



Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernization by Incorporating Virtual Technologies

VTech@WBUni

WP3 - Deliverable 3.4

1st QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT

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1. Introduction

This document presents the Quality assurance report for the Erasmus VTech project for the period from January 2020 to January 2021. Quality assurance for this reporting period was led by South East European University with the contribution of all partners.

It is based on Quality assurance monitoring and periodic assessment of progress toward project goals. Data collection is provided during this reporting period, qualifying the project management to maintain the project's quality, based on four main pillars:

1. Overall evaluation
2. Event evaluation
3. Document evaluation
4. COVID-19 Impact evaluation

2. Overall evaluation

In the scope of the overall evaluation for this reporting period this reporting project, we tried to answer these questions:

- What are the main achievements of this project according to your opinion till this moment?
- What are the main opportunities for improvement regarding the WP that you are leading?
- What are the main opportunities for improvement that other institutions can contribute regarding the WP that you are leading?
- A short description of reaching milestones and objectives regarding the WP that you are leading.
- A short description of the perceived risks (if any) regarding the WP that you are leading.

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2.1 Main achievements of this project till this moment

Below are listed main achievements till this moment based on overall partner input:

- Integration of the project partners
- Raising awareness of Virtual Reality
- Survey on the usage of VTech in WB countries
- Preparation for setting up VTech labs/hubs
- Introducing VTech in a teaching/learning environment
- One of the partners reported that staff training on VR/AR was done and courses that will implement VR/AR were defined. They also started a student VR/AR club one year ago. They have been studying UNITY for VR/AR.
- Every activity implemented as planned in the project is an achievement.
- First virtual training for academic staff
- Quality assurance plan
- The preparation of the dissemination materials the survey with students and staff and the workshop dedicated to this purpose.
- Keeping the team together the project coordinator was one of the challenges keeping in mind the Covid19.
- Regular meetings, updates, project progress discussions online, clarifications, etc. have been outstanding.
- Equipment purchases hub establishments completed in the majority of partners.
- Deliverables on the quality assurance plan, quality assurance policy for teaching and learning, project dissemination strategy and guidelines on AR/VR user experience have been prepared.
- The adaptation of the work program, and all measures taken for the project implementation
- Analysis of state-of-the-art in the domain of VR usage in education.
- Guidelines for the creation of VR content/solutions.

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2.2 Main opportunities for improvement regarding WPs (provided by each WP leader)

The Table below presents the main opportunities for improvement regarding WPs, as declared by each WP leader:

Partner	Main opportunities for improvement regarding leading WP
P1 - Aleksander Moisiu University (UAMD)	Our WP is on management and most of the activities till now are done online due to the pandemic situation.
P10 - Lodz University of Technology (LUT)	<p>If we conduct the training, we need to see and prepare the laboratory/room 1 day before the workshop (to adjust everything that will be used during the workshop).</p> <p>During the training for teachers, there should be a good internet connection, therefore the training might be more effective and fruitful. The training concerning VR needs to have access to the Internet. For VR training it is needed to have spacious rooms (we suggest a place/ spot 4m x 4m - in order to use VR equipment and apps fully and properly).</p>
P11 - University of Ljubljana (UL)	Development of the first VR educational content, coming in 2021 and 2022
P2 - Polis University (Polis)	Taking all steps to use this WP to publish the qualitative paper, not only as a dissemination product but moreover as scientific research
P3 - European University of Tirana (UET)	The involvement in the project of the targeted project actors (universities, schools, teachers, students, regional industries, and businesses) through the implementation of various activities such as dissemination and communication, awareness raising, educational/training activities, and through access to the VTech Hub and VTech Network for WB.

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P4 - Epoka University (EPOKA)	Epoka is not leading any WP. But we contributed the WPs. Especially we will prepare some VR/AR animations for selected courses.
P5 - University of Prishtina (UP)	Improvement of the pandemic situation so we can organize training and study visits to EU partners and learn from their expertise and in-site experience
P6 - University for Business and Technology (UBT)	While there is always a lot to do, we hope to get back to the real world of physical meetings, and visits to the institutions for Hub Establishments.
P7 - Mother Teresa University (MTU)	The main opportunities are the involvement of different platforms for the development of VR/AR content for education
P8 - South East European University (SEEU)	Better follow-up of the tasks by QA in order to gain better responses on the activities, and prepare quality reports.
P9 - University of Tartu (UT)	Increasing the collaboration with other partners and benefitting from their experiences.

2.3 Main opportunities for improvement that other institutions (other participants) can contribute regarding the WP (provided by each WP leader)

The Table below presents the main opportunities for improvement that other institutions can contribute regarding the WP:

Partner	Main opportunities that other participants can contribute regarding the WP
P1 - Aleksander Moisiu University (UAMD)	There is a very good collaboration among project partners. Some of them must be more active in the activities they are responsible for.
P10 - Lodz University of Technology (LUT)	Workshop participants should use unified hardware (the best option is to use the equipment provided by one university/organizing university). No use of "private" computers etc.
P11 - University of Ljubljana (UL)	Develop VR educational content

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P2 - Polis University (Polis)	Engagement of partners to share more massively questionnaire
P3 - European University of Tirana (UET)	All project partners are to be willing to disseminate timely the results of the project within their institutions and network, also including all other events they participate in as per the communication and exploitation strategy.
P4 - Epoka University (EPOKA)	NA
P5 - University of Prishtina (UP)	Organization of training workshops for the academic staff that will develop and offer Vtech-supported pilot courses
P6 - University for Business and Technology (UBT)	The situation is pretty similar among partners and live meetings would further provide better feedback rather online.
P7 - Mother Teresa University (MTU)	Can contribute with participation in VTECH open Days to present their work and also to participate with their students in the HACKATHON contest to be organized in MTU
P8 - South East European University (SEEU)	More responsive on the Quality Reporting Table
P9 - University of Tartu (UT)	Nothing in particular

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2.4 Short description of reaching milestones and objectives regarding the WPs that are leading

This Table provides the main achieved objectives for each WP:

Partner	Short description of reaching milestones and objectives regarding the WPs
P1 - Aleksander Moisiu University (UAMD)	Kick-off meeting, first staff training on AR/VR, financial management, and other project management-related meetings are organized. The event on sharing the survey results of WP1 is planned and will be organized from 25th - 26th February 2021.
P10 - Lodz University of Technology (LUT)	The set objectives were achieved. The first VR staff training in Albania was carried out. 20 teachers were trained.
P11 - University of Ljubljana (UL)	Deliverable 2.6.1. was written and confirmed, first staff training is foreseen for March 2021, second staff training is in May 2021.
P2 - Polis University (Polis)	The milestones are met, although with delays but most of the delays were imposed because of the Pandemic situation
P3 - European University of Tirana (UET)	Dissemination plan delivered; Project visual identity materials like flyers, posters, roll-ups, and brochures.
P4 - Epoka University (EPOKA)	NA
P5 - University of Prishtina (UP)	The VTech pilot courses have been selected by each HEI. The institutions showed willingness and commitment to developing VTech content and methodologies. The deliverable and report for the selection of Vtech-supported courses are produced.

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P6 - University for Business and Technology (UBT)	On reporting activities in HUB Establishments among Balkan Partners, we are working to collect data and report that on 25/26 Feb 2021. We will be able to see the real results if they have been met by then.
P7 - Mother Teresa University (MTU)	Signed contracts with 2 companies that are working with VR (Intelligent Network Solutions (INS) & DigiCube Company). The companies will present their work during the VTECH open days (September 2021) and also include students in an internship for training them in VR. Training students and preparing VR/AR HACKATHON contest in October 2021
P8 - South East European University (SEEU)	With a slight delay, almost all the expected deliverables are completed.
P9 - University of Tartu (UT)	In 2.1 we are proceeding with most tasks, although due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have to move some of the tasks such as training either online or to another time.

2.5 Perceived risks (if any) regarding the WPs (provided by each WP leader)

Partner	Perceived risks regarding the WPs
P1 - Aleksander Moisiu University (UAMD)	Some of the risks maybe: Delay of activities due to pandemics; staff not being trained on time to realize the implementation of AR/VR in their teaching methodologies as expected; delay in tendering procedures due to late money transfers to partners and other procedure-related issues.
P10 - Lodz University of Technology (LUT)	Due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions, there are some problems with the organization of travel to selected places. Some events may not be able to take place in physical form.

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P11 - University of Ljubljana (UL)	VR educational content is not being developed and consequently, Ux evaluations, cannot be done. Online training is not as efficient as live training.
P2 - Polis University (Polis)	They were no major risks
P3 - European University of Tirana (UET)	Potentially the lack of attention by the public/stakeholders.
P4 - Epoka University (EPOKA)	NA
P5 - University of Prishtina (UP)	Delay in staff training due to the pandemic situation
P6 - University for Business and Technology (UBT)	Although there seem to be some delays in equipment acquisition, we are positive to have them in place by June 2021 at the latest for all partners. Quality management will depend also on equipment and training activities that are critical to project success and with COVID-19 measures eased these will be addressed during this year 2021.
P7 - Mother Teresa University (MTU)	Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of participants might be small in the events to be organized VTECH Open Days and VR/AR HACKATHON
P8 - South East European University (SEEU)	The reports on the QA of the project tasks might be delayed due to the delay of the other chain of activities in other WPs.
P9 - University of Tartu (UT)	No immediate risk is identified.

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3. Events Evaluation

The results of the VTech events evaluation are presented in this section. In the scope of this reporting timeline, three events took place:

- Kick-off Meeting (7-8 January 2020, Durres, Albania)
- Second Steering Meeting (6 October 2020, Online)
- VTech first staff training (26-28 October 2020, Durres, Albania)

Figure 1 shows the overall event rating in terms of organization/management:

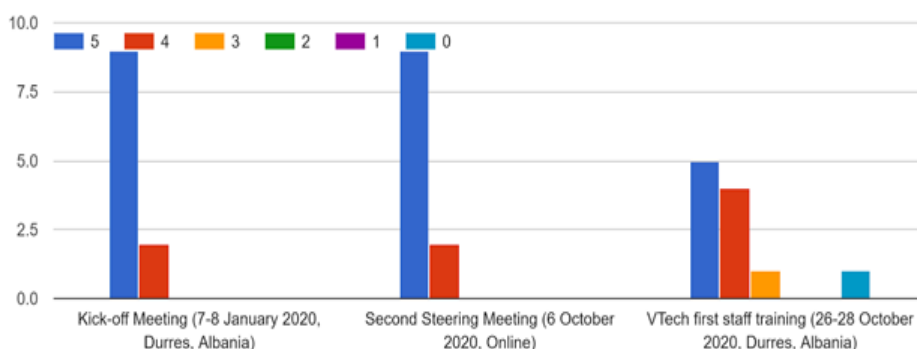


Figure 1. Events rating in terms of organization/management (5 - very good, 1 - weak, 0 - not present)

Figure 2 shows the overall event rating in terms of outcomes:

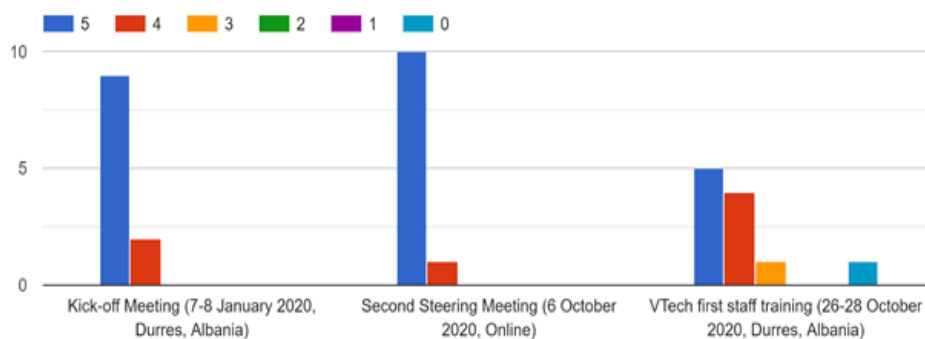


Figure 2. Events rating in terms of outcomes (5 - very good, 1 - weak, 0 - not present)

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3.1 Kick-off Meeting

The first Kick-off Meeting was held on 7-8 January 2020, in Durrës, Albania. The agenda was sent to all participants previously, aiming for the attendees to know what to expect and have time to prepare.

The main impressions of this event are as follows:

- Kick-off meeting was a valuable time to get to know each other and learn from their experiences in VR/AR technologies.
- Effective meeting as it brought all partners together over the steps clarifying all initial preparation and steps to follow during the project implementation.
- The organizations provided a very good atmosphere and friendly environment, agenda full in line with the project objectives, assistance with stays, guidance, and just great hospitality by the host as well as the partners creating a fantastic team.
- Very good organizational and informative meeting, realized seriously, where all topics foreseen were covered and challenges were set from the very beginning.
- It was very nice, especially to see all people face-to-face (and practically the last as the COVID outbreak started).

3.2 Second Steering Meeting

The second Steering Meeting was held online on 6 October 2020. Again, the agenda was sent to all participants on time.

- Well-prepared, in time, all issues were delivered and discussed smoothly
- Not as beneficial as face-to-face one, but we had an idea of the tasks and WPs that we and other partners have. It was useful to see where we are and what our future plans are.
- Important decisions are taken and the distribution of tasks was crucial in paving a smoother and clearer implementation of activities.
- Excellent as usual, everything went smoothly.
- Good and efficient. Decisions on future plans made.
- Second meeting was very useful and although online it was very important as a guide on how the activities should be adapted to the situation imposed by the Pandemic
- Very good. The project management presents the progress so far and the foreseen activities for each partner.
- It was good and my team was pleased with the whole organization.

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- An effective meeting, making decisions on how to handle the COVID-19 situation.

3.3 First Staff Training

The first Staff Training was held on 26-28 October 2020, in Durres, Albania. This was the first meeting focused more on training other than overall project management. Due to the pandemic situation, some of the partners could not participate.

The overall impression about the event was that the organization was good and training was very useful for the staff with practical insights, but time was not enough for such training. Some other impressions are as follows:

- The staff training was organized aiming at increasing the quality and level of efficiency in teaching and knowledge retention through interactive learning methods, therefore hopefully it was received with much interest and attention.
- Unique experience, hands-on technology.
- Some technical issues at the premise of the leading institution led to lower efficiency and some delay in training activities; The trainees were well prepared; late arrival of some of the attendees; The training content was more introductory, there is a need to plan later training as the continuation of this training.
- Introduced to VR tech, and experienced them in practical lessons. Unity software was also introduced.
- It was good and there are places to improve the use of online tools.
- The main problem connected with this training was a poor Internet connection. No suitable room for VR exercises (4m x 4m needed next time). The background about VR was done.

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4. Document evaluation

The opinions and suggestions regarding overall document quality provided by each partner are as follows:

- The documents are generally well-prepared and have good quality. We have no suggestions.
- Due to the pandemic things are not happening as planned, but all the partners are trying their best.
- Keep up the good work!
- Some of the partners should be more active in document feedback, however, the quality of the documents is quite good.
- As far, everything is going well, and let's try to keep this serious approach
- Very good, Continue in the same manner

Figure 3 shows the overall quality rating of delivered documents for each WP:

Please rate quality of delivered documents for each WP (5 - very good, 1 - weak, 0 - no documents):

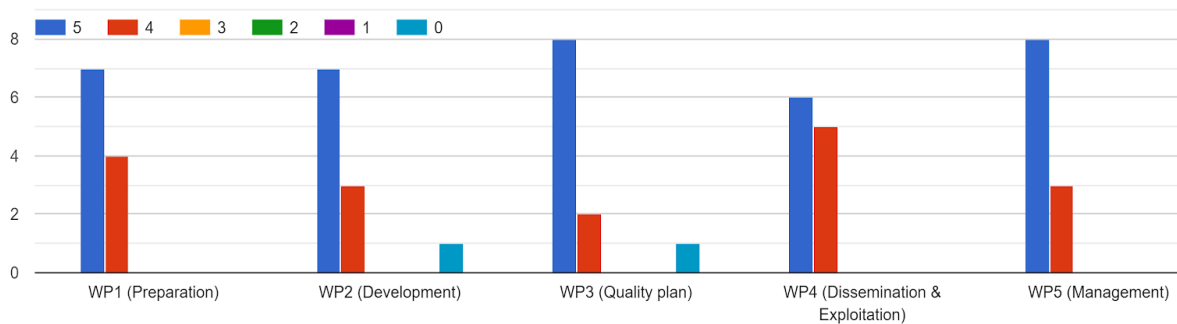


Figure 3. Overall quality rating of delivered documents for each WP (5 - very good, 1 - weak, 0 - not present)

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5. COVID-19 Impact evaluation

Shortly after the First Kick-off Meeting, the pandemic situation in the world escalated, which had a lot of impact on the overall project realization. Besides the traditional evaluation methods and metrics, we have tried to evaluate also COVID-19 for VTech activities aiming to adapt to the new situation. As expected, all partners agreed that there is the main impact is on staff training and meetings, another concern is evaluations of user experience, a huge impact on the overall project achievement, with forced delay in many activities such as EU teacher training, integration of VR in teaching, QA, results.

These are the most important remarks by partners:

- We need to find a solution to implement activities that are doable online or in a hybrid form
- COVID-19 has impacted on delay and way of organization of a few project activities. On the other hand, during the pandemic time, the relevance of projects has increased even more
- The main problem is the absence of live meetings and consequently training (study visits, workshops, etc.)
- COVID-19 has had a large impact on the management of Erasmus+ projects. Most of the activities have been postponed due to the pandemic, and when it has been possible some meetings have been organized online. But of course, it has been hard to network with Balkan and European partners in these online meetings; face-to-face activities allow much more interaction among the partners.
- It is obvious that Covid19 affected a lot of VTech project tasks, even though all the partners are doing their best to catch the timelines.
- COVID-19 impedes project realization. The exchange of knowledge and experience is not allowed to be done efficiently as planned. There are some traveling restrictions, some flights are no more in the timetable, and if the flight exists, they are really expensive. Moreover, there are some local restrictions (each country may be different) and all project participants have to get familiarized with them before traveling. The situation is changing dynamically; it is difficult to plan anything.
- Hybrid meetings (real and online) are a very reasonable solution - depending on the current situation all participants can take part in the event.

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- COVID-19 impedes project realization. Some events must have the form of physical to hybrid (which is a very good idea). There are travel restrictions and local limitations, everything is changing dynamically. Some flights are canceled, some are very expensive, and it is difficult to plan anything.
- Many tasks have been delayed because of Covid-19, but we are trying to solve them as much as possible.
- Most of the training was done online. This makes it difficult to manage challenges such as keeping high motivation, high efficiency, and in-person interaction lacking. On the other hand, more project management and quality meetings were organized which increased the level of being active in the project and better communication was achieved.
- We have to find a solution to go on with the activities, trying to minimize delays. Hybrid activities could be one of the solutions for the activities

Figure 4 shows the overall rating of COVID-19 impact on VTech activities:

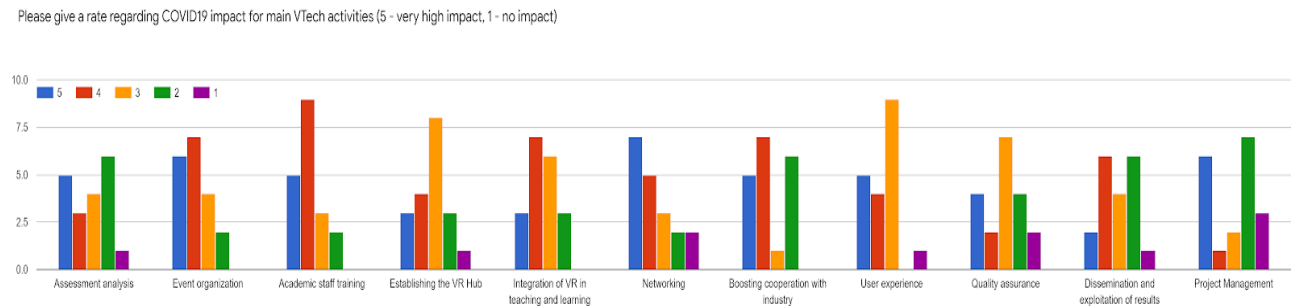


Figure 4. Overall rating of COVID19 impact on VTech activities (5 - very good, 1 - weak, 0 - not present)

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Conclusions

The VTech project activities for this timeline accomplished the objectives set at the beginning, with appropriate quality standards. Project activities have been fully implemented according to the project specifications outlined in the project work plan. The project aims and planned outputs have been achieved.

This report was generated after one year of project activity. The Quality Assurance Team prepared the content and later on approved it at the meeting held on 22 March 2021. The report is based on the questionnaire that was shared and fulfilled by each partner representative. They have evaluated the meetings, training, documents, and overall project activities. The Report includes their self-evaluation of each of their tasks, as well as areas for improvements in the activities that they are leading or improvements in activities led by other partners.

Note: *The initial QA Report was foreseen for the first initial six months of the project duration, but due to the COVID-19 situation, many of the countries were locked down and it took a few months to adapt the project planned activities to this new mode of functioning. However, it should be mentioned that during this period project activities which included the start of project activities, were completed with a slight delay.*