



Lifelong
Learning
Programme



Metalinguistic Awareness Tests
in European Languages

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME A European Commission funded project
Project number 543277-LLP-1-2013-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP

MATEL

METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS TESTS IN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

EVALUATION REPORT

External evaluator: Lucilla Lopriore, Roma Tre University, Rome
Officially appointed on March, 16th, 2015, subcontracted by Statistics & Psychometrics Ltd.
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PROJECT GENERAL INFORMATION

DURATION

24 months: 01 December 2013 – 30 November 2015

18.01.2014 (Kick-off meeting) – 20.11.2015 (Final Conference on project presentation)

TEAM MEMBERS

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EVALUATION REPORT

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

The MATEL Project, as clearly stated in the Project and on the Project website, is based on a long standing research study and previous metalinguistic tests originally developed from the end of the eighties to the end of the nineties. The innovation brought up by this project lies in the aim of extending the results of the previous research studies into a European perspective by adjusting the project approach and products to different European contexts and languages, in order to meet new needs while providing a useful assessment tool in each of the countries involved in the project. In turn, the tool itself can be converted into different types of educational resources applicable to diverse curriculum areas.

1.1 Project objectives

The main aim of the MATEL Project is to provide European tests for assessing levels of metalinguistic awareness in different languages (MATs in English) and suggest possible implementations in education.

The main and multifold innovating elements of this project are synthetized in the Project website as follows:

- *1) To elaborate on a systematic basis, common to a plurality of European languages, Metalinguistic Ability Tests (English acronym: MAT), which both assess and empower a type of abilities that are pivotal for a broad spectrum of learning abilities, particularly in the language domain.*

- 2) To systematize previous scientific knowledge about these tests (Italian acronym: TAM), which have first been created and then validated in Italian language.
2a) To validate those tests which have already been translated into other languages than Italian: the Spanish and the French versions of the MATs (Spanish and French acronyms: THAM).
2a) To validate those tests which have already been translated into other languages than Italian: the Spanish and the French versions of the MATs (Spanish and French acronyms: THAM).
2b) To translate the MATs into one more relevant European language, German, starting from the intermediate developmental age, the MAT-2 (9-14 years).
- 3) To allow for multiple comparisons between levels of metalinguistic awareness in individuals with different linguistic backgrounds by using the same test in different linguistic versions: monolinguals, bilinguals of different developmental typologies, trilinguals, etc.
- 4) To allow for assessment of levels of metalinguistic awareness in L1 at different ages, in order to plan activities for empowering metalinguistic abilities and/or for predicting academic achievement in L1.

1.2 Project organisation and actions

The main actions originally entailed by the MATEL Project as stated in the project website are:

- To validate the linguistic versions of the MATs already existing, namely the French and Spanish THAMs (acronyms of the MATs in these languages) on samples of participants having these languages as their L1. In detail, the Spanish THAM-3 had to be validated under the supervision of the University of Vitoria Gasteiz on young adults, and the Spanish THAM-2 under the supervision of the University of Granada on children and preadolescents.
The French THAM-3 was to be validated under the supervision of the University of Québec à Trois Rivières on young adults.
- To translate the MAT-2 and the MAT-3 into German, under the supervision of the University of Innsbruck, as a basis for future validation and for possible translation of the MAT-1. In addition, pilot studies were envisaged for an initial evaluation of the translated tools. In order to meet these two main objectives, it was necessary to ensure the availability of the same tests in different linguistic versions of widely used European languages, on a common scientific basis, through a shared statistical procedure.

The project, as underlined by the team, aimed to act at two different levels: research and educational.

- At a research level, all the Project actions undertaken were devised within a sound methodological framework deriving from and sustained by previous research studies, and a clear research design.

- At educational level, the actions implemented and the resources made available and diffused in each country context were aimed at promoting as well as sustaining teachers' and researchers' professional development.

As also stated in the Project description, the implications for its development are:

- *To use the MATs for assessing levels of language awareness in L1 as predictors of different types of language abilities in L1, or of academic achievement in general.*
- *To use the MATs for assessing levels of language awareness in L1, L2 or L3 for comparing participants of different linguistic backgrounds on a dimension whose cognitive correlates are notoriously relevant.*

At educational level the project was meant to provide researchers, teachers and educational psychologists tools to make screenings of the levels of metalinguistic abilities of the students of a given classroom, at the individual as well as at the group level, and at a given phase of the year.

At classroom level, the project meant to:

- Provide teachers with a tool for screening strengths & weaknesses in metalinguistic abilities
- Show the interactive use of parts of the tests in didactic videos for classroom activities in order to exploit the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
- Develop materials for classroom activities focused on MLA in diverse curriculum areas.

2. EVALUATION PLAN

The multiple and powerful implications of this project demanded a specific intervention on the part of the external evaluator since it was necessary not only to check that all different actions – at both research and educational level - matched the project objectives, but that each team partner ensured the fulfilment of the project aims and that they were actually following the same protocols in accordance to the project main objectives.

The evaluator set up an evaluation plan aimed at collecting data through regular visits to the website, consultation of the documentation provided, interviews with the Project coordinator and the team members, analysis of the actions undertaken and of the different types of products developed.

2.1 Assessment criteria

The evaluator used as central assessment criteria for each relevant points:

- the fulfilment of the tasks and of the actions planned
- the accurate representation of the processes enhanced
- the availability and the relevance of the documentation provided on the website
- the relevance of the dissemination actions undertaken in each partner country
- the relevance and implications of research results
- the validity and availability of the educational resources developed and the potential for future development.

2.2. Evaluation Objectives

In response to the development of the Project actions, the evaluator set the following objectives:

Objectives

- Learning about the project
- Identifying major actions undertaken until March 16th by the team members in each country
- Monitoring the Project actions undertaken after March 16th
- Monitoring the Work Plans development (on March 16, 6 of the 11 WPs had already been developed)
- Monitoring the website organisation (first set up in June 2014)
- Analysing tests, reports, publications and educational resources
- Meeting the Project Coordinator on a regular basis in order to be informed about actions and provide feedback and/or suggestions
- Investigating the Project team main coordinators' opinions on the project in order to gain their point of view on its implementation and on the implications at educational level in their own countries.

2.3 Actions

The following actions were set up and carried out by the evaluator:

- monitoring the development and implementation of the project, of all the documentation and of its products (tests, translations, videos, publications, reports, events, minutes, Newsletter etc.) as well as the public presentations as planned in the WorkPackages and as carried out in different countries also through the use of media communication (website, newsletter, Facebook pages, Twitter etc.);
- monitoring the development of the MATEL website;
- regularly meeting with the project coordinator in order to be informed about the project development stages and the actions undertaken in order to fulfil the project main aims;
- identifying strengths and weaknesses of the project and of its main components;
- checking structure and completion of the Working Packages;
- control the fulfilment of the project aims and of its completion.

While some of the above points are transversal to the whole evaluation process (EP), some were specifically related to the three stages of the evaluation, namely:

Stages of the actions

First stage: 16 March 2015 - 15 May 2015

Second stage: 16 May 2015 - 30 August 2015

Third and final stage: 1 September – 30 November 2015

During the EP first stage:

- The analysis of the documents produced before the evaluator's appointment, ie before the first stage of the EP;
- The observation of the website development;
- The analyses of the numerous presentations as carried out by the team components in different countries (at that period, it concerned Spain, Canada and Italy);
- The analysis of the development of the educational videos.

During the EP second stage:

- The monitoring of the overall implementation of the project;
- The analysis of all the documentation and of its products (tests, translations, videos, publications, reports, events, minutes, Newsletter etc.) available on the website;
- The detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the Project communication tools (Newsletter, Facebook pages, Twitter, minutes of the meetings etc.)

During the *EP third and final stage*:

- The analysis of the final reports;
- The analysis of the research results (in a Special Issue of the *Rivista di Psicolinguistica Applicata /Journal of Applied Psycholinguistics*. 2015. A short version, *The "MATEL" Project: Research results*, is available in the public section of the MATEL website: www.matelproject.com. The full version will be available in the private access section of the website);
- The analysis of the educational products;
- The analysis of the Final Conference organisation and implementation;
- Evaluation of Project partners' degree of satisfaction, their view of the Project implementation and as well as its future perspectives in their respective contexts;

All through the three stages:

Meetings with:

- a) the Project Coordinator
- b) the Project Team to provide regular feedback and advice.

Meetings dates:

- March, 07, 2015, Rome first informal contacts with the Coordinator and the new responsible for the Quality WP (WP4), Dr Paolo Illiceto (P2).
- March, 13, 2015, Rome, Team in-person meeting.
- March, 16, 2015: Meeting with Dr P. Illiceto, Legal representative of S & P Ltd for the contract signing.
- March, 22, 2015, Toronto (Canada), (AAAL Sonia El Euch's & Maria Antonietta Pinto's presentations of research on the metalinguistic tests associated to MATEL)
- April, 03, 2015, Rome, with project coordinator
- May, 05, 2015, Rome, with project coordinator
- June, 11, 2015, Rome, (one of the MATEL products presentation at Rome, La Sapienza)
- June, 13, 2015, Rome, with project coordinator
- September, 07, 2015, Rome, with project coordinator
- October, 02, 2015, Rome, with project coordinator
- November, 20, 2015, Rome Project Final Conference.

a) Meetings with the Project coordinator

There were several face-to-face meetings with the Project coordinator - particularly in the first part of the project – as foreseen in the evaluator's contract, one official meeting with the Team members, and the evaluator participated to 3 public events where MATEL team members were presenting in international conferences: one in Toronto, Canada, at the American Association of Applied Linguistics Conference, and two in Rome, at University La Sapienza, where one of the project's products was presented, and the Final Conference was held.

The individual meetings with the Project Coordinator were aimed at checking any relevant information, updating on publications and products, discussing strengths and weaknesses of the project related to its different stages and, if necessary, providing advice.

b) Meetings with the team

The meeting with the team partners was very useful in order both to get a clearer picture of the project structure, to get to know the partners in person and to gain a better understanding of the team dynamics. At that stage of the Project there were still numerous pending businesses in terms of actions to be undertaken, since the first assessment from the European Agency (end of January) had provoked some anxiety among the team.

As an external observer, the evaluator was able to witness the capacity of the team members to overcome these difficulties and to redefine the following steps of the project promptly and efficiently. The summary of that meeting was distributed to all participants.

Evaluator's note: The evaluator was able to access the minutes of each of the in-person and Skype meetings of the team from March to November 2015. Face-to-face and Skype meetings are usually extremely useful for international teams because they provide an opportunity to clarify doubts and overcome organisational problems. This was exactly the case in the MATEL meetings.

Sources

The sources used by the evaluator for her report, some of them through private access, were the following:

- a) from the Project website:
 - Minutes of team meetings
 - MATEL Newsletter
 - MATEL Work Plans
 - MATEL Team didactic videos
 - MATEL Team public presentations in workshops & conferences
 - MATEL Team publications (those available on the website)
 - MATEL Reports (Dissemination, Management, Exploitation, Quality Plan, Educational Resources)
 - Other educational resources & products
- b) from other sources:
 - FACEBOOK pages: Granada and Rome (also linked to the website)
 - MATEL partners' evaluation of Project educational implementation (Questionnaire, see Appendix)
 - MATEL Team publications (some)
 - TWITTER (also linked to the website).

3. ASSESSMENT

The evaluation of the project was based upon the analysis of the products and of the procedures at both research and educational level, taking into consideration three main aspects:

3.1 Project main aims fulfilment

3.2 Project diffusion

3.3 Perspectives

3.1 Project main aims fulfilment

The main aim of the MATEL project was:

“to provide common European tests for assessing levels of metalinguistic awareness in different linguistic versions”.

Specifically, the Project aimed at fulfilling two main objectives:

1) Research

2) Educational

- 1.1. Validating already existing metalinguistic tests in the Spanish (THAM-2, THAM-3) and French (THAM-3) versions.
- 1.2. Translating the Italian TAM-2 and TAM-3 into German and piloting them.
- 1.2. Creating metalinguistic-based educational products:
 - 2a) Didactic Videos based on the interactive use of parts of the tests.
 - 2b) Other teaching materials related to curricular areas

Evaluation:

Question: To what extent have the above aims (1& 2) been implemented?

Sources: 1 & 2

1. Research

<i>Documentation on the website (both private and public access)</i>	<i>Electronic and paper version provided at in-person meetings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WorkPackages as described on the Application plus Reports and Work Plans.• Statistical databases of the validation (Sp. THAM-2 & Sp. THAM-3; Fr. THAM-3)• MLA test manuals (Manual of the Sp. THAM-2, Manual of the Sp. THAM-3.• Selected (for copyright reasons) parts of the German MLA tests (MKT-2 and MKT-3 in German acronym) and of the French THAM-3.• Report minutes & Newsletters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different types of publications (books, articles, see Publications section in the website) and reports.• Drafts of RIPLA Special Issue 2015/2 (in press at the moment).

2. Educational products

<i>Documentation on the website (both private and public access)</i>	<i>Electronic and paper version provided at in-person meetings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Videos (with booklets).• Guidelines for: -developing metalinguistic awareness (MLA) at university level (PPT),	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MLA exercises as classroom activities• Video Booklets

-developing forms of MLA at Junior school level, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLA exercises as classroom activities, at university level. 	
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All of the above aims (1a & 1b, 2a & 2b) were fully achieved.

All the steps of the validation process were carefully monitored by the team members and by the project coordinator as it emerges from the minutes of the meetings, from the final publications and from the documents on the website.

Evaluator's Note: The mere achievement of the above mentioned aims is not per se enough to indicate the project success.

There are three major aspects that deserve particular attention:

1. The degree of *accuracy* with which all the products have been produced;
2. The *punctuality* in responding to the challenge posed by the request from the Agency to produce richer educational materials than foreseen at Application stage;
- 3) The *richness* of the range of the educational deliverables.

3.2 Project diffusion

The MATEL Project design included several actions aimed at disseminating the Project research results and educational products – conference presentations, workshops, seminars, guidelines and publications - that were included in the *Work Packages*, particularly in the *Work Package 3 – Dissemination* and were further widened and diversified from April to November 2015, targeting different types of audiences.

The main diffusion tools were the Project Website and the Facebook pages.

Questions:

- How far has the process of diffusion of MATEL research results and educational products been activated and implemented?
- How far has the diffusion been implemented in the Project partners' countries?
- And in other countries?
- How far have all the products been completed?

Sources:

1. Research

Documentation on the website (both private and public access)	Electronic and paper version provided at in-person meetings
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All tasks foreseen in the *Work Package 3 – Dissemination* and reported in the Dissemination Report, have all been completed and accurately described in the documentation provided and available on the website.

Evidence is in the Newsletters, in the seminar and Final Conference programs, in the Power Point presentations and in the publications.

The diffusion of the MATEL Project was fully carried out by the team members who used all the main tools of communication available.

All the *Work Packages* have been fully revised and accurately completed by the team, in particular it is worth noting the extreme care paid to the diffusion of information and to the quality of communication reports. All presentations, seminars or workshops, were documented both as materials available to the recipients and as reports of the events as such. Participation to these events – whenever possible – has been documented by means of signatures, pictures or videos as well as reports that contributed to provide the team members feedback on the event.

The evaluator considered those as evidence of the impact and indicators of quality, since too often research projects do not fully represent all the actions undertaken and the language used is often too technical for the general public. All information needed has been regularly, even if at different times of the Project, posted both in the website and in the Newsletter.

Evaluation of the MATEL Project communication tools

The team has since the beginning of the project made a point in making all the components of the project available to all stakeholders through different forms of communication easily accessible also by researchers and educational authorities not directly involved in the project: website, newsletter, Facebook pages, Twitter, videos, presentations and publications. The evaluator has monitored since the beginning the availability of the documentation on the website.

In a few cases not all documentation was produced right at the moment of its production, but later on, particularly in the months of May and June, the publication of all documents followed a regular trend.

Website

The website had been set up before the evaluator started her work (March 2015), so comments in this report are related to the period after March.

Since March the website has been continuously updated all through the project with a definite increase of materials availability in the last three months of the project. The evaluator was able to access both the private and the public access of the project website since the beginning of the contract to monitor every week how the different steps of the project were developed as well as check all the documents (presentations & publications) that were gradually inserted. Most documentation was easily accessible and downloadable.

Websites are natural tools for dissemination. In the case of the MATEL website, the careful management of the website has allowed both the team components and the different stakeholders, external members or visitors to keep updated on the project development while being able to read the documentation accompanying each action.

The website is user friendly and offers both students and researchers the opportunity to be updated on MATEL progression. The evaluator regularly expressed appreciation of the way the website was organised and encouraged the Coordinator to sustain and further develop MATEL website in terms of dissemination of the Project materials (videos, Power point presentations, publications etc.) and of research reports.

The Educational resources, MAT 2 and MAT 3 Didactic videos are among the most relevant and useful sections of the website in terms of their potential for diffusion because they fulfil one of the aims of the Project, ie, to disseminate the tests and the approach in the most accurate way. These

sections are 'user friendly' and they offer the opportunity even to 'lay' people to understand the approach and the educational and training implications in different contexts.

Another useful tool are the PP presentations since they offer an opportunity to grasp the main notions underlying the tests.

If, at the beginning, there were some drawbacks and the website did not always offer all materials or a user friendly access, now at the end of the Project, the website is complete and provides a rich variety of all the Project documents and publications. What might still be needed is a set of sections where individual MATEL Products are presented with specific guidelines – in all languages - for perspective users and for Educational authorities. Working language for general guidelines has in many cases been English and Spanish.

Facebook Pages

The Project Facebook pages made the project public on the social networks and sustained the diffusion of the project actions. It would be advisable, now at the end of the project to keep the FB page open and to start country specific pages in different languages.

Newsletter

The newsletter has proved a very powerful tool for communication among the team members and for the general public. It came out later in the project time line, but perfectly served the purpose of informing stakeholders. It is well organised and fully informative.

Publications

Publications concerning different implementations of the project actions have been regularly uploaded by individual partners on the website and some are downloadable from the website. The MATEL team partners have all extensively written about topics significantly related to MLA and about the project implementation in their countries. All articles involving statistical processes, quantitative research, have undergone peer review.

The asset of this section of the website is the presence of a set of bibliographical references in the field of metalinguistic awareness that might become a reference point for future research studies in the same field. In order to reach this aim, what might be needed is a general guideline to all publications aimed at guiding anyone interested in the field, specifically with an annotated bibliography. This would help overcome the risk of reaching out only part of those scholars and researchers who are interested in different implications of the study.

Conference/Seminar presentations

All MATEL project partners have been involved in the implementation of the project actions and in the different forms of dissemination through seminars and/or conference presentations. Most Power Point presentations or reports have been loaded on the website and are at the moment accessible and downloadable.

Both seminars and conference presentations were geared at general public as well as specialised audiences. This choice of different audiences was justified by the need to reach out educators, teachers, scholars and curriculum developers, but it was also conceived in a feed forward perspective aimed at providing feedback to those contexts where the tests had been administered. The South Tyrol case is a special case in this respect. What the school staff and the principals particularly appreciated was the face-to-face meeting mode, the user friendly language used in the presentation, and the relevance of the results reported. This modality was also employed when presenting the MATEL Project at two international schools in Rome, the Swiss school (vehicular language: German) and the Lycée Chateaubriand (vehicular language: French).

Interview with the Team partners

Themes:

- Opinion about the project: Pros, Cons, Strengths & Weaknesses, Gut reaction to the project as an individual and as a team member.
- Implications for the implementation of the project findings in their countries (difficulties foreseen, advantages, areas, etc)
- First priority action in your country context
- Actions in Europe? What? Which areas?
- Concerns and strengths in multilingual classes
- Implications for teacher education

The responses gathered via the questionnaire highlighted the positive response that each partner received in their context in terms of usefulness of the research data, of the educational products and of the future perspectives foreseen in each country and across countries.

Asked about the possibility of disseminating both the research findings and the educational products all partners responded positively and identified the stakeholders for the implementation.

Partners' self-evaluation of the project implications and strengths well complemented the overall positive evaluation of the whole project.

3.3 Perspectives

As in all Research Projects, the final outcomes of the project are the implications of the research findings/results in terms of further research as well as the exploitation of the project products in terms of further exploitation or of the creation of new products. The Perspectives of the MATEL Project pertain to the *WP 4 Exploitation*

Sources:

WP 4 Exploitation (May to November) including: Final Conference organisation, *all* initiatives from the partners for exploiting the results of both research and educational products.

Evaluator's attendance at the final conference

From the website: Work Plan of WP4 ; all documentation about the final conference Ppts, minutes, Newsletters, Posts on Coordinator's Facebook pages.

Other documentation received in in-person meeting with coordinator:

- Electronic/paper documentation in meetings;
- Signed agreement with Portuguese universities,
- Multidisciplinary Project grant (La Sapienza),
- Commitment from the university of Laval- Québec and of UQAM Université du Québec à Montréal, for the translation into Farsi,
- Invitation to the whole MATEL Team from the UQTR (Université du Québec-à Trois Rivières) – Canada, to join the LERTIE (*Laboratoire pour les Études et Recherches Transdisciplinaires et Interdisciplinaires en Éducation*).
- Call for paper for the 2016 Special Issue of the RIVISTA DI PSICOLINGUISTICA APPLICATA / JOURNAL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLINGUISTICS on *Metalinguistic Awareness in Bimodal Bilingualism*, Co-edited by Maria Antonietta Pinto & Pasquale Rinaldi. The initiative combines the fields of two different LLP Projects, namely MATEL

(Coord: M.A. Pinto) and the Sign MET (Coord: P.Rinaldi), funded in the same period (2013-2015).

UPCOMING COMMITMENTS

1. Research:

- Exploitation of the MLA tests in Portuguese: Signed agreement with 2 universities in Portugal for piloting the already existing Portuguese versions of the MLA tests 2&3 (Port. TAM-2 & TAM-3).
- Translation of the English TAM-3 (Titone, Pinto, Trusso, 1999) into Farsi (Persian) at the University of Laval, Québec (Prof., S.Saif), University UQAM, Montreal (Prof. Mohammad Rahimi), S.Eleuch (UQTR) : official commitment.
- Applicability of the MLA tools to bilingual deaf subjects.
- Development and piloting of MLA-based linguistic materials for the Rome SAPIENZA Multidisciplinary Project in classrooms (see educational level, below).

2. Educational level

- Project based on a 34.000 Euro grant from Rome La Sapienza (Multidisciplinary Projects) to develop MLA based linguistic materials (Project Responsible Prof. O.Floquet of French linguistics). The MATEL Project coordinator is committed to develop MLA based linguistic materials in French parallel to similar materials in German, English and Spanish.
- Invitation to MATEL partners to be part of the LERTIE (Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherches Transdisciplinaires et Interdisciplinaires), as an exchange of experiences between scholars and teachers Canada-Europe.
- Dissemination of the educational products to students in Psychology and in Language teaching and to teachers at pre- and in-service training.

Evaluator's note:

The Project team has already started widening the project action plans, particularly in terms of test translation, validation and implementation, particularly within countries using Romance languages, thus complementing already existing European projects within the Intercomprehension perspectives.

The upcoming Project commitments are clear indicators of the MATEL potential for future research studies, implementation of MLA tests in teacher education courses and the exploitation of educational products within European countries and outside Europe (Canada, and probably Latin America, given the possibility to extend the validated Spanish tests to Spanish-speaking populations).

Attachments:

Matrix of the Questionnaire

Copies of the Questionnaires filled by the Partners

Rome, 30 November 2015.

(Coord: M.A. Pinto) and the Sign MET (Coord: P.Rinaldi), funded in the same period (2013-2015).

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Evaluator's note:

The Project team has already started widening the project action plans, particularly in terms of test translation, validation and implementation, particularly within countries using Romance languages, thus complementing already existing European projects within the Intercomprehension perspectives.

The upcoming Project commitments are clear indicators of the MATEL potential for future research studies, implementation of MLA tests in teacher education courses and the exploitation of educational products within European countries and outside Europe (Canada, and probably Latin America, given the possibility to extend the validated Spanish tests to Spanish-speaking populations).

Attachments:

Matrix of the Questionnaire

Copies of the Questionnaires filled by the Partners

Rome, 30 November 2015.

Signature:

Lucilla Lopriore

