

# Deliverable R5.1

## EVALUATION STRATEGY & FRAMEWORK

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Active8-Planet Evaluation Strategy is a result of WP5, Active8-Planet Evaluation Studies and as such based on 1) the evaluation requirements as stated in the Active8-Planet's 'Detailed Project Description', 2) the input Active8-Planet partners provided during online consultations and 3) input from the Active8-Planet's project leader. The Evaluation Strategy defines common guidelines for the evaluation and includes extensive evaluation tools which partners can either fully apply or adapt to their local program of work. Consortium members are given flexibility in adjusting the evaluation to their own context, whilst also setting standards for information to feed into the overall evaluation.

Alongside WP5-leader P3 'Hasselt University', an Evaluation Task Force (formed by an international evaluation leader representing each HEI partner) established shared guidelines for the evaluation. More specifically, the Task Force ensures that 1) all partners provide comparable input for the overall evaluation and that 2) requirements are compatible with (inter)national programs. The strategy outlines the steps to be taken by (inter)national Active8-Planet partnerships (between Higher Education institutions (HEIs) and Industry) to successfully collaborate throughout the execution of this strategy. These steps are suggestions and should be considered indicative. Partners can freely deviate from these steps, provided they ensure the required input for the overall strategy.

**Key words:** evaluation, planet-centered development, interdisciplinary and intergenerational co-creation, university-business collaboration, transformational learning, impact assessment

# 1 STRATEGY

## 1.1 An introduction to the Active8-Planet project

The Active8-Planet project brings together HEIs in the respective fields of *social and organizational sciences, architecture and design, business economics, physics and knowledge & technology transfer* and businesses engaged in the industries of *urban mobility, health and wellbeing in buildings, energy efficiency & circularity in built environment*. These partnerships aim at jointly developing and integrating *planet-centred development approaches* into their research, teaching, and learning practices. At the core of the project lies the idea that understanding ‘planet’ should become an indispensable part of industrial development processes, as a means to achieve practical-based education as well as new product and service categories or business strategies that truly address planet’s needs and lead to sustainable innovation. Through the development of relevant knowledge, skills and attitude, the Active8-Planet project aims at enhancing participants’ competences in supporting such sustainable innovation.

The industries of *urban mobility, health and wellbeing in buildings, energy efficiency and circularity in built environment* offer a particularly fitting context to develop and integrate the planet-centred development approaches of the Active8-Planet project. Current challenges posed by climate change and global warming are putting companies under strong pressure to profoundly transform towards carbon-neutrality and circular economy. However, currently innovation and development of sustainability solutions often proceed in silos and are mainly dominated by technical engineering, leaving societal and cultural factors underexposed. For entirely new products or services -that have the potential to considerably impact our practices and lifestyles towards carbon neutrality- to be introduced, a shift from the monodisciplinary expert mindset towards planet-centred development is required. The latter combines technical expertise with socio-cultural knowledge, insights, and rigorous ethical considerations. However, companies sometimes lack access to such interdisciplinary knowledge and a broader range of tools that would allow them a more profound understanding of societal change, required to increase the relevance and impact of their solutions or interventions.

Active8-Planet takes a case-study based approach and experiments with ‘planet-centred Learning Cycles’ in the same industrial field. The project is run by a consortium of industry representatives, HEIs and an intermediary organization based in four different countries (The Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Slovenia), involving different disciplines and different contexts. This facilitates the focused exchange of experiences and enhances the comparative potential of the project. The Active8-Planet project started 1 January 2021 and will run three years until 1 January 2024. In this period two Learning Cycles will be developed.

## 1.2 Scope

The task of WP5 is not to evaluate the Active8-Planet project as a whole, but -as stated in the 'Detailed Project Description'- to 1) prepare and execute the evaluation of the Active8-Planet approach and methodology in different case studies at the different levels; 2) concisely visualize the overall Active8-Planet evaluation objectives in an Evaluation Framework to allow quick evaluation of the extent to which different components meet the overall objectives at 'program' or '7+1 Team Project' level; 3) combine, analyse, interpret, generalize and summarize the outcomes ('Active8-Planet results') to guide the further refinement of planet-centred learning cycles; and 4) to create lessons learned, best practices and recommendations on long-term sustainable implementation and transferability of planet-centred learning cycles to other contexts and institutions.

Measuring competence is a challenging endeavour since it may be constituted by different combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Therefore, based on the project, the evaluation will aim at identifying how specific combinations of knowledge, skills and attitude contribute to competence in bridging the gap between education and industry. This, rather than pre-establishing which skills, knowledge and attitudes result in participants' competence. An additional challenge is posed by the fact that it remains largely unknown which learning processes favour the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes into competence. The Evaluation Strategy therefore takes an open approach that provides insight into the process through which competence is developed during the learning process.

### 1.3 Different levels of evaluation

The evaluation strategy is intended to evaluate the Active8-Planet learning approach, methodology and learning program implementation at three different level, as outlined in the underneath section. Figure 1 graphically summarizes the evaluation strategy at the different levels.

#### @ Metalevel

Using the Evaluation Framework, the evaluation at metalevel will be done in co-creation with all project partners at midterm and at the end of the project. The evaluation is focused on assessing whether all developed learning and teaching resources and case studies meet the objectives of the Active8-Planet project (in collaboration with WP7 Quality Assurance).

#### @ Program level

The evaluation at program level will be done at the end of each learning cycle and will concern the evaluation of the methodology and the activation model (WP3) and the evaluation of the supporting instruments and resources (WP2) that have been developed for each role (teacher, student, business, NGO). The evaluation involves all internal stakeholders of the 7+1 team projects. More specifically, each stakeholder will evaluate the resources that have been developed to support her/his role.

#### @ 7+1 team project level

The evaluation at this level concerns the evaluation of the achieved learnings, planet-centred development processes and the concepts/interventions that were developed at team level by internal and external stakeholders of the 7+1 team project. It will occur through three evaluation stages along each learning cycle. More specifically, a baseline evaluation of team composition and project plan will be executed at the beginning of each learning cycle, followed by a midterm evaluation of interdisciplinary and explorative action research, and a final evaluation of the co-created concepts and interventions at the end of each learning cycle.

Month								
Learning cycle	1			End learning cycle	2			End learning cycle
Stage	Baseline	Midterm	Final		Baseline	Midterm	Final	
<b>Metalevel:</b> To pinpoint action for environmental action and societal focus. Aligned with Active8-Planet core guiding agendas and Matrix (WP2)								
<b>Program level:</b> To evaluate Planet8 methods and strategies (WP3)								
<b>7+ 1 Team project level:</b> Evaluation of developed concepts and interventions.								
Evaluation Reports								

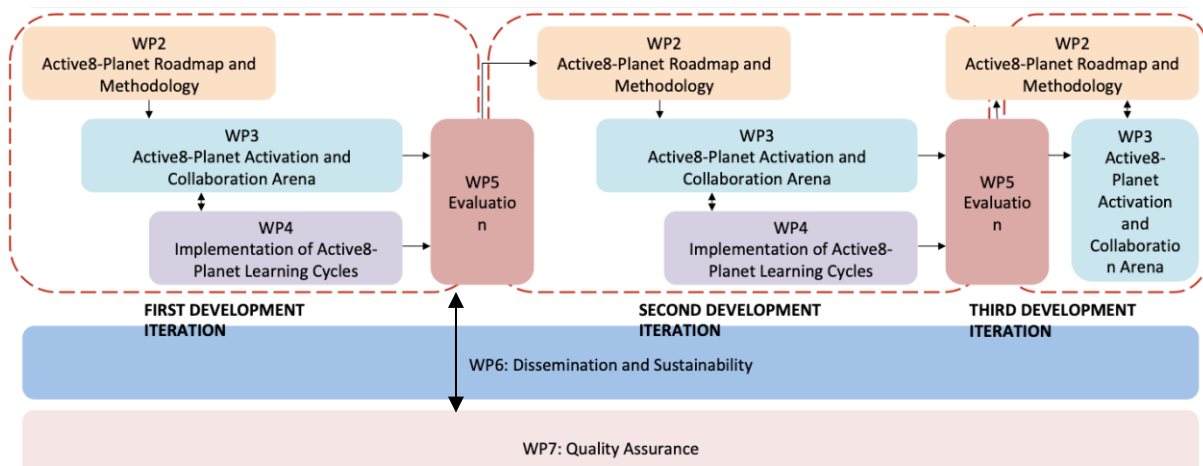
**Figure 1: Levels of evaluation**

## 1.4 Interrelations with other WPs

All project activities within Active8-Planet have been designed to involve more than one partner- ensuring the quality of the activities and their desired outcomes. This also applies to the evaluation activities within WP5. Not only do all stakeholders (students, industry professionals and faculty educators) need to actively partake in the forementioned tasks – the collaboration arena launched by WP 3 can play a role in this -, there is also an interdependency between work packages that needs to be considered for a successful evaluation within the Active8-Planet project. Figure 2 provides an overview of the interconnectedness of different work packages.

For example: Within WP2, the Active8-Planet roadmap and methodology is developed including the analysis of expected skill shortages and learning requirements of relevant participating partners. This analysis will be used as input for the development and implementation of the Active8-Planet Learning Cycles, which is the focus of WP4, used as the baseline in the evaluation studies of WP 5 and part of the dissemination and exploitation of the (preliminary) outcomes of Active8-Planet that is the focus of WP6. At metalevel WP5 and WP7 overlap.

Hence, to be able to steer towards our desired Active8-Planet (evaluation) outcomes and genuinely impact the lives of future graduates, increase the productivity of industry partners and innovate our education, all Active8-Planet partners need to effectively work together.



**Figure 2: Interrelations with other WPs**



## 2 FRAMEWORK

The evaluation framework is developed as overall touchstone for the Active8-Planet evaluation objectives to formulate supporting procedures and tools to allow collection of evaluation data in an efficient and timely way and to allow processing of evaluation results in a comparable and efficient way.

### 2.1 Elements of the evaluation framework

First, an overview of the elements of the evaluation framework is given here and summarized in Figure 3. These elements are discussed in more detail in subsection 2.3.

Evaluation should be built along the **4 Active8-Planet principles**:

- 1) Interdisciplinary and intergenerational co-creation
- 2) People-centered design
- 3) University-business collaboration
- 4) Environmental ambition and action

designed to assess the development of **4 target groups**:

- 1) Students
- 2) Faculty educators
- 3) Industry professionals
- 4) The collaboration at national level between HEIs and industry partners.

along **3 perspectives**:

- 1) Impact
- 2) Transformative learning
- 3) Process

and should be adapted to the **3 evaluation levels**:

- 1) Metalevel
- 2) Program level
- 3) 7+1 Team Projects level

One should also keep in mind that there are 2 learning cycles, each consisting of **3 evaluation moments**:

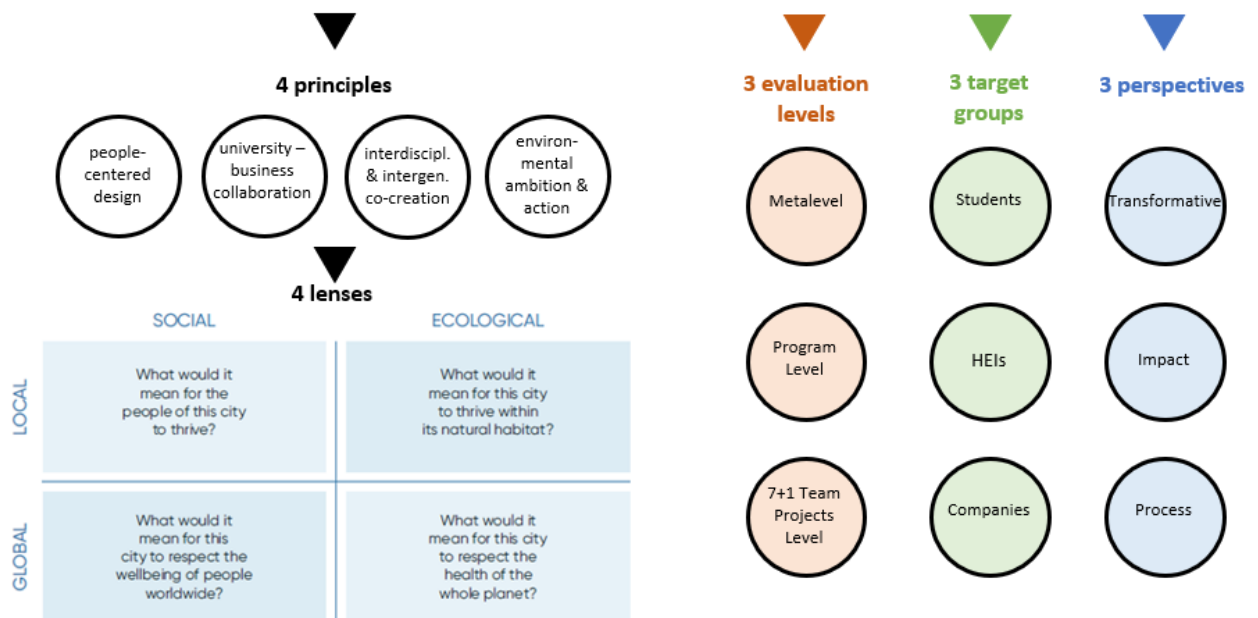
- 1) Baseline evaluation

- 2) Midterm evaluation
- 3) Final evaluation

Furthermore, our Active8-Planet Matrix is based on the core guiding agendas: European Green Deal, SDGs plus Ethics in R&D and contains **4 lenses**:

- 1) Ecological local
- 2) Ecological global
- 3) Social local
- 4) Social global

Figure 3 provides an overview of the different elements that jointly constitute the Evaluation Framework.



**Figure 3: Elements of the evaluation framework**

## 2.2 Focus and desired outcomes

The Active8-Planet project addresses five identified needs and challenges for the European Union:

1. The lack of higher education learning models and mechanisms that would support activating (mobilizing, empowering) students in climate and sustainability actions.
2. The mismatch between skills of European graduates and the requirements of the industry in the field of sustainability and circularity. Specifically, there is a lack of key transferable skills, which are increasingly needed both in the continuously changing nature of work and for an impactful change in the way societies use the planet's resources.
3. Students have little opportunity for implementing applied research in sustainability issues and furthermore translating the acquired knowledge into design and development of activities, concepts, interventions and solutions.
4. The complexity of sustainability problems requires working across sectors and disciplines, while existing HEI systems, organization, and compartmentalization of disciplines rarely support these. In addition, companies, and SMEs in particular, often lack access to interdisciplinary knowledge and expertise that would enable them to radically transform towards carbon-neutrality and circular economy. On policy and governance levels, there is a need for a broader range of tools that would support the planning and design of impactful sustainability interventions.
5. Innovation and development of sustainability solutions is often carried out in silos and is mainly dominated by technical engineering, with limited inclusion of societal and cultural factors. People are understood as passive users/consumers, which leads to developments that ignore the social embeddedness of their behaviours, habits and values.

The project aims to bridge the above outlined gap between education and industry, by implementing *planet-centred Learning Cycles*. These Learning Cycles bring together interdisciplinary groups of students, faculty educators and industry professionals to solve real-life planet business challenges, enabling:

1. Students to gain valuable practical skills to complement their theoretical education
2. Industry professionals to understand and acknowledge the added value of interdisciplinary knowledge and expertise
3. Faculty educators to develop industry-relevant education

## 2.3 Evaluation framework

By changing the way we evaluate we can change the way we teach/learn/think. Creating a culture of evaluation built on collaboration and trust among all stakeholders will support organizational learning and sustainable practice.

In our framework we outline three perspectives on evaluation and suggest how to implement them in relation to the different target groups, principles and evaluation levels.

### 1. Transformative learning evaluation

Transformation in this context is related to a person and indicates that the person him/herself or his/her view is different after than before the transformation.

Transformative evaluation is an ongoing practice, not a ‘one-off’ activity, and it is designed to be shaped by those who use it as they learn from its use. Essentially it involves the generation of a number of participants’ Significant Change stories during a given period and the systematic collective analysis of those stories. It focuses on the idea that learners can adjust their thinking based on new information.

Transformational learning evaluation is related to personal skills and growth and thus will be measured by key success indicators per stakeholder.

The transformative learning perspective gathers around four specific success indicators that are designed to assess the competence key stakeholders have developed during the project regarding our aims for 1) students, 2) industry professionals, 3) faculty educators and 4) the collaboration between HEIs and industry partners on a (inter)national level. The success indicators should consider the four Active-8 development principles:

- 1) Interdisciplinary and intergenerational co-creation
- 2) People-centred design
- 3) University-business collaboration
- 4) Environmental ambition and action.

These success indicators are the same for all challenges. They will be evaluated at baseline, midterm and the end of each learning cycle.

## 2. Impact evaluation

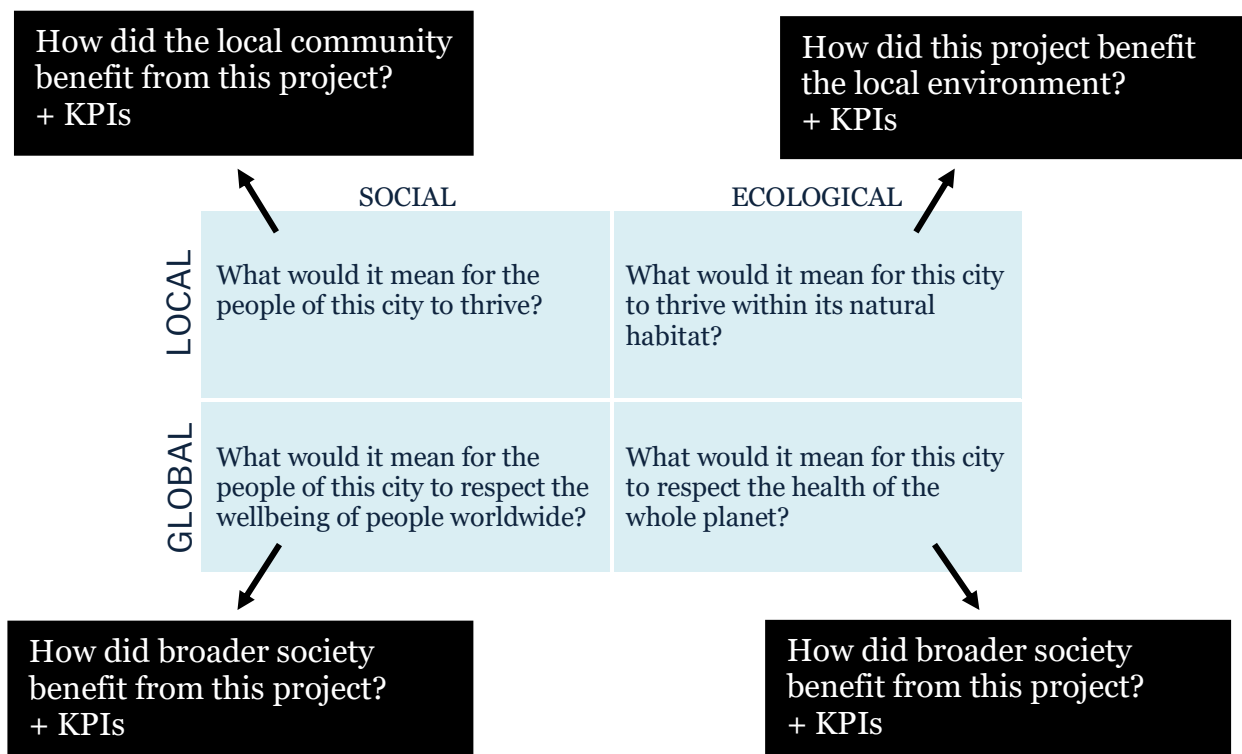
Impact evaluation provides information about the impacts produced by an intervention. The *intervention* might be a small project, a large program, a collection of activities, a policy. In this context impact is related to objects and services, not to a person.

Most often, impact evaluation is used for summative purposes. Ideally, a summative impact evaluation does not only produce findings about ‘what works’ but also provides information about what is needed to make the intervention work for different groups in different settings.

The impact evaluation can also be used formatively if an intervention is ongoing. For example, the findings of an impact evaluation can be used to improve or re-orient a project.

It is important to consider the timing of an impact evaluation. When conducted belatedly, the findings come too late to inform decisions. When done too early, it will provide an inaccurate picture of the impacts. In our framework the impact evaluation is proposed at midterm and the end of each learning cycle.

Although the impact evaluation perspective is related to an object or service, it is connected to the values of the stakeholders too. The social and ecological impact will be evaluated by all key stakeholders through the 4 lenses, in line with the WP2 Active8-Planet Matrix. For each challenge, specific success indicators will be identified at the start of each learning cycle. In other words, specific indicators per stakeholder are yet to be developed. In Figure 4, the principle of evaluating impact along the 4 lenses, is graphically outlined.

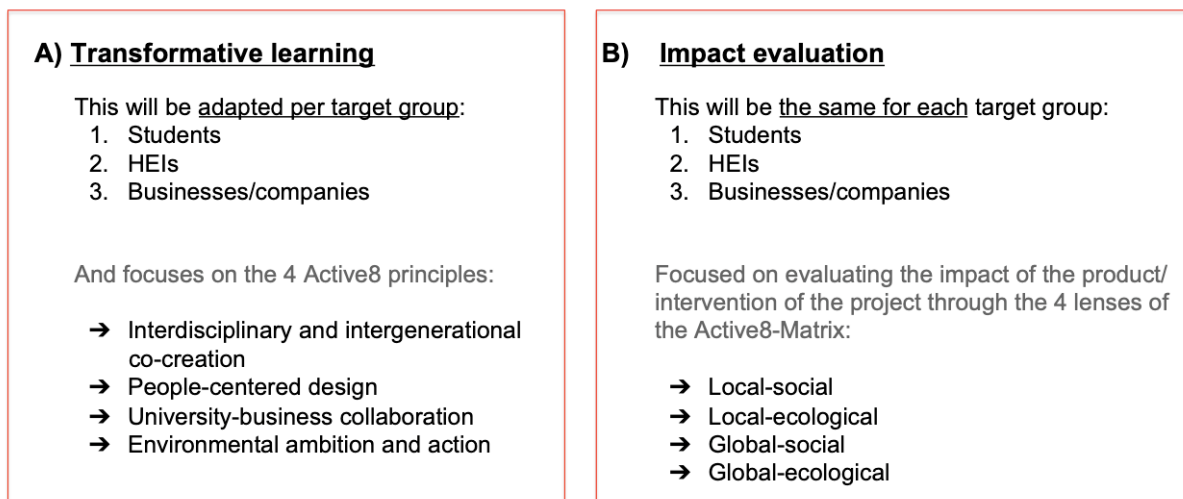


**Figure 4: Impact evaluation**

### 3. Process evaluation

Process evaluation typically uses both quantitative and qualitative methods, including structured observations, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and logs. Quantitative methods have the advantage of being amenable to quick analyses, brief reports and relatively straightforward interpretation, but often are not capable of answering questions about why and how, for example, a particular intervention component was not being received as intended. Qualitative methods have the advantage of being able to elicit unanticipated information, suggested solutions and/or innovations that address these sorts of questions, as well as the diverse perspectives of different groups participating in the intervention (e.g. teachers and students).

In Figure 5, the evaluation framework is outlined.

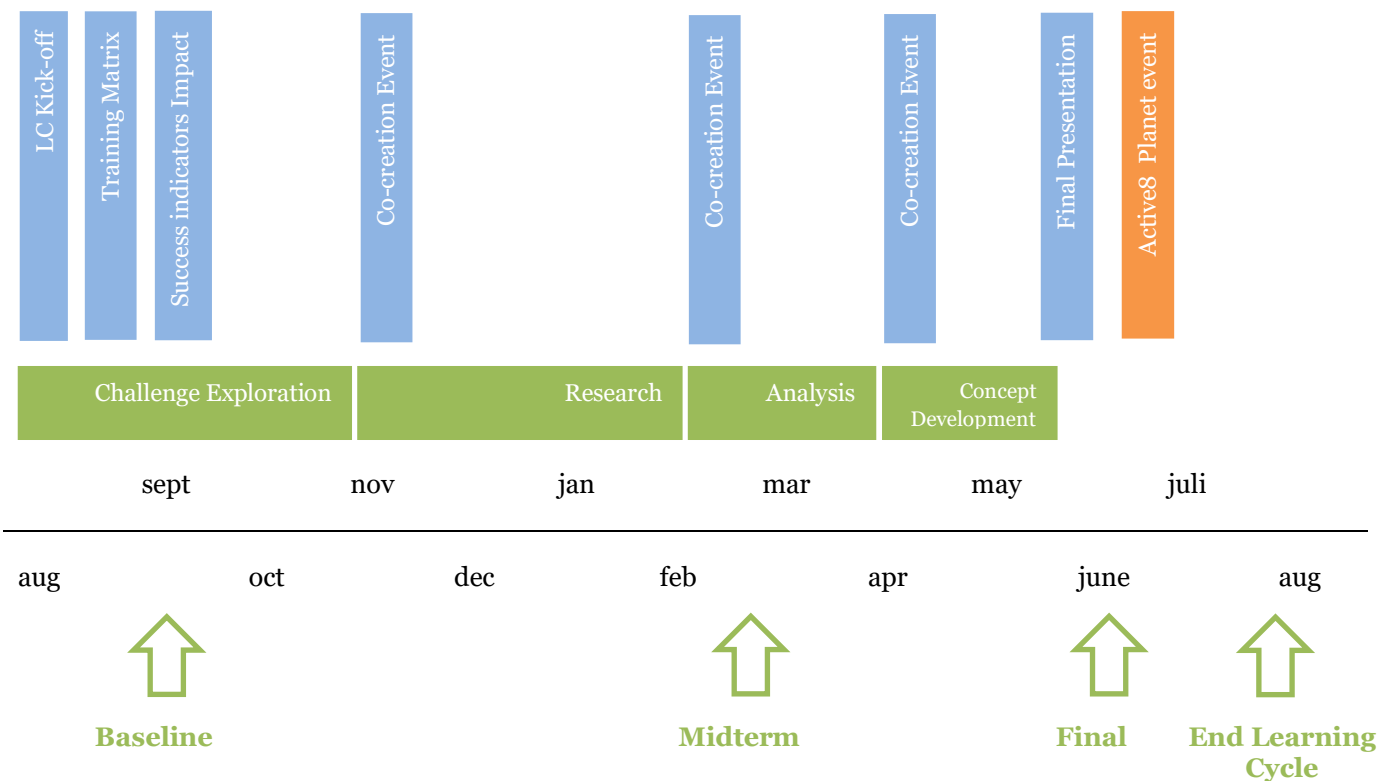


**Figure 5: Evaluation framework**

### 3 PLANNING

The strategy takes on a formative and a summative approach, involves the gathering of quantitative as well as qualitative data and involves internal and external stakeholders at the start, during and after above-mentioned learning cycles.

In Figure 6, a general planning is provided of when which activities are intended to be executed.



**Figure 6: Evaluation timeline**

## 4 TOOLS

To allow the processing of the evaluation results in a comparable and efficient way, evaluation tools will be provided, preferably in digital formats (in collaboration with WP3 – Active8-Planet collaboration arena) and accompanied by guidelines and instructions.

Project partners from each case study can use the evaluation tools they deem fit for their particular context alongside tools centrally designed in the Evaluation Strategy.

### 4.1 Frequently used evaluation methods

The most widely used evaluation methods for stakeholders in previous projects (such as the PEOPLE-project) concerned the writing of meeting notes and reflexive reports. Also, online (self)- assessment questionnaires, notes from co-creation workshops, focus groups and presentations for internal/external stakeholders were used. Additionally, data was collected through personal communication (e.g. informal conversation, e-mail, phone calls, etc.) and focus groups.

### 4.2 Active8-Planet tools

#### Tools for evaluation at metalevel

Based on existing models (e.g. the Doughnut model, SDGs) to pinpoint actions for their environmental and societal focus. They are also aligned with the Active8-Planet core guiding agendas and Active8-Planet Matrix (WP2/Task 2.2).

#### Tools for the evaluation at program level:

- Online surveys for internal stakeholders to evaluate Active8-Planet methods and strategies (in collaboration with WP3).
- Focus groups with internal and external stakeholders per country.

#### Tools for evaluation at 7+1 Team Project level:

- Process evaluation by means of online surveys and focus groups with 7+1 Team Project members (in collaboration with WP3).
- Evaluation of developed concepts and interventions by means of tools for social, environmental and economic impact assessment (in line with WP2 Active8-Planet Matrix).
- Focus groups and public juries with potential internal and external experts and end-users (in collaboration with WP3 – Collaboration Arena; and WP4 – Active8-Events).

### 4.3 Extra online assessment tools

Based on an extensive literature review, several online assessment tools have been identified and listed. They are too extensive for the general evaluation strategy, but project partners



from each case study can use the evaluation tools if they deem fit for their particular context alongside tools centrally designed in the Evaluation Strategy.

These tools are concerned with the evaluation of respectively:

- 1) Process: tools for self, peer -and group assessment
- 2) Person: tools for the evaluation of a person's transformative learning process
- 3) Product: tools for impact evaluation of products and services

For each of the tools, the key characteristics are summed up:

- 1) The purpose of the tool
- 2) The principle of the evaluation: the build-up of the evaluation and how it is executed
- 3) The nature of the evaluation: qualitative or quantitative
- 4) Existing formats (often this column is used to point out some remarks about the tool)
- 5) By whom the tool is intended to be performed: individually or within group?
- 6) Ease of processing the evaluation (yet to be analyzed)
- 7) Language of the tool: English or Dutch
- 8) Reference

The extensive list of these tools can be found in a separate Excel-file, as Annex to this report.

## REFERENCES

[1] Sinatti, G., & Prins, M. (2018). PEOPLE: Evaluation Strategy.