**FOCUS GROUP PLAN**

**Analyzing opinions of the FIRST-TAC project’s participants on the impact the project had on their teaching skills**

# The purpose of the focus group

The FIRST-TAC project envisages creating a training program on the use of force and basics of tactical medicine for first responding police officers, as well as conducting four pilot trainings in order to test the program. Trainers for the pilot trainings are recruited from the pool of experts/instructors involved in creating the training program, and the learners are other instructors of use of force tactics and techniques or tactical medicine from partner countries. The project included instructors as learners – even though they are not the future target group of the training – in order to give them a chance to experience it from the learner’s perspective and include them in refining the program. In addition, this was one of the early dissemination tools of the FIRST-TAC project.

The aim of the project is to influence both groups, enable them to exchange experiences and share best practices in both teaching strategies and professional content of the training.

This focus group is organized in order to analyze in what way the FIRST-TAC project changed its participants – both trainers and learners of the pilot trainings. The focus is on their teaching skills, rather than on the professional skills. The reason lies in the target group of the program and the training. As said – in the future, program will be used for training first responding police officers, so its content is not new or challenging to the instructors that were involved in pilot trainings as learners. Therefore, it is not expected from the pilot training learners to improve profoundly in professional skills. Rather, they will be able to reflect on the way the trainings are conducted in their own countries, and possible ways to improve them.

In short, the main question of this focus group is this: Did this project change the way its participants teach and think about teaching in their own countries?

# Background information

Based on the personal observations of the focus group creators – project manager, deputy project manager and curriculum coordinator of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, leading institution of the FIRST-TAC project – experts were mostly inexperienced in blended learning strategy and creation of online learning material. Therefore, their views and opinions about blended learning model will be one of the topics in the discussion.

Furthermore, extensive simulation exercises, which are not easy to organize and conduct, are the focal point of the training, where all the knowledge and skills gained during the online and face-to-face learning are applied in real-life scenarios. Therefore, views and opinions of the training participants about using those methods before and in the future will be another important topic in the discussion.

The third important topic for the discussion is quality of feedback. Again, based on the observation of the Croatian project team, skills related to giving and receiving of feedback improved in some of the participants during the project. Therefore, it would be interesting to know whether the participants themselves see that in the same way. The questions related to this topic will be composed in a way to give participants a chance to rate it – in the scale 1 to 5.

Finally, the last topic to discuss will be partly related to the professional knowledge and skills. The participants will be asked whether they will use some of the use of force techniques from the training in their future teachings.

# Multiple-category design

As there are two group of instructors involved in pilot trainings – instructors that created the program and conducted it as trainers, and instructors that were involved in pilot trainings as learners – two focus groups will be created:

* One will consist of trainers of the pilot trainings
* The other will consist of the learners of the pilot training.

It is important to separate those two groups, because instructors who had the role of learners could be reluctant to criticize the program in front of the instructors that created and conducted it. In addition, this will prevent possible confrontations, which could prolong the duration of the discussion.

# Time line of the focus group

The discussion within the two focus groups will be conducted during the two final days of the fourth pilot training, 7-8 November 2024. The exact time is to be determined, but preferably in the afternoon, after the training hours.

First group to be interviewed are the trainers, followed by the learners the next day.

The two moderators – one steering the conversation, and the other monitoring and noting the behavior of the participants – will lead the discussions.

Both sessions will be recorded, and transcribed and analyzed later on.

The discussion will follow five steps:

* Opening questions
* Introductory questions
* Transition questions
* Key questions
* Ending questions.

# Questioning route

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| **Step in the discussion** | **The main question** | **Supporting/follow-up questions** |
| Opening | Tell us your name, where you teach and what you enjoy the most about teaching. |  |
| Introductory | Describe how you usually teach your topic – whether it is the use of force or the tactical medicine. |  |
| Transition | Think back to when you were first involved in this project. What were your impressions? | Have you been surprised by some of the elements of this training? |
| This training revolves around the three main teaching methods – demonstration, role play and simulation. Do you use it in your own teaching, in your institution? |  |
| Another important part of this training is the online learning addition to the training, i.e. it is organized as a blended learning activity. Have you experienced this kind of online learning phase in your trainings before – whether as a trainer or the trainee? |  |
| Key | What do you think about the benefits and challenges of the blended learning model? | Do you want to use it in your future trainings? |
| When it comes to learning theoretical things, do you think online independent learning can replace face-to-face presentation done by the trainer? |
| Were the learners of this training well prepared for the practical part of the training? |
| What do you think of the simulation exercises – in general and in this training? | Do you want to use it in your future trainings? |
| What do you consider most useful in this method? |
| What do you consider most challenging? |
| Do you think you can overcome those challenges? |
| How important do you think feedback is to those three methods used in this training: demonstration, role play and simulation? | How would you rate your feedback giving skills – on the scale 1-5, 1 being the worst and 5 being the best? |
| How would you rate your feedback receiving skills – on the scale 1-5, 1 being the worst and 5 being the best? |
| Do you think your feedback skills improved during this training? |
| Will you use some of the use of force techniques from this training in your future teachings apart from this training? |  |
| Ending | Of all the topics we have discussed, which one do you consider the most important: blended learning, simulation exercises, feedback, or new use of force techniques in your teaching?  |  |
|  | (Moderator gives a short oral summary of the discussion.)Was this an adequate summary? | How well does this capture what was said during this discussion? |
|  | Have we missed anything? | Is there anything that we should discuss, but didn’t? |