Smooth Sailing for STEVIN: Essential Speech & Language Technology for Dutch

Peter Spyns¹,² & Elisabeth D’Halleweyn¹

¹: Nederlandse Taalunie (pspyns@taalunie.org, edhalleweyn@taalunie.org)
²: Vlaamse overheid – dept. Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie (Peter.Spyns@ewi.vlaanderen.be)

What:

• HLT R&D programme (2005 - 2012) with 3 targets:
  
  Goal 1: promote strategic research and develop essential resources for Dutch that are missing
  
  Goal 2: raise awareness of HLT results and stimulate the demand of HLT for Dutch products
  
  Goal 3: support the maintenance and distribution of HLT resources

• organisational essentials
  
  * coordinated by the NTU
  
  * jointly funded by the Netherlands (7,6 M€ - 66%) & Flanders (3,8 M€ - 33%): 11,4 M€ in common pot
  
  * common governance: same submission, evaluation, monitoring, acceptance, funding, IPR, ... procedures for all participants

• monitoring and evaluation essentials
  
  * two site visits per project by members of the STEVIN programme committee
  
  * a scientific mid term review by the STEVIN international assessment panel
  
  * an overall final evaluation by an external consultant (the Technopolis Group)

Programme logic:

Mission

Strategische terugkeer van de Nederlandse taalsector in zijn relaties met ICT op het gebied van kennis en onderzoek

targets

1. adequate infrastructure and financial support for research
2. HLT % growth for Dutch
3. network and cooperation of HLT actors
4. knowledge management
5. education and training
6. adequate resources
7. policy cooperation

Activities

R&D projects
data infrastructure
data sharing

Outcomes:

Targets:

All data from on-line survey:

Survey response rate:

Industry: 43.2% (21 of 65)
Academia: 56.5% (31 of 62)
Overall: 49.6% (of 127)

Expectations:

The evaluators (= Technopolis Group) concluded that

* the STEVIN programme has largely lived up to its expectations and achieved the predefined goals to a very large extent,
* the joint effort of the Dutch and Flemish governments resulted in less government spending, a higher quality of research results, less duplicated efforts and a maximum efficiency in expertise and resource allocation.

The HLT Board warmly supported the conclusions by the Technopolis Group.

They were happy with the quality of the evaluation report, though they missed a deeper analysis and stronger assessment at some points.

Conclusions:

No direct successor programme focused on HLT potentially some HLT related (local) activities in the areas of digital heritage, creative industries and social innovation

re-use and distribution of STEVIN materials by CLARIN and HLT Agency

Outlook:

Specific working group (for the HLT board) to:

* draft the evaluation assignment
* organise a call for procurement
* select an appropriate candidate
* monitor progress and approve (final) report

Evaluation method:

The Technopolis Group organised:

* desk research using many STEVIN related reports
* external scientific committee
* web site questionnaire for Flemish and Dutch HLT actors
* telephone interviews with project submitters
* face to face interviews with selected stakeholders
* comparison to base line study and other programmes
* network analysis