MODERNIZING AND ENHANCING INDIAN E-LEARNING
EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES – MIELES

MIELES External Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project aims to enhance quality and access to Indian Higher Education system by supporting Indian partners in the design of their institutional e-learning strategies. Activities are delivered in partnership with 14 Institutions from Europe and India. Their ultimate goal is to promote Indo European active collaboration in e-learning through sharing skills, best practices and innovative approaches toward e-learning. In order to reach its expected outcomes, MIELES involves a broad spectrum of activities that are encompassed in seven work packages. These activities fall mainly into two types: general events gathering all partners and team activities such as focus group discussions, pilot projects and trainings which are meant to study or develop specific components of e-learning.

For the purpose of this evaluation, a mixed-methods strategy has been adopted, comprising different instruments to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, acquire information and feedback from relevant stakeholders and provide a complete picture of the project. Data were collected using the following methods:

-Review of all project deliverables and documents
-Survey questionnaire
-Focus group discussion with Indian Partners
-Key informant interviews (European partners)

Through these instruments the evaluation sought to give evidence of the effectiveness, immediate effects, sustainability and efficiency of the project.

MIELES has been successful in improving capability of the partner institutions to develop sound, effective strategic approaches to e-learning in order to capitalize on the investments and the dedicated programs already launched by the Indian government. Generally, the project has advanced according to the plan; it has completed the deliverables and achieved the expected outcomes in a way that Partners find satisfactory and relevant to the needs of their institutions as well as consistent with the national policies concerning Higher Education.

Among the key successes of the project, it is worth mentioning:

- The management relied on a good level of interaction between partners throughout all the different stages of the project implementation.
- Partners find that information and instructions for implementing work package activities were clear and exhaustive. Workshops were well organized and formative.
- The project allowed the partners to reach a common definition of the key concepts of e-learning that will pave the way for future collaborations.
- The data collected through the SWOT analysis increased Indian institutions' awareness about their potential and their positioning in the complex, multifaceted context of Indian higher education.

- the project enabled EU partners to realize the strong penetration of e-learning in the India HE panorama and it allowed for the exchange of best practices with the Indian leading centers for e-learning, especially with the NPTEL partners.
- The collaboration with NPTEL is undoubtedly an asset of the project. For the first time the small colleges had the opportunity to actively work with the most important Indian e-learning platform and thus participate in the development of future MOOCs that might better address the needs of their student populations.

Some challenges have been detected during the consultation phase of this evaluation on which the following set of recommendations are based:

- MIELES web site should be employed for internal and external dissemination. The most significant project documents and milestones should be uploaded.
- Given the potential positive effects of a strategic approach towards the implementation of e-learning resources, the evaluation recommends that actions should be put in place to guarantee university ownership towards the strategic objectives identified. MIELES staff should organize meetings with faculty members and students unions of their institutions to present the project results, in *primis* the strategic plans. For all Indian partners it would be advisable to publish their e-learning strategies in the university website.
- To further maximize the potential impact of the capacity building component, the evaluation recommends to widen the project scope at the policy level. The reports of the team activities such as the focus group discussions and the pilot projects should be turned into policy recommendations to be distributed among relevant stakeholders.
- The planned trainings are of critical importance to guarantee sustainability of the project outcomes, therefore they should be consistent with them, especially with the lessons learnt form the pilot projects. Moreover, the training should be designed in a way that other editions can be planned autonomously by the Indian partners after the end of the project.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.The Project

MIELES is an innovative approach that aims to enhance quality and access to Indian Higher Education system by supporting the design of institutional e-learning strategies. Co-funded by the EU Commission, under the Erasmus+ program (Capacity Building Key Action 2), the project was awarded to the Universidad de Barcelona. Project activities are delivered in partnership with 14 Institutions from Europe and India. The ultimate goal of this partnership is to promote Indo European active collaboration in e-learning. This will be achieved by sharing skills, best practices and innovative approaches toward e-learning. Specifically, MIELES project endeavours to achieve the following outcomes:

-Better awareness and understanding of Indian university governance and leadership about their needs and potential benefits/gains with regards to e-learning

-Improved capability of Indian Institutions to develop clear, sound, effective strategic approaches to e-learning

-Empowered capacity of Indian Institutions to implement their institutional e-learning strategies via trained staff and pilot projects

-Transfer of knowledge within India regarding e-learning strategy and capacity

The MIELES project involves a broad spectrum of activities that are encompassed in seven work packages. At present, all the activities anticipated in the first two work packages have been accomplished, while partners are still working on the completion of the pilot projects that are the main goal of the third work package. Training university management and supporting university to develop their own strategies is the major component of the project; this approach has been adopted to guarantee that the Indian partners can recognize the potentialities of e-learning and can find the right solutions to invest on it and better exploit its benefits. Each partner has been engaged in reviewing and drafting its own e-learning strategy in a way to address their specific institutional needs and to be consistent with their university context and resources.

The project started with a mapping exercise on the existing e-learning trends in India and in Europe. The results of this study were presented during a workshop held at KTH in May 2017. The workshop, the findings of the mapping exercise aimed at building up a shared knowledge and common perspective on general trends on e-learning among the project partners. It allowed them to analyse and discuss different approaches, definitions and practices of e-learning specifically in India and Europe. At the same time, the final report served to draw a clear picture of the status of play of e-learning strategies, potentialities and needs of partner institutions and thus it laid the basis for the SWOT analysis. The European partner CARDET developed the templates and questionnaire that the partners had to employ to carry out their SWOT analysis and then to illustrate the concluding findings. Accordingly, the Universities performed a thorough assessment of the online educational resources already in place, the teaching/learning practices, staff capacity to set up e-learning courses and modules and ICT infrastructures. In addition, the SWOT analysis enabled them to highlight challenges, strengths and

potential to develop and reinforce e-learning educational resources that may respond to their institutional environment, their academic offering and their students' community. Finally this analysis was preparatory to the drafting or updating of the institutional strategies. Two team of experts from UB and KTH visited the Indian partners in order to support them in drafting the reports of their SWOT analysis. These reports were collected and made accessible in the project drop-box to all the partners. In October 2017, the second workshop on Institutional Strategies was held in Nicosia. The results of all the SWOT were discussed and shared among partners as well as set of recommendations stemming from the field visits by the EU experts to Indian partners. Three focus groups followed the second workshop with the aim to discuss issues and topics related to e-learning such as the use and implementation of blended learning, the development of collaborative online courses and tools for e-learning strategies, enabling students and staff to take advantage of e-learning possibilities. Starting from SWOT analysis, the discussions and final reports of the focus groups, Indian Partners engaged in the designing their own institutional strategies, this drafting was supported by a guide and a template developed by CARDET.

The aims and objectives of the three pilot projcets were adjusted and better defined during the workshop held in May 2018 in Bangalore. Each pilot is meant to test and further develop one component of the e-learning strategies that the Partners identified as crucial.

2.Evaluation: Purpose and Methodology

The main purpose of this evaluation is to collect data and evidence to assess the project and to confirm that it is accomplishing the planned goals and achieving the expected outcomes. The analysis has been centred on the following questions:

- Is the project meeting its objectives?
- Do its objectives still meet the needs of the partners involved and, generally, of the relevant Higher Education System?
- Are the expected outcomes being delivered as planned?
- Are the deliverables of acceptable quality? Are they being implemented in a way that they can be sustainable?
- Is the degree of collaboration among partners acceptable?

This research adopts a mixed-methods strategy, comprising different instruments to collect both qualitative and quantitative data and to acquire information and input from relevant stakeholders. This strategy allows for a triangulation of findings that can provide a complete picture of the project, evidence of its efficacy and impact with regard to its general objectives and target outcomes. In doing that, the study aims to determine the extent to which the capacity building action, and processes related to it, has been effective in generating the desired results. In detail, this external evaluation seeks to provide evidence of the effectiveness, immediate effects, sustainability and efficiency of the project that can be used for both learning and accountability. The final evaluation, carried out from July to February 2019, consisted of three phases

Desk review - The aim was to plan and establish the framework for the evaluation process, including identification of objectives and initial gathering of information. Relevant documentation in relation to the project in general and the WPs already completed, including the project proposal, agendas and presentations of meetings, reports from the FGs and from the Internal Quality Committee, were gathered and reviewed. A list of key staff members of the consortium was completed. The timeline and conditions for delivery and presentation of the final report were agreed. The overall methodology of the evaluation relies on a selected number of criteria such as: relevance of the work packages to the needs of the target groups and to the context, coherence of the work-package against the overall project design and logical framework, effectiveness of the activities, immediate results & sustainability, efficiency during the overall implementation.

Consultation process: This phase aimed at gathering feedback of key informants, such as the coordinating team (University of Barcelona) and representatives from the partner Universities. The consultation process employed a qualitative/quantitative data gathering methodology through semi-structured interviews on an individual basis, a focus group discussion and survey questionnaire. **Survey questionnaire (N.7 out of 14)**: A survey questionnaire has been designed to gather data from respondents across all the partner institutions. Respondents have been elicited to provide their feedback in relation to same questions in order to facilitate the identification of common themes. The questionnaire has been focused on the quality of project deliverables, quality of project management, quality of partners' collaboration.

Quality focus group discussion (10): A quality focus group discussion was organized in September at the Asian Institute of Design, in Bangalore. The representatives of all Indian partners took part in this focus group discussion led by the evaluator. This discussion allowed for an interchange on various issues related to project objectives and outputs, leading to an investigation on more qualitative factors beyond the information collected through the structured questionnaire responses.

Key informant Interviews (N.4): Representatives of European partners have been interviewed via Skype. Interviews have been mainly unstructured although they made use of the same lines of the questionnaire and of the quality focus group's key questions. These interviews aimed at providing an insight on the project outputs that cannot be acquired through survey questionnaire and facilitated discussion and exchange on the ongoing activities related to the Pilot Projects.

Consolidation: The results of the desk review and the consultation process were compiled and analyzed. Information was examined and crosschecked in light of the evaluation criteria defined during the desk phase. As a result of this process, the final report was drafted and finalized after incorporating the inputs of the coordinating team.

SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

1.Relevance and Coherence

India's higher education sector has moved from a period of slow growth and low gross enrolment ratios to an era of extraordinary expansion. Over the past 15 years, student enrolment has quadrupled to reach 34 million with a gross enrolment ratio of 24 percent in 2015-2016. The size of India's education

system has now surpassed the United States, becoming the world's second largest after China. Although India has now one of the largest higher education systems, this expansion of education is still accompanied by persisting social and regional inequalities in enrolment, poor infrastructures and uneven quality of teaching and learning. This negatively affects the employability of Indian graduates; many employers in India seem not to trust the quality of the qualifications awarded by the country's universities and only one out of four graduates is regarded as skilled enough to be employed in companies. Yet the demand of skilled workers and graduates is deemed to increase dramatically in all sectors, being India one of the fastest growing economy.

ICT and e-learning is globally acknowledged as a strategic means to improve access to higher education and to enhance/ equalize the quality of teaching. India has realised the potential of e-learning and has set up different government initiatives to develop its capacity. Among those, the most significant are the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT), a scheme administered by the Higher Education Ministry which aims at empowering the use of e-learning in the teaching and learning process and the Education portal, Sakshat, launched under NMEICT to address all the educational needs of students and teachers. Furthermore, the India Digital campaign plays an important role in increasing Internet connectivity through high-speed internet networks across the country and within educational institutions. Although the use of e-learning is constantly growing within the Higher Education system, e-learning platforms, material and courses are in fact developed and offered mainly by the most prestigious Indian Universities or by private/foreign providers: the major challenge is to provide access to the e-learning resources to a wider portion of universities and colleges.

The study "Indian Youth's speak out about higher education"[1] confirmed that most Indian university students would like more opportunities for on line learning; it is a shared opinion among them that provision of technology is not adequate and professors should be trained on how to use e-learning tools. Students also remark that taking MOOCs for credits should be facilitated and online course offering should be standardized.

As a measure to expand the usage of e-learning, the Indian government, with the support of a few universities, has established specific programmes and platforms with the aim of making e-learning materials and MOOCs available to the majority of Indian universities and colleges (SWAYAM, NPTEL and Virtual Labs). Against this backdrop, it is pivotal for Indian universities to develop strategies in order to better exploit opportunities and investments already in place. It is equally crucial to favour synergies and collaborations between universities and colleges in marginal areas and institutions that have already high quality ICT infrastructures and e-learning academic offering.

In this respect MIELES project seems to respond to the country's needs for three main reasons: the diverse composition of the consortium, the main goals of the project and the planned activities.

The consortium comprises Indian institutions in less economically favored regions (Mysore and Kerala) and with marginal use of e-learning (AIGA, MEAC, KUWC). At the same time, it includes Indian universities that are at the forefront in e-learning: IIT Madras, IISc Bangalore and Amrita University. IIT

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1 a study carried out by the UNESCO MGIEP to collect the opinions of Indian nationals between the ages of 17 and 29 about revising the higher education portion of the National Education Policy (NEP).

Madras and IISc Bangalore are NPTEL partners, whereas Amrita University is one of founding institutions of the Virtual Lab Portal. Likewise University of Mysore has a long tradition of distance learning that cannot be sustained without the use of e-learning resources. Due to its dimension and diverse student population (about 100.000 students in in its main campus and affiliate colleges) Mysore is also a key partner in representing the needs of small colleges and marginalized institutions. KUWC accounts for the needs of women's colleges where the drop-out rate is higher; in its case e-learning can work as a measure to foster inclusion and gender balance in higher education.

Whereas most of the cooperation projects are focused in developing specific online courses and in empowering the ICT infrastructure, MIELES has a different approach and purpose since it seeks to enhance Indian Partners' capacity in exploiting investments, dedicated programs and opportunities for joint collaborations in e-learning. The project anticipates that each university develops an institutional strategic plan that can address its needs and is in line with the university's profile and general strategy. Thus e-learning can effectively become an integrated component of the academic offering, a means to innovate and enhance the quality of teaching. Feedback from the key informants confirmed that the project design and activities are relevant to the needs of their institutions and consistent with national policies. A representative from IIT Madras also pointed out that EU projects such as MIELES also serve as a leverage to receive more funds from the Indian government for further development of e-learning initiatives. In addition to the activities focused on the university governance for the design of strategic plans, MIELES complies also trainings dedicated to staff and professors, responding in this way to the need of increasing the number of trained staff that can produce and deliver e-learning courses.

Another important project component is the attention to the quality standards of course content and e-learning approaches. This has been a topic of the field groups discussions, an important element of the SWOT analysis and the focus of a planned training. This attention to QA is also proven by the inclusion of ENQA as a partner: ENQA offers Indian universities its expertise on QA standards in e-learning and provides them with the new emerging trends in Europe and internationally.

The Higher Education has become a global, competitive market where e-learning can be regarded either as a threat or, conversely, as an opportunity for modernization and internationalization. MIELES seeks to exploit this positive potential of e-learning so that the cooperation with the European universities is not only meant for the sharing of best practices but also for the development of joint didactic activities. This opportunity to collaborate with EU partners in designing on line courses and programs (an expected outcome of the Pilot phase) is particularly appreciated by the Indian partners since they regard it as a way to add an international dimension to their academic offering. Thus those Indian students who cannot benefit from mobility schemes can as well have an international exposure to different teaching methods and different approaches.

In conclusion there is clear evidence that the project goals and activities respond to pressing needs of Indian higher education sector such as inclusion, access and improvement of teaching quality. Technically, from the documents review and the feedback from the partners, it can be maintained that the WP activities are relevant to the partners' needs and in line with the overall design of the project proposal where the different levels were coherently outlined and interlinked in a robust logical

framework. A clear result chain and appropriate set of indicators complete the M&E methodology of the project.

2.Results achieved (Effectiveness)

The project's effectiveness is measured through the analysis of the deliverables produced and the partners' feedback that has been collected during the discussion group, the interviews and through the survey questionnaire. The evaluation is focused on the outcomes achieved in WP1, WP2 and WP3. The WPs activities proved to be effective, as all the major expected outputs have been achieved according to the project work plan although with some delay. 80% of the survey respondents confirmed that the outcomes of the work-packages were successfully achieved however some pointed out that not all partners met the deadlines.

<u>WP1: State of Play and Needs Assessment for E-learning in Indian higher education</u>
This workpackage was meant to set the basis for the development of the chore activities of the project. The WP started with a mapping exercise on e-learning trends in Europe and India which consisted of desk research focused on the current studies in e-learning, initiatives and governmental policies in India and Europe. This activity aimed at building up a common background and shared lexicon among project partners.

A final compendium was drafted by KTH. The report has been undoubtedly a useful tool for MIELES partners as it is a concise compendium of the general e-learning trends in India, Europe and also United States. It also provides a picture of the e-learning practices, implemented strategies, planned objectives for each partner institution. In this way the compendium also contributed to increase reciprocal knowledge among the partners in relation to their e–learning practices and strategies already in place. Furthermore the brief description of each partner's e-learning strategies and implementation, which includes types of e-learning offering, platforms in use and available infrastructures, was also a suitable assessment exercise that set the basis for the following SWOP analysis.

In May 2017 the results were presented during a two day workshop hosted by KTH in Stockholm. All Partners attended the event that gathered 20 participants. Both European and Indian partners found it formative and regarded it as an occasion to share best practices especially during the group sessions. During the workshop CARDET also introduced the methodology and the tools which were to be employed to carry out the SWOP analysis and to further develop or update a consistent e-learning strategy. The event was well planned since it comprised both a general session and a participatory activity; it was also time effective as partners were not only informed about the results of the first mapping exercise but were instructed on the following activities to be developed.

it might be suggested only that the report on e-learning trends in Europe and India should have been published on the MIELES website to disseminate project's outcomes.

CARDET drew up a step by step guide to support partners in their SWOT analysis and in the development of e-learning strategy. The guide proved to be an effective instrument as it exemplifies a clear methodology on how to conduct the analysis. It provided examples of strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities that are relevant for the e-learning component in a higher education context, a set of key questions that guided partners in this assessment and finally simple but precise

instructions on how to draw up a SWOT report. Evidence of the effectiveness and success of this activity is the partners' responses: the SWOT analysis was designed for Indian partners and in fact also EU partners committed to complete it. During the discussion of the quality focus group, a representative from Amrita University pointed out that the approach employed in this analysis was particularly appropriate since it brought up the awareness that strategy for e-learning should be consistent and align with the overall institution's vision and mission. On the same positive note the interview respondent from KTH commented that SWOT analysis was an occasion to review their strategic planning for e-learning and more generally to realize that an institutional commitment towards the e-learning component in the academic offering is crucial also to avoid that single groups of instructors or single departments develop e-learning didactic tools and resources autonomously without a far-reaching approach.

WP 2: Towards comprehensive e-learning institutional strategies

The overarching aim of this WP was to support the Indian partners in drafting their institutional strategies for e-learning. To this purpose different activities/events were planned and effectively accomplished: a round table and three focus groups. The round table was held at CARDET premises in Nicosia in October 2017.The reports of the SWOT analysis were presented. During the quality focus group discussion participants confirmed that the event had been operative and effective: Indian partners had the opportunity to share the different findings as well as to receive feedbacks and recommendations from the EU experts. Furthermore CARDET took the lead in reviewing the necessary steps and the methodology to design and draft a strategic planning for e-learning. Partners also defined and agreed upon the working plan for the Focus Groups and the agenda of the meetings dedicated to these following activities. Focus groups were aimed at studying more in depth specific topics relevant for e-learning in general and for its strategic planning. Accordingly, the topic of Focus Group held in Bangalore was the use and the implementation of blended e-learning, whereas the Focus Group held in Chennai discussed the advantages, challenges and management of collaborative on line courses. Finally a third Focus Group was organized in Kerala to discuss strategies and tools to engage students and staff in e-learning didactic experiences. Although the Focus Groups' organization as it was designed in the project proposal was slightly modified due to some changes in EU partners' participation, the choice to further discuss e-learning strategies with a thematic approach was successful and appreciated by Indian partners (ie. positive feedback from the evaluation respondents). Indian partners had the opportunity to work collaboratively and to identify shared objectives to be included in their strategic planning. They also focused on the main needs to be address and on challenges to be faced. Another relevant output of the Focus Group work was a plan of activities and strategies to make the collaboration with NPTEL sustainable.

The final deliverable of this activity is a consolidated report compiling all the issues that arose during the discussions of the 3 FGs such as accreditation, quality assurance in examination, treatment of learners' data, training for academic staff, teaching methodology and new pedagogical models, to quote some of them. This report has been drafted as an internal working document, a reference source for partners when drafting their e-learning strategies. However it might be suggested that it could be further

edited as a set of general recommendations to circulate also among external stakeholders and partners' university communities.

The drafting of the strategic plans for e-learning has been the most challenging and difficult task, in spite of the supporting activities carried out and the tools designed to facilitate the analysis (i.e the guide to draft the strategic plan, the template to defines SMART Objectives and the template for action plan). Indian partners completed a draft of their strategic plan for the final meeting that was organized at Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore in May 2018. The quality of these strategic plans is not uniform, which can be due to the different expertise of the Indian Partners and different approach in writing strategic, programmatic documents. As the ultimate objective of this activity is institutional ownership, the strategic plan should be validated by the university governance in order to become an operative component of the development policy of each institution, however, from the documents reviews and the interviews carried out, it appears that this process of institutional validation is still ongoing. The establishment of an e-learning committee in those universities with less capacity in developing e-learning resources is however an important success that will foster institutional engagement and assure sustainability and long term effects to the project outcomes.

WP 3: Implementing e-learning strategies: e-learning pilot projects
The activities and expected out-comes of the Pilot Phase have not been completed, for this reason a thorough evaluation of its effectiveness cannot be carried out. In the way it has been designed, this WP represents the most operative phase of the project. The work package consists of three pilot projects, each one dedicated to develop a specific e-learning resource that was identified by the strategic action plans. EU and Indian partners chose to participate actively in one or more pilots according to their interests, objectives and expertise. The focus of the each pilot has been fine-tuned to better address the most common challenges that haven been shared among the institutions during the focus groups. Action plans have been agreed upon during the Bangalore meeting held in May 2018 and the activity is carried out through skype meetings/teleconference and visits. Three EU partners are basically leading the Pilots: KTH, UNIROMA and TUB. Pilot 1 comprises two specific deliverables that are both centered on collaborative online courses. The first one involves Amrita University and is dedicated to the development of preparatory MOOCs that will support the mobility of an already existing 3+2 program agreement between the two universities. The second one is based on an active collaboration between KTH and IIT Madras and aims at the completion of two pilot courses that will be designed by KHT and delivered through NPTEL platform. The Pilot coordinated by University of Rome is working on the setting up of blended e-learning pilot courses through the Moodle platform.
Pilot 3 was initially targeted to the needs of Indian partners with less access to e-learning resources. This will be achieved by the setting up of Platform to Collect and Provide High-Quality Open Online-Learning Resources for Selected Topics, to set up and maintain a local (institutions intranet) learning platform to produce blended learning material collection of free or even open tools to create online course material, which can be easily reused even if the person who created it is no longer available. This will be further discussed during the workshops of WP 4. TUB in collaboration with NPTEL partners has developed a MOOC in computer science which will be offered in NPTEL platform.

A final report on the outcomes achieved in the 3 pilots is of the utmost importance since it will allow dissemination of results among those partners that were not directly engaged in the implementation phase of each pilot. This final report should also include an outline of the trainings planned for WP 4 specifying the target groups and the expected learning outcomes of the training activities. The trainings should align with the themes of the 3 pilot as they seek to build capacity in the Indian partners to guarantee sustainability of the pilots deliverables.

.3.Immediate Effects and Sustainability

The impact of the project action is primarily on institutional level since the first target is the governance and the management of the Indian partners that are supported in the design of e-learning strategies. Mid/long term effects on the students community and faculty members will be measurable when the pilot courses are delivered and the trainings performed. Immediate effects can be ascribed to the collaboration between European partners and the Indian ones and between the most important Indian institutions and the small colleges. MIELES enabled EU partners to better understand the strong penetration of e-learning in the India HE panorama and it allowed for the exchange of best practices and knowhow with the Indian leading centers for e-learning. In this regard, the cooperation with NPTEL represents an asset of the project in term of impact and sustainability for different reasons. First, the pilot courses will be delivered in this platform thus potentially reaching a vast student population, secondly, on the European side, this connection will facilitate future synergies and interactions leading to the collaborative design of further MOOCs with NTPEL partners. For the small colleges that cannot autonomously design courses and update their curricula, the dialogue with NTPEL is even more beneficial: they can intervene in the content and format of new MOOCs so that the teaching units might better address the needs of their students population. The trust and relationship built during the project life let us presume that there will be an improvement in the academic offering of the small institutions provided that this collaboration with NTPEL is continued. For this reason it might be advisable the Indian partners frame this collaboration into formal agreements engaging also the accrediting institutions. An example of a positive effect of the collaboration is a program IIS is designing for the MAEC students: after taking specific on line courses they will be granted an internship at IIS in Bangalore to complete their study experience.

Immediate effects can also be analyzed through the accomplished deliverables. The project has allowed the partners to reach a common definition of the key concepts of e-learning, FGs led them to discuss relevant issues (such as accreditation, methods of course delivery and, final evaluation and treatment of learners personal data) and identify possible measures to tackle them. The data collected through the SWOT analysis increased Indian institutions' awareness about their potential and their positioning in the complex, multifaceted context of Indian higher education. The strategy formulations and the relevant action plans are a key factor for the sustainability of project positive effects. Prime condition for sustainability is that these action plans are validated by the Universities' governance, with their commitment the strategies for e-learning will drive future changes and improvements in the online resources of the project partners. The trainings will also contribute to the sustainability of the achieved results by enhancing capacity in the staff of the partners universities to employ e-learning resources for

further implementation of online courses. They should be designed as a format that can be reproducible also after the end of the project, having an impact on a higher number of faculty members that have not been directly involved in the project. Likewise, pilot courses will be a sustainable outcome if they respond to the needs of the students population and if policies and procedures for accreditations are put in place. Especially In the case of collaborative online courses the institutions involved should finalize this cooperation in structured agreements.

4.Management (Efficiency)

The evaluation of the project documentation and the feedback received at consultation level showed that the management of this project relies on a good level of interaction between partners throughout all different stages of the project implementation. The working relationship appears to be based on mutual respect and common goals which led to a participative implementation strategy, involving partners representatives in all the important decisions-making as well as assigning the responsibility of the different WPs implementation to European partners and Indian Partners. Furthermore, a number of strategies and working modalities are in place to guarantee a coordinated and transparent project implementation such as regular meetings in person and through Skype. Although the project partners generally expressed satisfaction with the management structure and they found that project budget, financial aspects, reporting procedures had been clearly explained, some challenges emerged. The different degree of experience and familiarity with regulation and reporting procedures of EU projects caused some delay in processing refunds and in the procurement of the equipment. Another concern is the poor responsiveness of some Indian partners in the activities carried out by the internal quality committee and by the external evaluator when this assessment implies the filling out online questionnaires.

SECTION THREE: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMANDATIONS

The evaluation results prove that MIELES has been successful in improving capability of the partner institutions to develop sound, effective strategic approaches to e-learning in order to capitalize on the investments and dedicated programs already launched by the Indian government.

Through the implementation of its work packages, the project directly contributed to rising awareness of the potential of e-learning and of major obstacles and issues related to the production of online resources. The WPs activities have been **effectively** built around **contextually-relevant** needs and have been generating significant achievements that have the potential to be impactful in the long-term. The project formulation has adequately taken into account complexities and challenges linked to the Indian HE context, therefore it can be claimed that it is **relevant to** the needs of the target group.

The project has put in place transparent and **efficient** working modalities: partners are generally satisfied with the project management and with the degree of interaction and collaboration. The project has fostered the exchange of best practices and expertise that has been beneficial for both European and Indian Institutions and will be seminal for future collaborations. In this respect the dialogue between NPTEL partners and the other Indian institutions is one of the major success of the project; if this

collaboration is kept, it will certainly contribute to improvement of teaching quality and will facilitate the access to the NPTEL academic offering for a wider students' population.

However, some challenges arose during the consultation phase of this evaluation on which the following set of recommendations/suggestions are based in order to consolidate the results so far achieved:

- MIELES web site should be more employed for internal and external dissemination. The most significant documents such as the report on e-Learning trends and the results of the FG discussions should be uploaded .

- Given the potential positive effects of a strategic approach towards the adoption and the implementation of e-learning resources, the evaluation recommends that actions should be put in place to guarantee university ownership towards the strategic objectives identified. MIELES staff should organize meetings with faculty members and students unions of their institutions to present the project results, in *primis* the strategic plans. For all Indian partners it would be advisable to publish this programmatic document in their university website.

- A final report on the outcomes achieved in the 3 pilots is of the utmost importance since it will allow dissemination of results among those partners that were not directly engaged in the implementation phase of each pilot. This final report should also include an outline of the trainings planned for WP 4 specifying the target groups, the expected learning outcomes of the training activities and didactic material required.

- The trainings should align with the themes of the 3 pilot as they seek to build capacity in the Indian partners to guarantee sustainability of the pilots deliverables. Moreover the training should be designed in a way that other editions can be planned autonomously by the Indian partners after the end of the project. The didactic material should be developed in a way that it might feed a future online course for academic staff interested in acquiring expertise in e-learning methodologies and practices.

- To further maximize the potential impact of the capacity building component, the evaluation recommends to widen the project scope at the policy level. The consolidated report of the FG discussions and the lessons learnt from the pilots might be turned into policy recommendations to be distributed among relevant stakeholders and presented during the final workshops and the dissemination conference.
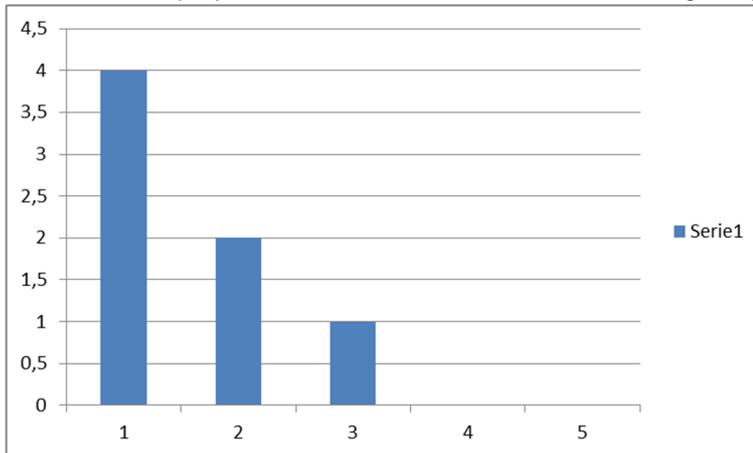
ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Results of the survey questionnaire

### RATE THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT

Please express your satisfaction on the following aspects of the project by selecting the relevant option on the provided scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree)

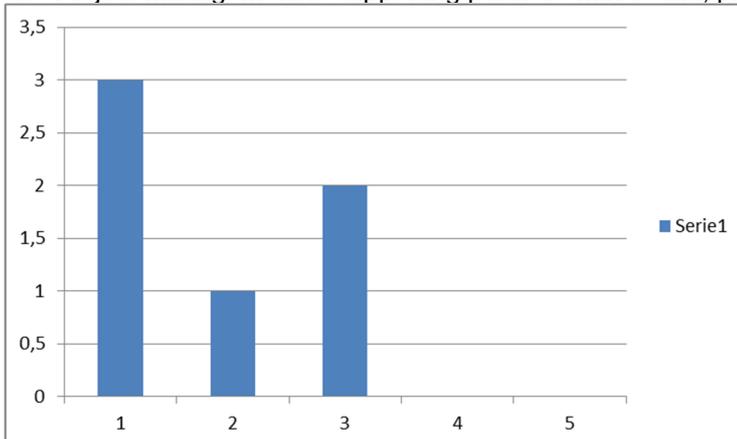1. So far the project has been successful and is reaching the planned goals
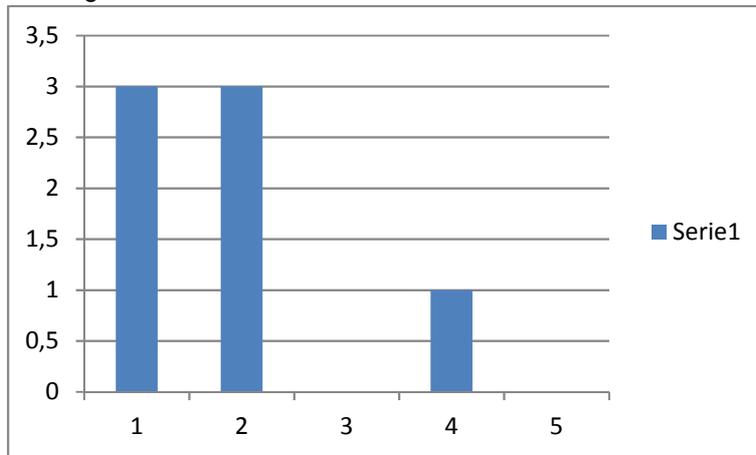

RATE THE OVERALL PROJECT MANAGEMENT
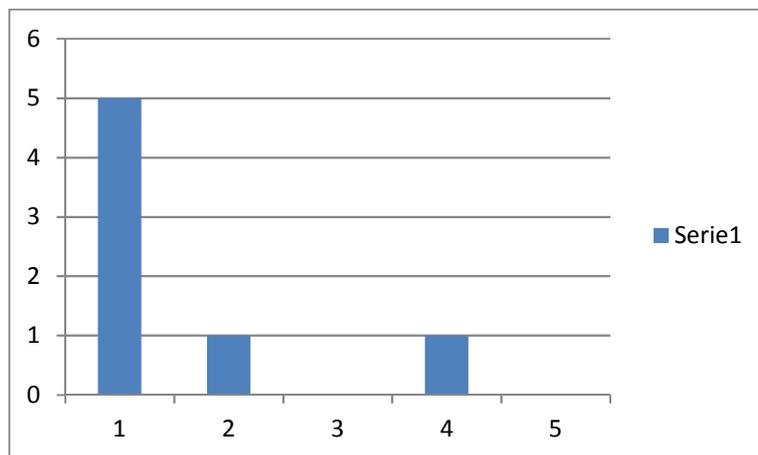
2. The management structure is clear and effective
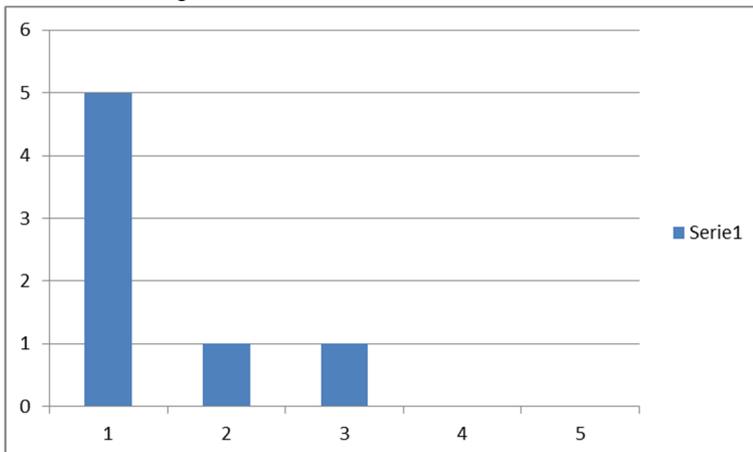
3. Project Management is supporting partners with sound, prompt feedback

4. Information and instructions for implementing work package activities were clear, thorough and well-timed

5. Project budget, financial aspects, reporting procedures have been clearly explained.

6. Meeting agendas and reports were clear and well-organized
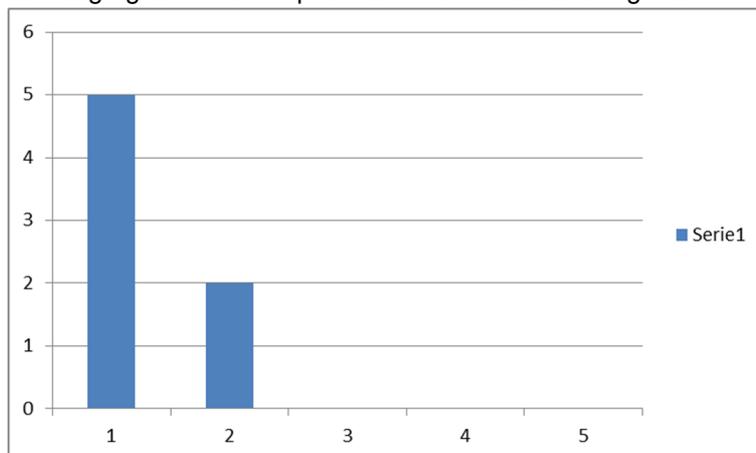
7. Involvement of partners has been kept high and even throughout the development of the three work packages
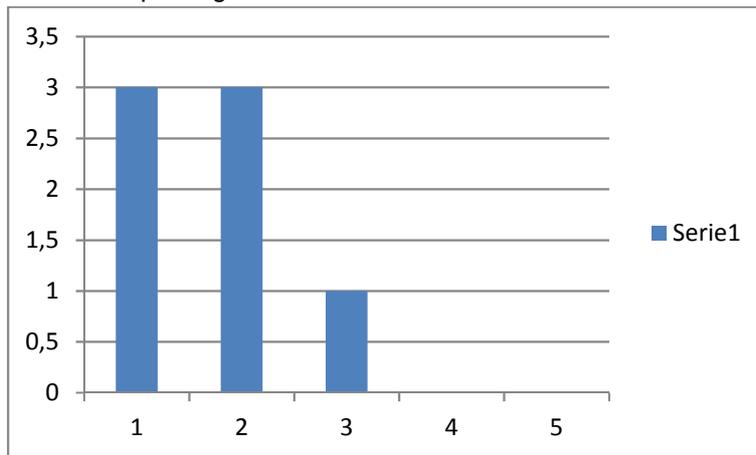
RATE THE QUALITY OF PROJECT DELIVERABLES

8. Project deliverables have been successfully developed and they are of good quality
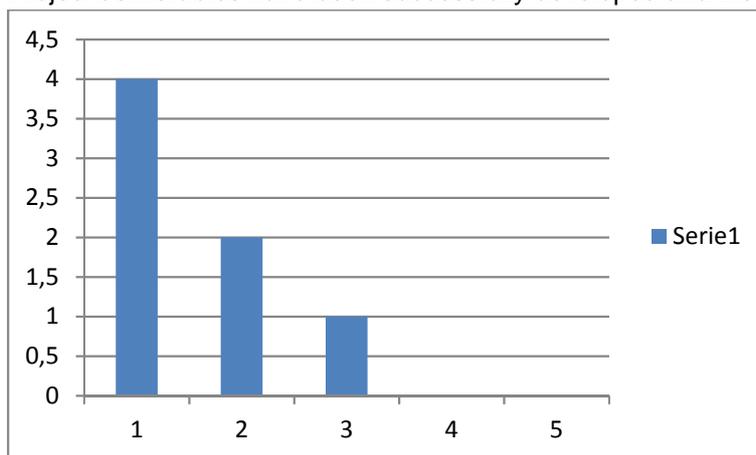
9. Partners met the deadlines for delivering outputs
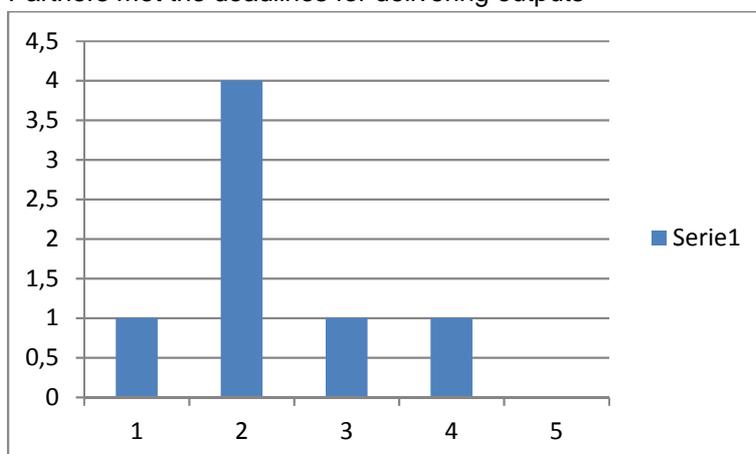
10. Deliverables have been developed in a way that they can address my insitituion's expectations and goals.
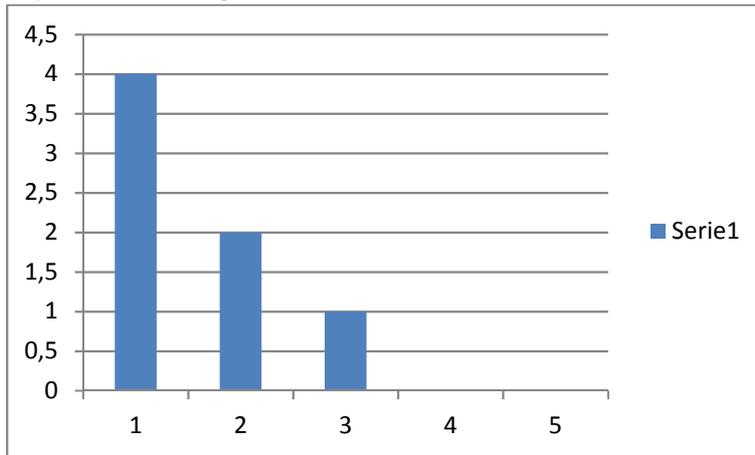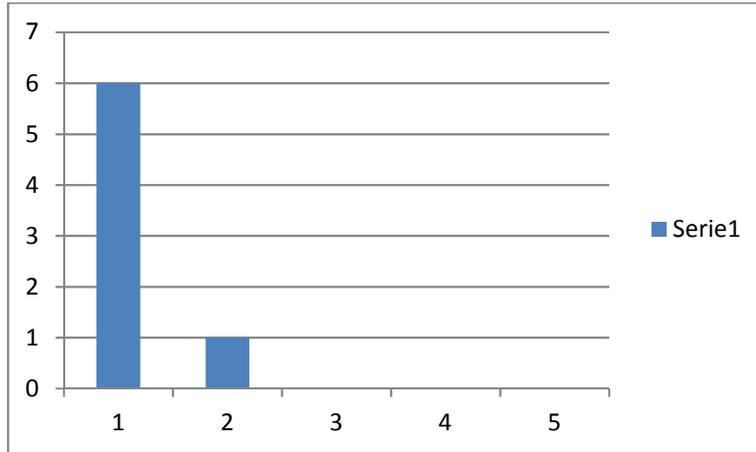

RATE COMMUNICATION AMONG PARTNERS

11. Communication among partners and with project leader is smooth and timely
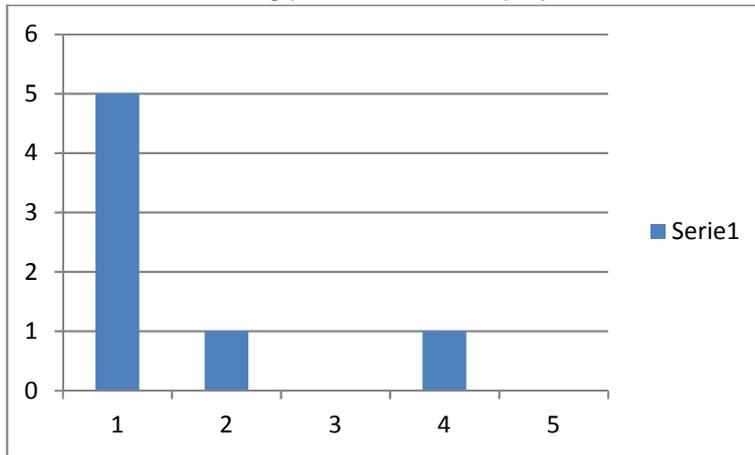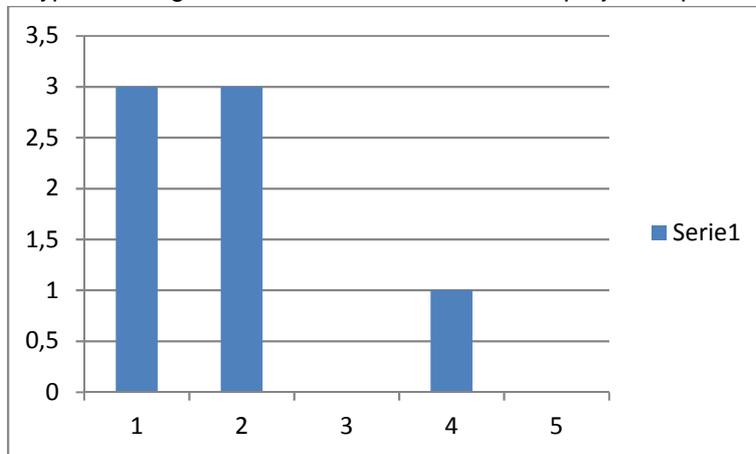

12. Channels of communication (e-mail, website, face to face/skype meetings) are effective and appropriate
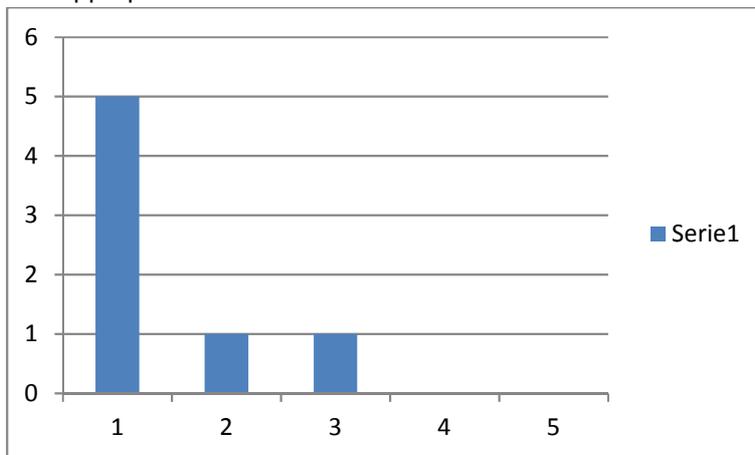
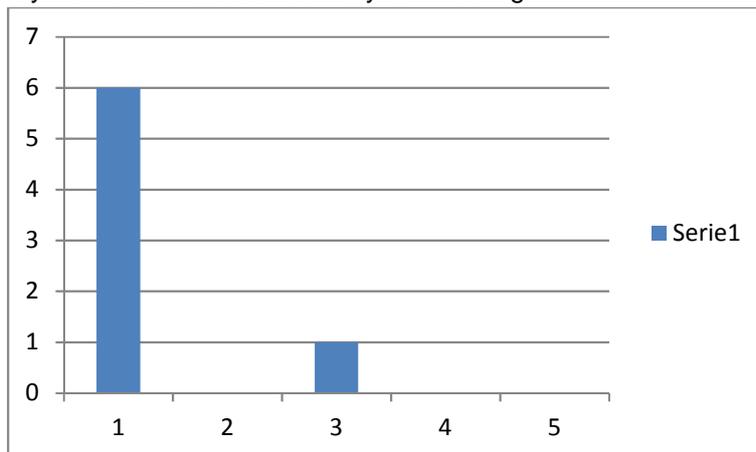13. Face-to-face meetings were satisfactory and time effective

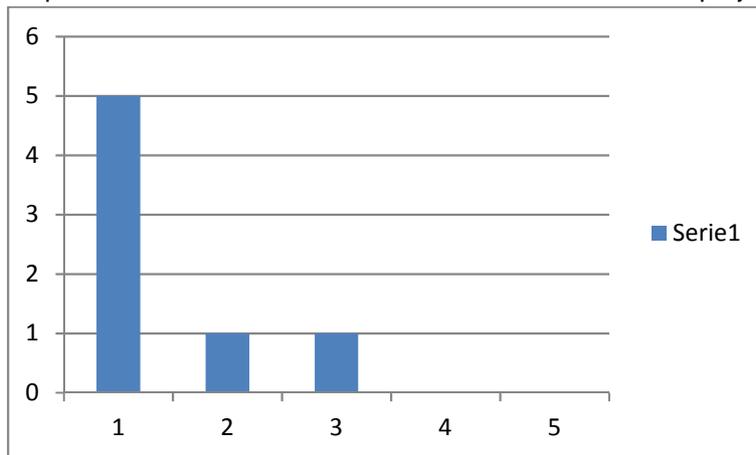14. Skype meetings were a useful tool to enhance project implementation

RATE CONTRIBUTION FROM YOUR ORGANISATION AND FROM PARTNERS

15. My institution has been actively contributing

16. All partners have been collaborative and committed to the project's objectives

ANNEX 2 : Group discussions

Wednesday, 14th September

Asian Institute of Design.

How and to what extent do you think online educational resources might contribute to modernization of teaching and learning?

What are the advantages?

increase inclusiveness, access

improve quality of education,

improve its degree of internationalization

IS MIELES ADDRESSING THESE MAIN ISSUES WHILE DEVELOPING ITS WPS?

Evidence and examples

What are the main successes of the project?

Try to point out positive achievements in terms of

- Project Management
- Monitoring/ Internal Quality process
- Partner collaboration/ interaction

What are the main challenges that your institution is facing in the project implementation?

What can be done better?

Project activities

Among the project activities concluded so far, which one/s are effectively useful to further develop your institution strategy and capacity with regards to e-learning?

- Mapping exercise
- Workshops
- SWOT
- Roundtable
- Focus groups

Which are the main difficulties/challanges you are facing in developing the 3 pilots?

Dissemination

Is MIELES contributing to rise/increase awareness in your Institution community and governance about the e-learning potentialities? What has been done to enhance institutional commitment towards project's goals?

What is your institution factually doing to share MIELES outcomes with HEIs in your region?

Transnational cooperation

Did MIELES contribute to strengthen/build relations/collaboration with European partners beyond the planned project activities?

Did MIELES give rise to new project proposals within Erasmus+ or other EU funded programs?

Did MIELES provide you with a better insight on EU policies towards HIGHER EDUCATION?

Did MIELES make you more familiar with the EU project rules and regulations?