

**DIRECTORATE GENERAL
FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

E-learning in continuing vocational,
particularly at the workplace,
with emphasis on Small and Medium Enterprises

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SUBJECT:

APPENDIX G:

Workshop remarks - output details

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1 INTRODUCTION

Per focus group, the following tables summarise workshop ideas and introduce classification.

2 FOCUS GROUPS ON SME NEEDS

1

Informal learning is the most important source of learning. This means that employees are “futzing around” to find informally solution to their problem, when they encounter it.	Informal / Immediate
First of all, the knowledge needs to belong to the company – help them build their knowledge and company culture on an intranet. Expert sees his mission as a way for SMEs to preserve knowledge and to construct “intangible assets” out of this knowledge.	Competition / assets protection
For SMEs, the possibility of sharing knowledge is more important than to “receive” formal training, but sharing knowledge means building communities, and working together requires trust. Therefore the need for some “platform” allowing this trust building.	Community Building
Solution must be sustainable – the first step is to help SMEs to identify their own needs.	Awareness
The need for SMEs concerning e-learning is to develop skills that brings the ability to survive in market.	Competition / assets protection
Brokerage – support a better dialogue between providers and users	Awareness
Awareness raising for e-learning	Awareness
Make figures/benchmarking info available	Awareness
Keep competences	Competition / assets protection
Take into account constraints specific to SMEs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Different responsibilities on a same person ▶ Just what he needs ▶ ASAP ▶ Specific 	Wide / Specialised
No training covers 100% of the needs of individuals from SMEs	Wide / Specialised
Instead of trainings, usually use their network of competent acquaintances	Community Building

Need for both horizontal (wide) and vertical (in depth) knowledge	Wide / Specialised
New financing models: SMEs could be part of the knowledge sharing process, participating in its update, but what's in it for them?	Community Building

2

Minimise broadband costs	Economic
Position the needs between knowledge/ learning/training	Awareness
Provide user-friendly instruments	Tutorial
People need to feel there is someone behind the machine: work with matter experts and tutors	Tutorial
Awareness raising: training landscape, culture, e-business ...)	Awareness
Help them move /identify where they want to be/where they are today. Then make them aware of the options they have	Awareness
Learndirect: 2hours/interview for learning guidance	Tutorial
Sole traders have mainly basic needs: Word, excel, computer literacy ...	Wide / Specialised
Bigger companies go more for sales skills	Wide / Specialised
Must be able to ask for help – expert help: you need to build the credibility of the experts/people behind the system. SMEs want to know the persons: So a face to face kick off meeting is a need to establish credibility.	Tutorial
Tutors/telephone learning	Tutorial
Individual follow up	Tutorial
SMEs are afraid to share knowledge/give away their strengths: they will not share industry specific information – maybe dependent on culture.	Competition / assets protection
Scotland has successful programs for lifelong learning: ILA (Individual learning account) and BLA (Business Learning Accounts) supported by Scottish Executive funds.	Info

3

SMEs have very different needs	Wide / Specialised
They need multi skilled individuals	Wide / Specialised
On the job training, collaborative learning	Informal / Immediate
Learning could be between suppliers and customers, and the other way round.	Community Building
SMEs often take reactive trainings: it needs to be quick, short, practical, on the job, just in time.	Informal / Immediate
SMEs need guidance to define their needs and help them find adequate solutions.	Tutorial
How to evaluate quality of solutions	Tutorial
Prompt response to needs	Informal / Immediate
Easy to use tools	Tutorial
Connectivity – Broadband	Economics
Financial needs	Economics
Different business cases, e.g. managers, employees	Economics
Learning while working, working while learning	Informal / Immediate
Core business is the need	Wide / Specialised

4

SMEs have no time and no money for e-learning	Economics
They need it cheap and just in time – how do you get there?	Informal / Immediate
Could work as a Franchise network	Community Building
Common creation of contents supported by administrations, governmental bodies, professional associations	Community Building
Use existing network (e.g. eGov must force things to happen for fiscal declaration, access to regulations, etc.)	Tutorial
HR seminars: low participation. Seminar on constructions in wood: lots of participants: core business!!!	Wide / Specialised

Sectorial approach needed	Wide / Specialised
Needs are often very technical	Wide / Specialised
Associations are paid by cotisation – so no budget needed to provide training activities	Economics
Individuals will evolve differently, the gap could become wider amongst those using /not using learning since it requires more self-discipline.	Wide / Specialised
Focus must be on daily activities.	Wide / Specialised
Trainings must be provided by external organisations.	Tutorial
Most people do not know what – where- how to find it.	Tutorial
They need common platforms, standards.	Tutorial
How to access Quality	Tutorial
Slow learning curve means: investments and time	Economics
Traditional classroom based more trusted: employers believe employee will acquire some knowledge, not so confident in e-learning	Tutorial
Sectorial approach needed	Wide / Specialised
Offer must exist, targeted, adapted to needs, then take up	Tutorial

3 FOCUS GROUP ON PEDAGOGY

This focus group has some difficulties to agree on a common terminology and concepts, e.g. constructivist approach, as even amongst the group, participants were using different wordings and have different definitions of what e-learning is. This shows that common definitions are needed.

Concerning pedagogy and organisation, it was hard to separate the pedagogical and the organisational issues, so both have been covered and sometimes mixed during the work sessions.

Put the learner in the centre	
a) Motivation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question as starting 	Tutorial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion, communication, collaboration - > CO-ACTING 	Community Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customisation of materials – not from scratch (financial problem for SMEs) 	Wide / Specialised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modularisation 	Tutorial
b) Empowering the person: learner is “co-instructor” (co-structure/co-decider)	Community Building
Learning organisation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual trust needed between all actors 	Community Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business processes should be taken into account + detection of training/company/individual needs 	Wide / Specialised
Pedagogy should	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be result of top-down and bottom-up approaches (both the organisation and the learner participate in the decision process) 	Community Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every learning should have a social aspect – 	Community

networking and learning communities	Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situated and social learning e-learning <-> social learning – not only obstacle but also opportunities in e-learning. 	Awareness
There is a need for training the trainers for e-Competencies	Tutorial
Contents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not only aimed at knowledge/skills/attitudes but also information 	Wide / Specialised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep it to short learning units <-> longer “training” (attention is typically 10 minutes) 	Tutorial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannibalising existing materials -> problem of pirating software course 	Competition / assets protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice products more effective? 	Economics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid settings that remind school situation, e.g. kiosk type offer with touch screen could provide a brand new stimulating environment 	Tutorial
Evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measuring success but learning results not always showing up e.g. people start communicating with each other outside the discussion environments of instructions – using emails. 	Community Building
Change management	Tutorial
Improve / demonstrate a relation between pedagogy – and organisation progress	
Need for convincing demonstrators, using partnerships and providing resources	Tutorial
Necessity of fusion technology – learning - work	Wide / Specialised

4 FOCUS GROUP ON ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS

Organisation within SMEs or outside SMEs ? Both methods are recommended.	Community Building
Lack of learning (not training) culture in SMEs but SMEs have their own culture of learning that should be respected.	Tutorial
Managers are crucial and should be convinced of the benefits of e-learning: - Tell them that the e-learning is part of e-Business, e-Commerce, etc and how it is beneficial for SMEs. - Consider the rational aspect (ROI) – link to a new business.	Economics
However, individuals needs and promotion should also be addressed. (What are the benefits of e-learning for them? Employment, etc.)	Tutorial
Two possible ways to organise SMEs for e-learning: a) Sector based: but what about competition? b) Locally, by geographic area: avoiding the problem of competition and building on knowledge of local situation and complementarity of companies	Competition / assets protection
Two views for the content of e-learning: a) A more general level; skills like change management, enterprise management; b) Focus on the core business of the SMEs (effective need of SMEs)	Wide / Specialised
It would be useful to create of a license similar to ECDL for SMEs. This will be a driver for SMEs.	Look for Incentives
For e-learning, there is a need for establishing of a partnership with a) Other SMEs b) Public-private organisation (government, university, etc.) c) The Intermediate between providers and SMEs (consultant/advisor or maybe a role for the government)	Community Building

For a win-win situation for each partner Networking and learning communities should be promoted (role for trade organisations, Chambers of Commerce).	Community building
Role for Government : eGovernment could simplify the administrative procedures but also create incentives to use them.	Look for Incentives
Adopt the PLATO approach : large companies (which should have incentives to do so) coaching SMEs. Necessity to define the roles of each participant : contributor, expert, etc.	Community Building
If SMEs group together to form a network, who will be responsible of what (financially, maintenance, etc)? Necessity to define the roles of each participant : contributor, expert, etc.	Community Building
Not only incentives are needed for employees but also learning contracts between management and learners. These contracts should define the expectations and responsibilities of both sides (who, when, what, etc).	Look for Incentives
What about informal learning ? Opening time for it.	Immediate / Informal

5 FOCUS GROUP ON GOVERNMENT POLICIES

When screening policy maker writings and speech, SMEs in all member states a priority, but it seems that concrete measures to promote training and e-learning are largely left out of policies. In fact, they are declared policies, but they are missing their target.

The reasons are multiples:

- ▶ No strong target, therefore dilution of means;
- ▶ The fact there is a lot of projects does not mean « consistent policies », it mean that governments are acting « opportunistic » and disseminate efforts;
- ▶ Where they are strongly focused initiatives, successes are obtained. This is the case in specific countries or regions (Scotland...) or in specific sectors (e.g. medicine in Italy);
- ▶ In general, they are still too much research projects (e.g. FP6 for Universities / Research Centres) without care of tangible end-user impacts. Rather than to progress in research and new innovative material, projects should be more focused on the adoption of the available e-learning in practice.

Do we need a policy? What is our budget? Which policy?	Awareness Tutorial
How to set-up an e-learning policy specific for SMEs?	N/A
Priority to SMEs with real growing potential (= not the majority of micro-SMEs)	Info
Various national approaches (HU=All enterprises; FR=Law mandate 20 hours/person/year ...)	Info
Government should lead by example (do they use e-learning for internal needs?)	Tutorial
At which level should the policy and corresponding measures be implemented (European / National / Regional)?	N/A
Services or Money? - SMEs want content for free... (<-> for free has no value?) - SMEs want immediate benefit, Issue is lack of time	Informal - Immediate

rather than lack of money - Idea to provide free Self-assessment analysis	
Incentives for SMEs or for e-learning producers (to make them care about SMEs)?	Look for incentives
Incentives for individuals?	Look for incentives
Money to “set up communities” and “knowledge sharing” rather than individual tax / VAT exemptions or similar grants	Community Building
How can <i>e-learning</i> just become Learning?	N/A
How to promote standards, e.g. adopt open standards rather than Industry-led proprietary formats?	Community building
How to develop communities (around vertical / horizontal sectors, around languages, around national or regional needs...)?	Community Building