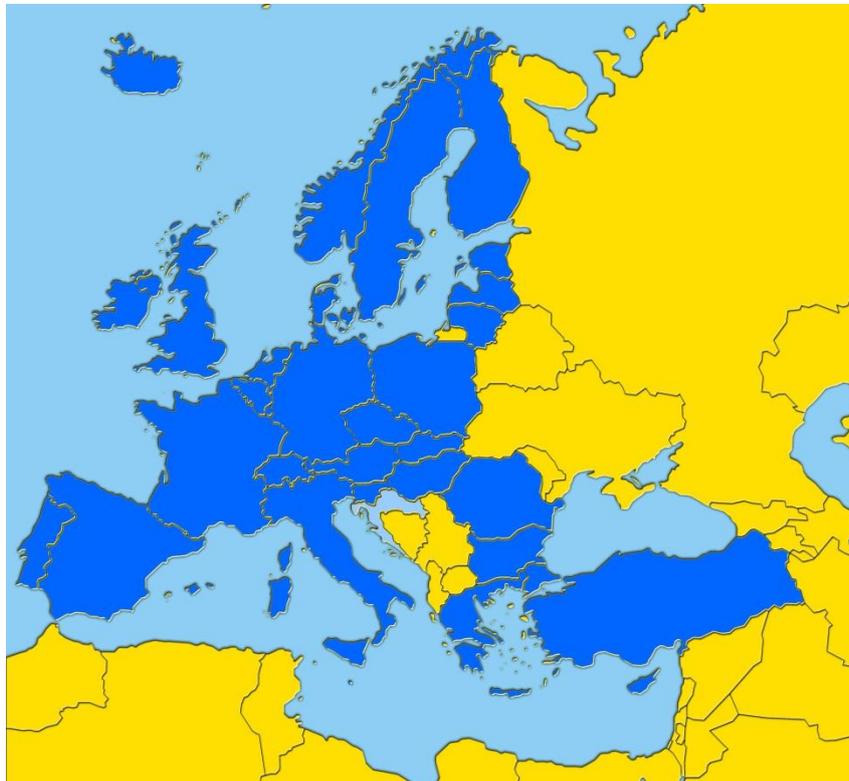# NetQues

Network for Tuning Standards and Quality of Education programmes in Speech and Language Therapy / Logopaedics across Europe

Newsletter 2

June 2012

Report from coordinator and project management steering group (PMSG)

This year we have been very busy trying to make sure the project keeps "on track". This has presented us with many challenges but also the opportunity to get to know many of the partners better as well as develop our team working and negotiation skills! We wish to thank especially the work package team leaders who have worked hard to make sure the tasks assigned to them are being completed, largely within the time schedule which is very tight in some cases. Also we are very grateful to the country lead partners and the translator partners who have been extremely diligent in getting all the survey translated into the 24 European languages required to allow respondents to access and complete the first survey in their own language. As a result Work Package 2 managed to get the survey out early in January and, despite the logistical challenge of dealing with the results in so many languages, a small group of members of Work Package 3 have put in huge amounts of time to analyse the data and will soon be able to provide some very interesting facts regarding the competences expected of newly qualified speech and language therapists, including any differences in expectations between academic staff, new graduates and their employers. They have also gathered important information regarding the types of qualifications current Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) hold.

With so many partners in the Network, one of the problems we have faced has been trying to ensure that partners are sharing the workload and all are contributing as per the days allocated to

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them. Inevitably some partner institutions have really embraced the work and given wholeheartedly to the project, some others have for various reasons not engaged as much as envisaged in the plan - fortunately this only applies to a few - but it has presented leads of working groups with additional work in chasing up members or in having to have additional Skype meetings or review work to induct new members where partners have changed staff personnel. We appreciate and wish to acknowledge the extra efforts taken by team leaders to find ways to overcome these challenges and keep their tasks under control. The PMSG and coordinator have been working closely with the work package leads to be as proactive as possible to avoid problems arising as a result of these situations.

There have been many high points such as the annual meeting in Berlin in September 2011 which was bustling with activity and was a great opportunity for partners to raise issues, discuss progress and any problems in a very supportive and active environment. The ability of Speech and Language Therapists to problem solve, work in teams with great tolerance and good humour and come up with solutions, even when confronted with difficult questions was evident throughout the meeting. It was a real joy to hear partners frequently volunteering to take on a necessary task or to suggest how they could overcome a problem faced. It reinforced our view that SLTs are a truly special and dedicated group of professionals.

Other high points have been presenting the project at the annual American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) congress in San Diego California 2011 and also at the CPLOL congress in The Hague in May 2012. At both of these events there was considerable interest in the project and especially its international and cross-cultural, cross-linguistic aspects.

The biggest challenge of this last year has been the completion of the midterm report required by Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in EU. This was a mammoth task which involved a complete review of every activity which has taken place since the commencement of the project, measured against all the objectives, outcomes and products outlined in the application and project plan. It also involved submitting all financial accounts, detailed records of every meeting and full details of every partner's involvement and audits of all their activities.

Now that we have passed the midway point we are looking forward to the next annual meeting in Riga in September 2012 and planning for the final meeting and the dissemination and exploitation of results. However in order for that to be a success we know there is still much work to be done and look forward to the cooperation of all our partners as the results of the work already achieved take shape, and the teams working on benchmarks and key education information prepare the documentation for validation and publication.

There are busy times ahead - but as we start to see results - it is also an exciting time for us all!

Aileen Patterson
Project Coordinator, (P01 CPLOL, France)

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WP 2: Tuning SLT educational programmes

Since January, WP2 has sent out two different surveys.

The **first survey** focuses on **the general and subject specific competences of newly qualified Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) in Europe**. This survey was sent out in January to the 31 European country lead partners. The country lead partners cascaded the questionnaire to the SLT departments in their education institutions in their own country. The departments also sent out the survey to their graduates from the last 5 years, the employers of their graduates and also to their academic staff. The participants were able to complete the different questions in their mother tongue, as the survey and the glossaries of the terminology used in the questionnaire were translated into the different European languages.

4369 respondents took part in the survey (2930 of them completing the questionnaire in its entirety with the remainder having some missing answers). WP3 is currently analyzing the extensive data.

The **second survey** was sent out at the end of May 2012. The aim of this is to obtain a snapshot of the range of different **SLT departments in Europe**. It was a challenge to phrase the questions and formulate them in such a way that they would capture the information required and be user friendly and comprehensible in English for those for whom this was not their first language, which of course would be the majority of respondents. The questions needed to include the following information: information on curriculum structures, information on curriculum design (e.g. modular/ in semesters), information on level/content of programmes of study (e.g. Certificate/ Bachelors/ Masters levels), number of years of study, approaches to learning, teaching & assessment (LTA), information on credit system and number of credits awarded (ECTS), information on Quality assurance processes and how assessed (e.g. who validates the programme and how), information on national, regulatory + other frameworks influencing programme delivery etc. The challenge was in creating a balance between gathering useful information and yet not making the survey too long. This survey was distributed in English, only being sent to the SLT departments. More than 90 departments have completed the survey and as it is not yet closed at time of writing we are hopeful of more responses yet to come. We are very grateful to all those who took the time to complete the survey, as we appreciate it was time-consuming and demanding to complete some sections but the data is very valuable. In the next phase of the project the results are being collated and analyzed by WP2 and WP3 and will contribute to the benchmarking and other outcomes.

In parallel to the development of the second survey some members of WP2 have been further developing the database of key information regarding SLT education and glossary of terminology. This information will be published on the NetQues website.

Lien Martens,
WP2 lead partner (P07 Lessius Hogeschool, Belgium)

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WP 3: Tuning stage 2 - analysis and evaluation of survey results

Following TUNING methodology, WP3 has commenced the analysis of the results of Survey 1 compiled by WP2 to formulate the necessary generic and profession specific competences of an SLT professional at time of qualification. These competences define the essential competences required and are a basis for formulating the intended learning outcomes (stating, what the graduates should able to demonstrate that they know, understand and are able to do) that need to be achieved and demonstrated at the end of their education that shows they are ready to practise autonomously as an SLT. WP3's analysis to date focused on what generic competences are relevant to the SLT particular subject area. Following WP2's design and piloting of conceptual clusters categorizing competences, the comprehensive on-line survey by questionnaire was conducted in January 2012, having been translated into all required European languages. Currently, WP2 is awaiting the results of the second departmental survey, which will be key information for WP3 regarding the framework of the educational contexts of teaching, learning and assessment of the identified main competences which need to be acquired. Next to the focus on generic and specific competences, further special interest will examine any differences in expectations between the three groups: speech and language therapists having graduated within the last 5 years, their actual or employers and members of staff of academic institutions offering courses in Speech and Language Therapy. It will be of interest to find out how they have rated the relevance and importance of the generic and subject specific competences. This will provide necessary information for the benchmarking team of WP3 to commence its work in the autumn. The project team has also collaborated with the CPLOL Education commission in redesigning their biennial gathering of education statistics drawn from the national SLT professional associations so that the data will also feed into the project results and can be extended to all NetQues partner countries including the few who are not in CPLOL. The results from the survey of generic and specific competences, the) departmental survey on SLT initial education programs, and the information from the evaluation, together will provide the data to help define and provide international reference points for the nature and level of SLT initial education, in accordance with the EQF and Dublin Descriptors (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks 2005, Joint Quality Initiative Group 2004).

Wiebke Scharff Rethfeldt

WP3 lead partner (P01 CPLOL, France)

WP 4: Quality assurance of the management and outcomes of the project

If 65 partners are working together across Europe over a period of three years to achieve a common purpose, it is not easy to keep track of such a huge project, especially if there are only a few meetings, and the work has to be done mainly by email exchange or by virtual meetings (e.g. by Skype). Under these circumstances it is necessary to have a common plan, well-ordered responsibilities, and a system of Quality Assurance.

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Quality Assurance is one of the 6 work packages (WP4) in the NetQues project. Partners from Belgium, Finland, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany work together to review the overall management process of the entire project and also the Tuning process itself.

To perform the first task, the evaluation of the project management, the first subgroup started its work at the initial meeting in Paris in October 2010. They developed the Quality Guidelines of the project within three months. The quality of structures and the quality of working processes were defined by 17 common quality indicators. The quality of results was specified by 21 quality indicators referring to the different results of the 6 work packages. The data of all quality indicators were not gathered by an external audit, but by a self-assessment checklist completed by the lead partners of every work package team. The self-assessment checklist was somewhat modified after the first run in March 2011 to assure the feasibility of the checklist. The data of the first and the second run of the self-assessment provided the data for the first annual audit report compiled by subgroup 1. After review and approval by the PMSG, the audit report was passed to all lead partners and is now available on the internal part of the project website (see documents of WP4). The annual audit report showed the project to be mainly on track. Some small recommendations were given to support the further working processes. All WPs were asked to read and discuss the annual audit report and the recommendations and where appropriate implement changes.

In January 2012 and again in June 2012 the subgroup 1 sent out the self-assessment checklist to gather the data of the 2nd annual audit report. A draft version of this second annual audit report should be ready at the 2nd annual meeting in September 2012 in Riga to discuss the ongoing activities in the project and possible recommendations for the next steps. The 2nd annual audit report will be published on the website also after approval by the PMSG.

The second task of the Quality Assurance in the NetQues Project was to review the Tuning process itself. To perform this task the 2nd subgroup was involved in the feedback process in preparation of the survey in summer 2011. The next steps at the beginning of the third year of the project are to organize the feedback process of all project partners (first step) und additionally of external experts (second step). For this purpose the draft benchmarks will be sent out to all project partners to ask them for feedback. Subgroup 2 to collate and summarize the answers and provide them to WP3. The same feedback loop will take place some months later with external experts like employers, SLT professional bodies, academic experts and so on. These two feedback loops will validate the benchmarks developed by WP3 which rely on the survey worked out by WP2. After the summer break and after the annual project meeting in September all NetQues Project partners will be invited to comment on the draft benchmarks.

So WP4 sends best wishes for a nice summer time and looks forward to receiving many, many comments and answers from all partners in autumn 2012.

Monika Rausch

WP4 lead partner (P17, Deutscher Bundesverband für Logopädie (DBL), Germany)

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WP 5: Dissemination

The aim of the Dissemination working group is to spread information about the ongoing work in the NetQues project and especially the results of it (http://www.netques.eu). Updating of the website has been ongoing. A leaflet has been printed and it can be downloaded from the web page. The project has been presented in a convention of The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) in San Diego California 2011 and at the CPLOL congress in The Hague in May 2012. Many project partners and national Speech and Language Therapist Associations have published information about the project in their national journals and presented it in their national conferences.

In the end of the project, during the year 2013, the results of the project and the interpretations of them will be published on the NetQues web page but also on national level so that both Speech and Language Therapist Associations as well as Higher Education Institutions can take advantage of them. Press releases and other information are going to be published and disseminated to the Associations and Higher Education Institutions to be used in their own journals and web pages etc.

The Dissemination working group WP5 and Exploitation working group WP6 are going to work in collaboration during the last active year of the project to ensure the broad spreading of the results and make sure that the benchmarks concerning the Speech and Language Therapist Education come in to use in different European countries. The results will be presented for the 65 participants in the final meeting in September 2013 and also the relevant members of the Barroso Commission (2010-2014) will be informed.

We would like to ask all of the 65 participants to prepare to contact all the Speech and Language Therapist Associations and the Education Institutions with Speech and Language Therapist departments in your countries and send them information about the results when they are ready. In some countries it is important to contact also the politicians and civil servants in Ministry of Education and Health to enable the changes in the education systems if needed. You can also already now plan your own national Open Forum where you can tell about the results of this project.

Pirkko Rautakoski
WP5 lead partner (P24 Åbo Akademi University, Finland)

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WP 6: Tuning stage 3 Exploiting project outcomes

During and especially at the conclusion of the project WP6 has to make sure that the results are widely spread and used throughout Europe. Work Package 6 is at the moment collecting contact details of significant organizations to whom we will send information about the results of the NetQues project. We are endeavouring to have the addresses in all European countries. For the members of WP6 this is a great challenge, since we don't speak all the different languages. This is why we have asked help from many people in different countries.
We are grateful that so many people are willing to help! Thanks for that!
As soon as our contact list is ready, it will be published on the NetQues website.

In the last year of the NetQues project WP5 (Dissemination) and WP6 (Exploitation) are collaborating very closely. In the Annual Meeting in Riga in September 2012 final plans will be made how to exploit and implement the NetQues results.

Evelijn Raven
WP6 lead partner (P48 Hogeschool Utrecht, Netherlands)
(Second from the left above, along with her team)

For the lead partners of all countries:

It is important that we disseminate and exploit the results of the NetQues project as widely as possible throughout Europe. We will therefore be approaching the lead partners of all countries to ask them to provide information regarding what types of academic, professional and client networks, exist both nationally and EU wide and if appropriate how they may be accessed. This could also lead to creation of a useful resource for sharing specific information on networking within each country or across borders.

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Click here to see the proceedings and the videos:
http://www.cplolcongress2012.eu/en

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