adaptation of the language to low qualification profiles.

- ▶ It is understood that in order to handle the questionnaires on the platform, students must have basic digital skills. This implies: having e-mail, operating a computer and the Internet.
- ▶ It is taken for granted that all students must have an e-mail address, with the possibility that the student does not have one and cannot be evaluated.
- ▶ The tool does not allow the possibility of assigning several tutors to the same course. It is possible that the same course has the same student body but there are different tutors for each training module.
- ▶ The programming error 404, hinders the process and leads to fatigue of the participants.
- ▶ Test collaborators interpret the evaluation tool as a platform for training management and not as an evaluation platform that measures the impact of training on learners.

### ***Some findings***

- ★ The send links should specify what type of evaluation it is. (Initial, intermediate, or final).
- ★ Emails with the address atwork@ultra.pl are repeatedly sent to the spam or junk mail box.
- ★ Instructions for completing the platform questionnaire as an introduction to the questionnaire questions.
- ★ Adequacy of the language of the questions of the questionnaire for low qualification profiles.
- ★ The messages of the questionnaires for both students and tutors should appear in the language preset or selected, in this case, in Spanish.
- ★ Ensure the General Data Protection Regulations (RGPD).
- ★ The font size of the questions is very large, the question becomes very long as it occupies several vertical lines.
- ★ The answer spaces are duplicated. One with the Likert scale dropdown and a blank space below it. This can create confusion on the part of the learners.
- ★ Change the button at the end of the questionnaire "SAVE" to "SEND".

### ***Final conclusion***

As a final conclusion, from the Agency for Employment, we understand that although there are issues that are susceptible of improvement, we deduct that profiled these technical difficulties, the evaluation tool based on ICT ATWORK, has validity in the framework of training for employment and there are possibilities of implementation, since there are evaluations tailored to the skills and requirements of the company but not what ATWORK evaluates, an aspect as important as the impact of training on students.

### 3.2. Poland

Within the testing and validation process all its participants (trainees, trainers, training providers and experts) had the possibility to express **additional comments** on ATWORK project main results either within questionnaires **open questions** or during **face-to-face** focus groups or individual discussions with national coordinators.

Even though overall feedback is very positive, which is visible in the statistical results presented and commented in proceeding chapters of current Testing & Validation Report prepared by 36,6 Competence Centre, it is worth to present complimentary analysis, suggestions, feedback, critical points and recommendations to be taken into account for the sustainability of the project.

In Poland, **65 persons in total** participated in the testing (40 beneficiaries) and validation procedures (25 future users and experts). However, not everyone had the same role and joined the process in the same time. Within validation and testing procedures 5 main criteria were assessed: efficacy, efficiency, usefulness/ usability, quality and products transferability. Different aspects and results were evaluated by various end-users using different methodology and tools. Trainees evaluated only usefulness/ usability of the platform. Trainers and training providers assessed efficacy, efficiency and usefulness/ usability of the platform and handbook. Finally external experts (professionals dealing with training evaluation) were asked to evaluate all aspects (efficacy, efficiency, usefulness/ usability, quality and transferability) of all results (platform, handbook and theoretical framework).

Within the first testing phase trainees were involved to assess the usability of the platform. As end-users they were able to identify promptly all **technical features requiring improvements**, which were introduced immediately based on their feedback. Their engagement was also appreciated at the level of providing different language options (English, Polish, German,

Spanish and Romanian). At the beginning of launching the on-line evaluation tool, testing persons might have received feedback/ question/ instruction/ answer in wrong language. All those **language gaps, bags and errors were removed after trainees' intervention**.

Despite technical and language issues raised, trainees appreciated the tool at the very high level. Among the most common feedback received is the one that **they felt the tool** is not to evaluate the trainer and/ or training course they participate in but it **focuses on them**, which was **empowering**. Answering questions made them realised they are in the process of **increasing their quality of life** by acquiring new competencies that will lead to **employability and social inclusion**.

Trainers and training providers tested and validated the ATWORK project results from different angle having distinct aims and needs. It was essential for them to gain innovative tool evaluating the aspect that has been neglected and underestimated so far in traditional and commonly available evaluation training approaches. **Assessment of social impact of work-based training they are providing appeared to be an essential factor for adjusting their current offer to their clients' needs**.

Trainers found the **feature of early warning system as particularly important** for them to follow the trainee progress (or regress) and react with certain measures when it is not too late to avoid dropouts or poor achievements of course participants.

Training providers appreciated the handbook as extremely helpful in understanding the functionality of the platform. Everybody appreciated the tools are available in Polish.

External experts engaged in validation process appreciated the most the **huge potential** of all ATWORK project results **for future exploitation** with a special focus on evaluation on-line tool. All of them underlined the tool developed can be easily adjusted to other training environments. It was noticed there is **strong coherence** between what ICT based evaluation tool along with handbook offer on one hand **target group needs** on the other. Also flexibility and adaptability was mentioned as a considerable asset several times.

To sum up, all actors involved in the testing and validation process gave positive opinion to the main products realised within Erasmus+ ATWORK project and they predict huge potential in its sustainability in the future especially in central Poland, Lodzkie region where it underwent the complex assessment by experts and users.

### 3.3. Romania

According to the testing and validation plan, INCSMPS conducted validation activities in Romania, namely:

**Testing among users:** 50 final users - tested the **ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform** according to the following distribution: 30 trainees, 5 trainers and 5 training providers. Also, **ATWORK handbook** was evaluated by 10 final users according to the following numbers: 5 trainers and 5 training providers

**Testing among experts:** 5 experts were required to evaluate the following project outcomes:

- ATWORK theoretical framework for evaluation
- ATWORK ICT based evaluation platform
- ATWORK handbook

The training companies were informed about the project and its results and received all information regarding the testing and evaluation process that they will be part.

All testing and validation activities were **face to face sessions** developed using ATWORK platform and ATWORK Handbook, after one introductory session for explaining the project, the ATWORK IOs components to evaluate and how to evaluate.

The Romanian administrator assisted the representatives of training companies, trainers and trainees during the tests. Also experts were contacted and the evaluation was made face to face. For collecting the feedback from final users, they received questionnaires and a deadline for sending the feedback was set.

According with the role of participants in the testing and evaluation process, each of them evaluates only some components/products of the project.

Analyzing the answers we may conclude that almost all final users considerate the ATWORK platform an innovative tool, very useful for trainees, trainers and training companies.

Interesting observations were made by experts that considerate that the tool has big potential to be implemented in the training evaluation activity because it cover

aspects of training impact that normally are not assessed – namely social impact of training. The project ATWORK theoretical framework and the testing results proves that Evaluation platform developed in the AT WORK project could ensure the training impact evaluation, the training course quality and gives new ideas for improving the training courses, in the same time.

The trainees acknowledged that if at the beginning of the course they were skeptical about its usefulness for their future professional career, they changed their mind and the AT WORK platform helped them to understand this change in terms of perception regarding social position and chances of healthy social evolution.

The training providers appreciated the AT WORK platform and handbook as useful and good developed even that some of them considerate that for a complete assessment of training activity of their company is not enough and some of them stressed that the questionnaire should be more personalized according to the course. Customization of platform is a topic that may be very interesting for a future project or collaboration with training companies.

### **3.4. Scotland - UK**

In Scotland - UK we conducted the evaluation within Further Education Vocational Training Colleges, these colleges provide more Work Based Training and Work Based Learning Experience than private sector training providers and conduct Work Based Training within the majority of their training provision.

For the Piloting and Testing of the ATWork Project we worked specifically with Glasgow Regional Colleges, Glasgow Region has the highest number of Further Education Vocational Training Trainees across the whole of Scotland with around 130,000 FE Full-Time Trainees per year. This made a suitable target group for Tutors and Trainees, and as the local colleges work with around 500 plus employer based training companies supporting Work Based Training made for an ideal location to pilot and test the ATWork Evaluation of Work Based Training.

We therefore selected a suitable number of pilot programmes ranging from short term training courses to full year training courses, this will allow for further and more concrete

testing over the year ahead. We selected two 12-week training programmes, one 18 week training programme and two 1 year full time training programmes.

- 12 Week Programmes – Princes Trust Training and Employability
- 18 Week Programme – Returners to Further Education and Employment
- 36 Week Programme – 2 Full –Time Childcare and Early Years Training

This provided a total of 57 Trainees to trial the ATWork Programme with and obtain suitable overall results. The Piloting also targeted 5 course Tutors and 6 experts to provide further feedback on the suitability of the Platform and final project Outcomes.

Some conclusions

The testing results proved to be extremely positive, of the 57 Trainees initially targeted we had a response from 52 of the trainees, 3 trainees never received the survey due to incompatible email addresses (email addresses containing symbols or characters unsuitable). However this is being addressed and it was only a very small amount of trainees. All the Tutors and Experts completed the survey and verbal feedback was extremely positive with all Tutors stating the process was very simple.

The experts involved in the evaluation of the ATWork activities were overall very impressed by the full project, the project activities and outcomes. For the use of the platform we included 6 experts from across the Glasgow Clyde partners who had initially been informed of the project and supported the project activities.

From a Glasgow Clyde College conclusion (which is a major Further Vocational Education College in Scotland and the UK (5<sup>th</sup> Biggest in the UK), we see a huge potential to roll out this platform to most of our National and Higher National Certificate Programmes which target approximately 18,000 Full-Time trainees per year. We also see the opportunity to roll the ATWork platform out to our College Apprenticeship Programmes which includes 1,500 Apprentice Trainees per year. To increase the potential usage we shall highlight the project through the Scotlands College Work Based Learning Group which has a Glasgow Clyde College staff member on the Steering Group of this organisation. For Glasgow Clyde College we see this project and platform as a very valuable source of evaluating work based learning and it will help the college achieve its high standing through our quality and performance at national level and will be named as a best practice by the college to 'Education Scotland', which is the college inspectorate for Further and Higher Education.

For modification, which are still ongoing it would be good to see a diagrammatic diagnostic printout of Trainee performance from the survey. Maybe this is the potential for further development through a future Erasmus Funded project.

Trainers and Tutors also gave the project the seal of approval and recommended further availability across other college programmes and to be made available to a wider target audience.

Trainees enjoyed participation within the piloting phase and welcomed the idea that the survey platform would be made further available to them during their training and in progressive training in the years ahead.

Further individual feedback from our local experts recommended the Platform for greater use across the Glasgow Regional Colleges, this makes up for 25% of all the Vocational Education Trainees in Scotland and that the project has a wider potential for further development if funding was to be available. Experts were fully supportive of both the Platform and the Handbook and information provided on the project as a whole.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

In general, there is a great potential of the evaluation tool for alternating training activities. The participants were very interested and valued positively most of the components of the theoretical framework that is reflected in a practical way in the evaluation tool ATWORK and in the handbook. The indicators used according to most experts and training companies as well as tutors are adequate, and tell us and offer us the information we are looking for about a specific training course. Not only about the course itself, but also about its participants. This part has been very well valued by the experts, as it allows us to have an early warning system at the mid stage of the evaluation that tells us if something is happening in the course. This is very interesting because it is the moment when modifications and changes necessary to respond to this situation can be made. The method of measuring the variables (Likert Scale) has been evaluated very positively and in fact it has been advised to reduce the open questions to a minimum. Some participants acknowledged that if at the beginning of the course they were skeptical about its usefulness for their future professional career, they changed their mind and the AT WORK platform helped them to understand this change in terms of perception regarding social position and chances of healthy social evolution. The training providers appreciated the AT WORK platform and handbook as useful and good developed even that some of them considerate that for a complete assessment of training activity of their company is not enough and some of them stressed that the questionnaire should be more personalized according to the course. Customization of platform is a topic that may be very interesting for a future project or collaboration with training companies. However, there have been some aspects that should be improved and thus have been put into relevance by the partners. The answers should be better adapted to a broader understanding, i.e. to discriminate against the end user and redefine the indicators to make them more user-friendly. It should be pointed out that there have been some technical problems that are mainly due to the fact that this is a "beta" version of the platform, so they will be solved in the remaining time of the project.