HANDBOOK

The start and implementation of pilot projects

Points of special interest and action: problems, solutions and practical tips

December 2001
(Translated and revised 2003)

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REVICE, Centre for Work, Training and Social Policy, Nijmegen

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Foreword

I have great pleasure in accepting a request by the National Leonardo da Vinci Agency in the Netherlands to provide a foreword for this handbook: The start and implementation of pilot projects.

A large number of guides and handbooks have been published during the course of the Leonardo da Vinci programme – from guidance for prospective promoters to handbooks in the subsidiary areas of the programme, at European and national level, brochures, compendia, evaluations – one just has to look at the EU website – I would not venture to guess at the number of publications which can be found there. For anyone with an interest in the Leonardo da Vinci programme, this multiplicity of guidance is sometimes disheartening. Unfortunately there is often no other way: a programme which operates at many levels in thirty European countries needs detailed explanation and sometimes raises questions which cannot be answered immediately.

And now there is this handbook which is more than just a handbook. It is a very useful tool for finding ones way around the Leonardo programme and in particular to give an impression of everything involved in running a pilot project. It is here that this handbook definitely proves its worth, precisely because it examines aspects which are not always found in regulations. How do you deal with differences in culture and language within a partnership? How do you ‘manage’ a project without wanting to come across as a ‘manager’? And while we are on the subject, how is the concept of manager regarded – is it the same everywhere in Europe? Issues which affect a multitude of areas but which everyone concerned with the programme has to deal with. From knowledge of the contract to essential qualities like flexible leadership and a sense of perspective.

By means of an almost chronological breakdown into points of special interest and action, the text provides a clear and in particular realistic picture of the course of a Leonardo project. And, last but not least, thanks to its many practical tips and the advice it gives, this handbook effortlessly refutes the myth that it is almost impossible to bring a Leonardo project to a satisfactory conclusion. Quite the contrary.

I wish you an enjoyable read,

Ruard Wallis de Vries
European Commission
DirectorateGeneral for Education and Culture
‘Implementation of the Leonardo da Vinci programme’ Unit
Desk Officer for the Netherlands
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### Points of special interest and action

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### Points of special interest and action

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### Points of special interest and action

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Introduction

The handbook The start and implementation of pilot projects offers prospective project managers information and assistance for the start and implementation of a Leonardo da Vinci pilot project. This handbook has not been developed on the basis of studying the literature dealing with project organisation but entirely on the insights and experience of Leonardo project managers. It is this approach, everyday practice, which makes this handbook so special.

Leonardo da Vinci is the European Programme for promoting innovation in and international co-operation on vocational training. Leonardo da Vinci is also known as the “European laboratory for innovation in vocational training”. Leonardo da Vinci supports development projects which are designed to improve the relationship between training and the business community or involve new content and methods. It also stimulates exchanges and placements for students, teachers and young people in or seeking employment. The programme assists vocational training in preparing young people, the unemployed and the employed, more effectively for the changes which they can expect in their job or vocation in the short or long term.

The second phase of the programme (2000-2006) supports mobility projects and pilot projects. Language projects, transnational networks and studies are recognised as a special form of pilot project. To produce a genuine innovation in vocational training in Europe, it is not enough simply to develop innovative training products. Not until all these products are actually in widespread use shall we be able to speak of the impact on vocational training in Europe.

This handbook is primarily intended for Leonardo project managers with little or no experience of running an international project. It is not easy to manage an international project with partners from other cultures subject to a European regime of rules and procedures. Project managers must constantly anticipate developments in a project and react to them flexibly. This handbook is not, therefore, an action plan, with stages that can be disposed of one by one: rather it is a work of reference with points of special interest and action. It is especially useful in situations which have not been immediately anticipated.

More experienced project managers and co-ordinators of mobility projects will also see the handbook as a useful tool. The way in which the points of special interest and action are put in context makes this handbook a useful tool for anyone who wants to start up and run an international project.

Firstly we would like to thank the project managers, the “old hands” who have placed their experience and know-how at the disposal of new project managers. And thanks too to the authors of this handbook, Toos Feijen and Theo Reubsaet of REVICE, who knew how to prise the information out of project managers and arrange it in a logical framework.
A publication like this creates its own momentum: as soon as it appears there are new things to report. So go ahead! Let us have your experiences for future publications.

National Leonardo da Vinci Agency, the Netherlands
December 2001

The start and implementation of pilot projects

Points of special interest and action

Internal responsibilities
• Organisational integration of project by all concerned

Parameters
• signature of contracts
• fixing timetables
• arranging venues and dates for project meetings
• organising interim opportunities for contact and feedback

Project content
• defining objectives
• definition of terms
• specification of working procedures

Functions of partnership
• creation of an open group culture
• distribution of tasks and responsibilities
• setting deadlines for interim and final results

External responsibilities
• stressing the need for and planning of evaluation and dissemination strategies
• feedback to NA and/or EC

By item for action
Potential problems and solutions
Leonardo is now an established and almost exalted term in the world of vocational training. Leonardo is short for the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme which is designed to promote the renewal and internationalisation of vocational training. The Leonardo da Vinci I programme (1995-1999) is complete and the Leonardo da Vinci 2 programme is now in progress.

So far dozens of international projects have been started and completed from the Netherlands. Many project co-ordinators have observed that the management of a project of this nature is no sinecure. It consumes a lot of time and energy, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide for and plan all the developments for a project in which a fairly considerable number of international partners participate.

The Netherlands now has the people needed who can provide an account, often in fragmentary or anecdotal form, of their own positive and negative experiences of project co-ordination. However, every year new project applications are obviously presented by organisations which have little or no experience of managing international projects aimed at innovations in vocational training.

With this handbook we intend in the first instance to prepare prospective project managers who do not yet have any experience of managing international projects for what lies ahead of them and support them in their selection of suitable courses of action. A project co-ordinator must always anticipate and react flexibly to developments in the project. The handbook is not, therefore, a blueprint of “what must be”. It is a flexible outline of points of special interest and action which maps out a working method, useful in a variety of situations and retaining its value when practical experience takes an unexpected course.

This handbook also represents a useful tool for project co-ordinators who already have experience of Leonardo projects. This is due to its systematic analysis in a conceptual framework of those aspects which may be important for the effective start and management of a project. Even more experienced project co-ordinators can therefore use this handbook as a “work of reference” when they accompany a project from the start.

Finally, although the handbook is aimed at project co-ordinators, partners in Leonardo projects may also derive benefit from the points of special interest and action which may occur.

This handbook is specifically tailored to aspects of the start and implementation of Leonardo projects but may also be useful for other international projects in the sphere of training and employment. It is not a handbook of project organisation in general. Sufficient literature is available on that issue.

The user of this handbook may not need to read it from beginning to end. The conceptual framework with its five core themes (internal responsibility, limiting conditions, project content, function of partnership and external responsibility) highlights points of special interest and action which may be of importance to project co-ordinators at any given moment. These are based on years of experience of the management of small- and large-scale international projects dealing with innovations in vocational training.
The handbook takes the thirteen points of special interest and action which are important for the initiation and maintenance of Leonardo projects and puts them under the microscope one by one. Although reference is made to a specific sequence, the points of special interest and action do not provide a plan of action. More points may be under discussion at the same time and a project manager can look at problems from different angles. For each point of special interest and action a number of problems which might in practice arise during international projects in general or Leonardo projects in particular and which might stand in the way of their start or progress are outlined. At the same time we provide potential solutions to these problems. The solutions are often supported with tips deriving from practical experience of Leonardo projects which have been advanced in interviews with the National Agency and with about ten co-ordinators of Dutch projects in the Leonardo I programme.

If you read the handbook through from start to finish you would get the disheartening impression that Leonardo projects often mean sorrow and grief. Nothing could be further from the truth. Most of them are challenging, absorbing and ultimately satisfying ventures. Nevertheless, project co-ordinators have learnt by trial and error how to bring projects to a successful conclusion. Potential and realistic pitfalls have been brought together in this handbook, along with suggestions of ways in which a project co-ordinator might successfully deal with them.

Careful preparation offers a greater chance of a good project start and successful project management. No Leonardo project will be without its setbacks. The flexibility with which the project co-ordinator deals with setbacks is essential. This handbook is intended to support project co-ordinators in their endeavours.
Signing contracts

Within six weeks of notification that a subsidy has been granted, the co-ordinating body for the project will receive a contract from the National Agency or the Commission (Procedure C). That contract must be signed on behalf of the partnership by an authorised person within the co-ordinating body. The initial payment will be made to the co-ordinating body within sixty days of signature.

**Tip 1**

Read your contract with the National Agency or the Commission carefully

Experience has shown that co-ordinating bodies have sometimes failed to read a contract or its attachments with sufficient care. As a result, problems have arisen during and on completion of projects in connection with, for example, the admissibility of certain costs incurred by the project co-ordinator or project partners. These could have been avoided if the conditions of the contract and its attachments had been examined properly.

One of the first activities which project managers will then have to address is to draft the contracts which they as “prime contractors” must conclude with their partners. Here they can make use of the standard contract which has been developed specifically for the Leonardo da Vinci programme by the Commission (a copy of which can be obtained from the National Agency or downloaded from the Internet). It is advisable to examine it carefully and to consider if anything must be added, in respect of personnel, for example. In this connection, think of the individuals who will represent partner organisations, their potential substitutes, the products which partners will have to supply etc. The contract must clearly identify (if necessary with reference to the attachments which will be appended) the tasks which the partners must carry out and the amount of funding (specified according to different cost items) which will be available to them.

To prevent anything essential from being overlooked when a contract is drafted, standard contracts issued by other bodies, including Ministries, may be compared with the Leonardo standard contract. This can pinpoint potential problems which is easier to guard against in advance.

**Tip 2**

Examine the details of your contract closely

Your contract will specify a starting date and a finishing date (contract period). Make it clear that any costs which are incurred during the contract period are eligible for Leonardo subsidies. This means that any costs which are incurred before (e.g. in connection with a preparatory agreement with your partners) or after the contract period will have to be borne by you and your partners. The period between the granting of a subsidy and the actual start of a project, i.e. the signing of a contract, will be about two months. It is advisable that the partnership does not commence scheduled activities until all of the formalities have been completed and funds have been approved.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

1. Inadequate understanding of legal consequences

1.2 Delays resulting from necessary feedback to management and financial administration in one’s own organisation

1.3 Alleged discrepancy between agreements based on trust and formal agreements

1.4 Waiver of sanctions in the event of non-compliance with contract

1.5 Lack of agreement within the partnership on contracts offered and their conditions

1.6 A poor relationship between divisions based on funding and divisions based on content

1.1 Inadequate understanding of legal consequences

Project managers who initiate and co-ordinate a Leonardo project will usually do so on the basis of an expert assessment of the content. Drafting contracts is not usually one of their standard tasks. But a contract must be properly formulated for the purposes of the law. If project managers have inadequate knowledge or are uncertain in this respect, they may initially decide to make use where possible of existing standard contracts which will usually have a sound basis. They may also arrange for the draft contract to be examined by a lawyer in their own organisation. If no such person is available in house, the assessment in question may always be obtained on the open market. This will cost money but affords the certainty that one is covered against potential calamities relating to the contract.

Tip 3

Take time to communicate with partners about contracts

In the case of Leonardo projects, the project manager and/or the contracting organisation will usually have a good grasp of contracts. This understanding will often be absent in partners and certainly in the financial departments of partner organisations if they are not involved in contracts of this kind on a regular basis. It is very important that contracts should be transparent, both as regards their content and their legal status.

1.2 Delays resulting from necessary feedback to management and financial administration in one’s own organisation

When a project manager drafts a contract for the partners who will be participating in a project, he does so as a representative of his organisation. Contracts must therefore be supported by that organisation. Often the director alone will have authority to sign contracts and there must also be a good relationship with the financial administration. This can sometimes lead to problems. The organisation may have rules which conflict with those which the Commission employs. This requires a degree of creativity and flexibility. It is best to attempt to come into line with the Commission internally at an early stage, as soon as it has given notice that a project has been accepted. It will then be possible to speak plainly to partners from the very first meeting.
**Tip 4**  
*Make sure that contracts are signed by authorised personnel*

Many Leonardo projects come into being because an individual or organisation devises an initiative and tries to involve people from other Dutch and international organisations in it. Those organisations then sign a ‘letter of intent’ and everything seems in order. In the past it has often been the case that when matters have to be formalised, the people who promised with greatest enthusiasm are held back by their organisations. When submitting a project proposal it is essential to ensure that ‘letters of intent’ are signed by the proper person.

If the person who signs a contract lacks the authority to do so, the contract will be invalid. And it may also ultimately mean that a partner drops out prematurely. If this is a key partner, then a good replacement will have to be found. If this is not the case, you can go ahead with a smaller group, provided you do not fall below the minimum number of partners and that you submit for approval an effective argument for the changes and their consequences to the subsidy provider.

**Tip 5**  
*Reach effective agreements on project administration*

The requirements which Leonardo imposes on project administration may differ considerably or slightly from those customary in your own organisation or those of your partners. The use of all-in prices, for example, which is the norm in the Netherlands, is not accepted in Leonardo projects. For this reason, you should conclude effective agreements with your own financial administration officials on the adaptation of the Leonardo system to your own system. You should also ensure that in this respect your partners take the action required so that they are in a position to supply you promptly as project manager with adequate financial administrative data for your interim and final reports.

### 1.3 Alleged discrepancy between agreements based on trust and formal agreements

Project managers and members of a partnership who decide to organise a project together which is aimed at the development of innovations in vocational training, usually do so because they are confident that they can achieve their objectives. In all likelihood, they expect that each of them will duly carry out his tasks. This basis of trust forms a useful point of departure for planning. But in practice there may be any amount of interference which seriously obstructs the process. In their own organisations, partners may not be given enough space for project work. They may become ill. They may under- or overestimate the importance of this or that activity. They may stress their own interests to such an extent that group interests come under pressure etc. Many managers of Leonardo projects are confronted with problems of this nature. For this reason it is recommended that as many formal agreements as possible be concluded, not to undermine the initial trust but as a welcome supplement to it.
Tip 6  Create space for adjustments to the contract

In practice, project co-ordinators who want to use the standard Leonardo contract as a point of departure may meet resistance. There are partners who have a quick look at the standard contract superficially and usually sign it on trust. But there are also partners who, seeing the commitments they are entering into, want to add refinements. In principle this is possible because it is not laid down anywhere that a project co-ordinator may not modify the model contract. If the refinements which partners wish to introduce are reasonable, the co-ordinator can simply add them. It is a good idea if at the start of a project the partners are given a draft contract which is automatically followed after a month, for example, by a definitive contract unless those concerned propose any amendments.

Tip 7  There are many ways of adapting contracts to requirements

One of the decisions which project managers may be faced with if they want to introduce changes to a project is whether to do so by amending the model contract, by including supplementary information in an annex to the standard contract, or by drafting a completely new contract. When choosing between these three options you may encounter the problem that you do not know exactly how far you can go. You can then turn to the National Agency which can advise you what is possible and what will not be accepted.

1.4  Waiver of sanctions in the event of non-compliance with contract

If a project manager has drawn up well thought out contracts and he reaches agreement on them with the partnership, it is advisable to take them seriously.Obviously there may be things which in practice do not go according to plan. A certain amount of flexibility is therefore always desirable. If, however, there are things which threaten to get out of hand, a project manager must act decisively. If necessary, sanctions must then be imposed on those concerned. Imagine that a group agrees on a distribution of tasks whereby each carries out a proportionate part of the work. One partner, however, refuses to do so, with the consequence that another partner or the project manager has to grasp the nettle and carry out a large amount of extra work. The fact that this can cause irritation hardly needs to be pointed out. On the other hand, the project manager must empower the group. And that is only possible if he is also willing to link consequences to poor performance. In that case it is reasonable that the project manager should take corrective action, for example by imposing other tasks on the partner who is in default or by curtailing his funding.

Tip 8  Do not pay the money out too early

It is not advisable to let all the partners have their share of the money as soon as the prime contract is completed and the first instalment is received. This is what project managers sometimes do if they are managing a project for the first time. They also write it into the contract. But experience shows that it is better to proceed more cautiously: do not release money, piecemeal, until the work has really been delivered. In other words, the effective and careful control of finances oneself is a useful tool for keeping a project on the right track. The contract must include a clause to this effect. The standard contract does not provide a standard. Project managers must therefore devise a formula themselves.
Lack of agreement within the partnership on contracts offered and their conditions

A partnership which must work together for a number of years towards pre-defined goals can only function if the conditions under which this must take place are acceptable to all of them. One of the most important conditions is represented by the contractual agreements. If there is any disagreement about these, this can have an adverse effect if no or too little attention is paid to them. Matters about which disagreements may arise include copyright, unequal distribution of work, unrecorded cost items and onerous requirements. There are things which are hard and fast and cannot be undone. If someone objects to them, the project manager must make it clear that in this case there is no room for manoeuvre. Other aspects should perhaps be changed to counter the objections. A good project manager must anticipate them and formulate fair agreements in advance. It is also important that the project manager should explain the choices which are made and indicate why in his/her opinion matters will be best regulated in the way which has been chosen.

Tip 9
There are limits to moving costs between cost headings
In Leonardo projects it is possible that one or more partners state that they want to rearrange costs, fewer travelling costs, for example, and more labour costs. The Commission has, it is true, drawn up rules on this, but in certain real situations they may not be enough. In that event a project manager can submit a request to the subsidy provider for greater room for manoeuvre. Whether the request is granted is at the discretion of the provider. Every change request must be argued with very good reasons. It is advisable that once a contract has been signed with the subsidy provider you are not tempted to introduce changes too quickly.

A poor relationship between divisions based on funding and those based on content
In the contract, a project manager will give the members of a partnership a number of tasks for which they are responsible together with an appropriate budget. It is obviously desirable that in this respect they are in proportion to each other. To some extent this can be incorporated in advance, but in practice it can seem that some tasks are much more difficult than was initially thought or that some are not really necessary. If that is the case, this must be open to discussion, otherwise there will be problems. Project managers must remember this. They must foresee the tasks which are more time-consuming, and why and whether there are also tasks which may be performed more quickly. If this is clear enough, there may be a redistribution of activities so that none of those involved has an unnecessarily heavy burden.

Tip 10
Ensure that all costs entered are eligible under Leonardo rules
Although the rules and procedures for the initial phase of the Leonardo programme are very simple (labour costs and overheads, for example, need no longer be justified retrospectively), there are still strict regulations with regard to costs which must be justified (e.g. the rules on travelling and subsistence expenses).
Tip 11 Bear in mind that a negative evaluation of your end result may have financial consequences

The final results of projects in the Leonardo 2 programme will be assessed by independent experts. If they describe the products/results of your project as being “of insufficient quality”, the final payment may be at issue. In the case of serious deficiencies the return of a subsidy which has already been made might be requested.
Creation of an open group culture

To achieve good project results, to make a creative contribution possible and to offer all the partners an opportunity to highlight their expertise, it essential that an open group culture is established. This can be achieved by acting openly and honestly, by creating sufficient transparency, by treating all the partners positively and with respect, by recognising any problems immediately and solving them. Likewise it should be possible for everyone to make an equivalent contribution, by dealing with problems seriously, by relieving the atmosphere now and again with humour and observations which put things in perspective and by incorporating not only time for work but also moments for more relaxing interaction.

Tip 12

Don't go just for fun and games

Many Dutch people are Calvinistic and businesslike by nature. They often want to achieve their objectives quickly and efficiently. But the Leonardo project revolves to a considerable extent around trust. Thus if you sit round the table with people who are more or less strangers, you must take time to let trust develop. The experience of Leonardo project managers shows, for example, that with southern Europeans you must first forge a relationship before you can work together effectively. There have also been Leonardo partners who when referring to their projects stated in particular how much they had enjoyed them, but could hardly show any results. Here a warning is appropriate: make sure that it does not become too enjoyable. There is work to be done: that is the primary objective. The Leonardo 2 programme attaches much more importance to the results to be delivered than the first programme. Enjoyable co-operation is an important factor in the development process.

Potential problems and solutions

2.1 Hidden agendas
2.2 Extroverts and introverts in the group
2.3 Participants with conflicting interests
2.4 Language barriers: English is a problem for some project participants
2.5 Poor division of workload
2.6 Excessive preoccupation with tasks

2.1 Hidden agendas

A project group cannot function effectively if it includes individuals with a hidden agenda. Signs which may indicate hidden agendas include barriers which those concerned repeatedly raise, conflicting ideas which they introduce and/or an absence of adequate participation. If a project manager suspects a hidden agenda, he must try and discover what the individual concerned actually wishes to achieve. The project manager can do this by concentrating on the individual interests of the person concerned and on the interests of the organisation he represents. If matters are clear enough for the project manager, he has two options. He can attempt to minimise the harmful effect on the group of actions...
based on a hidden agenda by means of specific action. He can also try to reveal the hidden agenda. Perhaps the best approach is to talk to the individual concerned in person. A project manager can only deal effectively with a delicate matter like a hidden agenda by dealing with it tactfully.

**Tip 13**

Allow for possible reservations about the transfer of knowledge

Partners who co-operate on an international project will often differ considerably in the nature of the contribution they can make. One or more partners, for example, will possess sophisticated knowledge or experience which the others can take advantage of, while they themselves can expect little of the others in return. This may lead to friction. A project manager can play a guiding role here, by showing his appreciation and recognition of the expertise which is being introduced, by stressing the merits of the reactions and viewpoints of the other project participants, and by emphasising the shared process of learning and the value it adds to the end product.

### 2.2 Extroverts and introverts in the group

One problem which can quite often arise in connection with Leonardo projects is that the partnership will consist of more extroverts and introverts. This difference is not solely due to differences in personality traits within the partnership. In international collaborative projects involving heterogeneous partnerships it can also be a factor of differences in the cultural backgrounds of the project partners (‘the modest’ Finn as against the ‘excitable’ Italian).

Discussions are often dominated by extrovert types, with the introverts being left out. The project manager must therefore ensure that everyone gets to make a contribution. As the leader in discussions he can impose good discussion procedures. He can also as a matter of policy curb the extrovert types a little and occasionally explicitly invite the introverts to say how they see certain things. It is not advisable to balance the situation completely in this respect. People are different, after all. It is not possible to turn an introvert into an extrovert, even less vice versa. What matters is that each individual is involved in the project despite the differences between the partners. Only in this way can the project fully benefit from the expertise which is on hand.

### 2.3 Participants with conflicting interests

In any group in which a variety of partners from different and dissimilar organisations co-operates it is possible that the interests of one partner will be at odds with what another partner wants. This can lead to a serious impasse which threatens the progress of the project. Each project manager must therefore be alert to this and bring it to the fore in good time, if there is a suggestion of a conflict of interests. The problems must then be put on the table at project meetings. It must be clear what the interests of the group as a whole are in the project, what individual members want to achieve with the project and the extent to which individual interests can be served. It often turns out that the conflicts need not arise and that individual and group interests need not be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, if someone is offered an opportunity to gain something from a project for themselves, he will often be more prepared to do something extra in the interest of the group. However, if conflicts are really insurmountable, the project manager must intervene. He can attempt to reach a compromise, but the interests of the project may compel him to support one of the “conflicting” parties. In that event the project manager must argue
his decision carefully. He would also do well to offer those who have had to back down the chance to compensate for the loss of face.

**Tip 14**

Organisations do not always send the most suitable individuals

It is possible that a project co-ordinator has inadequate insight into the qualities and background of the partners. Sometimes, for example, organisations from certain countries in Eastern Europe will be quite keen to take part in a project but are not adequately informed about its purpose. What happens then? Someone will attend the first project meeting who fails to turn up at the second meeting, but sends a replacement. For the project manager this means that he has to repeat some of his work. This is an obvious burden. Hence the importance of good preparation. In the run up, adequate consideration must be given to clarifying the project objectives for the partners and to confirming (for example by asking for the CVs of those concerned) the identities of those who will be the actual participants in the project. It is worth recommending that the names of individuals be included in the contract (see also Tip 20).

2.4 Language barriers: English is a problem for some project participants

When seeking partners to invite to Leonardo projects, one of the selection criteria is usually that those concerned must be able to use English as the medium of communication and as the working language. There are seldom adequate funds for interpreters. Despite this requirement, it is often the case that not everyone is adequately prepared in this respect. If there are deficiencies in this area, project managers should be able to ask the partner or partners concerned whether they want to send replacements who are more proficient in English. If this is not possible, he will have to manage with what he has. A project manager must then concentrate on establishing the most effective communication possible. The best option is to use English as the medium of communication and ask the project partners to speak slowly and clearly and to check that each of the delegations has understood properly. It may also be possible to divide the work up in such a way that despite language barriers, the end product will still be of the required quality. Thus, however difficult it may be at first, speak the same language as much as possible. You will notice that practice makes perfect and that with the passage of time, a great number of initial difficulties will dwindle “of their own accord”.

**Tip 15**

Take any language problems which arise into account

The medium of communication usually used in Leonardo projects is English or a mixture of English and French. But it is often the case — and inexperienced project managers often fail to take account of the fact — that people from southern Europe take part in the project who do not speak English or only speak it poorly. In that case, use may be made of interpreters or translators whom a project leader must always have on standby. If the project proposal does not make any provision for translation or interpreting this will involve extra costs. Another option is to leave the parties concerned to solve their own problems. This may be more effective. If an inherently knowledgeable partner from a specific organisation does not speak English well enough, he may be asked to arrange for a colleague who does so well to accompany him to meetings. Any language barriers will also be mitigated by deciding that end products are only to be delivered in the languages agreed in the project plan (e.g., English or French). However, this does not apply to interim reports. Any agreements of this nature must be reached at an early stage in the project. Then everyone will know where he stands.
2.5 Poor division of workload

The specification of an effective distribution of work in the contract does not always mean that in practice everyone does the same amount. A project group may be made up and interact in such a way that the active members, for example, always have a bigger workload while passive participants remain in reserve. This will often develop slowly and insidiously, but in the long term the established route will be seen as obvious. In the case of those in the partnership who must bear the heaviest burden, it is not easy to rectify matters. This is clearly a task for the project manager. He must always ensure that the work does not end up on the plates of a handful of people but that the group as a whole must see itself as responsible for what has to be done. The prevention of distorted growth at an early stage is preferable to a cure. And a cure is in turn to be preferred to letting the sickness take its course. In other words, ignoring the problem is the worst solution.

2.6 Excessive preoccupation with tasks

If a project is a complex one, encompassing a number of tasks and can only be achieved with considerable effort, there is a danger that the project manager will be occupied only with the work-related affairs of the partnership. However, many people who take part in international projects do not do so just because the work and content are interesting but because they enjoy it. After all, there’s more to life than just work. Occasional relaxation is an essential requirement for subsequent optimum concentration. For project managers these considerations mean that, however difficult the project is, they must also make room for informal contacts. These often offer an excellent opportunity to get to know each other and to develop a relaxed atmosphere. These in turn play an important part in ensuring that the skills of those concerned bear fruit for the project unimpeded. Task-orientation and socio-emotional orientation need not be perceived as opposites but as mutually enriching attitudes which are both essential to the achievement of optimum results.

Tip 16 Informal familiarisation activities can be very useful for creating an open group culture

At the first meeting at 9.00 o’clock in the morning the project manager can begin with agenda item 1, a quick round of introductions in which everyone introduces himself and then afterwards immediately set to work effectively. But if he introduces an enjoyable familiarisation game, the atmosphere will become much more relaxed. A large number of games of this kind are in circulation and standard in almost all European countries. It is easy for a project manager to get hold of them.

Another approach is for the project manager to organise an informal get-together — a social gathering, for example — in the evening before the kick-off meeting at which the partners can get to know each other.
Defining objectives

If a group has to work together to achieve a specific objective and that objective is only vaguely formulated, there is a chance that the partners will either consciously or unconsciously work against each other or be side-tracked in any number of ways. In the long term, this will have a discouraging effect. It is therefore of considerable importance that objectives should be defined at an early stage and in as much detail as possible. If this is not possible with regard to the later phases, project managers must anticipate this in such a way that it is obvious when this happens. The great advantage of well-defined objectives is that they can get everyone pointing in the same direction so that progress is visible, that the speed of the project can be maintained, that partners can share tasks effectively, that participants can communicate effectively, and that at the end participants can feel that they have worked as a group. Adequately defined objectives also make it easier to work to schedule and to deadlines.

Tip 17

Experimentation on the one hand and effective planning on the other may result in tension

Leonardo da Vinci may be viewed as a laboratory for innovation. It is an experiment. On the other hand, the subsidy provider asks that partnerships plan everything in advance, that they ensure that everything can be checked and described in advance. These two approaches are very much at odds with each other. This creates and will always lead to problems. A project manager must be sufficiently flexible and intelligent to steer a middle course through this area of tension.

Potential problems and solutions

3.1 Inadequate definition of project objectives and project plan
3.2 Excessively open and accommodating attitude by the project manager
3.3 Objections to specific elements of projects among partners
3.4 Problematic project phases
3.5 Excessively detailed frameworks

3.1 Inadequate definition of project objectives and project plan

The application for a Leonardo project must include project objectives and a project plan. The milestones will usually be formulated in greater detail when the project is being implemented. The course which a Leonardo project will take cannot be completely clear or obvious in advance. It is always assumed that these projects will be innovative by nature. The intention of a project is to arrive at a point that no one else has yet achieved. In principle exact predictions are never possible. Thus all project descriptions are to a certain extent of a general nature. However, that is not to say that project managers cannot try to provide as much clarity as possible. The means to this include: drawing up a schedule of project objectives and planned milestones, giving all partners an opportunity
at the initial meeting to express what they have distilled from the project description, discussing project objectives and phases in full at the initial meeting, setting up sub-groups to formulate the constituent parts of the project in more specific terms.

**Tip 18**  
*Don’t forget that situations can change*  
If your project is lengthy, it is possible that the context in which you are operating at any given moment looks very different from when you submitted the project proposal. Sometimes you will still be able to realise your original project concept but it may also be desirable to make adjustments. It is often more difficult to introduce fundamental changes. For this a partnership must obtain the consent of the subsidy provider.

### 3.2 Excessively open and accommodating attitude by the project manager

Effective cooperation on an international project is hardly conceivable without an open attitude on the part of the project manager. Each partner will obviously impart their own view of the project, demonstrate their knowledge and skills and make them available. This will obviously be impossible if no opportunity is made to do so. But if a project leader is too open and compliant, there is a danger that clear project objectives will be watered down during the course of time. A project leader must attempt to show both sides of the coin: on the one hand the need to give clear direction to the partners and on the other to offer the partners the opportunity to exert some influence. These can go hand in hand quite effectively. Another option is to delegate the content or processing of the task of management to another member of the partnership and to monitor the process oneself. The reverse is also possible, i.e. manage it oneself and delegate monitoring to someone else.

**Tip 19**  
*Partners prefer clarity*  
Some projects are formulated in such a way that the partnership itself must define its objectives within specific frameworks. Partners will seldom be accustomed to doing this. They expect project leaders to say what must be done. Project participants are usually happy if the project manager has thought his initiative through carefully in advance. They will sometimes put forward a few minor modifications, but on the whole they want to follow the established plan.

### 3.3 Objections to specific elements of projects by partners

Sometimes the participants in a partnership will not or cannot immediately reconcile themselves to everything to be done in the project, even detailed aspects. Before or during the project, partners may object to specific elements in the project or to the way they are actually formulated. These objections must be open to discussion, because otherwise they may “informally” have an adverse effect on the work of the project. The project manager must ascertain the precise nature of the objections by listening closely to the arguments of those who raise them. Are they, for example, theoretical in nature, or inspired rather by practical motives? And if so, which motives? It is then of considerable importance to establish whether the objections raised pose a threat to the successful conclusion of the contractual project objectives. If not, the project leader may decide to modify the project. In principle he must be able to bring flexibility to this. If, however, the
project objectives as such come to be viewed in a different light, this will be more difficult. Then a satisfactory middle course must be found so that objectives can still be achieved. After all, the contractual commitments which the establishment co-ordinating the project has entered into are designed with the end product in mind and the project manager is ultimately responsible. In extreme cases this may even mean that a contract with one of the partners is terminated before the project is complete. But for this the partnership must seek the consent of the National Agency or the Commission. It is also appropriate for them to consider the financial consequences of such action.

Tip 20  
**Partners are not always empowered to make decisions**

If a project manager explains the project objectives and makes it clear what he expects of the partners, he can be faced with the problem that some partners are reluctant to enter into agreements or approve of them, simply because they are not authorised to make decisions. They must therefore go back to their own organisations to establish whether they approve of the agreements. This means that project managers cannot simply lay down agreements from the outset.

3.4 **Problematic project phases**

Every project will include difficult and less difficult phases. A project will be exposed to most risks in phases over which no-one has complete control, for example a phase where partners must trace unique sources which are not easy to tap, where the project depends on the co-operation of third parties which are not easily activated, where advanced ideas have to be tried out, or where complex group discussions are required. If a project consists of one or more such difficult phases, it is advisable to deal with it properly at the start of the project. Project phases which the other partners consider problematical should also be on the agenda. Both the project manager and the partners will then be in a position to state the risks they expect. Project partners can then be involved immediately in finding solutions (e.g. reference to the authorities, involvement of intermediaries, forward-looking procedures and/or possible changes in the timetable).

3.5 **Excessively detailed frameworks**

In a partnership in which different nationalities are represented, a well-formulated and clear plan may have precisely the disadvantage that too many things are defined. Partners may then get the idea that the project manager wants to impose his own ideas originating in a Dutch context on partners from countries where the context is different. This can lead to irritation. A good definition in itself need never be a problem. The problem often lies in an inclination to deal with detail too rigidly. There are two conceivable ways out of this. The project managers can put the definitions to one side for the time being and begin the development work at a somewhat more global level or he can raise the definitions for discussion in such a way that partners can still introduce changes.
Tip 21  Specifying objectives is a not a one-off activity

Most Leonardo projects are sub-divided into a number of project phases. Initially not all of them need be
formulated in detail. For some of them this will have to be done gradually. Learning processes, ideas and
thoughts alter, situations are not stable and executive personnel often changes. A project manager must be
alert to this. He must have a firm hold on the project, while at the same time displaying the flexibility
needed. This can sometimes require considerable energy.
Definition of terms

It is clear from experience of international projects that one problem which should not be underestimated may be a lack of clarity, as well as misunderstandings as regards terminology. For example, qualifications or skills may mean different things in different countries. An actual profession, for example, need not have the same content in every country. In other words, anyone who imagines that concepts which are used in the Netherlands will automatically be applicable to other Member States is likely to be disappointed. It is therefore advisable to ensure that adequate time is made available particularly at the commencement of a project to clarify what the central concepts stand for and whether the same holds true for each of the countries concerned. If not, it may be necessary to introduce others or to use a number of terms at the same time. Feasibility is of overriding importance when making choices in this respect. Practice will act as a pointer. If this is not the case, one can end up in interminable theoretical discussions where everyone will try to present his own point of view as the “correct” one.

Tip 22
Do not assume that anything is familiar
Project co-ordinators often assume that partners are familiar with certain things. They in turn will do the same. When you are working at an international level, you must be able to abandon pre-conceived ideas. Working with other nationalities means that you will sometimes be rudely confronted with your own shortcomings. You must not make a fuss about it but turn it to your own advantage. You can learn a lot from other countries and that will be an enriching experience for you.

Potential problems and solutions
4.1 Considerable differences in the backgrounds of project partners
4.2 Discussions which stray from the point
4.3 Language barriers
4.4 Dominant partners who want their own point of view to prevail over the general one
4.5 Difficulty of working with a strict definition in an individual context
4.6 Failure to record agreed clarifications results in constant repetition

4.1 Considerable differences in the backgrounds of project partners

Differences in the backgrounds of project partners may have something to do with, amongst other things, the type of organisation represented (an educational establishment for example or an industrial concern), with educational background or with national peculiarities in the area of occupational training. A different background may complicate mutual understanding considerably; one organisation will have quite different priorities from another, jargon will be incomprehensible, one partner will refer to a concept which
is quite unknown to another and so on. To promote mutual understanding it is advisable at the outset of the project to arrange a round of detailed introductions to allow those concerned to describe their backgrounds. If discussions stagnate because no-one understands each other, the project manager must ensure that partners have an opportunity to explain their own points of view on the basis of their own specific context. If this is clear, one can carry on where one left off, or – if necessary and feasible – change the terminology in such a way that the group as a whole can cope with it.

**Tip 23**  
**Identical terms do not always refer to the same concept**

In various Leonardo projects social partners play a specific role, for example where official recognition of training is concerned. However in the Member States of the EU the role of social partners is often different or they operate in a different way from what is usual in the Netherlands. This can lead to problems. A project manager must be flexible and also check whether or not similar concepts are being discussed.

4.2 **Discussions which stray from the point**

A discussion of terms and the concepts they refer to can easily go off in all directions. One journey will lead to others and as a consequence some parts will be picked up and some will not. In time the thread will be lost completely. Project managers have the task of acting as regulators. They must give those concerned an opportunity to disclose their own points of view, while at the same time ensuring that the discussion is to the point. They must therefore repeatedly stress the central theme of a discussion and which elements are relevant to it. Themes which are not relevant may be put on the agenda at a later stage in the project. They can also be discussed at an informal level – in the breaks. Tactical action is to be recommended here. If a project manager acts too severely and too inflexibly, the partners may withdraw with the result that the discussions continue in fits and starts.

**Tip 24**  
**European standards are a good basis for agreement**

Should a group disagree on specifics, reference to European standards can be very useful. This will often solve the problem. And not only Member States but also candidates for membership wish to play a role in Europe and meet European standards. Projects often involve companies too. Often they actually have to meet European standards. In such cases it is easier for partners to introduce things to a project under a single heading.

4.3 **Language barriers**

Since language barriers constitute a potential source of quality loss (see Point of special interest and action 2), it is recommended that the medium of communication should always be English even if there are problems. This, however, does not seem advisable if problems arise specifically about the application and interpretation of terminology. When someone wants to describe exactly what he means by a specific term, he will sometimes be able to express himself more effectively in the language concerned or provide other partners with an accurate translation. In all likelihood, the project participants will all speak more than one language. If, for example, a Dutchman can clarify a term for a Frenchman in French, and that Frenchman speaks Spanish, the Frenchman will be able to
enlighten the Spanish partner. Here the partners must make the optimum use of the opportunities which the partnership offers.

**Tip 25**

*A good translation of basic terminology can take up a lot of time*

If you implement a project with a specific subject such as quality care, for example, you must be able to define exactly what you have in mind. What is the best term in Dutch? Which term fits the bill most effectively in the various participating countries? Which English term will you use? And what is an adequate French term? Sometimes it takes a full day of discussion to achieve clarity and unanimity about specific terms.

Such terms as qualification and education have a bad reputation in this respect. They are used everywhere but often with a different, if not incompatible meaning.

### 4.4 Dominant partners who want to elevate their own point of view over the general one

Sometimes it is useful for the progress of a project if a partner with a good idea persuades the group of its merits. However, it is also possible that a dominant partner will want to impose his point of view on others and actually weaken rather than enrich a project. If this threatens to happen, it is time for the project manager to intervene. This he can do by emphasising that the point of view put forward is only one of many and then inviting others to offer alternatives. In this way he ensures that everyone has a chance to have his say. If it is necessary to express a preference after a more general summing up, this is best related to potential contributions for the satisfactory achievement of project objectives. In either case, action must be taken to prevent the unilateral control of a project by a single person or small group. Everyone must take part and a group must be able to decide on the basis of reasonable argument which is the best way forward.

**Tip 26**

*Partners should also be given an opportunity to introduce their own interests*

The clarification of terms does not only mean that there is a potential for agreement, but also that the project is beginning to assume flesh and blood. Here the project manager must not think only of his own interests as regards the project. The other partners must also get something out of it for their own situation. This must be made clear and space created for it. A project manager, for example, can allow each partner to describe separately what he expects from the project and how he can reap the benefits.

### 4.5 Difficulty of working with a strict definition in an individual context

In any project it is possible that a strict definition formulated in one of the Member States cannot be used in another Member State, for example because that definition is not recognised or because different terminology is used for the concept in question. If this problem arises it is advisable to look out for alternatives. These alternatives must be capable of giving the partners concerned the opportunity to perform their specific tasks successfully. Afterwards the project partners can try to stretch definitions in such a way that they are useful in a number of contexts. However, if such a flexible approach to the work of the project is adopted, project managers will have to prevent different countries from going their own way with the resultant complete or partial loss of any sense of...
commonality. The ability to successfully manage the field of tension between the specific and the general is what matters here.

**Tip 27** *In the absence of good terms use clear descriptions*

Many situations are possible where a technical term is used in the Netherlands which has no equivalent in, for example, Ireland or Finland. If this is the case, a description of the concept is a useful alternative. It is not a matter of forcing another country to accept a Dutch concept. Existing practice in the country in question will point in the right direction.

**4.6** *Failure to record agreed clarifications results in constant repetition*

If the discussion of terms ends with useful clarifications, they must be put in writing. Any group which fails to do so creates a potential problem for itself. Agreements must be recorded in writing in the minutes of the meeting. If it is clearly recorded in this way that the partners have reached an agreement, there is less danger that they will repeat themselves and that old discussions will flare up again. In this respect project managers can take precautions by recording whatever has been agreed, so that this also serves as a point of departure for everyone.

**Tip 28** *Create enough space to correct an inaccurate definition*

One of the Leonardo projects developed a management-training module. However, the project partners could not find anyone who wanted to take part. The reason for this was that the target group misunderstood the term “management”. A manager was regarded as a go-getter with a mobile phone and not as someone who heads a research institute, for example, or with a managerial role in industry. The co-ordinator of this project then conducted an exercise. All the partners received a card on which they were asked to write what sort of role a middle manager in industry had. When all the data had been collected, it turned out that 70% of the tasks mentioned were managerial tasks. The module in question was aimed at precisely those tasks.
Specification of working procedures

In every Leonardo project proposal there are a number of things which have to be worked out, such as how it is intended to achieve the project objective(s). But there will still be a number of question marks over the way it is executed; this is only natural given the innovative and developmental nature of these projects. Before a project has been developed, it is hardly possible to provide comprehensive answers to questions such as how are we going to test the product? Where will the test take place? Whom do we approach for the purpose? Do we test everything at once or do we break the product down into its constituent parts? Who will take the lead? Do we bring in observers? If so, how do let them observe? The actual development work may assume a wide variety of forms and there may be divergent views on the best approach. It is important to reach agreement on this with the partners. The project manager can make a proposal and try to create support for it. He can give the partners an opportunity to offer suggestions for the basis on which a choice is made. He can also suggest that different working procedures should be used alongside each other, thereby accommodating the preferences of those concerned. Whichever choice he makes, the working procedure must be practicable and everyone must be able to contribute.

Tip 29

At the start of a project it is not always so simple to explain to the partners precisely what is expected of them

Whenever a project manager discusses the contract with partners, the latter will usually ask: “I get so much money now, but what exactly is expected of me?” A question like this can be quite awkward, especially if at the beginning of the project you only have a global definition for it. It is also difficult to see three years ahead. But you must come to terms with this, for example by means of a somewhat more global definition of the tasks or by sub-dividing a project into phases, defining the first phase and only later making decisions on the content of the others.

Potential problems and solutions

5.1 Inadequate support by those concerned for the approach adopted
5.2 Significant differences in sources and basic material available to partners
5.3 Cultural differences between partner countries
5.4 Inadequate uniformity of expertise of project partners
5.5 Uncertainty about the practicality of working methods
5.6 Excessively complicated working methods
5.1 Inadequate support by those concerned for the approach adopted

If a project manager wishes to achieve an objective, but selects a specific working procedure which is not actually supported by the partnership, the chances that he will be successful are slight. Every failure will then be blamed on the working procedure which the partnership by now does not like. It is essential to realise that the objective is of primary importance and that there is more than one way of achieving it. A good basis for a specific working procedure can be promoted by clarifying the pros and cons and arguing why such a procedure is adequate in the given context. If the group still has its doubts, a project manager can decide to try it out for a short while to see how it works or to adapt it to the wishes and ideas of the partners. Whatever the project manager decides to do, he must be aware that the partners always have a certain amount of space in which to give shape to things in their own way. This is an important precondition for effective motivation and will usually deliver the best results.

Tip 30 Ensure that the partners are not only partners but also interested parties

A project manager can try to have complete control of a project but it is much more effective to take account of other people’s wishes. The interests and hidden agendas of partners must be considered. This is very important because it determines whether and why people are motivated to join in. If motivation is lacking, efforts made are highly unlikely to produce the desired results.

5.2 Significant differences in sources and basic material available to partners

New developments do not usually come out of the blue but follow on from something which already exists. There is a certain basic knowledge which is developed. This basic knowledge or material will not be available to the same degree for all of the partners. In this respect there will usually be considerable differences. These often make it impossible to approach every context in exactly the same way. A project manager may find the differences inconvenient and regret them but also regard them as a challenge from which there is much to be learnt. In order to select an efficient working procedure particular account must be taken of such differences. If partners identify the basic material which they have at their disposal, it will soon become clear what is and what is not possible, as well as what is needed to get on the same wavelength. So once again it is clear that the working procedure must be flexible and adaptable by those concerned to their own situation.

Tip 31 Choose a working procedure which takes account of your project partners

The extent to which you will be able to define a working procedure depends strictly on the original position of your partners. How difficult is it or how easy to get partners to perform their tasks? One partner, for example, has much better background knowledge than the others. This sometimes calls for extra effort in the area of qualification or forces you to give specific partners different activities. It is important to list whether the preferred working procedure is practicable at an early stage. If this is not done, it may result in unnecessary tensions.
5.3 Cultural differences between partner countries

Anyone who is actively involved in international collaborative contracts will have to deal with cultural differences. Generally speaking Northern Europeans are different from Southern Europeans. But sometimes there are also significant differences within these categories. If a project manager fails to take adequate account of them, even in respect of the preferred working procedure, he will soon come up against problems. Some cultural differences are well known but a partnership must also form its own understanding of them. Project managers must in any case act in a way which leaves enough room for cultural differences. They must not only be made more explicit but also recognised as the background against which those concerned operate. A background which may impose constraints but may also offer unique opportunities.

Tip 32

*Project agreements may have a different significance in different countries*

Partner organisations in Southern Europe often attach great value to the gift of 'acte de présence' by the project partner at the meetings they organise. This is often prompted by the fact that for subsidies they are dependent on the local or regional authority. With that in mind they want to create a distinct profile for themselves. In this case, a Leonardo project can play an important part, at least if it is presented with all the trimmings.

5.4 Inadequate uniformity of expertise of project partners

Partnerships are often relatively heterogeneous as regards their composition. For one thing the Commission encourages it. Most Leonardo projects are carried out by a diversity of partners from different organisations and different countries. In this respect, the project manager has a wide range of opportunities. If he has a good idea about the experience of individual project participants, he can deploy them where they are in their own element. One, for example, may have a sound knowledge of curriculum development, while another is good at the level of business development and a third has experience in the field of dissemination. A working procedure should be selected in which differences in expertise is not an obstacle but an advantage. If one section of the partnership, for example, is very experienced, and another hardly at all, the project manager can then create pairs from the two opposite poles, where one can introduce existing knowledge and the other fresh insights.

Tip 33

*If possible, allow the partners some space for selection processes*

If you are actively involved in a Leonardo project with a variety of schools and issues to be dealt with, you can as co-ordinator allocate issues between them. However, it is perhaps better to allow the schools themselves to select the issues. This can influence motivation in a positive way, an approach which may also benefit quality.
5.5 Uncertainty about the practicality of working methods

A project manager who has initiated a Leonardo project can have a reasonably well-defined objective as well as a fairly drafted working procedure, but perhaps harbours doubts about its practicality. Project partners may also have similar doubts. Although it is often true that “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”, it may be advisable to have done one’s homework better and not pursue a riskier course. To be more certain of the practicability of the working procedure selected, it is sensible for a project manager to consult the partnership. This group will ultimately have to carry it out. Having drawn it up, the project manager can clarify the working procedure and ask the partners two questions. The first is: why is the working procedure practicable? The second is: why is the working procedure — or parts thereof — impracticable or hardly practicable? On the basis of the answers given, a decision can be taken to carry out the project as originally intended or make any necessary adjustments.

Tip 34 Ensure that the project bears the necessary fruit
For Leonardo 2 the reporting and financial accountability have been considerably simplified. That was the intention at any rate and time will tell if it works in practice. An essential innovation is that on completion of the project your product will be evaluated by independent experts. If what you promised is not delivered, there is a fair chance that you will have to pay back the money. For very good products a Leonardo hallmark may be created. Be that as it may, the subsidy provider is increasingly concentrating on a project’s content output.

5.6 Excessively complicated working methods

If the partnership, after an explanation by the project manager, still does not have a clear picture of the working procedure, it is highly likely to be too complicated. The advice here is: “Keep it simple”. Distinguish between main issues and side issues and then explain the main ones. Also explain how the central elements are connected and the role they play in the realisation of interim and end results. Go through the side issues at a later stage in detail and explain how they relate to the main issues. Also indicate the extent to which they can be applied to specific situations. It must be possible to put the most important information about the working procedure briefly and effectively on a single A4 sheet. If this is not possible, the project manager can ask himself if another approach might not be more appropriate.

Tip 35 Demarcate units of work properly
Leonardo projects involve ever more clearly defined tasks, work schedules, intended products and deadlines for partners. For this they receive a detailed budget. The number of meetings is also increasingly subject to cutbacks. The requirements of the subsidy provider guide things in this direction. Nowadays it is a form of modern management. Effectiveness and efficiency are increasingly emphasised.
Distribution of tasks and responsibilities

A project can only proceed to completion effectively and on schedule if tasks and responsibilities are properly divided among the partners from the start. Here some thought must not only be given expressly to development work or trial activities but also to financial responsibility, administrative matters, organisational aspects, the compilation of minutes of meetings etc. Consideration should also be given from the start to appointing partners at an early stage to take responsibility for project evaluation and the dissemination of project results. After all these are not activities which can be put off until the end of the project. Consideration must be given to evaluation and dissemination for the duration of the project.

When tasks and responsibilities are being distributed, the expertise and competence at the partners’ disposal must be identified and above all who can work with whom most effectively (the psycho-social component). The project leader can most effectively delegate some tasks, such as project administration, to a single person. Other tasks should rather be regarded as group activities. But even in this case it must be clear who has to do what. Who is ultimately responsible for co-ordinating and harmonising the contributions to be made by individual partners? The creation of an unequal distribution of tasks must be avoided, as must an unsatisfactory balance between the activities which are to be performed and the remuneration received.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

6.1 Excessive number of tasks for project managers
6.2 Reluctance on the part of those concerned to commit themselves to anything
6.3 Poor understanding of the relationship between tasks and workload
6.4 Differences between load and capacity
6.5 Problems of competence in the partnership
6.6 Reluctance to accept tasks and responsibilities

6.1 Excessive number of tasks for project managers

An international network of co-operation, consisting of a variety of partners working together to develop an innovation in the area of occupational training, requires careful and effective co-ordination. Activities and their content must be harmonised among them all. Paths must be marked out. Different contacts must be established and meetings organised. Project administration must be taken care of. Accountability to the subsidy provider must be established. Financial matters must be regulated, etc. The project manager will himself take responsibility for many of these tasks. If he then also plays a key role as regards content, he may become overloaded. In that case the efficiency of a project group will also be largely dependent on a single person. To avoid these disadvantages, a project manager should delegate some of his tasks. He can, for example,
set up a project secretariat which supports him. He can also give certain partners responsibility for specific parts of the projects, such as dissemination or agreed content, for example. He can transfer parts of tasks, in the financial or administrative areas, for example, to all of the project partners. If they then arrange things effectively in their own area, with responsibility for them taken by the partnership as a whole – during and on completion of the project – matters are relatively straightforward.

**Tip 36**  
The quality systems used by partner organisations may be highly demanding

There are establishments where quality systems are employed which require that for a project to be recognised as such it must undergo a number of more closely-defined stages, the requirements for which are fairly strict. If the establishments themselves apply the same requirements to a Leonardo project, the burden may be disproportionately large and the project manager will have even more work.

**b • 2**  
Reluctance on the part of those concerned to commit themselves to anything

A project manager who intends to distribute more specific project tasks than the contract states, may encounter resistance from partners who are reluctant to commit themselves in that way or to take responsibility. In some cases this is understandable, for example if there is not enough understanding of the consequences and the time which this may free up. But sometimes it is a matter of shirking responsibilities. If that is the case, it is sensible that a project manager should take corrective action. This may point to the importance of the work and the need for each individual to buckle down. But those who are still unable to say whether they can take on a task or not should make provisional agreements which specify the date on which the project manager can expect a definite answer.

**Tip 37**  
Not all partners require the same degree of precision

When sharing out tasks and responsibilities, project managers are dependent on their partners. Some partners are quite easy-going about the division of work and the like. They see how things are going. But others want to know the precise objective in advance, and the contribution which they are expected to make. As a rule Dutch people belong to the second category but experience shows that the French also impose strict requirements in this respect.

**b • 3**  
Poor understanding of the relationship between tasks and workload

If a project manager shares the tasks among partners, it is possible that he will not know how much time and effort those tasks will require. If that is the case, it is better to admit this than to remain silent. It is possible that he will be able to make a rough assessment after taking the advice of the partners just as something to go on with. He can also ask the individuals who will take responsibility for the tasks whether they can give an idea of the number of hours which have been devoted to the tasks in question. If the figure is much higher than the estimate, additional action can be taken, such as transferring parts of a task to someone else or reducing the number of other tasks which the individual in question has been assigned. Either way, none will want to take on a task which he considers will take 20 hours, for example, when the actual hours spent turn out to be twice as much or more.
6.4 Differences between load and capacity

When distributing tasks, the project manager must not only look at who is more or less suited to the tasks but also at differences between the partners regarding burdens and capacities. If one partner, for example, already has three key tasks in his package, it is better to give a fourth and difficult task to another partner. In fact, it must in two respects be a question of balance, between contract and tasks, and between the partners themselves. This balance is particularly easy to measure if the contract budgets are similar. One problem with this is capacity, which may be considerably greater in the case of one person than in another. The project manager must also allow for this problem. He can, for example, give those with broader shoulders rather more arduous tasks and protect the weaker ones from failure to perform their own work. However, this must only be done within reasonable limits.

6.5 Problems of competence in the partnership

These can find expression in various ways. People can overestimate their own abilities. There may be too many people in a partnership with the same or similar skills. Perhaps a couple of very competent individuals will carry the project alone. Specified skills may not be offered by any of those concerned.

Those who overestimate their abilities can be set right by allowing them to perform tasks which suit their real abilities. If there are too many people who possess the same skills and they threaten to score points off each other, it may be helpful to split the group up into smaller ones charged with the execution of sub-tasks. It should be possible to give very competent individuals an important role in the management of specific project phases, where they must also keep an eye on the processes. If a partnership lacks a specific type of competence, consideration should be given to hiring someone for the purpose.

In principle, it must be possible for project managers to cope with differences in ability where they can assess them adequately. It is worth recommending that a checklist be drawn up in which partners can specify the areas in which they are or are not competent. CVs can also offer a solution. If a project manager already has a good overview of competence before the first meeting, he can take them into account from the outset.

Tip 38 Participation in training for Leonardo project managers can make the job considerably easier

The National Agency organises a number of training courses to help partnerships implement and monitor their projects effectively. Participation at these training courses is recommended. All manner of advice is offered and the participants learn a variety of creative solutions to practical problems.

6.6 Reluctance to accept tasks and responsibilities

In almost any group the members will differ as regards level of activity and willingness to accept responsibility. This is likely to be the case with Leonardo partnerships too. Here, good project management can find a safe middle way and ensure that differences are not given excessive prominence. Nonetheless, it is possible that a project manager notices that one or more partners are disinclined to accept tasks and responsibilities. Because of the demotivating effect this has on the partnership, corrective action is desirable. First of all a
The project manager can point out that almost everyone take his tasks and responsibilities seriously and that he expects the same of the persons in question. The project manager can record the agreements which have been reached in writing (in minutes, for example), so that he can refer to them if necessary. Finally, he can ask those concerned in each case to provide the partnership with a verbal report on what they have achieved in their own areas during a specified period. If things go as desired, a compliment is called for. If that is not the case, he should be able to confront those concerned with problems which arise if the project manager himself does not fulfil his responsibilities.

**Tip 39**  
*Don’t let a project slip; this may result in the cancellation of funding*

The second financial instalment for a project will only be paid out once the interim report has been submitted and assessed for quality. If a partnership fails to produce its reports on time it will therefore have to wait longer for its money. And if the interim report is of inadequate quality, there is a risk that payment of the second instalment will be delayed. The situation will be the same as regards final reports. A partnership must allow for the duration of the contract. If a project has to be completed in a certain year and the final report is not submitted to the financial section of the subsidy provider well before the end of that year, there is a fair chance that the latter will be unable to make any payments in respect of the past year. The partnership’s financial claims may not then be honoured.
Fixing timetables

Before the start of each Leonardo project, even before contracts have been drafted with the partners, a satisfactory timetable must be drawn up. Ideally with as much detail as possible, without being ridiculous, it must indicate when the various subsidiary activities should start, how long they should last and when they must be completed. Depending on the nature of the activities and their mutual relationships, these can take place simultaneously, overlap or follow one after another. A good written timetable is important but not enough in itself. Good planners are not usually the people who can produce an impressive timetable but can also manage the practicalities of the timetable as a guideline. It is advisable to distribute the work as evenly as possible over an entire project phase and only to deviate from this when there is a good reason for doing so. Project managers must look out for excessively long intervals between the various activities. This can weaken the involvement of partners so that initial enthusiasm gives way to disinterest.

**Tip 40**

*Do not tie planning too closely to project meetings*

In the past there have been project proposals which at first sight looked quite impressive but placed too much emphasis on the scheduling of meetings and other occasions for contact. This approach to planning is not recommended. Timetables must be linked to project content, project objectives, project methods and the intended project results.

**Potential problems and solutions**

7.1 Non-parallel agendas
7.2 Delay in starting a project
7.3 Problems with holiday periods
7.4 Overloaded group members
7.5 Competing activities
7.6 Excessive dependence on third parties in the project

7.1 **Non-parallel agendas**

A timetable for a Leonardo project will mean that all of the partners must be active at the same time at least on subsidiary items. It is possible that some partners cannot do this because they are too busy with their other daily activities. This will be the case in particular if a partnership includes representatives of very different types of organisation. It also frequently occurs if a large number of the partners have full agendas.

In order to keep the project under control as effectively as possible, it is advisable to make the proposed timetable known at the earliest possible stage. The same applies to project meetings. It is best to arrange them when everyone is together, ideally at the first meeting. It is also advisable to produce a schedule from which it is clear what is genuinely fixed, and where there is room for manoeuvre. If at the outset of a project it is apparent that partners will be not be able to keep to the proposed timetable in its entirety, the
project manager can try to use the available leeway to accommodate the partnership. However, it is not advisable to be too flexible here, as there is a danger of losing control.

7.2 Delay in starting a project

The start of a project can be delayed if the subsidy provider is late in giving the green light, if the project contract is late in arriving or if there are problems scheduling the initial project meeting. If the problem lies with the subsidy provider, a project extension can be requested so that the duration of the project remains unchanged. If the problem lies with the partnership, then a solution must in the first instance be sought at that level. It is sensible to draw up a tighter timetable and make up for lost time in the first phase of the project.

An enthusiastic and lively kick-off meeting is in any case important. If a project is subject to delay, it will have a somewhat demoralising effect. Partners want to start but have to bide their time for a while. Any flagging which this causes can be effectively eliminated by an energetic and stimulating first meeting.

Tip 41

Maintain the momentum of the project

If as project manager you have pushed the project into the background for a couple of months and not kept things up to date, you should realise that it will be difficult to get it going again. If there is little or no movement on a project for a while, it will require energy to bring it up to speed again. In other words, a project needs constant attention. That is the best guarantee of efficient progress.

7.3 Problems with holiday periods

Projects have periods when all kinds of activities can be satisfactorily organised but also “dip” periods such as holiday months or weeks. For European training projects, July and August are definitely months when little can happen and because not everyone takes their holidays at the same time, project managers can even expect a three-month break. Obviously partners will not be on holiday all of that time but all sorts of external bodies and individuals will be difficult or impossible to contact during that period, and a project manager must work it into his timetable. Specific activities such as office work, where partners can work independently of third parties, can obviously be scheduled for the summer. Project meetings, trials, interviews, surveys and visits to specific types of body can be arranged more efficiently for other periods. Other times when there might be problems include Christmas and the New Year, Easter, Whitsun and other periods with a concentration of long weekends and public holidays.

7.4 Overloaded group members

The production of a satisfactory timetable can also be hampered by one or more overloaded partners. Everyone knows the people who have so many appointments and commitments that scheduling an activity with them is an elaborate exercise in adaptation and calibration. This is inconvenient but here too a way can be found round it. When scheduling meetings, for example, a project manager can first turn to the partners with the greatest workloads and concentrate in particular on the things which they can manage. As regards activities which run for rather longer periods and opportunities to
contact the people concerned on an ad hoc basis, the project manager should be able to suggest that overloaded partners delegate some of their work to others. They can then be points of contact whom it is easier for the partnership to reach and who can gain rapid access to their busy colleagues.

**Tip 42**

**It is not always easy to get all of the partners together at once**

If you have a partnership with a large number of participants and you want the project to run smoothly, the time factor is a considerable problem. Just try to get 20 or 30 people together for a day or two. All stops have to be pulled out. It is important to anticipate situations of this kind and leave enough room for mutual agreement.

### 7.5 Competing activities

People who take part in a Leonardo project do so in addition to the normal daily business of their jobs within their own organisations. There will always be activities which compete with the project. In educational establishments, for example, this often presents problems. Lecturers are there primarily to teach and are seldom free to be scheduled for other work.

If a project manager wishes to prevent this from leading to stagnation in the project, effective agreements are essential. He must explain to the partners what is expected of them and what that means for the time they invest. If this is done at an early stage, the partners will be able to arrange their other work to give them space. It is also important in this connection that the project is firmly embedded in each organisation (see Item for action 11). If the organisation really attaches importance to the project, it will also place the necessary facilities (time, space, resources etc.) at the disposal of its staff.

### 7.6 Excessive dependence on third parties in the project

In a Leonardo project where it is necessary to have a large number of contacts with outside players (government bodies, trade unions, company managers, policymakers, employment exchanges, other educational establishments and the like) it is more difficult to draw up a timetable than when only the partnership has to be active. The more third parties with a role, the greater the uncertainty. The timetable must take this into account. This can be done by setting aside more time when outsiders must be consulted, in particular for any wasted efforts making contact and concluding agreements. Another option is to develop escape scenarios. Here we are referring to alternatives which can be considered if a specific body cannot or will not co-operate. The project is important to the partnership but that does not mean that third parties will want to invest their own time and money in it. To achieve a minimum of uncertainty, the project manager and the partners can at the start of the project sound out the bodies concerned about whether and how they wish to serve the project. Here a good introduction to the project can be of critical importance.
Tip 43  A timetable is a guide which cannot always be adhered to at a practical level

If you draw up a timetable for a project with a duration of three years, you will find that it can differ in practice. For example, you fail to meet specific deadlines or specified activities progress much more quickly than estimated in advance. This means that you must modify the timetable on a regular basis. Flexibility is desirable.

You cannot predict everything in detail down to the day.

Make sure that the subsidy provider gets what he has been promised, and that a number of dates, such as the submission of interim and final reports, are strictly defined. Any postponement requires the consent of the National Agency or the Commission.
Arranging venues and dates for project meetings

The project proposal will identify a variety of activities and also usually the number of meetings. These are things which have to be arranged in greater detail. As meetings usually take place when it is necessary to discuss specific interim results and because detailed terms of reference and a detailed timetable have to be agreed at the start of the project, agreements should be reached at an early stage on dates and venues for project meetings. Project meetings are best scheduled for immediately before or immediately after the weekend. This enables partners to book cheaper flights and also may allow them to visit things of interest at the weekend. Obviously the venues which are recommended for project meetings should rotate between the partners so that they have a chance to act as hosts and present their own organisations.

Tip 44  Do not schedule more meetings than are necessary
In each Leonardo project at least two meetings will be held, one at the start and one on completion of the project. These will usually be augmented with a few interim meetings. In the past projects have sometimes consisted entirely of a succession of meetings and as a consequence the subsidy provider has decided to limit their number. This forces partnerships to seek alternative means of communication such as video conferencing (see Tip 55).

Tip 45  Try and keep travelling costs to a minimum
If you hold a meeting just before or after the weekend, the partners will be able to buy cheap Apex tickets. This, however, means that they have to stay at the venue for somewhat longer than is strictly necessary. A practical alternative is to schedule two meetings within the space of two or three months at the same venue. This enables you to use two Apex tickets which does not oblige you to spend Saturday night at the venue. You have a greater degree of freedom to organise meetings for the middle of the week for example.

Potential problems and solutions
8.1 Uncertainty about readiness of interim products
8.2 Inadequate opportunities for rotation
8.3 Inaccessibility of venues
8.4 Availability of suitable accommodation (hotels, conference rooms, etc.)
8.5 Competing events
8.6 Work should not be combined with social or cultural activities
8.1 Uncertainty about readiness of interim products

The meetings in Leonardo pilot projects are working meetings. To make them as effective and efficient as possible it is advisable to arrange them to coincide with interim products which partners can find out about prior to the meetings. They can then be discussed and possibly also examined for their impact on the future course of the project. Problems with scheduling a meeting may arise if it is not entirely certain when the interim product in question will be ready.

Obviously it is not possible to predict everything but a project manager must show he is in control by setting explicit deadlines for the delivery of interim products. On the basis of these deadlines he can set dates for meetings. If any of the partners fails to deliver the complete results (unforeseen circumstances can arise at any time), then what is available can then be discussed. Only exceptionally, if there is a real lack of available material, should a project manager decide to postpone a meeting.

Tip 46 Use meetings to discuss progress on the project

When preparing for meetings, project managers must note in the agenda that they will discuss all points from the development phase and assess progress. Has everything been done? How has the process developed? Are results overdue? If so, what action shall we take? The process must actually be evaluated on a continuous basis so that at least you will not find yourself after a few years faced with all sorts of things which have not progressed. Monitoring progress will also have a stimulating effect on the partners. It also allows them to keep their own work under control. Try and schedule meetings to coincide with deadlines for making decisions. In other words, only meet if it is essential.

8.2 Inadequate opportunities for rotation

Partnerships that want to rotate meetings may have little opportunity for doing so. In real terms, there could be a partner’s shortage of accommodation, a Member State is far away or there is a somewhat unresponsive organisation behind the partner concerned. It might mean that in some cases a venue must be dispensed with. Problems of this nature can usually be solved by a flexible approach. If a partner, for example, cannot accommodate meetings in his own organisation, he might be able to hire a venue in a hotel, for example, where the partners also spend the night. If the partner’s organisation is unresponsive, this may be a good reason to meet at the partner’s venue. The meeting can then also be used to involve that organisation in the project more closely.

Tip 47 Do not expect too much of meetings

It is often the case that meetings take place where many good decisions are made and where everyone gets involved. However, when the participants get back home, they start other activities and forget what has been agreed. Minutes and/or records of decisions can offer a solution. A project manager can also keep things under control more effectively by making frequent contact with partners using new media (such as e-mail and internet chat meetings) and by confirming plans. Partners always value regular contact and demonstrations of interest.
8.3 Inaccessibility of venues

From the point of efficiency, the ideal venue for a meeting attended by partners from different countries is possibly in the vicinity of an airport in "soundproof" accommodation. Many organisations which are involved in Leonardo projects, however, are not located near an airport or are located on the outskirts and/or are badly served by public transport. It can be useful to arrange a meeting in a peripheral area so that the project group gets to know the organisation for which the partner works. In that case consideration might well be given to bringing the partners together for a meeting in a more central location and for example, only visiting the organisation in question during part of the day. Transport must then be laid on. Another option is to put up the partners in the vicinity of the organisation in question and to lay on a bus for example, for trips to other locations. We cannot ignore the importance of mobility.

Tip 48
Remember that partner countries may be in different time zones

When arranging meetings etc., project managers must bear in mind that partner countries may be in different time zones. Bulgaria, for example, is two hours ahead of the Netherlands. If you agree that the partnership should organise a chat meeting at 5 p.m. on the first Monday of each month, it must be clear what this means for those concerned. At which local time should partners log on if they are to take part in the discussion?

8.4 Availability of suitable accommodation (hotels, conference rooms etc.)

The project partner organising a meeting must arrange overnight accommodation (hotel) for the other partners, lunch and dinner options (restaurants) a suitable conference room with the necessary facilities (a flipchart and overhead projector, possibly a beamer, etc.). It is also recommended that any relevant domestic travel information should be provided. The guests themselves are in the best position to arrange flights and international rail journeys. There are a number of sources which can help locate suitable accommodation, for example yellow pages, a local tourist information office, colleagues and friends. The Internet is another option. There is currently a great deal of information there about hotels, restaurants, conference rooms and public transport. It is recommended that the intended accommodation be inspected in person in advance. This will usually require little effort and can help avoid later irritations. Uncomfortable beds, unappetising food, less-than-perfect conference rooms are often remembered for a long time afterwards.

Tip 49
Try and control the costs of accommodation associated with meetings so that the group is happy with them

In principle each partner in a Leonardo project pays his own expenses. For this he will have his own budget. For the development of a group culture and common progress, however, this is an uncomfortable situation. It would be much better to create a situation in which the project manager or a financial assistant holds the purse strings for the group as a whole. One possibility is to allow the partners to pay their own travel and hotel expenses and leave the host organisation to provide for food and drink. As everyone takes turns to organise a meeting, this does not matter. The joy of this arrangement lies in its hospitable nature.
Tip 50  Let the host partner share in the organisation of a meeting
If a project meeting is to be held on a partner’s premises, it is sensible to give that partner an opportunity to produce a programme or otherwise take the reins. The project leader himself should specify an agenda for the meeting.

8.5  Competing events
When scheduling dates and venues for meetings, it makes sense to check if there are any other competing events taking place at the same time (such as national exhibitions, trade fairs, demonstrations and the like). If so, the local hotels will probably be full and it will not be easy to find conference rooms. This need not by definition mean that the project’s own meeting should be rescheduled. If there are competing events, try to arrange the project’s own business as early on as possible. In many cases, this will be impossible. If need be a decision may be taken as to whether the meeting should be held further from the hub of activity where there are still hotels available. Competing events can also be used positively in any case, for example by arranging a visit by the partnership. This can provide an opportunity to alternate work with moments of relaxation.

Tip 51  Choose a location for the meeting which benefits the project
For a significant number of Leonardo projects, it is useful and also desirable to rotate the venues for meetings between the partners so that each of them can be the host at some time. But there will conceivably be occasions when it is desirable to proceed in a more efficient manner. Many people in business are used to a lot of travelling and are not keen to spend even more time abroad. In one partnership, meetings were scheduled in the United Kingdom, in Belgium and in the Netherlands. Ultimately the final meeting was held in Brussels and the rest at Badhoevedorp near Schiphol Airport. The partners did not need to travel to the different countries. For them this was not effective, let alone efficient.

8.6  Work should not be combined with social and cultural activities
If the organisers (host partner and project manager) put together a full and comprehensive programme for a meeting and most of the partners have to travel or return to work immediately after the meeting, it is difficult to combine project work with cultural and/or social activities. In that event the host partner should be able to arrange something enjoyable in the evening after dinner, such as a tour of the town in combination with a visit to somewhere which would appeal to visitors. One possibility is to organise something for the weekend following or preceding the meeting if all of the partners are available. What constitutes an attractive option will obviously depend on the country and the area in question. A choice can be made with the help of tourist organisations or acquaintances who receive foreign visitors often and therefore have to organise something interesting.
Tip 52  **Do not just arrange for a good working atmosphere but also about adequate informal contact**

In every project it is important everyone knows each other, that partners are frank with each other and that a ‘social event’ is organised which everyone can attend. A town walk, for example, can usually be recommended which gives people an opportunity to make contact in small groups. Certainly it is important that the first meeting should not be devoted solely to formal project objectives. Much consideration should be given to these social interactive aspects.

Tip 53  **Anticipate cultural differences effectively**

People who take part in international projects must realise that there will be cultural differences between people from the Member States in question. Good international comparisons have been carried out which could be used as an aid. The National Agency in the Netherlands also organises meetings on a regular basis. However good your background knowledge is, you will only really learn to deal with those differences in practice. The disadvantage of this is that your judgement of cultural differences is often based only on the experience with one or two foreign partners.
Organising interim opportunities for contact and feedback

Leonardo projects have a lifespan of between two and three years. During that time, the partnerships will develop innovations to improve vocational training in Europe. In most projects, meetings are scheduled where all of the partners can meet physically to cooperate on interim and end products. The number of meetings will usually be limited. It is therefore of considerable importance that provision should be made for interim opportunities for contact and feedback. Only in this way can an optimum degree of mutual harmonisation be guaranteed. Some interim contact can be planned in advance and tied precisely to the points in time when interim products must be delivered. Agreement will be made as to who makes contact with whom and when, by what means (post, telephone, fax, Internet etc.) and the purpose of the contact, for example to assess each other’s work, discuss sticking points etc. Project partners must also be given an opportunity to communicate with each other on an ad hoc basis. To this end they must have a list compiled by the project manager with names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses of all of the project partners.

Tip 54

Newsletters in printed form can have a supporting role

A partnership can produce a newsletter for the Leonardo project to keep everyone, including third parties, informed about developments. This newsletter can contain, amongst other things, interviews and an introduction to the organisations concerned. A newsletter is also an excellent means of dissemination.

Potential problems and solutions

9.1 Partners are physically remote from each other
9.2 Partners are reluctant to show each other their provisional findings
9.3 Feedback loops are too time-consuming
9.4 Supervision of who does what deteriorates
9.5 Feedback from one partner may be at odds with feedback from another
9.6 Some feedback can be irritating

9.1 Partners are physically remote from each other

One problem for international project groups which carry out development work is that they are physically isolated from each other. There are usually only a few face-to-face meetings. Communication is always most effective when people meet each other. Partners must therefore look for alternatives: videoconferences, for example, for interim verbal and visual contact. Another option is the creation of a project website which partners can use for rapid and relatively simple communication. The advantage of a website is that in principle all of the partners can see exchanges of messages and keep abreast of situations in the project. Lastly we would draw attention to the merits of the telephone
conversation which is often more penetrating and more interactive than contact by fax, post or e-mail. Regardless of the purpose of the interaction the partners will choose the most suitable medium.

Tip 55 Videoconferences can bring people together on a friendly basis

An increasing number of partnerships are organising videoconferences. They offer the advantage that project partners can communicate with each other verbally and visually. They also provide adequate interaction and savings on travel and subsistence expenses. Technical expertise is necessary to use this resource.

9.2 Partners are reluctant to show each other their provisional findings

One potential obstacle to joint development work and the attendant comments on each other's products is the way in which partners are sometimes reluctant to reveal half-finished products. Here there could be scope for a lot of criticism while the partners concerned know that more work is required and that various improvements are possible. A project manager must be alert to this. He can act as a facilitator by expressly emphasising that what is important is the joint and constructive development of a new product, by preventing feedback from creating an obstacle, and repeatedly stressing the status of interim products. Interim products must also be treated in confidence. They are not intended for the general public. Critical in this respect is the atmosphere within the partnership. This must be based on mutual trust and support.

9.3 Feedback loops are too time-consuming

Constructive feedback on each other's products is essential if everyone's opinion is to be heard and a broad basis created for the final result. However, feedback loops take up time and if they take too long they get in the way of further development. It is therefore advisable to monitor and control activities in this respect. This is relatively simple to organise. The partnership can agree, for example, that if a partner submits documents for comment, any comments must be provided within two weeks. In the absence of any response the originators of the documents can simply follow the established route. A project manager can also agree with the partners whether they provide feedback verbally or in writing and how they will do it. If the partners are clear about the way in which they are expected to provide feedback, they will do so more promptly and more efficiently.

Tip 56 Treat e-mail in the same way as conventional post

In Leonardo projects there has been a distinct increase in e-mail traffic. It is much easier to send an e-mail than a letter and you can use a list server to get in touch with several people at once. For international traffic certainly e-mail is a prime medium of communication. Treat e-mail in the same way as conventional post and print out important reports. They must be included in your project documentation. Ensure that project partners deal with e-mail in the same way on the project.
9.4 Supervision of who does what deteriorates

If partners consult each other, make agreements and/or provide feedback between meetings there is a danger that things will happen unknown to other people. Obviously not everyone needs to keep abreast of all the ins and outs of every sub-group all the time, but at least those elements must be known which might influence the work of others. To prevent important matters played out between partners from being concealed, a project manager can ask all of the partners to keep him informed of what is happening in the project. Then he can decide if other partners need to be briefed. The most complete approach is to use the Internet (website or e-mail) to notify partners on a regular basis of any interim contacts and their results. This directs attention to the project and has a stimulating effect.

Tip 57

Websites can also have a facilitating effect

There are various Leonardo projects for which the partners have developed a website. A site is not only suitable for effective mutual communications but also for the presentation of project initiatives to third parties.

9.5 Feedback from one partner may be at odds with feedback from another

People who comment on draft products do so on the basis of their own ideas and beliefs. Feedback says as much about its originator as about the product which is being commented on. Because there are considerable differences between each of us, it is obviously possible that one partner may venture an opinion which is at odds with the opinion of another partner. This is awkward for the recipients of feedback. They can exploit differences to look at the matter critically again from the point of view of their critics and then make a decision. They can also try to consult other partners for their own points of view. This certainly seems to be the best approach if the decisions which are taken on the basis of the feedback affect the partnership as a whole. Every partner will be aware that it is almost impossible to create a product which everyone will judge in the same way. There will always be differences of opinion.

9.6 Some feedback can be irritating

For some it is not that easy to submit project results for judgement by others. In a sense, everyone puts themselves in a vulnerable position but obviously does not want to be hurt. Not everyone is so tactful in the role of critic. Sometimes the criticism can only lead to irritation. This can seriously interfere with co-operative processes. In this area project managers can be very important to a partnership by drawing up a number of rules for providing feedback. They can themselves set a good example and provide constructive feedback on the partnership’s products and interim products. They can emphasise the importance of proposed improvements, point out to critics that their opinion is relative and not absolute, and warn against nit-picking and abuse. Loss of face by a partner must also be avoided. If these measures fail to achieve the desired effect, project managers must take corrective action and speak to those concerned about their conduct on feedback. They might even provide a brief training course in feedback themselves.
Chat meetings and discussion forums are on the increase

Discussion forums are a sort of post-box on the Internet where you leave reports to which others can react. They are therefore ideal for generating ideas and providing feedback. Chat meetings, during which everyone sits at a computer in his own place of work, can be organised on a regular basis, once a month for example. They are ideal for getting everyone together. Obviously chat meetings cannot really compete with physical presence but they supplement them adequately. Electronic meetings take some getting used to and require a certain amount of discipline.
Fixing deadlines for interim and final results

It can be very stimulating to work in a group but it will only have a successful conclusion if there is effective co-ordination and everyone completes his work to the required standard within the period specified. Project managers should be inclined to approach their work with some flexibility, but here practice teaches us that a flexible attitude towards the partnership will often put the project manager himself on the spot. If interim results are late in arriving, the project co-ordinator will usually have to go flat out to meet contractual project commitments with limited time. It is also possible that planned discussion meetings collapse or yield incomplete results in the absence of the appropriate documents. Hence the advice to determine explicit deadlines for interim and final results and to convince the partnership of the need to keep to agreements. The advantages of this strict approach are so important that no-one should try to get round them.

Tip 59

For some partners supervision means that they are being taken seriously, while other partners think it is not really necessary

There are distinct differences in attitude towards the supervision of their activities by project managers between partners in Northern Europe and Southern Europe. Dutch project managers do not usually exercise very strict control. They expect that all of the partners will simply do their work. Some partners feel offended by this approach. They feel that the project manager is not taking them seriously if they are not being encouraged and supervised. Other partners dislike being kept on their toes. They feel they are adult enough to regulate their own work.

Tip 60

Continuous monitoring of progress will bear fruit when things have to be wound up

At the end of a project everything often happens at once. Financial accounts must be prepared. The final report must be attended to. Partners’ contributions must be collected and commented upon. The final products must see the light of day. Sometimes it will also be necessary (to arrange) for contributions to be translated. Things can go wrong in any of these stages. Hence the considerable importance of continuous monitoring and, if necessary, adjustment of project progress. Every partner must perform his work in accordance with quality requirements.

Potential problems and solutions

10.1 Personnel changes in the partnership
10.2 Desirability of re-organising working procedure
10.3 Unrealistic project milestones
10.4 Sickness or withdrawal of partners concerned
10.5 Delays in work which has been contracted out
10.6 Political agenda priorities may affect issues
10.1 Personnel changes in the partnership

The development of innovation in vocational training is a strongly personnel-related process. Whether results are achieved and what their product looks like depends on the quality of the participants. Every project is also always a learning process from which the participants are enriched. One problem which every project manager must anticipate is that of personnel changes in the partnership’s complement which are sometimes unavoidable. Changes in personnel are often by definition difficult. Newcomers must settle in completely and the group must adapt to the changed situation. Often a change in personnel in the partnership will involve some delay in the project. To avoid the negative impact that this can have, a project manager can initially stress in the project group how important it is that the partnership should remain intact. The project manager can then ask the partner organisations if they can provide cover in their organisation by nominating a suitable person as a replacement. If that person is kept abreast of the course the project takes, there will be less disruption when the project partner in question drops out. Finally it is worth recommending that in the event of a personnel change the schedule of activities and the timetable are looked at closely again to see whether the proposed deadlines can be maintained or need to be deferred.

**Tip 61** Inform the subsidy provider of a change in the partnership

A change in the partnership can take two forms. One or more partner organisations leaves and is not replaced. Or one or more partner organisations leave the project and others take their place. In both cases, the subsidy provider must be informed and agree with the financial and organisational consequences.

10.2 Desirability of re-organising working procedure

Planning is looking ahead and formulating how one intends to operate in practice. Project managers do their best to keep a check on things and to mark practical routes. But during the course of a project it may happen that errors in evaluation have been made and it is necessary to rearrange the working procedure. In that event, the project manager must think carefully about the consequences. Questions which he must then ask include: what does the change imply for the project objectives, will it be possible to maintain those objectives or will they require any adjustment? Will the amended working procedure be more time-consuming, can the intended results be delivered on schedule, is the same true of the interim results and what is the implication for the distribution of tasks between the partners? If the answers to these questions are clear they must also be made known to the group to give all of the partners an opportunity to operate in a way which is target-orientated. If the proposed change exceeds the limits specified in the contract, the consent of the National Agency or the Commission must be sought in advance.

**Tip 62** Be careful. Once the contract has expired, you cannot claim any more expenses

Once a Leonardo project has expired, the partnership cannot declare any more expenses. Then the project must be completed by means of extra investment. For the project manager and the project partners it is therefore an advantage if all activities are carried out within the specified period.
10.3 Project milestones are unrealistic

A partnership which embarks on a course of development consisting of a number of subsidiary stages may discover en route that certain stages are impracticable. This may be related to the absence of co-operation on the part of third parties, with a lack of basic material and/or inadequate specific expertise within the group. The first question which a project manager must then ask is: are the prospective measures essential to the achievement of the project objective or can that objective be realised without those measures? If they really are necessary, the project manager must concentrate on potential alternatives: approaching other third parties, seeking alternative sources of information and/or farming out some of the work. In his quest for alternatives, the project manager may solicit the support of the partners. They may be able, in a brainstorming session, for example, to provide many more ideas. In many cases it will be apparent that the perceived obstacle is not as serious as was first thought.

Tip 63 Not everyone is in a position to produce publication standard texts

If you automatically assume that all the partners are in a position to produce adequate texts you may have problems. It is possible that partnerships will have to use a word processor at the end of the day to remove all kinds of textual defects. Another related problem here is that partners will often have to deliver a product in a language other than their mother tongue. Project managers should actually assess partners’ writing skills in advance so that if necessary action can be taken at an early stage, to avoid the need for all kinds of extra activities at the end of the project.

10.4 Sickness or withdrawal of partners concerned

To achieve objectives within a defined timeframe, the necessary efforts must be made and partners must be in a position to work on the project on a steady and regular basis. There may be a snag if partners are sick or withdraw for other reasons. This can happen in any project group. Solutions to this problem can be sought on two fronts: via the organisations where the partners work and within the project group itself. Ideally every partner would have a colleague in his own organisation who can replace him if necessary (see 10.1). This is certainly also important for the project manager himself. If he withdraws and there is no alternative available, the situation will be quite precarious. The project manager’s own organisation must therefore also have a potential replacement in reserve, certainly to provide for the eventuality that the project manager drops out for a long time or permanently. If only a short absence is in prospect, the project group will be able to arrange a replacement itself.

Tip 64 Be on the safe side with your internal project deadlines

A good way to avoid exceeding the duration of the project is to introduce two sorts of deadline: one for external partners and an internal deadline with a fixed period of time in between. In this way you will create a safe margin and be able almost always to pick up any small infringements of deadlines.
10.5 Delays in work which has been contracted out

If a project group contracts out some of its work to a third party, it will run the risk of delay in its own activities. There will be a particular risk if the work which is to be contracted out is closely associated with what the partners are expected to do themselves. Effective rules must be imposed in this respect. First of all, the project manager must include enough time in his timetable for the work which is to be contracted out so that any delay here does not bring the partnership’s work to a halt. He must then conclude strict agreements with the sub-contractor. He must be subject to a contractual commitment to perform his work in a professional manner within the agreed time. Deadlines are therefore also of critical importance to third parties who provide their commercial services.

Tip 65

As project manager start by collecting partners’ contributions on time

In order to comply with deadlines, a project manager who is responsible for the project as a whole must encourage his partners to make their contributions available at the earliest opportunity. He might also emphasise that if a partner is late in making a submission this will have financial consequences. The project manager must in any case ensure that he has sufficient room for the final activities which he himself has to carry out. If a partnership also needs an extension, this must be made clear in good time. Extensions are usually only possible to a limited extent.

Tip 66

Allow for delays in the preparation of products for printing

The production and duplication of your end products (handbooks, reports, books and the like) often require more time than initial estimates suggest. Many partnerships have had problems here. If a draft version of a product is produced, this does not mean that it is ready. The final amendments and finishing touches often take a considerable amount of time. A designer will also usually have all kinds of suggestions. This often means an extra ‘loop’ in the process.

10.6 Political agenda priorities may affect issues

A Leonardo project which has a lifetime of a few years may meet with considerable changes during this time. It is possible that it may suddenly be given a boost if the central issue acquires high priority politically. It is also possible that an issue which was originally of great interest recedes more and more into the background. If this threatens to happen, the project group will have a more difficult task. It will then have to try and dig in its heels, for example by pointing to the abiding relevance of the subject to vocational training in practice or by linking a project issue to aspects which do attract a lot of political attention. It may also be necessary to adjust some project activities, say for example that a project group wants to organise a large-scale conference which was arranged at a time when the issue could be regarded as a ‘hot item’. If this subsequently ceases to be the case, the project group can consider whether to continue working on a reduced scale.

One must always have an eye open for the wider context in which one works. In this way a partnership can guard itself against any wrong decisions.
Organisational integration of project by all concerned

A Leonardo project can only make a contribution to the improvement of European vocational training if it is not merely an initiative by a small core group of enthusiasts but is also firmly integrated within its institutions. All of the members of a partnership take part in a project as representatives of an organisation. Project managers and the members of a partnership can simplify a project enormously if they all work to develop a good base within their own organisations with colleagues and management. If a Leonardo project has a (relatively) high priority in the partner organisations involved, there is a considerable chance that they will be able to create suitable conditions for the development work. This includes releasing manpower, making resources available, etc. It is also very useful for the dissemination of the results of a project if the organisation represented provides the necessary support. The best way of developing a good base is to involve colleagues and management in (sub-divisions of) the project from the start, ideally in an active role. If this is not possible, the least one can do is for regular consultation on the project’s progress with key players in one’s own organisation.

Tip 67  Effective organisational integration often only comes about at a later stage
For many organisations, a Leonardo project is still a novelty. One or two enthusiasts take the initiative and start on the development work. The organisation must get used to the fact. Contributing to an international project is also a learning process for the organisation the effects of which will only become visible with the passage of time. It is usually years before an organisation has a good solid policy plan concerning internationalisation within which a Leonardo project can gain a place on a regular basis.

Potential problems and solutions
11.1 Partners are active on the margins of their organisation
11.2 The organisation’s management is not sufficiently persuaded of the need for the project
11.3 Colleagues have a problem if they are not involved in the project
11.4 Only one person is released for project work
11.5 The project goes in a different direction from what was originally planned
11.6 There is a radical change in the organisation itself and it changes course
11.1 Partners are active on the margins of their organisation

The effective organisational integration of a project is relatively easy to achieve if the partners can be regarded as key players in their own context. In the case of people who are more on the margins of their organisations, this can present problems. Those people should pay extra attention to this aspect. They can develop a plan to create a base for the Leonardo project within their own organisation. They can, for example, give a presentation to their own management on the significance of the project and its advantages for the organisation. They can also form a small project group around the Leonardo initiative with a few central members. They may also be able to activate their own organisation by trying out the products developed. Be that as it may, in the case of partners who work on the margin it is absolutely essential to make provision for an increase in involvement. Otherwise it will only be a personal matter and the project will not have the least impact at an institutional level.

Tip 68 Beware of project hobbyism

If you act as project manager, and this applies to all the parties concerned, you must ensure that the project is not solely considered the initiative of a single individual. The danger of inadequate organisational integration has turned out to be a very real one in practice. In the past this has led to problems and projects themselves have collapsed completely. A co-ordinator who has been energetic in setting up a project, for example, gets another job and no-one in his organisation wants to take it over. In that case it is much better to charge someone else in the partnership with the task of co-ordination.

11.2 The organisation’s management is not sufficiently persuaded of the need for the project

One problem in the creation of an effective base may be that the management of an organisation which is involved in a Leonardo project is not convinced of its need. If this situation arises, the partnership must take action. It can emphasise the project’s merits but it may be more effective first to examine the reasons for the management’s attitude. Where exactly do their doubts lie? What is the nature of those doubts? Are they real? Are the same doubts present in the other organisations involved? If not, why not? If as a result of the answers to these questions it is clear why management is not really convinced of the need for a project, thought can be given to a suitable line to take. The most effective is to discuss and refute the doubts, emphasising what the organisation stands to gain by supporting the project effectively. It might even be agreed that certain products of the project will first be demonstrated to that organisation with the most unresponsive attitude. People will usually be more enthusiastic about a tangible product than about a somewhat abstract idea.

Tip 69 At management level too the personal interests of managers can dominate

Within an educational establishment internationalisation may be incorporated in policy at a formal level, but as a result of the interest of a single individual at managerial level. If that manager is replaced by another, internationalisation may well retain its place in policy but the chance that it will lose its significance is not hypothetical. At present there are only a few organisations which say that they want to identify themselves with internationalisation and which want to stick to this regardless of the people at the top.
11.3 Colleagues have a problem if they are not involved in the project

Adequate integration of a Leonardo project in one’s own organisation can be obstructed by colleagues who have a problem with someone else representing their organisation and not them. In other words, envy can stand in the way of a good base. This can be countered by involving others from the organisation in some areas. This can be arranged effectively during the rotating meetings, for example. The organisation of a meeting for an international group, if you intend to do it properly, is not an easy matter. For many people it is a pleasant change and a welcome addition to normal activities they have to carry out. If a partner activates those of his colleagues who do not like standing in the wings for parts of the meeting to be organised, there is a good chance that they will be able to convert opposing forces into complementary ones. The project manager probably has everything under control but need not cope with the task entirely on his own. The chance of a satisfactory base increases if others can also play an active part.

Tip 70 In one’s own organisation it is possible that feelings of envy will be directed at the project

In the project manager’s own organisation and those of the partners, there is often a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Leonardo projects. On the one hand, you have to deal with a sort of envy that you are working on an enjoyable project and repeatedly go on interesting journeys. On the other hand, however, there is often a lack of real will to take control oneself. Since the project will often have come into being as the result of a passion for an issue, some project managers feel more at home in the project group than in the parent organisation. It is not always easy to reconcile these two spheres.

11.4 Only one person is released for project work

In some projects certain organisations are represented by more than one person. This is usually favourable to the integration of a project in their own organisations. However, sometimes organisations will only release a single person full or part-time for a project. For that individual it is then harder to acquire a broad base of support. Nonetheless, supporting action is also possible here. A partner can involve his colleagues and/or keep them abreast of what is happening at an informal level. He can also carry out some project activities with colleagues outside normal working hours. Another option is to swap tasks with specified colleagues so that they can work on the project without sacrificing their free time.

Generally speaking it is true to say that the more closely a project is linked to a single individual or small group, the smaller the base at the level of the organisation as a whole. Effective expansion requires that others should be allowed to play a part. However limited that role might be, it will always produce a sense of involvement.

Tip 71 The delegation of tasks is an agreeable way to involve an organisation in a project

The effective integration of a project is not an easy thing to achieve if the project manager takes every task upon himself. Delegation is advisable. For example, you can entrust the financial side of project management to a colleague. You can also transfer other subsidiary tasks, ideally right across the organisation, from top to bottom. In this way you will create a much greater sense of involvement.
\section*{11.5 The project goes in a different direction from what was originally planned}

In the course of time, a project for which a reasonable base has been created in an organisation may take a different direction than that which was originally planned as the result of external circumstances. This may go hand in hand with deterioration in the base. For example, an organisation may support a given idea but not, or not automatically, a given variant of it. A project manager must be prepared for this. Any change in a project which has implications for the organisations concerned must be discussed in those organisations. The reasons for the changes must be identified, along with their nature and implications. If a change in a project is more of an advantage than a disadvantage to the organisation, it will gain ready acceptance. If the opposite is the case, then in order to create a base more emphasis must be laid on the reasons why the original approach was impracticable. Only in the second instance is it possible to look in detail at objectives which can still be achieved.

\section*{11.6 There is a radical change in the organisation itself and it changes course}

A project which is effectively integrated in the organisations involved may end up in a less favourable situation if one of those organisations adopts a different course. There should be agreement that if a change of this kind arises, the partnership is informed. The project group can then consider the question of how best to deal with the change. In the first instance, the project manager can ask the partner in question himself for suggestions as to which course of action to take. The other partners can then submit ideas. An approach can then be chosen on condition that the partner in question regards it as practicable in his own context. A change in direction need not always complicate an effective basis. There are situations in which it is conceivable that it would have a beneficial rather than an adverse impact on a project.

\begin{center}Tip 72\end{center}

\textbf{Projects designed to relieve bottlenecks increase commitment}

If an institution – such as a school – has no bottlenecks but still joins a project, it will have no immediate interest in it. In this regard the preliminary phase of the project application is essential. There must be a distinct question or recognisable problem, which is not perceived just by the project leader, but by all parties concerned. Both the partnership and all of the organisations behind it will have an interest in the answers provided or the solutions which are developed. There will then seldom be any lack of effective organisational integration.
Accentuating the need and planning for evaluation: a strategy for dissemination

The European Commission expects partnerships which have initiated a Leonardo project to take responsibility for evaluating their own projects and for the effective dissemination of their project results before the contract expires. Project managers must take two aspects into account, not only as the project draws to a close but right from the start. In doing so they can make use of the handbook of Dissemination Strategies which can be obtained via the National Agency. In the near future they will also be able to make use of the Handbook of Evaluation Strategies which will likewise be available from the National Agency.

It is not only to the subsidy provider that evaluation and dissemination are of interest. The partnership itself can also benefit from them considerably. Continuous evaluation of one’s own activity offers an effective guarantee that the project is on the right track. It also offers excellent possibilities for effecting improvements in one’s own performance. Effective dissemination of results offers the partnership and the organisations to which the partners belong an excellent opportunity to give themselves an external profile.

Evaluation and dissemination can be effectively tackled by charging one or more people with these tasks and by agreeing that these two points of interest will be included in the agenda for project meetings.

Nor need evaluation and dissemination limit themselves to the duration of the contract. Partners and target groups will still be able benefit from activities of this kind after the contract has expired.

Tip 73

**Evaluation can also be of interest in the long term**

For many partnerships, the content of the project is of critical importance. It is advisable not to restrict evaluation to the period immediately following the conclusion of the project but to examine what has been done with the results of the initiative after a period of two or three years and what remains of the partnership. Do the contracts still exist? Has the innovation really been put into practice? Has this happened on a small scale? Or is there any question of a broader impact?

**Potential problems and solutions**

12.1 Those concerned believe that evaluation and dissemination are only important at the end of the project
12.2 The end product is not yet in prospect
12.3 The partnership does not possess the necessary competencies
12.4 The partnership is overcritical or is reluctant to voice their own opinion
12.5 Dissemination is interpreted in too narrow a way
12.6 The partnership wants to keep the product to itself and not let others benefit from it
12.1 Those concerned believe that evaluation and dissemination are only important at the end of the project

As at the start of a project everything has to be arranged at once, partnerships may be inclined to postpone evaluation and dissemination indefinitely. Dissemination as the product must be ready before any thought need be given to it and evaluation because it is only really necessary at the time when feedback on the project has to be given to the Commission. The project manager must change the partners’ perspectives in this regard. Dissemination must be initiated at the very start of a project. To that end, the partnership must realise that certain target groups will be much more inclined to make use of the end products if they are involved in the project from an early stage than if they are presented with a fait accompli at the end. It is also more effective to carry out evaluation at the start since it is well-nigh impossible to assess the route taken with an adequate degree of accuracy after a period of two or three years. This requires a very good memory. A second reason to carry out evaluation from an early stage is that it is not only of interest to the subsidy provider but also to the partnership itself. Critical evaluation is an essential aid to controlling and improving a project’s work on a continuous basis.

Tip 74 The world is not always ready for project products

A project group may be concerned with the adequate integration of its initiatives but it must realise that not everything is possible. It may be that the world is not ready for them. It is also possible that the project is far ahead of its time and that perhaps the innovation will be implemented after a period of five or ten years. The reverse may also be true. The group may have spent three years developing an idea but meanwhile an effective solution to the problem has already been devised and introduced during that time.

12.2 An end product is not yet in prospect

Leonardo partnerships can encounter problems with evaluation and dissemination because they lack understanding about the end product. It is essential that the project group should recognise that evaluation is not solely a final judgement on the end product but also an assessment of the interim products and of the processes which the partnership negotiates. The working procedures must therefore also be evaluated. In the case of dissemination, the partners must also think beyond the end product. Dissemination plays a significant part in the work of development itself. Provisional results, for example, may be submitted for assessment to prospective target groups for review. In this way these target groups can help guide development work in a certain direction and the partnership can guard against overlooking important points of view and against the result being ultimately of no use. If a partnership wishes to develop a product for a target group and that target group is not given an opportunity to have its say, there is a real chance that the product will not meet needs. Development should not be carried out solely for a target group but sometimes even by a target group. This will generally produce the best results.

Tip 75 The provider of the subsidy will expect partnerships to evaluate and disseminate

Leonardo project groups are committed to evaluating their projects and the progress of their projects. They must also give serious thought to a wider dissemination of the results of their projects. If this is not done, the subsidy provider may impose sanctions on the partnership.
12.3 **The partnership does not possess the necessary competencies**

Evaluation on a sound scientific basis is a separate subject. Effective dissemination similarly requires specific expertise. A Leonardo partnership may conclude that it is inadequately equipped in either or both of these areas. The partnership can then decide to solve the problem by engaging outside experts. But if there are obstacles to this, such as insufficient funds, for example, a project manager can recruit a few people from the project group who have an interest in evaluation and dissemination. These people can then immerse themselves in the handbooks which the National Agency has produced on both dissemination and evaluation. With the information and practical tips they offer, the persons in question should be in a position to evaluate a project adequately and plot a strategy which gives the results of the project maximum dissemination to the relevant target groups. It is obviously important that those individuals keep the partnership as a whole informed of their ideas and activities on a regular basis, keeping an inventory of what the various project partners have done in this respect.

**Tip 76** Take a critical look at who does the disseminating: do you do it yourself or do you delegate it to others?

Sometimes it is better to delegate the task of dissemination to others. This is particularly advisable if dissemination involves putting the finished product on the market. This will require commercial expertise. If dissemination is seen, at the very least, as the maximum involvement of the interested parties in the development work, it is typically a task for the partnership itself. It must not be farmed out because it is too closely associated with the project work itself.

12.4 **The partnership is excessively critical or is reluctant to hear the opinions of others**

One problem that a partnership might encounter during project evaluation is that the evaluators are much too critical. Nothing complies with the standards and overall there is lot to find fault with. That this is not really encouraging must be obvious. If this happens, the project manager must take corrective action. He must point out to the evaluators that their task involves not only exposing the shortcomings but also stressing the good points. This offers the best guarantee of improvements. Solely negative feedback has a demotivating effect. It is also possible that evaluators are not critical enough, for example because they do not want to spoil the atmosphere. This does not benefit a partnership in the long run. If things happen in a project which are not right, they must be criticised. The primary purpose of such criticism is not to confront one or more of the partners with their shortcomings (although they might be pointed out), but to prevent similar problems in future. Ultimately it is a matter of implementing a project as well as possible and not casting this or that person in a bad light.

**Tip 77** Avoid product-orientation which is too one-sided

It is not only the project product which is important but also the route to it, especially if European projects are involved. In the Netherlands this is often lost sight of because product-orientation in this country is very strong. For that reason, it is good to monitor a project meticulously from the start and in each case to write up how it progresses. There is often much to learn from the experience gained.
Dissemination is interpreted in too narrow a way

Dissemination is the circulation of project results towards potential target groups. This can be done in all sorts of ways: by means of conferences, by making books available, via the Internet, via Leonardo product fairs etc. At present a partnership should be able to concentrate in particular on as many people and organisations as possible. But this does not automatically mean that the dissemination will then be in order. Besides a quantitative dimension, dissemination also has a distinctly qualitative dimension. It is not only important that as many people and organisations as possible know what a Leonardo partnership has achieved, it is of equal importance that the target groups ultimately allow the project results to work their way through to their business. Qualitatively speaking there must therefore be an obvious impact. It is not enough to circulate the results of a project. Only if it has a practical impact on vocational training can dissemination be regarded as successful. Sometimes this can mean that the partnership disseminates on a small rather than a large scale, thus putting the emphasis on intensity and depth.

Not only products but also ideas can be disseminated

If the partnership develops something, it is important that not only the project group and its colleagues should benefit from it. You must ensure that your partners also disseminate the product more widely in their region. In doing so, the product must not be judged in terms of the number of books sold. It is much more important that the partnership’s ideas should be implemented in the industry, the organisation and/or the field of action at which the activities are aimed.

The partnership wants to keep the product to itself and not let others benefit from it as well

If after all the effort made a Leonardo project group has produced an attractive product, the partners will regard that product as its own. Some partners and partnerships are inclined to use the products to which they have “given birth” solely for their own purposes. This is contrary to the intentions of the Leonardo programme which provides subsidies for developments that deliver results for a wider group than the partnership alone. The project manager must point this out. A partnership develops a product using Community money which must support the general interest. The project manager should also stress the advantages of effective dissemination and valuation. They do not just enable others to benefit from the experience gained during the project. The partnership can also derive a positive image from dissemination and evaluation as well as acquiring useful knowledge of its products’ limitations: where can they be exploited effectively and where not?

Dissemination pays

It is nice for Leonardo partnerships to know that the products which they have produced are being used. This shows that they have created something from which the target group can benefit.
Feedback to the National Agency and/or the European Commission

In every Leonardo project, the partnership is contractually obliged to provide an account of progress on content and financial expenditure in an interim and a final report. This is an important task for the project manager. For this purpose, he requires data from the partners which they must provide in given formats. Here it is desirable that consideration should be given to this at an early stage to prevent partners arranging and presenting the data in the wrong way.

Nor would it do any harm if the partnership tried in the meantime to involve the National Agency and/or the Commission in the project. This can contribute to their own activities reaching a wider public. The subsidy provider may make suggestions for the dissemination of the innovations which have been produced and thereby contribute to their optimum impact.

Tip 80
Ensure that your financial reporting is in good order

Up to now the Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Culture has exercised relatively strict control over a project’s financial reporting. In this context, project content was of a somewhat subordinate interest. Leonardo 2 attaches more importance to the assessment of the intrinsic results. This does not mean that financial control will be relaxed, only that financial reporting is less complicated than it was in Leonardo 1. For project managers it is thus still important that the financial reports submitted should be as accurate as possible in accordance with the published guidelines particularly as an ‘audit’ may take place.

Potential problems and solutions

13.1 The National Agency and/or the Commission do not see things from the same perspective as the partnership
13.2 The results are disappointing
13.3 The project takes a different course from prior expectations
13.4 The project has been subject to delay
13.5 The basis for the project is restricted
13.6 Not knowing who best to approach

13.1 The National Agency and/or the Commission do not see things from the same perspective as the partnership

The issues which a Leonardo project addresses will be of equal, if not more interest to the partners than to the project managers. Those issues will be closely associated with their regular work and geared to any innovations. This does not automatically mean that the National Agency and/or the Commission will look at and assess the project and its results from the same perspective. The project manager must take this into account when
providing feedback. He must clearly explain the problems for which the project wants to provide a solution, the consequences of that problem and the way in which the project can contribute to a changed and more desirable situation. The partnership can also try to persuade its target groups(s) of the project’s importance to them. If a target group regards the project as something of considerable importance, the subsidy provider may develop a more positive attitude. This, at any rate, is also achieved by providing a good service to target groups.

Tip 81  
**Keep the National Agency informed about what you are working on**  
In the context of external reporting, a project partnership should keep the National Agency informed of developments on a regular basis. Send in your bulletins, products, part-products and reports, for example. You can also invite the NA to project meetings. For final meetings this is certainly worth the effort. The NA will often set a day aside for this.

### 13.2 The results are disappointing

If a partnership can show promising results the provision of feedback to the provider of the subsidy will be a pleasant task. The subsidy providers like hearing positive reports. However, if the results are disappointing, the urge to be frank will often be much reduced. What is often forgotten in this context is the importance of the learning experience and the lessons which can be drawn from these disappointing results, not only for the partnership itself but also for others. A partnership can conduct itself in two ways towards the subsidy provider. It can stress the positive elements in the results, for example if the subsidy provider has not such high hopes for the project as the partnership itself. The partnership can also evaluate and critically analyse the reasons why the results are poorer than expected: what obstacles did it encounter? Why could it not circumvent them? What does this imply for future activity? What experience has been gained of processes? Can that experience be transferred to other partnerships as useful information for potential pitfalls? In his feedback to the subsidy provider, the project manager should be able to stress that there is much to be learnt even from less successful experiences.

Tip 82  
**Remember that the end product will be assessed by independent external experts**  
Partnerships which have enjoyed working together and believe that they have created a product of good quality must remember that others, including the provider of the subsidy, may have a different perspective and a different attitude to the merits of their product. It cannot be ruled out that the subsidy provider or the independent judges may make critical comments on the basis of criteria external to the project, whose effect may be discouraging. This is always possible if partnerships make their products public and it is wise to be prepared for it in some way. The project’s objectives should be clearly identified in every case.

### 13.3 The project takes a different course from prior expectations

A project which has been accepted has been given a green light on the basis of the project proposal in which an approach to the project is elaborated. If that approach has to be adapted, this will require the consent of the subsidy provider. In practice a project lasting a few years which is geared to innovation and is on a development path which has
not yet been defined, may take a different course to what the partnership anticipated. The provider of a subsidy will be inclined to expect that the project will unfold as described in the schedule. If there are differences between the planned activities and those which are actually implemented, there may be questions. To prevent this happening, project managers must consult the subsidy provider if there is any departure from the path planned. They must indicate why the original plans are not practicable, the options which are available and what in their own eyes is the best alternative. Only when the subsidy provider consents to the proposed changes can a partnership continue its development work along those lines.

**Tip 83**

*Bear in mind that carrying out a Leonardo project involves a lot of managerial work*

It is not a simple matter to establish international collaboration on projects for innovation in vocational training. Such projects are often difficult and complex. Many people are deceived by this. For project managers in particular this means that they must devote a lot of time to project management. This should not be underestimated.

### 13.4 The project has been subject to delay

Problems with feedback may arise if a project is subject to delay. If this happens in a period during which the submission of interim and final reports is not required and the delay can probably be made up, the provider of the subsidy need not be informed. This is not the case with delays which cannot be eliminated or if they result in the late submission of regular reports to the provider. The project manager must then raise the problem with the subsidy provider and request a postponement to another (specific) date. If the arguments for the requested postponement are reasonable, the subsidy provider will often be prepared to agree to a postponement within specific limits. A partnership cannot have everything under control all of the time. If a partnership has been subject to a delay and it is their own fault, for example because individual partners fail to comply with their contractual commitments, a project manager would be advised not to appeal to the subsidy provider. In that event the problem must be resolved within the partnership.

### 13.5 The base for the project is restricted

A Leonardo partnership may itself be extremely enthusiastic about all of the products it produces. However, if the same point of view is not shared by others, target groups in particular, they will not attract attention. The partnership should therefore continuously give consideration to the creation of an effective base. Involve the various target groups at as early a stage in the initiatives as possible. Give them the opportunity to guide the project in a slightly different direction. Explain clearly what the project can signify for the solution to the problem which it is aimed at. If the partnership can show the subsidy provider that the project possesses a considerable degree of relevance for a broad section of society, it can expect a positive response. But if this fails, there is a danger that the initiatives which have been started will peter out.
**Tip 84**  
*Critical comments by the subsidy provider can be very helpful*

If a partnership decides to make contact with the National Agency or the Commission about specific matters, it is advisable to use that contact to discover what they themselves think of the project. In the past it has transpired that partnerships have been able to learn a lot from this. Pointed questions and critical opinions make it clear what the provider of a subsidy expects of a partnership. The more clarity there is about the matter, the easier it is to make an impression.

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**13.6 Not knowing who best to approach**

If a project leader wishes to inform the provider of a subsidy or the National Agency of progress in the project, it is possible that he does not know who he must or can approach. To find out about this he can ask the National Agency or the Commission for a list of the officers who work there and their roles and responsibilities so he can make the right choice. Sometimes it is advisable to consult the partnership about this. It is possible that one of the partners will have a good contact in the National Agency or the Commission. In that case a partnership would do better to use that channel than to open a new channel. The quality of the contacts is more important than who exactly maintains the contact.

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**Tip 85**  
*Try to identify a fixed point of contact for external reporting*

In Leonardo 1 there were a number of partnerships which had no idea who their contact in the National Agency or the Commission was. This is an awkward way of operating. It is much better to obtain a fixed contact in the organisation of the subsidy provider in order to reduce anonymity.