

## 2. Evaluation of E-Learning Virtual Campuses

### 2.1 *Aims and Scope of the Study*

The evaluation tool is the instrument used in the e-learning study in different virtual campuses and to analyse the distance learning experience in campuses selected from the partners of the project.

The evaluation tool is organized into four levels of analysis: macro-areas, actions, informative units and indexes. Each macro-area is in a single format and the tool is composed of seven evaluating formats to use, together, for each virtual campus experience to investigate.

The analysis has forecast 2 principal activities: Firstly to simplify the principal actions within every campus to extend first, the analysis, and then the services offered. Secondly, to evaluate the quality of every Macro-area indicator through the view of the multi-stakeholders to promote the recognition of all the actors involved.

In this sense, the evaluation tool addresses the fundamental question of the study - which areas of activity to extend distance learning, the degree of technological innovation and didactic quality.

The evaluation tool was divided into information units to make use of the evaluation of the campus.

Considering the analysis and the aims of the research, we have looked for the indicators that clarify the evaluation practice, the planning of the evaluation practice, the evaluation of the process, the evaluation of the results, the evaluation of human resources required for the process and finally the analysis of the users of the process.

The macro-areas have been selected after the analysis of other studies realized on activities linked to e-learning and they are based on the EASY project goals.

Each macro-area is led back to different typology of actions. The actions have been selected on a recognition realized on-line about virtual campuses' activities. Each action is distributed in informative units to select virtual campuses' experiences.

This recognition on web has permitted to realize a typical inventory of e-learning practices in virtual campuses.

The seven formats used to evaluate each campus will be equipped with a synthetic filing format concerning the experience that contains the following points:

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1. University
2. location
3. on-line address
4. studying area/course
5. offered degrees and certifications
6. experience's duration
7. short experience's description
8. short products/services' description
9. short staff and staff competences' description.

The format will be realized with an information collection by the realization of an interview to a virtual campus' witness.

The inventory has provided important elements to choose the evaluating actions.

The virtual campus is not defined *ex ante*, but it is chosen and delimited by each partner. It can be: a faculty, an athenaeum, a course or a didactic experience on-line, etc.

The evaluating macro-areas are seven:

1. Institutional actions (*plan strategies*).
2. On-line support for students (*information and orientation services, consultancy in itinere*).
3. On-line support for students (*learning*)
4. On-line support for staff
5. Technological supply
6. Management, organization, human resources (*processes/services/resources*).
7. Evaluation system's monitoring.

Macro-areas have been selected after the analysis of other studies realized on activities linked to e-learning and they are based on the EASY project goals.

Each macro-area is lead back to different typology of actions. The actions have been selected on a recognition realized on-line about virtual campuses' activities.

The virtual campus is not defined ex-ante but chosen and limited by every partner. This could be a faculty or a university or a degree course or an on-line didactic experience, etc.

This recognition on web has permitted to realize a typical inventory of e-learning practices in virtual campuses. The inventory has provided important elements to chose the evaluating actions. Each action is distributed in informative units to select virtual campuses' experiences.

Each informative units is referred to three indexes: score, quality index, target. The score, from 0 to 3, indicates the accomplishment state of the specific action, the quality index indicates the effectiveness level of the action and the target wants to investigate the users interested in that specific action.

The seven formats used to evaluate each campus will be equipped with a synthetic filing card concerning the experience that contains the following points: university, location, on-line address, studying area/course, offered degrees and certifications, experience's duration, short experience's description, short products/services' description, short staff and staff competences' description. The card will be realized with an informative collection by the realization of an interview to a virtual campus' witness.

## **2.2 Evaluative Aims of the Macro Areas**

The following describes the dimensions of the study from the instrument and the aims achieved. N.B. The instrument helps construct a working virtual campus based on the principals of e-learning, and from this the analysis of the different European campuses was based. For every Macro-area will be an explanation of the single sub-areas.

We remember that each informative units is referred to three indexes:

1. **Score:** 0 absent; 1 in start up; 2 work-in-progress; 3 realized.
2. **Target:** 1 initial students; 2 advanced students; 3 doctorates.
3. **Quality index:** it shows the quality on-line action, in each level and score.

Range of Evaluation						
<b>1.</b> <b>Institutional Actions</b> <i>(Planning Strategies)</i>	<b>2.</b> <b>Student On line Support</b> <i>(Welcome, Orientation and Consultancy Services )</i>	<b>3.</b> <b>Student On line Support</b> <i>(Learning)</i>	<b>4.</b> <b>Staff On line Support</b>	<b>5.</b> <b>Technological Endowment</b>	<b>6.</b> <b>Management, Organisation &amp; Human Resources</b> <i>(Processes, Services &amp; Resources)</i>	<b>7.</b> <b>Monitoring the Evaluation System</b>
<b>Aim:</b> Evaluate the coherence between the project and the institutional practicalities of e-learning	<b>Aim:</b> Evaluate the effectiveness & efficiency of the information, communication services to the students.	<b>Aim:</b> Evaluate the efficiency and quality of the training offers and support activities.	<b>Aim:</b> Evaluate the efficiency of staff support in terms of availability of technological & human resources	<b>Aim:</b> Evaluate the distinctive traits of the technological platform (if present) – accessibility, flexibility etc	<b>Aim:</b> Evaluate the efficiency of the administrative management and in human resources in terms of the flow of information, communication in training and teaching	<b>Aim:</b> Evaluate the effectiveness of the evaluation practices and procedures.

## Macroarea 1 - Institutional actions

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Macro-area's principle of evaluation: Analysing the coherence between the project and the institutional practices in e-learning.

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**These indicators mostly serve the analysis of the e-learning needs in terms of planning input and output, identifying integrated projects that promote the idea of a united institution.**

*1.1 Needs analysis. Analysing that actions concerning planning activities in e-learning. Researching for an institutional strategy about training in e-learning.*

1.1.a) study on e-learning needs.

1.1.b) strategic document on e-learning.

1.1.c) work groups (dedicated to the analysis) composition.

*1.2 Market analysis reference potential. Analysing that actions concernine the market analysis reference potential about users, technologies and costs.*

1.2.a) market analysis on users.

1.2.b) market analysis on technologies.

1.2.c) costs analysis.

*1.3 Human resources dedicated to e-learning. Analysing the institution's engagement in activating a riconversation and riqualfication of the human resources or in activating training processes for new resources.*

1.3.a) needs analysis concerning strategic competences for e-learning.

1.3.b) presence of human resources to promote e-learning

1.3.c) presence of human resources to plan e-learning.

1.3.d) presence of human resources for e-learning development.

1.3.e) presence of human resources for e-learning evaluation.

*1.4 Communication strategies. Analysing if the institution has put in action specific marketing policy and which are the trends*

1.4.a) realizing advertising and communication campaigns.

1.4.b) networking activities with other subjects.

*1.5 Organizational capabilities. Analysing if the institution has professional and organizational resources oriented to e-learning policies.*

1.5.a) presence of internal practices communities dedicated to e-learning.

1.5.b) presence of extra-university professional men dedicated to e-learning.

1.5.c) capabilities to manage internal and external knowledge trends

*1.6 Products certification, delivery service. Analysis of suitability in training and professional activities. This recognition in definded criteria certificates the potential of student/user: results culture.*

1.6.a) Europass

1.6.b) ECTS

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## Macroarea 2 - On-line supports for students

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Macro-area's principle of evaluation: Analysing the information, communication and assistance services (information and orientation services) in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

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**The aim of this area is to analyse the instruments of e-learning that simultaneously clarify didactic and research support and student services. Through this dimension it is possible to see if the services satisfy the aim to understand and improve the didactic process, student interaction, the structure and training offered. Through this it is also possible to analyse the collaborative instruments used in socialisation, the instrument and the virtual campus (Chat, mail etc.)**

*2.1 Information services for the students. Analysing if there are on-line actions and services for students.*

- 2.1.a) presence of detailed information on the didactic offer (technical, organizational, didactic requisites).
- 2.1.b) Human resources for managing FAQ
- 2.1.c) information about stages
- 2.1.d) presence of an help on-line (listening and reduction of abandons).
- 2.1.e) on-line information services.
- 2.1.f) on-line orientation services.

*2.2 Communication services between students and didactic and administrative staff*

*Analysing if there are services and communicating platforms able to put in connection and facilitate the dialogue between staff and students.*

- 2.2.a) on-line forum.
- 2.2.b) news.
- 2.2.c) FAQ
- 2.2.d) chat

*2.3 Presence of on-line procedures. Analysing if there are procedures to reduce bureaucracy.*

- 2.3.a) procedures for matriculation.
- 2.3.b) procedures for courses management.
- 2.3.c) procedures for lending books.
- 2.3.d) procedures for certification.

*2.4 Technical assistance services. Analysing if there are help desk services.*

- 2.4.a) monitoring and technical problems' solution.

*2.5 Financial assistance services. Analysing if the possibilities to access the financial information are guaranteed.*

- 2.5.a) costs support and monitoring for the student (financing).

*2.6 On-line linguistic support. Analysing if there are linguistic support to facilitate the intercultural dialogue.*

- 2.6.a) Presence of on-line procedures to make easier communication with users.

*2.7 Cultural Services. Analysing if there are intra and extra university's cultural information.*

- 2.7.a) link with the university's cultural services.
- 2.7.b) link with the territory's cultural services
- 2.7.c) link with other universities.

- 2.7.d) information on students' initiative concerning mobility.
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### **Macroarea 3 - On-line supports for students (learning)**

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Macro-area's principle of evaluation: Analysing the learning offer and the supporting activities' quality and effectiveness

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**This evaluates whether the provision of support instruments is right for the improvement of the preparation and can continue through the student training courses, providing advantages for teachers managing lessons and evaluating students. The aim is to analyse collaborative training environments, in existence, where everyone is part of the development of a "New Consciousness". This indicator sees if the organisation and its users have forecast some form of "learning curve".**

*3.1 Communications actions between students and didactic staff. Evaluating if the training offer concerning learning processes is guaranteed.*

- 3.1.a) communications on the learning activity's content.
- 3.1.b) communication on didactic material
- 3.1.c) communication on bibliographical support.
- 3.1.d) didactic education.

*3.2 Use of technologic platforms to empower learning. Analysing if the used methodologies satisfy the different learning processes.*

- 3.2.a) presence of different learning methodologies (e. g. home work)
- 3.2.b) personalization of on-line methodologies for learning.

*3.3 On-line training actions for the student. Analysing if the information on didactics is guaranteed.*

- 3.3.a) courses updating
- 3.3.b) news on didactic actions.
- 3.3.c) on-line library services.

*3.4 On-line services to substein studying. Analysis on on-line support and consultancy processes.*

- 3.4.a) tutoring for courses.
- 3.4.b) consultancy on the formative curriculum.

*3..5 Quality of learning monitoring Analysing if students can contribute to improve structures and learning processes.*

- 3.5.a) possibility that students can value the didactic offer (feedback in the operative process).

*3.6 On-line self-evaluation system on students' learning. Analysing if there are on-line self-evaluation tools on learning*

- 3.6.a) learning assesement ex ante in itinere e ex post.
  - 3.6.b) analysis and certification abilities.
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#### **Macroarea 4 - On-line support for staff.**

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Macro-area's principle of evaluation: Effectiveness' analysis of staff support concerning the availability of technical resources and support in analysis and valorisation of competences.

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#### **Aims to investigate the technological resources and analytical support that give more importance to skills.**

*4.1 Training actions to provide on-line actions. Analysing if staff is supported by user's services.*

4.1.a) staff needs analysis.

4.1.b) availability of guidelines in order to provide the activities.

4.1.c) information and training activities for staff.

*4.2 Permanent support actions for teachers. Analysing the effectiveness of didactic supports.*

4.2.a) technical supports (software to find information on web)

4.2.b) professional supports (presence of e-learning professional men, on –line to support the staff).

4.2.c) rooms (real and virtual) for staff sharing and interacting (e. g. on-line libraries, informative data base and images).

*4.3 Staff on-line self-evaluation. Analysing if staff can update his competences.*

4.3.a) professional and technical competence assessment.

4.3.b) on-line informative and training updates.

*4.4 Presence of a monitoring system for the didactics efficiency and the effectiveness. Presence of monitoring tools concerning didactics' effectiveness.*

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4.4a) analysis about: withdrawals, exams, courses, learning times' effectiveness.

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## Macroarea 5 - Technological supply

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Macro-area's principle of evaluation: Analysing if technological platforms have quality's peculiarities (accessibility, usability, flessibility or if they pay attention to people with handicap).

**Aims to evaluate if the e-learning facility trains rather than “teaches”. These indicators investigate how distance learning incorporates scaffolding processes according to the needs of the students. Negotiation is a fundamental aspect of communication and takes on a particular importance on the net if someone uses a tutor for any number of Communicative and interactive techniques. We have studied if the net is capable, at least theoretically, of answering most of the range of needs such as facilitating, that is, not only assistance and/or tutoring but also the socialisation between teacher and student and the certainty of a constant figure of support.**

*5.1 User friendly interface use. Analysing the usability' effectiveness of on-line technologies.*

5.1.a) presence of many different interfaces

5.1.b) range of uses

5.1.c) specific interfaces for people with handicap.

*5.2. Presence of valuation system for technical areas. Noticing the presence and the efficiency of technical system monitoring.*

5.2.a) support to develop learning.

5.2.b) daily software updating.

*5.3 Quality's technologies services. Evaluating the technologies service*

5.3.a) help on line.

5.3.b) technologies updating.

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## **Macroarea 6 - Management, organization and human resources.**

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Macro-area's principle of evaluation: Analysing the efficiency and the effectiveness of the administrative managing practices and of the human resources in connection with informative, communicative, learning and educative trends.

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**We wanted to analyse with this indicator whether the service provided information on cost and efficiency, measure the impact of the course on knowledge, beliefs, abilities (of the student and teacher), compare the effectiveness and efficiency of the different ways of distribution: evaluating the quality of the activated processes.**

*6.1 Administrative trends monitoring. Analysing the presence of an evaluation on administrative trends dedicated to e-learning.*

6.1.a) presence of a managing control in e-learning practices.

*6.2 Administrative interface services. Analysing if there are procedures for the administrative effectiveness for the targets.*

6.2. a) for students: grants

6.2.b) for teachers: salaries (payments).

*6.3 Information, training and self evaluation services for the administrative staff. Analysing if the administrative staff uses self-evaluation systems for the effectiveness of the offered services.*

6.3.a) administrative software updating.

6.3.b) information updating.

6.3.c) training services for human resources (administration, organization and management).

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## **Macroarea 7 - Evaluation system monitoring.**

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Macro-area's principle of evaluation. Analysing the entire effectiveness of the valuating practices and procedures

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**This Macro-Area, studies the multitude of data on the training process (time of use, percentage of advancement, results of tests etc). The data, once gathered and filtered, is available to the students choosing personal training paths, to the tutors assisting the students to achieve their aims and to the commitment to check and evaluate the training projects in real time.**

*7.1 On-line evaluation system monitoring Analysing the presence of an evaluation strategy concerning e-learning.*

7.1.a) tools and procedures for monitoring

7.2.b) importance of evaluation in e-learning.

*7.2 Professional man evaluating e-learning. Analysing the strategic presence of an evaluating competence.*

7.2.a) presence of professional men in evaluation

*7.3 Evaluation of links between different macroareas Analysing if the valuating actions are in an integrated course*

7.3.a) Interconnections' density and numerosity

7.4.a) Quality resources supporting learning monitoring

*7.4 Analysing if there are monitoring practices on human and technologic resources dedicated to e-learning*

7.4.a) possibility that students can value the didactic offer (feedback in operative process).

7.4.b) monitoring on the methodologies and platforms' obsolescence

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7.4.c) monitoring of the obsolescence of staff competences.

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## 2.3 Evaluation of the Macro-Areas by Country

Below are the results of the application of the evaluation tool.

In these tables the figures refer to the evaluations made from each of the following. 48 campuses and linked to the 6 countries of reference. In the following table (Tab. 1) are the campuses from every country involved in the research (for details on specific campuses involved see Chapter 1).

**Tab. 0.1 Virtual Campuses Analysed**

Country	Number of campuses
Belgium	10
Spain	11
Hungary	3
Italy	8
Poland	4
United Kingdom	10
Total	46

Table 2 (below) analyses institutional actions. Regarding the first Macro-Area, institutional action, the campuses are generally in a state of “work in progress”. On average the results seem positive. Most responded “Good”.

**Tab. 0.2 Macro-Area 1 “institutional action”: The complete evaluation of the 7 sub-areas of the 6 countries studied.**

	Need Analysis	Analysis of market potential	Human Resources dedicated to eLearning	Communication strategy	Organizational capabilities	Products certification, delivery service	Institutional support to build virtual communities
Belgium	Work in progress	Start up	Realized	Start up	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress
Spain	Start up	Work in progress	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Start up
Hungary	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Absent	Work in progress
Italy	Realized	Work in progress	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Start up
Poland	Realized	Realized	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress
United Kingdom	Start up	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Absent

Looking still at table 2, regarding every sub-area we can note that the weakest area is certification. Probably the university institutions are fine tuning, setting up structures and e-learning skills (most activities carried out) but still can not manage to standardise the processes and results.

Remember that this sub-area is formed by Europass and ECTS (for definitions see 1.1.2). Dissatisfaction with the progress is further confirmed by the evaluation of this sub-area as “insufficient”. Which perhaps can be attributed to unfulfilled expectations in respect to the technical innovations offered.

Regarding the countries, note, however, that the situation is more developed in Poland where the campuses considered the actions of this Macro-Area as either “realized” or “excellent”

The Student Support Macro-Areas are analysed in tables 3 and 4. In the first study – Support, in the second – E-learning.

**Tab. 0.3 Macro-Area 2 “on line support for students – communication and assistance”: The complete evaluation of the 7 sub-areas of the 6 countries studied.**

	Information services for the student	Communication services between students and academic and administrative staff	Presence of online procedures	Technical assistance services	Financial assistance services	Online linguistic support	Cultural services
Belgium	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Realized	Start up	Work in progress	Work in progress
Spain	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Start up	Start up
Hungary	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Absent	Start up
Italy	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Start up	Work in progress
Poland	Realized	Realised	Work in progress	Realized	Absent	Work in progress	Start up
United Kingdom	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress	Start up

Regarding the second area, On-line Support for Students, the campuses show a general state of “Work in Progress” and “Good”. Regarding each sub-area, we can note the type of support most lacking are financial assistance, linguistic support, cultural support or services (links to other universities, to cultural services of the country or university). These were judged, except in a few cases, “insufficient” or “sufficient”. As regards the countries, Poland is again the country where the most services had been realised.

In conclusion, student support seems to be an important activity, even if we note that institutional work is weak in the Linguistic, cultural and financial support sub-areas.

**Tab. 0.4 Macro-Area 3 “on line e-learning for students - learning”:** The complete evaluation of the 7 sub-areas of the 6 countries studied.

	Communication actions between students and academic staff	Use of technological platforms to empower learning	On line training actions for the student	On line services to support studying	Quality of learning monitoring	On line self-evaluation system on student’s learning
Belgium	Work in progress	Realized	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress
Spain	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress
Hungary	Work in progress	Start up	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up
Italy	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up
Poland	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Realized	Start up
United Kingdom	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress

As can be seen from table 4, the situation is equal for all the sub-areas and countries. Practically all the results were “work in progress” and “good”. Also in this case we can say that the relationship between the students in the campuses is a priority.

Table 5 (below) shows the completed Institutional work on the improvement of staff performance

**Tab. 0.5 Macro-Area 4 “on line support for staff”:** The complete evaluation of the 7 sub-areas of the 6 countries studied.

	Training actions to provide on line actions	Permanent support actions for teachers	Staff online self evaluation	Presence of a monitoring system for the academic efficiency and the effectiveness
Belgium	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress
Spain	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress
Hungary	Work in progress	Realized	Start up	Work in progress
Italy	Realized	Realized	Start up	Start up
Poland	Work in progress	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress
United Kingdom	Work in progress	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress

A variegated situation emerges from processing the data. The most advanced sub-area is Permanent support Actions for Teachers, related to the presence of software, rooms, and on-line libraries and so on, at the disposal of the professors.

Conversely, the least advanced sub-area is Staff On-line Self Evaluation related to the possibility of evaluating and updating the competence of the staff. In nearly all the campuses this sub-area was described as in the “start up” phase.

As regards the profiles of the countries, Italy presents a particular situation, in fact, while structures and information on the campuses were regarded as “fully realised”, staff monitoring and evaluation were decisively in “Start Up” (The evaluation is “good” for all the 4 sub-areas). In short we can say that the Hungarian Campuses were judged to be “sufficient” on average in this area in contrast to the other countries in which the evaluation was “good”.

In conclusion, we can assert that the most consistent institutional work predominantly revolves around the students. The actions of the teachers, that form the staff evaluations, are probably the most advanced and although provision has been made, are still in the planning stage. This is still most evident in the sub-area of On-line Staff Self-Evaluation.”

Table 6 looks at the institutional actions regarding technological support.

**Tab. 0.6 Macro-Area 5 “Technological supply”: The complete evaluation of the 7 sub-areas of the 6 countries studied.**

	User friendly service interface use	Presence of evaluation system for technical areas	User friendly learning interface use
Belgium	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress
Spain	Work in progress	Realized	Realized
Hungary	Start up	Realized	Work in progress
Italy	Start up	Work in progress	Work in progress
Poland	Work in progress	Realized	Realized
United Kingdom	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress

As seen in Table 2.6, the campuses are considered to have sufficiently invested in areas of learning services. In the study, Poland again emerged as the most advanced, followed by Spain. We can see that Hungary and Italy invested the least.

**Tab. 0.7 Macro area 6 “Management, organization and human resources”: The complete evaluation of the 7 sub-areas of the 6 countries studied.**

	Administrative process monitoring	Administrative interface services	Information, training and self evaluation services for the administrative staff
Belgium	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress
Spain	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress
Hungary	Start up	Start up	Start up
Italy	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress
Poland	Start up	Absent	Start up
United Kingdom	Work in progress	Start up	Work in progress

Looking at the table 2.7 we can see that the sub-area “Administrative Interface Services” in the campuses in Hungary and Poland are those with the least investment for planning and carrying out projects. The evaluation for all was “sufficient”.

In short we can suppose that the campuses occupy traditional fields such as learning, starting a contamination process for the development of other organisational areas such as human resources.

Table 8 shows the institutional aim of the definition of a system of monitoring and evaluation.

**Tab. 0.8 Macro area “Evaluation system monitoring”: The complete evaluation of the 7 sub-areas of the 6 countries studied.**

	On line evaluation system monitoring	Professionals in evaluation e-learning	Evaluation of links between different macro areas	Quality resources supporting learning monitoring
Belgium	Work in progress	Work in progress	Realized	Work in progress
Spain	Work in progress	Realized	Realized	Work in progress
Hungary	Work in progress	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress
Italy	Start up	Realized	Work in progress	Work in progress
Poland	Work in progress	Work in progress	Realized	Realized
United Kingdom	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress

This area appears to be well developed. In the countries observed, when not judged “realised”, the area was at least considered to be a “work in progress”. The only exception is in the Italian campuses which were still in the “start up” phase to develop on line evaluation system monitoring.

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The Hungarian campuses considered the quality of these actions “sufficient” as opposed to the other campuses that rated “evaluation system monitoring” as good.