Q-PLM

Quality Assurance for VET Providers
Using Product Lifecycle Management

LdV/TOI
Project Nr° 538379-LLP-1-2013-AT-LEONARDO-LMP

WP 4: Exploitation of results

WP 4: Stakeholder Analysis

provided by P1, bfi Steiermark, Carina Bachner

Partnership

AUSTRIA
Berufsförderungsinstitut Steiermark
www.bfi-stmk.at

GERMANY
INIT Developments Ltd
www.init-developments.eu

BELGIUM
Syntra West vzw
www.syntrawest.be

SPAIN
Fondo Formación Euskadi
www.ffeuskadi.net

FINLAND
WinNova
www.winnova.fi

IRELAND
City of Cork Vocational Education Committee
www.corketb.ie

SLOVENIA
Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije
www.gzs.si

ROMANIA
Universitatea Ştefan cel Mare din Suceava
www.usv.ro

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1. Introduction

Q-PLM – **Quality Assurance for VET Providers using Product Lifecycle Management** is a project aiming to provide an easy to use IT based instrument (software) for **integrated product lifecycle management for VET providers**, which all VET providers (no matter of what size) can use to actively manage the product lifecycle of single VET services/offers. Product lifecycle management will offer VET providers with an instrument that allows the identification of relevant influence variables impacting on a specific VET service/offer, the weighting of different variables in terms of impact value, the measurement of variables values and the forecast of their impact on the lifecycle of the VET offer on the market.

Therefore the instrument developed within this project will ensure that VET offers have the appropriate content and learning outcomes, the appropriate duration, the appropriate didactic format, the appropriate price and are offered at the most appropriate location. Integrated product lifecycle management can be a pragmatic and efficient solution for the need of VET providers related to instruments for quality assurance of VET offers made.

To outline in one sentence, we determined that there is a strong need at VET providers' level for a **coherent and practical instrument to monitor several variables influencing the performance of a VET service/offer**, assess changes and their impact on the VET offer to allow early and immediate reaction.

Due to this background **potential stakeholders and target groups** need to be identified and involved in the project activities at early stages for leading this project to a successful and sustainable ending. Therefore a special focus on dissemination and exploitation issues is put in this project from the very beginning.

This does not only contain the lead partner (P1) bfi Steiermark (AT), much more the hole partnership of the *Q-PLM* project is involved and has already identified relevant stakeholders, target groups and networks on national and international level.

Already at the kick-off meeting in Schwerin (DE) in November 2013 all partners agreed that the direct involvement of stakeholders from the very start of the project is vital in order to successfully exploit the project results and to reach the project's aims and outcomes as defined by the application.

Generally, target groups and stakeholders can contribute to as well as benefit from the project on various levels:

1) Firstly, they are involved during the research and analysis phase of the project. The main aim was to find out if VET providers do already use PLM instruments in any way and to ask and confirm again, how demanded this topic/tool is within the whole VET sector.

2) Secondly, stakeholders from other economic sectors are identified and interviewed, for an analysis of product lifecycle management theory and innovations available on the market in other economic sectors and the identification of transferable good practice and experiences to the VET sector.

3) Thirdly, they are involved in evaluating the basic orientation and frameworks of the project regarding its content, the main products, its strategic orientation and its European dimension; in this context, stakeholders and target groups can influence the project's basic set-up in their favour, which on the other hand helps the project group to meet better the demands of the markets.

4) Fourthly, stakeholders and target groups will be able to follow the development process of the software on the *Q-PLM* homepage as well as to test it later on, which assures that all relevant stakeholders and target groups from one partner country are able to use this tool during its testing phase, and again they will feedback about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with its services; this allows the partnership to further improve the quality of the software and later on of the handbook.

5) Fifthly, stakeholders and target groups will promote and disseminate the project and especially the software by their own networks, contacts, media etc. which helps to promote the existence of the software so the demand will be growing steady and quickly.

6) Sixthly, the project consortium will organise a final conference event in Graz (AT), where the final outputs and experiences of the *Q-PLM* project will be presented to a large number of stakeholders and target groups. This will however also be the starting point of continuously informing these stakeholders about the outputs and a possibility to use it themselves after the project has ended. The conference event in this sense should not be the final event of the project, but the start event of intensive communication of project partners and stakeholders about the results of the project and exploitation possibilities.

7) Last but not least, seventhly, stakeholders and target groups can use the *Q-PLM* software (beta version) for free and can benefit from its services and instruments in their own daily professional life.

In this context it is not only important to identify an appropriate quantitative number of stakeholders, also the indicators *quality*, *authenticity* and *relevance* need to be respected when selecting them. Therefore, P1 started this work task with great care and intensive preparation. For defining the different stakeholders and target groups properly, all partners were provided with an standardised documentation grid *(see Annex 1: Annex 1_q_plm_stakeholder_pool_template).* This instrument preselected appropriate quality indicators such as the *type of organisations, nature of engagement, main areas of activities* and the *level of action* (i.e. local, national, European, outside EU). During 11/2013 and 04/2014, the *Q-PLM* project partnership used this template to identify and collect as many relevant stakeholders as possible, inside but also outside their home countries. Different stakeholders have been identified by the project partners whereby finally the project group managed to collect *310 contacts.*

This proves not only the high engagement of the partners to involve their national stakeholders and target groups in the *Q-PLM* project, it is also a strong indicator that the real-life market cares for our project idea and is interested being part of it. The project partners will use this positive start for linking the *Q-PLM* project with real-life markets right from the beginning.

Carina Bachner, bfi Steiermark

2. Methodology

To identify the stakeholders in all partner countries bfi Steiermark (P1) provided a template to all partners in order to collect detailed information about their stakeholders and key actors. The partners were asked to fill in these templates to give more information about their identified stakeholders and key actors, so far *(see Annex 1: Annex 1_q_plm_stakeholder_pool_template).*

As already mentioned, this instrument preselected appropriate quality indicators such as the *type of organisations, nature of engagement, main areas of activities, level of action* (i.e. local, national, European, outside EU), the *approximate size of organisation* and of course general information and contact details of each stakeholder. During 11/2013 and 04/2014, the *Q-PLM* project partnership used this template to identify and collect as many relevant stakeholders as possible, inside but also outside their home countries. Each county established its own stakeholder list/pool, which had to be sent to P1 (bfi Steiermark), where a common list with all stakeholders of all eight partner countries has been created. Finally, different stakeholders with different focuses have been identified by the project partners wherefore the project group managed to collect *310 contacts* in total (*see Annex 2: Annex 2_qplm_stakeholder_all).*

3. Quantity of stakeholders – Partnership

The first chart within this analysis reflects the amount of provided stakeholders of each partner. Altogether 310 stakeholders could have been listed in the beginning of the project, which is a very representative quantity at all. Each partner had been asked to provide a minimum of 20 stakeholders for the beginning of the *Q-PLM* project; however as it is seen on the following chart, the partner provided different numbers. It is seen that the Belgian partner (Syntra West) provided the highest amount of stakeholders (134 in total) followed by the Austrian one (bfi Steiermark) with 51 in total. The rest of the partnership (Germany, Finland, Spain, Ireland, Slovenia and Romania) provided between 19 and 24 stakeholders. During the upcoming projects phases there will always be the possibility and motivation to update and enlarge their contacts.
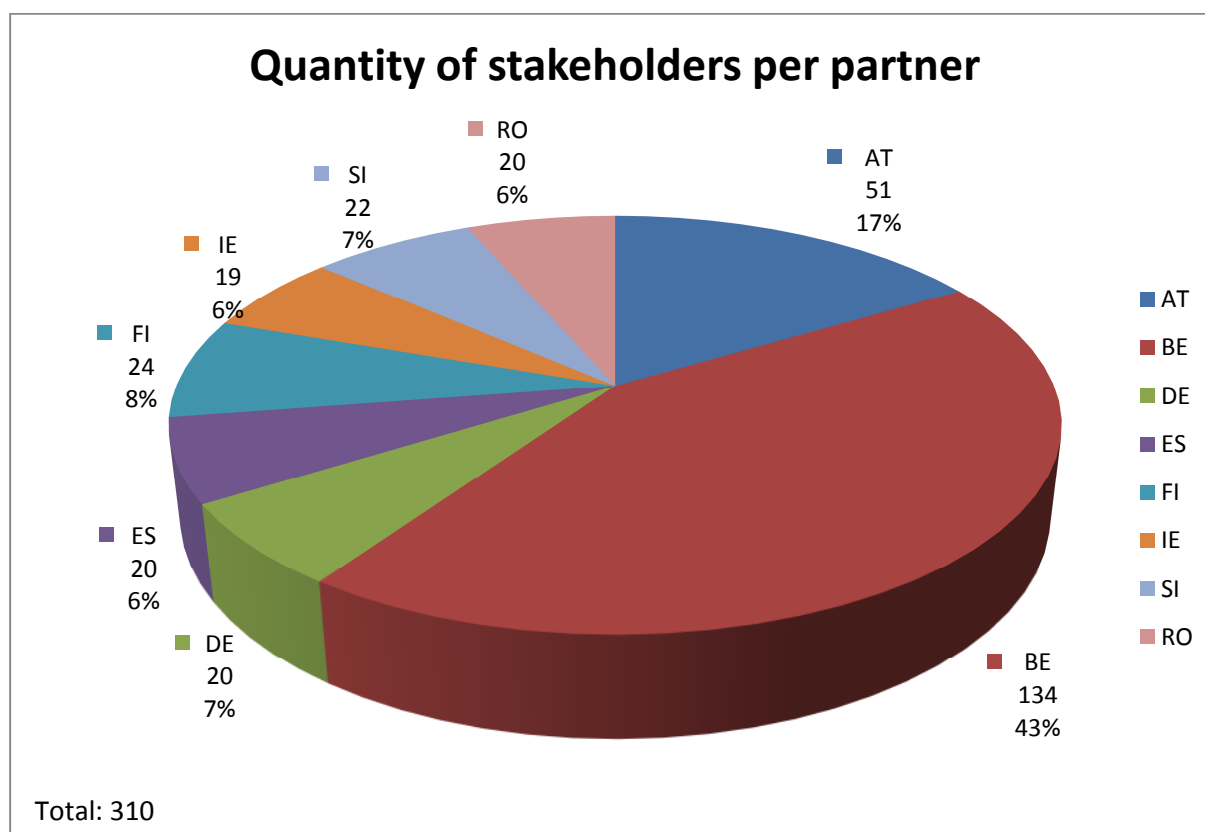

Chart 1 – Quantity of stakeholders per partner

4. Listed stakeholders – Partnership

The following chart shows, which countries are represented in our stakeholder pool. It is very important to spread the pool as wide as possible and to reach additional VET providers outside the represented countries of the partnership. Moreover, several organisations of the stakeholder pool act as networking partners all over Europe, whereby the European distribution will again be much wider, due to the engagement of these stakeholders.
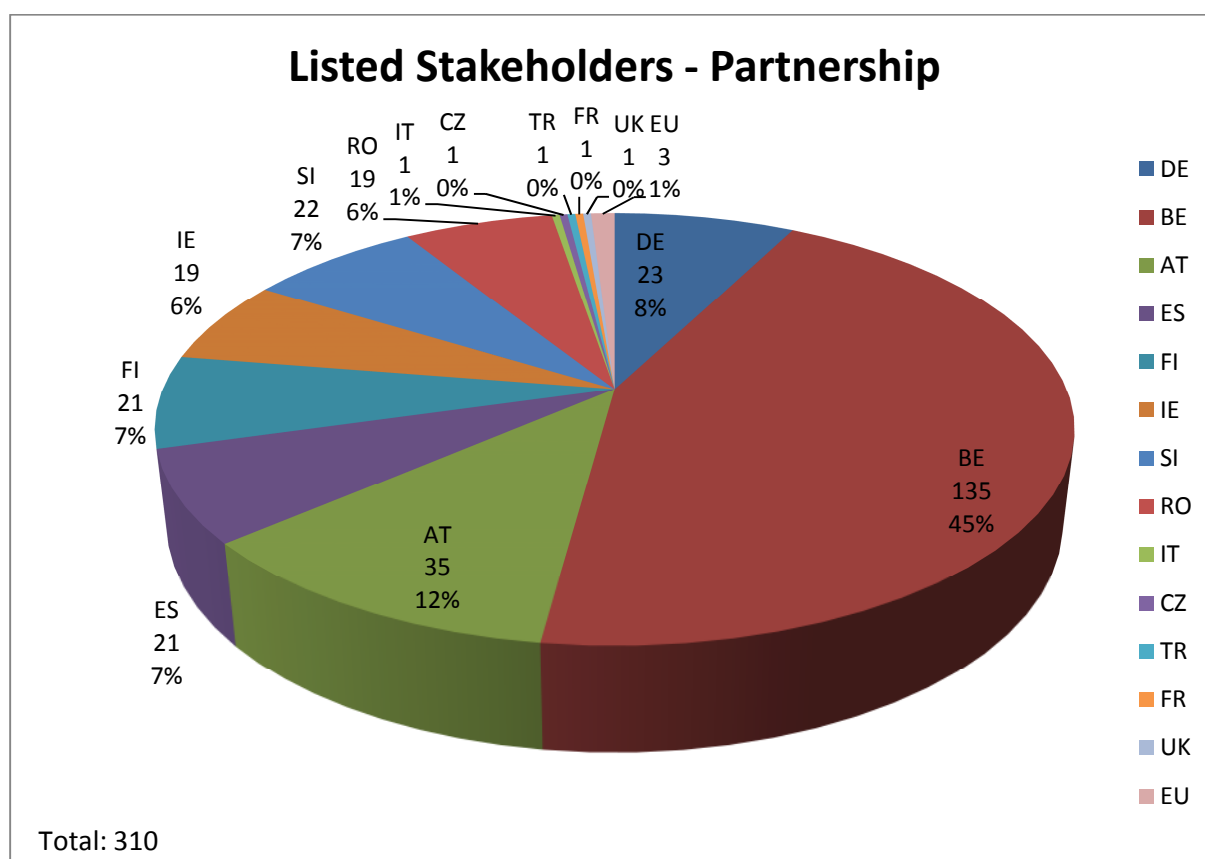
Chart 2 – Listed stakeholders - Partnership

As it can be seen above, a total of 310 stakeholders that represent different types of organizations and act in diverse fields and at different levels are currently engaged in the *Q-PLM* project by the individual project partners *(see Annex 3: Annex 3_data for charts 1 and 2).*

The upcoming charts are going to describe these listed stakeholders in more details. The analysis focuses on a detailed demonstration of the *types of organisations*, the *kind of engagement,* the *main areas of activities* in the *Q-PLM project,* and the *level of actions.*

The sheets with the stakeholder pool of every single partner are attached as well *(see Annexes 4 to 11),* because they show in a second step the diversity in each partner country. Those disparities reflect the challenge developed in EU projects because of the different requirements of the target groups within different countries. Because of this it is even more important to engage key actors from the very beginning of the project and to continuously convince stakeholders of the projects products adaptability and need. However, we didn't create 'extra' charts for every single partner, because we are of the opinion that the overall image as shown in the following reproduced graphs (clustered by the mentioned categories) represents the partnership's stakeholders very well.

5. Type of organisations – Partnership

The identified stakeholders represent different types of organisations. It is of importance to get an impression which organisations are interested in the results of *Q-PLM* in the different countries. The identified types of organisations, provided by the partnership were clustered in the following groups:

- VET provider / consultancy company
- policy and decision maker
- public authority / public body (local, regional and national)
- department / ministry
- union / chamber / professional association (political)
- university / college
- accreditation and certification company

These categories were chosen due to the fact that they represent the majority of the listed stakeholders by individual country template, with an allocation to the relevant category. Sometimes it was not totally clear, which category should be chosen, why we clustered them in all conscience, to present a transparent overview (see Annex 12: Annex 12_data for charts 3 to 6).

As already described, the diverse categories were designated because of their frequency in the individual templates of the eight project partners.

The emphasis on VET providers and consultancy companies reflects the focus in the educational and training sector of stakeholders as well as target groups. Universities / colleges as well as the enumerated "unions / professional associations / chambers" are, in most cases, connected to higher

educational establishments and mostly allocated as a dissemination partner. Especially in the category of "unions / professional associations / chambers" it is important to state, that having political empowerment at hand is not only a benefit during the projects duration but also with regard to exploiting the results in the best possible way and to ensure sustainability. The importance of empowerment on a political (i.e. local authorities) or semi political level (i.e. unions) should not be underestimated. Successful dissemination work is not only based on a good network but also on the opportunities and operating distance occurring in cooperation with political or semi-political supporters.

Furthermore, when it comes to effective dissemination work, public authorities and bodies as well as policy and decision makers play an important role. As the *Q-PLM project* is closely linked to issues of quality management, organisations of accreditation and certification are also represented within the stakeholder pool.

The following chart presents an overview of the different types of organisations listed by the *Q-PLM* partnership.

Type of organisations - Partnership

5 2% 15 5% 4 1% 17 5% 16 5% 6 2%

- policy and decision maker
- Public authority / public body
- Department / ministry
- Union / chamber / professional association
- university / college
- Accreditation and certification company
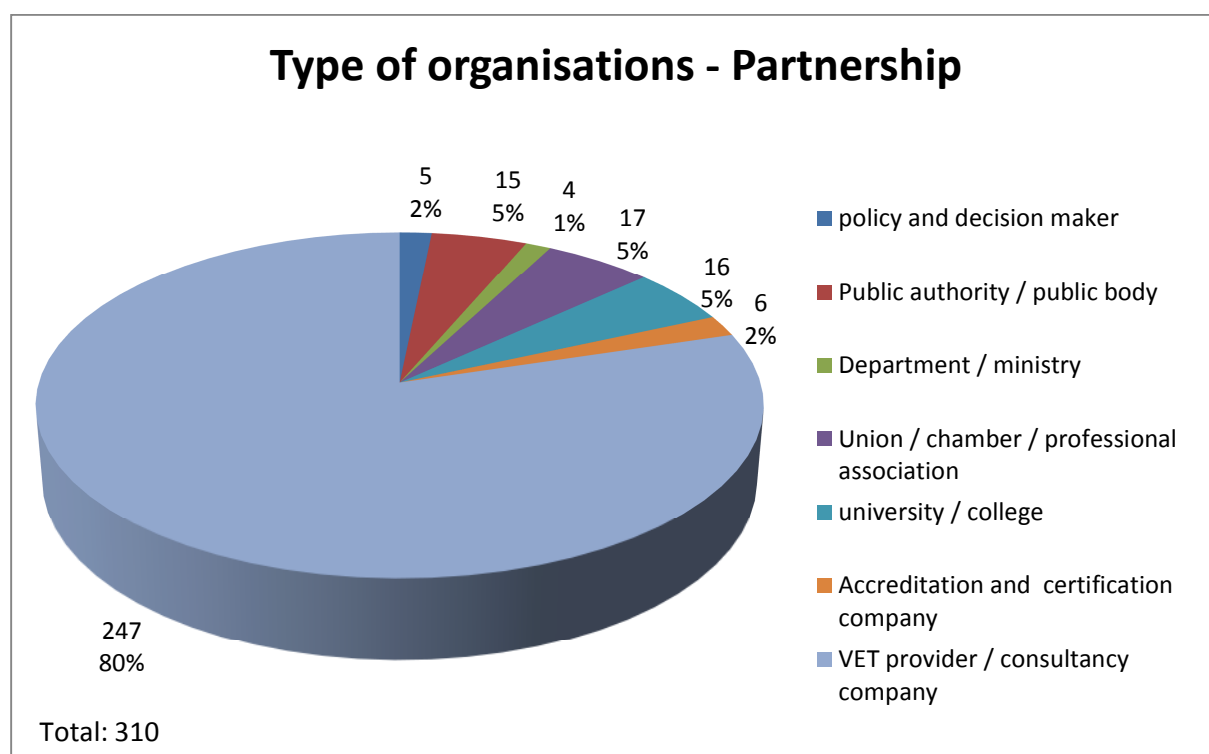- VET provider / consultancy company

247 80%

Total: 310

Chart 3 – Type of organisations - Partnership

It can be seen that the main types of organisations within the partnership are significantly training and consulting companies (80%, 247), which is very important during the development and testing phase as well as for the final output of the *Q-PLM* project. The *Q-PLM* software should be an easy to use IT based instrument (software) which all VET providers (no matter what size) can use to actively manage their VET offers/services. Therefore the fact, that VET organisations and consultancy enterprises are dominant categories is very promising in terms of getting access to target groups and potential (end-) users of the project results.

Furthermore the balanced amount of "unions / chambers / professional associations" and "public authorities / public bodies" is a fruitful basis for the next project phases as well as for our dissemination activities. An implemented focus on the empowerment within a political level can also be a good basis for a sustainable implementation of the project results.

6. Kind of engagement in the *Q-PLM* project

In this section partners mentioned different categories for the same key actors. Therefore the total number in this section is higher (558 in total) than the actual total number of stakeholders.

The information provided by partners could be categorized in the following groups:

- Cooperation partners
- Political empowerment
- Potential (end-)user of project products/results
- Representative of target group(s)
- Support at dissemination activities and networking

The following chart provides an overview of the kind of engagement of the total stakeholders identified:
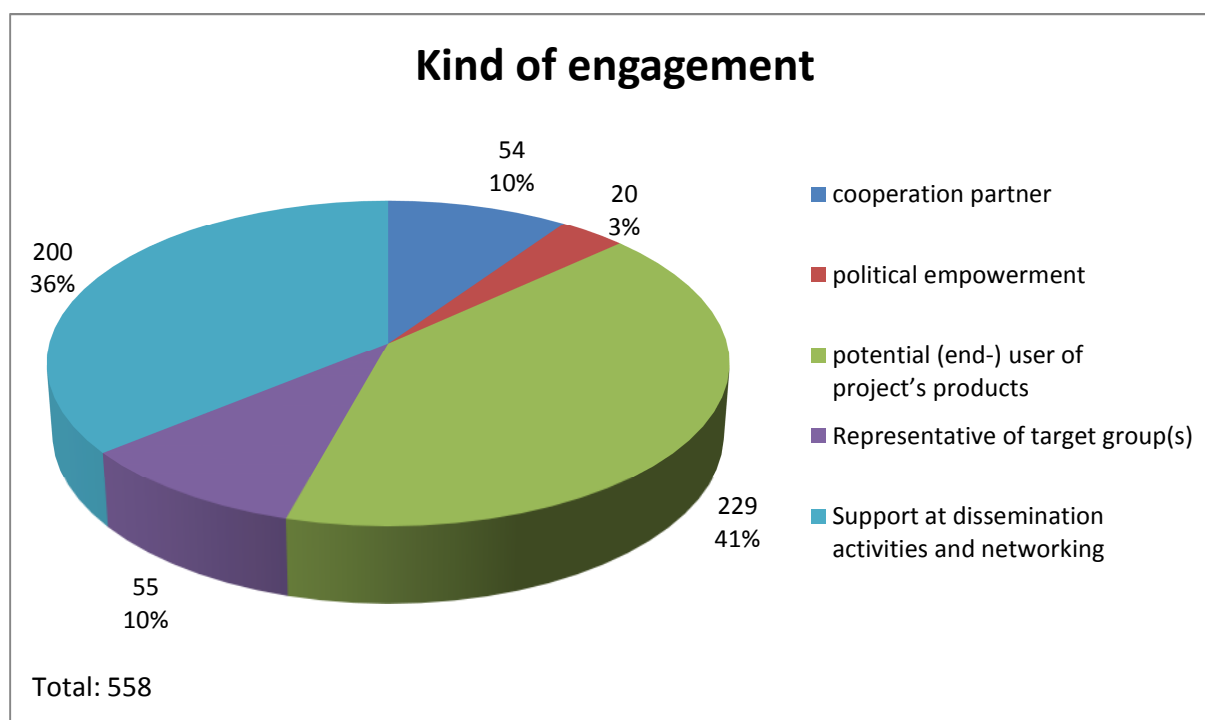
Kind of engagement

- cooperation partner
- political empowerment
- potential (end-) user of project's products
- Representative of target group(s)
- Support at dissemination activities and networking

54 — 10%
20 — 3%
200 — 36%
229 — 41%
55 — 10%

Total: 558

Chart 4 – Kind of engagement

The chart for all countries declares 41% of the stakeholders as potential (end-) users (229 in totals) of the projects products/results, which will be the *Q-PLM* software and handbook. With 36% (200 in total) the next highest and very representative category of engagement is stakeholders that support at dissemination activities and networking. The two categories "representatives of the target group(s)" and "cooperation partners" are nearly represented the same amount, with 10% each. 3 % of the total amount is stakeholders that are engaged for political empowerment.

The information obtained shows clearly that the *Q-PLM* project has high potential for ensuring that its products and outcomes can be effectively disseminated to end users, which will mainly be VET providers and VET consultants of different size of enterprise. These key organisations working within the VET sector can be reached easily and will be involved in different ways and in different kinds of engagements. Some of these VET providers have already been invited to participate actively in the 1st feedback panels in each partner country. Especially during the testing and piloting phase the VET providers play a crucial role, by trying the beta version of the *Q-PLM* software and the draft of the handbook developed. Besides this direct involvement of representatives, VET providers are also the main target group for the whole dissemination and exploitation phases which will be reached by different channels, based on their needs and motivation.

7. Main areas of activities

Partners were asked to give information about the area in which their stakeholders for *Q-PLM* are acting. On the basis of this information the following categories were reasonable to create:

- accreditation & certification
- consultancy
- political decision maker & public body
- representation & dissemination
- Training, education & teaching
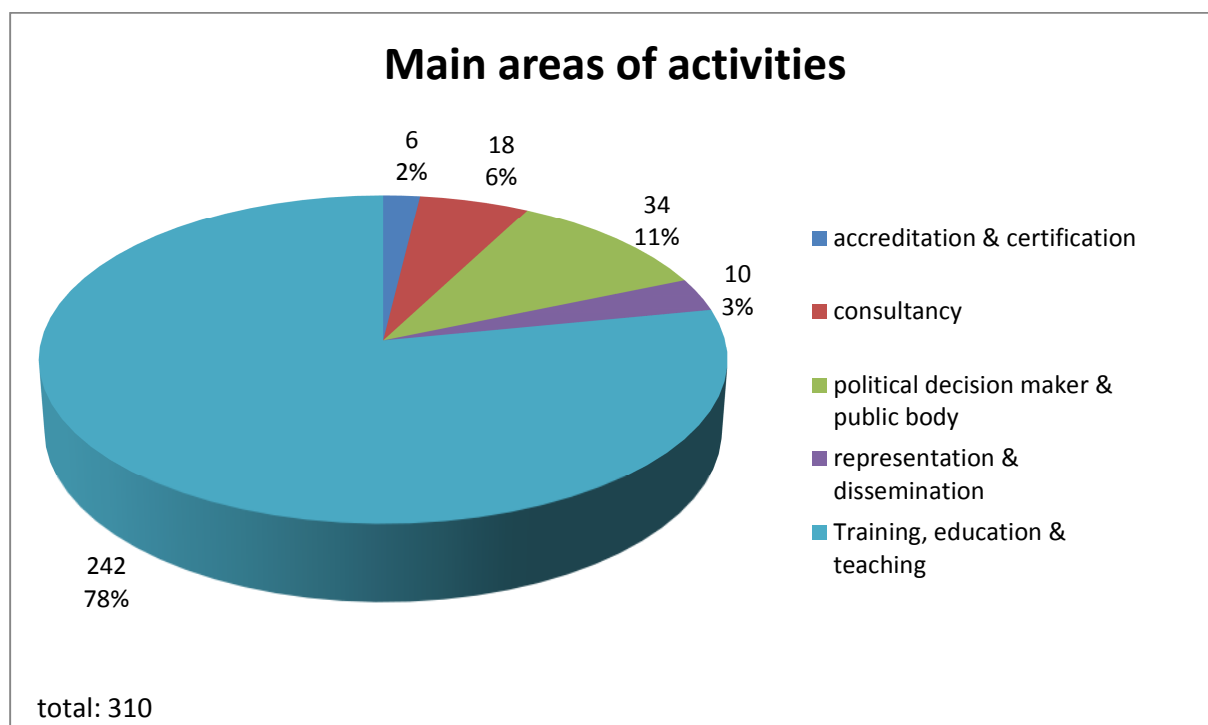
Chart 5 – Main areas of activities

As it can be seen on the chart above the area of training, education & teaching covers 78% (242 in total) of the five clustered categories. This result is a logical consequence in reference to the output of the chart created for "type of organisations" where VET providers / consultancy companies were presented with 80%.

Next are political decision makers & public bodies, with 11% (34 in total), which is of high importance, because the quality management discussion on VET still remains much on policy level. By the involvement of stakeholders of these areas, we will be able to draw attention also on superior level. The area of consultancy comes next. This again is a logical consequence due to the chart for

"type of organisations" where VET providers and consultancy companies were summarized in one category. The remaining two categories are nearly equally divided, where accreditation & certification is a more specific area. We are of the opinion that after developing, testing and finally implementing the *Q-PLM* software, an important next step for some providers will be the possibility to link the product (software) with existing quality management systems and state it on QM-level. Never the less this is not planned by now, but will be of high interest later, wherefore the area of accreditation and certification is represented as well.

To summarize, these 5 categories cover the most important areas to proceed with the project into the next phases with the required contacts operating in the background. The *Q-PLM* project can benefit from a wide range of stakeholders involved in relevant areas that link to the overall objectives of the project (also for future intentions).

8. Level of action

The partners were asked to allocate their stakeholders within their level of action. The provided categories were:

- Local
- Regional
- National
- Europe
- Outside Europe

Many organisations do not limit their activities to one level therefore it was possible to choose more than one category to describe the same stakeholders. The total amount in this chart is *481*.

level of action

- 153 — 32% — Local
- 220 — 46% — Regional
- 80 — 16% — National
- 24 — 5% — Europe
- 4 — 1% — Outside Europe

total: 481
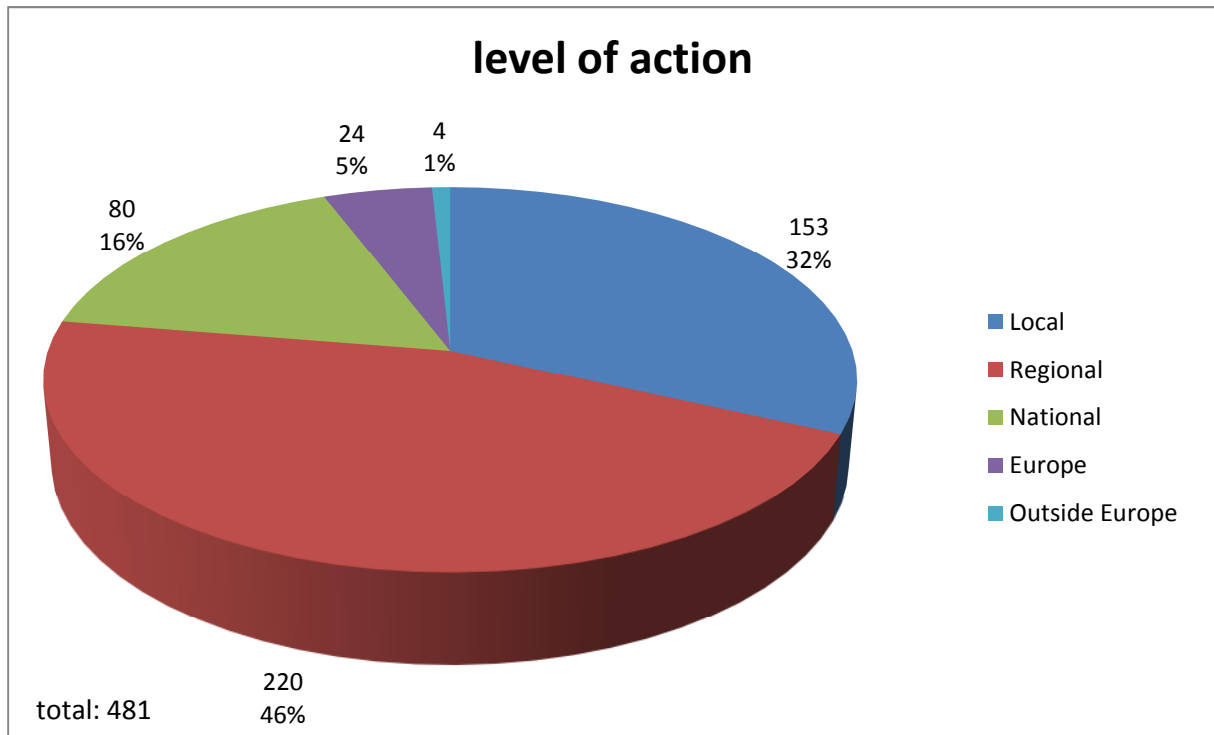
Chart 6 – level of action

In can be seen that the level of action on a *regional level* is most frequently listed (46%, 220), followed by activities carried out on a *local level* that have been counted 153 times (32%). On third rank, activities on a *national level* have been listed (16%, 80). A further 24 (5%) operate *on European level* and a small number of 4 (1%) are also working *beyond the confines of Europe*.

This analysis highlights clearly that the stakeholders identified implement their activities on many different levels. Therefore, the dissemination activities of the *Q-PLM* project group can take place at local, regional, national and EU levels and, to a smaller extent, even outside of Europe. There will however be a significant focus at the regional, local and national levels, which have priority status for the *Q-PLM* project's dissemination work. This fact is very typical for EU projects because every organization mainly uses their existing well known, proven and personal networks and contacts stakeholders at these levels even often personally, which intensifies the networks and serves the opportunity to discuss specific tasks, requirement and suggestions in a more intense way. In the future they will also be actively involved in the testing phase of the integrated product lifecycle management instrument developed.

Simply put, the focus on networks and stakeholders especially at regional, local and national levels as well as on European and outside Europe's levels is very important for the transfer of *Q-PLM* project's results, the ongoing dissemination work and of course for the implementation in each partner's country as it is stated in the *Q-PLM* application form.

9. Conclusion

Generally it can be said that the stakeholders present a very good balance in all categories, where the emphasis on VET providers and consultancy companies in the area of training, education and teaching can obviously be identified. The fact that these are dominant categories in all partner countries is very promising in terms of getting access to target groups, to cooperation partners for the testing phase of the beta version of the software, to networks for dissemination and to potential (end-) users of the *Q-PLM* projects results.

This shows clearly, that the *Q-PLM* project has high potential for ensuring that its product outcomes can be effectively disseminated to (end-) users, which will amongst others mainly be VET providers and VET consultants of different size of enterprise. During our current processes of research work, field analysis, feedback panels and first steps of development but rather more in the future, especially during the testing and piloting phase, these VET providers play a crucial role by trying and testing the beta version of the software and the draft of the handbook until finally the *Q-PLM* software and handbook will be presented at the final conference in Graz.

The kind of engagement of the stakeholders underlines again, that most of them will be potential (end-) users of the project's outputs or will support our project at dissemination activities and networking. As mentioned above, the key organisations working within the VET sector can be reached easily and with a high percentage.

When considered more closely, it is not surprising that there are slight deviances in the national results, dependent upon the individual aims and needs of the partner organisations. Due to the fact that within the *Q-PLM* partnership not all activities are undertaken by all partners the same way, it is only logical and by the way also very fruitful that different kinds of stakeholders for different needs and approaches are listed and required.

The identified key actors are mostly located at regional, local and national level. This is important for the transfer and implementation of the *Q-PLM* project results in the national partner countries. Some of them are also represented at European level and even outside Europe. This result shows that the *Q-PLM* project can be disseminated at those levels where the target sectors of the project are located and where the most important target groups can be reached. The focus on organisations and VET providers at regional, local and national level underlines the main aim of the project very well: The development of an practical and easy to use IT based tool for integrated product lifecycle management for VET providers at regional and national markets.

It is considered as very valuable when stakeholders can cover different types of organisations and different types of sectors and activities and moreover when the analysis reflects the aims of the European project as described in the application. These are criteria that the European Commission defined for a successful exploitation and dissemination of EU project results. The definition of stakeholders of potential key actors therefore is a vital element of each European project. The partnership of *Q-PLM* provided a respectable number of stakeholders from each partner country and these key actors represent different types of organisations covering different sectors.

Most of the sections to be filled in by project partners are summarized and displayed in this document, while more detailed data per partner country is comprehended in the detailed annexes provided (Annexes 4 to 11).

The project consortium disposes of very good contacts and networks to key actors and all of them do have experience with European project work and dissemination as well as exploitation activities. This is of crucial importance to actually reach the (end-) users of the *Q-PLM* projects' outputs. Not only the results of this stakeholder analysis but also the potential *Q-PLM* partnership looks very promising for the next project phases: feedback panels, pilot and testing phase of the beta and afterwards the final version of the software, various dissemination and exploitation activities and participation at workshops and conferences plus events of national reference, progress reports, and finally the final conference in Graz (AT).

Furthermore we assume that the already elaborated dissemination strategy is followed by all partners to continuously involve the stakeholders, so a fruitful basis can be built to support the impact and sustainability of our project. Stakeholders are on one hand important to support the

project in the field of dissemination because of their contacts to final users and on the other hand they also have the role of evaluators. Projects results always benefit from feedback and suggestions made. By taking into account the recommendations of stakeholders, the potential of impact and sustainability can grow immensely. Obviously each stakeholder lists of the *Q-PLM* partners can continuously be updated and enlarged during the entire project period.

However, it is imperative that the project partnership finds an effective way of maintaining the already established contacts and engaging with them effectively during the following project phases. It is very important that the project group keeps in contact with their stakeholders through an effective information flow system. Each project partner is solely responsible for communicating with its own stakeholders and target groups, while all results and activities will be collected in dissemination reports and the promoter of the *Q-PLM* project will monitor this process and permanently focus on it.

10.   Annexes

Q-PLM

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Annex 1:

Q-PLM - Stakeholder Pool_template

(Project N° 538379-LLP-1-2013-1-AT-LEONARDO-LMP)

LEGEND:

	= mandatory fields (information needed for identification and documentation purposes)
	= optional fields (additional information if available)

1 E.g. training centre, public authority, university, professional association, company etc.
2 E.g. training and eduction, umbrella organisatin, political decision maker, QM expert etc.
3 L = local; R = regional; N = national; E = EU; O = outside EU
4 E.g.: Representative of target group(s); potential (end-)user of project's products; support at dissemination activities; political empowerment; co-operation partner for pilots, meetings, conferences etc.

	Country	Name of Organisation / Individual person	Name of contact person	Phone	Email	Type of organisation[1]	Approximate size of organisation (in staff or members)	Main areas of activities[2]	Level of activities[3]					Kind of possible engagement in Q-PLM project[4]
									L	R	N	E	O	
Example	AT	European Network of Exploitation and Dissemination of EU Project Results (E.N.T.E.R.)	Ms. Petra Kampf	0049 (0) 316 329005	petra.kampf@enter-network.eu	Non profit association/dissemination network	approx. 720 member organisations from 35 EU countries	Dissemination of EU project results				x		Support at dissemination activities and networking

Annex 1: Annex 1_q_plm_stakeholder_pool_template

Advice:

Annexes 2 – 12 are attached separately