

Czechs check new ways in soft skills development



“Competencies for Labour Market” Project in the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic has been confirmed a good practice model in LED: Local Employment Development. RPIC-ViP/Regional Employment Agency and its 22 partners prepare a unique innovative programme for soft skills development within the life-long learning process from primary schools to senior age.

Three-day **training of C8 – Competency for solving problems** was one in a series of 14 verification trainings of soft skills development programmes. These programmes have been developed by a research group of training experts, education methodologists and target groups members with the main aim to improve a level of key competencies (soft skills) of individuals that are demanded by employers.

Project rationale

The development of key competencies (soft skills) demanded by employers can increase opportunities of students, the unemployed and employees to succeed on the labour market. Key competencies, however, do not play an important role in the school curricula and in the training programmes for adults (the unemployed and SME employees). The existing education system is focused mainly on the development of general and profession related knowledge and, sometimes, of professional skills.

Based on the analysis of more than 2.000 interviews with employers – small, medium and large-sized companies - the Competence Model was identified which includes the following 14 key competencies:

- C1 - Competency for effective communication
- C2 - Competency for co-operation
- C3 - Competency for entrepreneurship
- C4 - Competency for flexibility
- C5 - Competency for customer orientation
- C6 - Competency for efficiency
- C7 - Competency for independence and decisiveness
- C8 - Competency for solving problems
- C9 - Competency for organizing and planning
- C10 - Competency for life-long learning
- C11 - Competency for proactive approach
- C12 - Competency for stress resiliency
- C13 - Competency for exploring and orientation in information
- C14 - Competency for communication in foreign languages



The regional government of the Moravian-Silesian Region agreed that the development of the above-mentioned competencies is one of the key strategic priorities by. Within the “Competencies for Labour Market” EQUAL Project the training programmes have been developed in a form of competence training toolkits. These include training manuals for trainers and trainees, interactive DVD-video programmes, tools for testing competency level, tools for application and further development of competency in daily life, tools for training and certification of competency trainers etc. Before the finalization of the toolkits all of them have been verified during trainings with a feedback from 420 training participants from target groups – students, employees, the unemployed.

International dissemination of the good practice: Budapest – Barnstaple – Barcelona

IDELE Project “Identification, Dissemination and Exchange of good practice in Local Ememployment development and promoting better governance” sponsored by the European Commission and managed by ECOTEC confirmed the good practice status of the “Competencies for Labour Market” initiative. It was presented in the EC seminar in **Budapest** in March 2006.



“Competencies for Labour Market” Development Partnership co-operates with 8 other transnational partnerships in 7 EU countries (Belgium, England, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain). The partners expressed their interest in the testing and transfer of Czech tools into their countries and there is a schedule of dissemination actions.

The first one took place in **Barnstaple** in the North Devon College at the beginning of December 2006. The Czech DP presented a thorough insight into the methodology and tools for soft skills development and their partners from England, Belgium and Poland had an opportunity to discuss the details with several members of the Czech research team. As a result

of this discussion further co-operation activities have been agreed, including a three days’ demonstration training of competencies for partners’ trainers to be held in the Moravian-Silesian Region in the 2nd quarter of 2007.

Such a “demo training” of competencies is agreed with Spanish partners to **Barcelona** for February 2007. The audience includes Catalunyan partners from the IMPAC-TEM VALLÈS project, e.g. personnel of local public administrations and social partners, people responsible for economic promotion services and/or occupational training. Besides, there will be training experts from other partnerships – German, Portugal and Polish.

Mainstreaming the good practice: Ostrava – Czech Republic – European Union

The development of key competencies of individuals and integration of this approach into the “traditional” education systems have been a part of the relevant strategies on different levels, i.e. from Lisbon strategy of the European Union through national to regional and local strategies. There is a common understanding on WHAT should be done but, as always, the HOW to do it is a major challenge. The same situation is in the Czech Republic.

“Competencies for Labour Market” initiative from **Ostrava** and the Moravian-Silesian Region come with an innovative and relatively “easy-to-be-mainstreamed” solution for the **Czech Republic**. A complex programme based on a set of 14 soft skills training toolkits will be offered to the national government for implementation in the whole country. RPIC-ViP/Regional Employment Agency wants to continue in the development activities as a national Centre of Excellence for Key Competencies Development beyond the framework of the 2nd round of EQUAL. Besides further development of the already existing soft skills programmes the main focus should be on the training of certified competency trainers for adults and school children throughout the whole country.



A confirmed interest of partners from other countries in the Czech programme for soft skills development supports an idea to “internationalize” the whole Key Competencies Programme in the **European Union**. The first step should be a transfer of all toolkits from Czech to English. This step will be negotiated with the National Authorities for CIP EQUAL in the coming weeks. Pilot actions in this way have already been started in the above mentioned demo trainings for transnational partners in EQUAL. Further intentions for international co-operation will be announced during the international conference of partners in Ostrava in May 2007.

Thematic networking: Adaptability and Life-Long-Learning

“Competencies for Labour Market” initiative is a substantial part of the National Thematic Network (NTA) for Adaptability and Life-Long Learning. Mr. Zdenek Karasek, leader of the initiative, was elected a chairman of the network. He presented a national mainstreaming strategy and approach of this NTA to the audience of the EQUAL conference held in Prague in November 2006.



More information on the Competencies for Labour Market initiative:

www.mamenato.cz

www.keycompetencies.eu

www.globalskills.eu