QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN

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Abstract:	
The Quality Assurance Plan described in this report defines the general approach to quality assurance and the procedures to be followed for partner communication, documentation, deliverable production, and software development. The document describes: Communication procedures between participants; procedures for the production of reports, Financial Statements and deliverables: procedures for the review and distribution of the various types of deliverables; reports, prototypes and demonstrations; procedures for risk assessment and contingency strategies; a general approach to software development quality standards.	

Revision

Version	Date	Revision

Quality Assurance Plan

Quality Approach

This Quality Assurance Plan defines the general approach to quality assurance and the procedures to be followed for partner communication, documentation, deliverable production, and software development. In particular it describes:

- Communication procedures between participants;
- Procedures for the production of reports, Financial Statements and deliverables. These procedures include document naming and version numbering protocols as well as formats to be used for various purposes. Links to the relevant templates are provided in Annex II and III;
- Procedures for the review and distribution of the various types of deliverables; reports, prototypes and demonstrations;
- Procedures for risk assessment and contingency strategies;
- A general approach to software development quality standards.

The Quality Assurance Plan is designed to provide a common framework for effective communication, documentation, deviation identification and correction, and software development throughout the project. It complements the Consortium Agreement. The main goals of the Quality Assurance procedures are:

- Establishment of documentation, reporting and communication procedures which will be followed by all partners of the Consortium;
- Documentation of the progress of the project;
- Production of high-quality Deliverables on time and specification, in accordance with the Work Programme;
- Identification of technical and commercial risks, or deviations from the Work Plan at an early stage;
- A system which allows the consortium to take any necessary remedial actions as soon as possible.

Project Quality Assurance is an important task throughout the FIRST project, in order to monitor and report on the achievements of the project objectives. For FIRST this means that the project main outputs (i.e. the system prototypes) must be designed in accordance with user validated requirements, they must be in compliance with the specification of the individual modules and they must adhere to broadly acceptable quality standards. This implies that:

- criteria and standards, by which the quality of both the development process and the resulting outputs will be assessed, must be identified;
- tools, methods and techniques to be employed in order to ensure quality have to be described;
- quality monitoring during the process must be ensured and recording compliance or deviation must be allowed for.
- The testing and evaluation of the Prototypes are the principle means of measuring the quality of the outcomes, with a task devoted to the technical performance and usability of the Prototype technologies.

Taking into consideration the overall quality policy, FIRST's work plan has been designed to provide basic mechanisms to ensure quality of the Prototype(s) as well as the quality of the outcome of specific work packages devoted to:

- User requirements (WP2)
- In-process testing activities (all WPs targeting specific development activities(WP3–6)
- Development of evaluation resources (annotated corpora and automatic evaluation software) and production of error analysis reports for the prototypes under development. (WP7)

Communication Procedures

General communication between participants

The coordinating contractor will be responsible for the management of communication within the Consortium. The majority of day-to-day information (both administrative and technical) will be transferred electronically by e-mail and by the mailing lists. There are five mailing lists, three to facilitate communication related to each of the major project objectives, one to facilitate communication related to exploitation and dissemination of project outputs, and one to facilitate general communications relevant to all project partners:

- FIRST-Obj1@FIRST-ASD.EU: Representatives of partners involved in Objective Obj-1: Derivation of a detailed and accurate description of the requirements of users with reading difficulties (WP2 and WP7);
- FIRST-Obj2@FIRST-ASD.EU: Representatives of partners involved in Objective Obj-2 and its sub-objectives 2.1-4: Implementation of core LT to convert input documents into a personalised form facilitating reading comprehension (WP3, WP4, WP5, and WP6);
- FIRST-Obj3@FIRST-ASD.EU: Representatives of partners involved in Objective Obj-3 and its sub-objectives 3.1-2: Deployment and evaluation of the LT in scenarios demonstrating its use by end users and intermediaries (WP7);
- FIRST-EDB@FIRST-ASD.EU: Representatives of partners involved in exploitation and dissemination of project outputs (WP8 and WP9).
- FIRST-General@FIRST-ASD.EU: All personnel involved in the project.

In order to reduce the volume of e-mail and ensure the ready availability of electronic documentation, the Project will maintain in the Member Area (http://www.first-asd-eu/members) a secure repository of all project documents and deliverables. Rather than circulate project deliverables to the Partners by email, the Project Manager will upload Deliverables on the Member Area and inform the partners of their availability for download. The document repository will be maintained at http://www.first-asd.eu.

Deliverables

WLV, as co-ordinating contractor, has administrative responsibility for the transmission of all deliverables to the Commission. Deliverables must be in *final draft* at least 2 weeks before the deadline, in order to undergo an internal review procedure. The co-ordinating contractor will upload the deliverable in the Member Area so that all partners can send opinions to the author. The contact persons at each partner side have to submit the deliverable for the requested work packages by the projected deadline to the project coordinator (riilp@wlv.ac.uk), who will submit all final versions of the public deliverables to the Commission and make internal deliverables available in the Member Area.

The co-ordinating contractor will upload the deliverable in the Member Area so that all partners can send opinions. Besides, one partner of the Consortium will be appointed by the Coordinator for internal peer review of the said deliverable three weeks before the due date of the deliverable via e-mail. This partner should not have been involved in the preparation of the said deliverable. The designated partner writes a short report, according to a form that will be made available by the Coordinator. All feedback provided by the internal peer reviewer and the rest of partners is forwarded to the author of the deliverable, who updates and completes it.

Four-monthly progress reports (Internal Form)

In addition to the annual report (which includes a periodic activity report, a periodic management report and a report on the distribution of the community financial contribution) and the interim progress report, WLV, in order to monitor the project, will ask the partners to fill in two internal forms – one .docx and one .xlsx (each four months in the first year).

In the .docx partners are asked to enter details of the work they have completed and the amount spent. In .xlsx the partners are asked to complete the number of person-months worked, personnel costs and amount spent on travel and other direct costs. The contact persons at each partner side have to submit the Internal Form within 15 days following the deadline to riilp@wlv.ac.uk (see Annex III)

Financial Statements & Audit Certificate

Audit Certificates

Audit certificates are required for each period when a beneficiary is claiming more than €375,000 (cumulatively). They are not required otherwise, even at end of project, so only the coordinator will need an audit certificate in this project. However, all beneficiaries should be aware that the European Commission is within its rights to request as an audit from any beneficiary, and should retain all records for five years after project end.

Audits are an eligible cost as 'management activity' (100%).

Financial Statements

The financial statement summarizes the total amount of expenses incurred by every partner at the end of every reporting period. The last financial statement will be submitted together with the audit certificate (the latter covering all the reporting periods, from month 1 to the last month of the project). The time-cycle for the preparation of Financial Statements (Summary Financial Report, Form C, Cost Budget Follow-up Table, Person-Month Status Table – Annex III) reflects the contractual requirement that complete Financial Statements must be delivered to the Commission within 45 days after the end of the reporting period (Annex II.7).

The first draft of partners' completed financial forms are to be sent via email to WLV within 2 weeks of the end of the last month of the reporting period for checking together with any additional justifications required by Annex II of the Contract. WLV will verify the draft form with the partners, by e-mail, to reach a confirmed draft electronic version within three weeks of the end of the reporting period.

Each partner will send one copy by email and one signed original paper copies by post of the Financial Statements and supporting documentation to WLV to arrive no later than four weeks after the end of the reporting period. On receipt of the complete set of paper originals, WLV will forward the financial statement together with the Annual Report to the Commission to arrive no later than 45 days after the end of the claim period. In the event that any partner fails to respect the deadlines, the Co-ordinating Contractor will submit the Financial Statements on time, without the data from the partner missing the deadlines. The costs not reported as a result will then be reported in the next Financial Statements.

Meetings

All participants will be reminded of meeting dates 30 days in advance and the meeting Chair will circulate an agenda not later than two weeks before the meeting. All necessary working documents will be uploaded in the Member Area at least five working days in advance of the meeting date.

Minutes will be circulated to the Partners no later than three weeks after the meeting. Minutes shall be deemed to be approved if no objection has been sent to the Coordinator within 15 days of the circulation of the minutes.

Document Production

Formats

FIRST provides formats with a standard visual image, to assist clear communication and comprehension. The following are the formats specified for use in partner communication, documentation, reporting, and deliverable production.

Reports and Deliverables

- Reports and Deliverables will be produced in Microsoft Word: working drafts and editable working copies will be supplied to partners as Word documents. The Project Co-ordinator will make a final release version as a PDF file. This PDF version will also be made available to partners and will be regarded as the definitive version of the Report or Deliverable.

- Cost reports will use Microsoft Excel.
- Reports and Deliverables should have a consistently styled cover sheet and structure, based on the template contained in this document (available in the Member Area). All pages should be numbered and the document identification number should be included in the footer. The identification number consists of three parts:
  - o name of the project,
  - o document type, and
  - o date of final version.

Example: FIRST_D1.1_20111231.

Financial Statements

- Financial Statements (Summary Financial Report, Form C, Cost Budget Follow-up Table, Person-Month Status Table) will be prepared using Microsoft Excel in accordance with the European Commission template.
- Audit certificates will be prepared in accordance with the European Commission guidelines and to the standards and formats set out in this document.
- Any other numerical records (such as timesheets) should be prepared using Microsoft Excel.

Logos and acknowledgements

- All reports and deliverables should carry the FIRST logo (see Annex I)
- All publications and public displays produced by the project must, in addition to the logos, carry the EU logo (available at http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=logos)
- All publications and public displays produced by the project must contain a text acknowledgement: "This project is partially funded by the European Commission under the Seventh (FP7 - 2007-2013) Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.".

Illustrations

Photographs and illustrative material for print reproductions should be supplied as 360 dpi. Photographs and illustrative material for Web use should be supplied as 72 dpi RGB, JPEG, GIF, PNG or PICT files. Each partner shall be responsible for ensuring all necessary copyright clearances for illustrative materials they use within the project involving third party material.

Timesheets

In accordance with the terms of the Contract, all partners are required to maintain proper records of time worked on the project. There is no set format for time sheets, which should accord to establish company practice. The minimum requirements are available in the financial guidelines of the EC. If necessary the co-ordinator can provide templates.

Presentations

WLV provides templates for project presentations in order to facilitate their production as well as to guarantee the consistency and quality of FIRST image. (see Annex II, available in the member area)

Document numbering

In order to have a common understanding when discussing a special document, all documents have to be assigned with a unique identifier: PROJECT_Document Type and number (See list below)_Date of version (YYYYMMDD). For example, a draft of Deliverable D1.1, produced on 10 December 2011 would be: *FIRST_D1.1_20111210*

Document Type:
D   Deliverable
4MR   4-monthly report
AC   Audit Certificate
FS   Financial Statement
YR   Yearly report
RM   Review Meeting
MN   Minutes
TS   Time Sheet
WD   Working Document, not otherwise classified

Document numbering should conform to the original Contract where applicable.
File type using standard software identifiers.
The final version should always be in pdf format.

Annex I: Logos

FIRST Project Logo

The FIRST Project Logo is shown below. Electronic copies of the logo as well as background images for dissemination material will be placed in the project Member Area for download and use by the project partners.

EU Logo

As specified in Annex 2 of the Grant Agreement, the European emblem must be included on the cover page of all leaflets, brochures, books, press and audiovisual material, etc. Emblems for download and a graphics guide for use are available at http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/flag/index_en.htm.

Seventh Framework programme Logo

The official logo is available from http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=logos and can be included in addition to the European emblem (although this is not a requirement of the Grant Agreement).

Annex II: Document Templates

Front Page for Deliverables

To match the first page of this document. Available at <link>

Presentation Template

Available at <link>

Annex III: Project Monitoring Documents

WLV, in order to monitor the project, will ask the partners to fill in an Internal Form "FIRST-reporting" (each four months in the first year).

The internal-form contains one sheet for each partner, and each sheet is divided into 12 x 3-month periods to cover the whole of the project. For each period, partners must supply a total of person-months worked. The person-month rate supplied by each partner at the proposal stage has already been entered.

The total person-month figures should be backed up by timesheets for each month.

Below this is a box in which to enter the total spend on other direct costs (e.g. travel, equipment). After these figures have been entered, indirect costs and total spend/contribution, will be totalled automatically.

Please note that equipment charges are subject to depreciation, and that for items costing less than €5,000, the depreciation is usually 100%.