

Executive Summary of the Evaluation of the FORLAN Project

December 2022

This project is led by the **Navarre Employment Service (Servicio Navarro de Empleo)** in a public-private collaboration:



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1. Introduction

The aim of the European experimental project FORLAN was to test new learning strategies within existing basic skills learning provision, tailored and adapted to the needs and context of low-skilled/low-qualified adults and with a focus on developing literacy, numeracy and digital skills. This project has been led by the Navarre Employment Service in partnership with the Department of Education, the Department of Social Rights, the Navarre Government Social Reality Observatory, the State Employment Public Service, the ANEL business associations, and the Construction Work Foundation.

The training was directed mainly at three profile groups:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Minimum income recipients • In a labor or active inclusion itinerary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female workers from companies with a certain degree of digital transformation in the construction, services, and industrial sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers with temporary and precarious jobs, entering and leaving the labor market in short periods of time and frequently complementing their salary with the Minimum Guaranteed Income

FORLAN incorporated changes in the different phases of basic skills training for adults to make it more accessible and efficient for people in vulnerable situations. In practice this has meant that:

- ↗ It is **adapted to the person**: it identifies the dispositional, situational, and institutional barriers a person may have to receiving training and applies specific resources to overcome them (transportation, work-life balance, etc.).
- ↗ It is **flexible**: this is a hybrid model that may be in-person or virtual and offers a flexible timetable.
- ↗ It includes **personalized accompaniment and follow-up**: through a reference person who is always available for the student.
- ↗ It includes **emotional care**.
- ↗ The training is divided in **modules**, to be able to add value to the previously acquired lessons and streamline with the learning process.
- ↗ **The companies are involved** in various phases of the process, both in the identification of needs and the generation of knowledge.
- ↗ The **contents** are **practical** and are **adapted to the needs of the local market**.

In total, the project reached 228 people who were identified and recruited in the first phase, of whom 111 registered for the training and finally 96 people started the training in the Tudela and Pamplona areas. Regarding **nationality**, it is important to indicate that 58% of people come from countries outside of the European Union community, from more than 19 countries located mainly in North Africa, South America, Central America, and East Africa. Regarding sex, we see **greater participation from women** in almost all groups, representing 66% of the total, with 54% foreign women from non-EU community countries. Moreover, 38%

of the total number of people who start the training receive or are carrying out the process to receive Minimum Guaranteed Income.

The FORLAN project, due to its innovative nature, awards special relevance to the evaluation project as this process aims to generate evidence on the success of the experiment focused on the development of learning strategies for basic skills for employment. Likewise, this evaluation is framed in the Government of Navarre's commitment to the evaluation of public policies as a transparency and accountability exercise and that materializes in its public evaluation system¹.

This document summarizes **the executive summary of the external evaluation of the FORLAN project** produced by the consulting company, Fresno, the right link, during the period from September 2022 to December 2022.

The current evaluation responds to the following **objectives**:

- ↗ To get to know the functioning of the main innovative processes.
- ↗ To identify success factors and obstacles.
- ↗ To get to know the evolution of the participants in both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects.

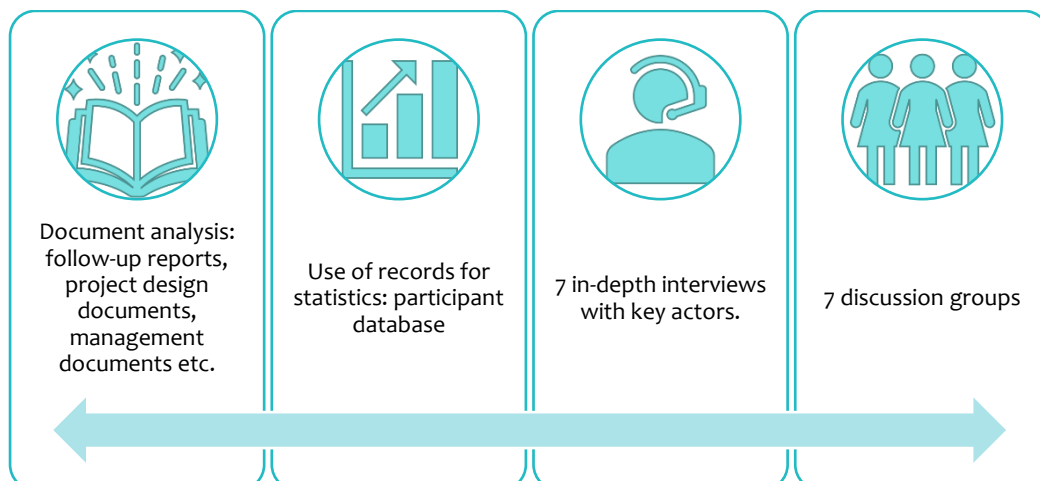
¹ Government of Navarre. Public Evaluation System in Navarre.
<http://www.navarra.es/NR/rdonlyres/3244F835-70BF-4A8A-B6BE-C561DD1FDD0F/205994/ElsistemapublicodeevaluacionenNavarra.pdf>

2. Methodology

To respond to the indicated objectives, a process and results evaluation has been developed taking into account the results achieved with the target group and the processes used during the implementation of the project. In operative terms, it has been a **mixed evaluation** in which the FORLAN coordination team has played a very relevant role in each of the project's phases, especially in the validation of the design and tools, in the collection of information through their own tools and in the organizational and logistical support of field work.

Processes	Design of the initial competency assessment system and the learning and training strategies
	-Pilot experiment (Implementation)
	Attainment of results and evaluation
Results for people	-Improved employability and professional development
	Acquisition of basic skills
	Improved ability to manage the responsibilities and challenges of daily life
	Increased motivation to upgrade their education levels (reduce drop-out rates)
	-Improved self-image, self-esteem, and empowerment
	Greater trust in public administrations, especially in the public support provided by employment and education institutions
Impact on the system	Improvement of the training offer for adults, introducing a more efficient basic skills training
	-Consolidation of the cooperation systems between the Department of Social Rights and Education and the different areas (for example: employment, social services)
	-Promotion of a future plan to improve the basic skills of adults connected to employment in Navarra and Spain

The collection and analysis of information has been based on the following quantitative and qualitative techniques:



The development of the evaluation has been marked by high uncertainty and this has had implications, both for the evaluation's scope and its operational deployment:

- ▶ **The temporary scope of the evaluation is limited to the project execution period.** As a result, it is not possible to measure the medium- and long-term effects that the project will have on the participants and, thus it is not possible to evaluate improvements in terms of employability, access or improvement of employment.
- ▶ **The participant groups are small.** The data resulting from the analyses of these groups are not statistically significant, thus conclusions cannot be applied to similar contexts. Especially the data from the application of the non-cognitive aspects' questionnaire, which was applied to all participants who started the training, but the majority have not been registered, hence there are only starting and end data for eight people which indicates a sharp reduction with respect to the total number of participants.
- ▶ Due to the **high incidence of COVID-19** in Navarre during the start of the project, the FORLAN team has had great difficulties in implementing the project based on the initial design, which has had a direct effect on the scope of the evaluation that has been modified to adapt to these changes. Specifically, the main consequences have been the delay in collecting information and a significant loss of the sample.

3. Main conclusions and recommendations

3.1. Main achievements

1. **The FORLAN project is based on a good identification of needs** and a strategy coherent with the objectives to be achieved, with a very robust strategic and conceptual level of the model. At the operational level, there is less definition of the roadmap and responsibilities.
 - ↗ *For similar projects, in the design phase we recommend expanding on the real risks of the project, the mitigation methods, the feasibility of applying the proposed solutions, considering the possibilities of the internal functioning systems of the administrations. It is also recommended that a monitoring system be designed to identify any discrepancies with the initial planning in a timely manner.*
2. **Innovation in the training phase through a multi-dimensional strategy that combines different channels and implicates several actors has had positive effects on access to training for** people who are generally far from the administration's official communication channels. For illustrative purposes, we should highlight that of 74 of the 90 people who participated in the initial Tudela event stated their interest in participating in the training and registered. When starting the training in the Pamplona area, the arrival of a new wave of coronavirus prevented an event similar to Tudela being held and, thus the training was carried out through smaller-sized groups. This double training strategy has made it possible to compare the effects of both and conclude that, while in relative terms the training in Pamplona through groups achieved a greater percentage of

adherence, in general terms, we consider that the training via the Tudela event was more effective as it allowed for greater use to be made of the resources.

↗ *In a scenario with greater coverage of places in adult education centers, we recommend transferring some of the lessons created in the Tudela training event to continue to recruit people with complex social situations.*

3. The initial skills assessment has been effective in identifying people's starting point in terms of skills and the barriers that may make it difficult for them to continue with the training. Among the most common barriers, the following must be highlighted: *fear of not passing the training, the student's self-sufficiency (N=29), the perception that the level is very high and there is no support (N=32), lack of time (N=30), family responsibilities (N=19).* This initial assessment has also made it possible to accurately identify students' training needs and establish a personalized itinerary. While the data obtained through this assessment has been useful for the project coordination team, it has been noted that their use could have been more effective if the teaching team had been more involved.

↗ *We recommend a more precise definition of the support plan for each person defining the objectives, time periods, and staff responsible for their follow-up. For this, the teaching team could undertake a greater role.*

4. The modularization of the project has turned out to be one of the most powerful aspects to motivate students to carry out and adhere to the training, giving value to their initial skills and to reduce stress during the learning process: **30 people** certified at least one module. Module certification has been especially significant in digital skills, where 19 people have certified this module.

5. Timetable modification has been one of the aspects most valued by the participants, as the first of the barriers they encounter when they wish to undertake training has been removed; it is in fact one of the most successful mitigation measures when it comes to address one of the most frequent access barrier.

6. The personalized follow-up has been key for motivating people to continue with the training and has been one of the aspects most valued by students. The effectiveness of this follow-up has highly depended on the personal competences of the Forlan's team but was hindered by the administration's lack of agility in recruiting staff, revealing instability in the intensity of the support.

↗ *For similar projects, we recommend that staff recruitment instruments be made more flexible in order to incorporate criteria related to transversal skills such as active listening, empathy, a person-centered approach and support for the development of life projects.*

7. Participants' continuity in the has followed a similar trend in all skills (numeracy, literacy and digital), which has been marked by a strong fall since the registration phase until the first module exam as almost half the participants dropped-out from the training in this first phase. From the first module exam, continuation with the training remains more stable (around 70% of participants manage to reach the final module exam)

which reflects the fact that the link to the training is strengthened after passing the first test, which suggests that increased motivation and self-improvement is a determining factor in continuation with the training.

8. **In contrast, participant's success rate is high for all skills (numeracy, literacy and digital).** Breaking down by skills, in numeracy 85% of the people who participated in the training passed the accreditation. This rate increased to 96% and 100% in the case of literacy and digital skills, respectively. These data reflect a high commitment and strong dedication to the training by the participants.
9. **Regarding the results of the project in other non-cognitive aspects, it is worth highlighting a greater self-perception: the shared perception of the participants increased their self-confidence, and their spirit of self-improvement was higher at the end of the project.**

3.2. Aspects for improvement

10. The flexibilization of training has been particularly effective in terms of flexible schedules and modularization of training. Moreover, **the virtual classroom has been helpful for accessing some training content, but it has not made it possible to offer a chance to follow the training that is equivalent to classroom training.**
 - ↗ *We recommend the establishment of some guidelines on the recognition of the use of virtual classrooms with class attendance and informing the teaching and student team.*
 - ↗ *We recommend that virtual teaching content be designed with the same methodology that is followed in in-person classes and, where possible, by the same person who teaches them in person.*
 - ↗ *For similar projects, we recommend that staff recruitment instruments be made more flexible in order to incorporate criteria related to transversal competencies such as active listening, empathy, a person-centered approach and support for the development of life projects.*
11. **The contingency fund, considered one of the pillars of the project, has had minimum coverage, due in part to structure and circumstantial reasons such as the requirements of the application itself, which did not allow cash to be made available to students.** In practice, this instrument has only been able to be used to support family care and coaching sessions. As a result, there has been certain frustration for some participants and, although it is not possible to estimate the net effect, we estimate that the low application of the contingency fund may have had a de-incentivizing effect in some people, thus it has made it difficult to finish the training.
 - ↗ *For similar projects, we recommend an accurate feasibility study on the application of the instrument, following the specific requirements of each department. Following this study, we suggest offering detailed information to the participants on the support conditions that they will receive and the ways to claim it if not provided in the indicated conditions and time periods.*



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