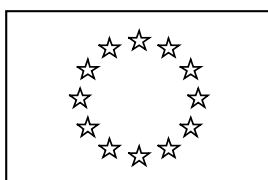


“Employment through Innovation”

Pilot Projects for Crafts and Small Enterprises



DG ENTERPRISE
European Commission



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Introduction

Small and craft enterprises are a vitally important source of jobs in Europe and make a major contribution to employment growth. 98.9% of businesses in the European Economic Area are small businesses¹, of which over 90% are micro-businesses (employing fewer than 10 people). In the European Union alone, there are nearly 60 million employees in small businesses, representing 52% of all employees in the Member States. In the midst of a rapidly changing business environment this sector, as a relatively stable and dynamic economic player, is and will remain the backbone of the European economy.

The three European Conferences of Crafts and Small Businesses, organised in 1990 in Avignon, in 1994 in Berlin and in 1997 in Milan, have shown that the special needs of these types of enterprises require specific actions. The Commission therefore decided, on 10 April 1996, to set up a Unit for Crafts and Small Businesses with a mission to develop strategies to improve the business environment for crafts and small enterprises in Europe and to develop and implement specific programmes and pilot projects to encourage entrepreneurship and improve the management capabilities of entrepreneurs in the sector.

The 47 projects described here meet a wide variety of objectives in support of the above mission. Beginning with a number of relatively small-scale actions in 1996 to encourage transnational cooperation between small and craft enterprises, the scope of the calls for proposals in 1997 and 1998 was widened to include other priorities such as access to training and advice, the use of new technologies, access to finance, participation in trade fairs, promotion of the spirit of enterprise and the introduction of innovative management techniques. The results from these pilot projects will be carefully analysed to determine how they can be translated into policies for the benefit of enterprises throughout Europe.

In producing this brochure, DG Enterprise seeks to inform national, regional and local authorities, business and professional representative organisations and entrepreneurs about the work that is being carried out on behalf of small and craft enterprises. Contact details are provided for all project leaders as a source of further information and to assist in the development of networking opportunities and the exchange of experiences and good practices. A copy of the brochure is also available on the European Commission's EUROPA website at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/craft/craft-bestpractices/projects.htm>. This electronic version will be updated on a regular basis to reflect the progress of the 1997 and 1998 pilot projects.

¹ small businesses are defined as enterprises employing less than 50 employees and having an annual turnover under 7 million Euro (Commission recommendation 96/280/CE (OJ L 107 of 30.4.1996).

1996

The continuing integration of European economies requires a degree of re-orientation amongst craft and micro- enterprises to enable them to benefit from the opportunities offered by a wider marketplace. The 1996 **call for proposals** (“**Assistance in the field of transnational cooperation between micro-enterprises and the craft sector**”²) aimed to assist craft and micro- enterprises in overcoming the obstacles to trading abroad and in establishing lasting partnerships which would contribute to their successful development in the future. Through such transnational cooperation projects, enterprises could gain knowledge of foreign markets, develop distribution structures, reduce language barriers and enhance their business competence by familiarising themselves with other management practices.

Specifically, the call aimed to:

- improve the economic and social performance of craft and micro- enterprises, particularly with regard to their dynamism and entrepreneurial spirit, in order to encourage employment, local development and economic and social cohesion; and
- establish a favourable business environment capable of strengthening the competitiveness of craft and micro- enterprises in the context of the Single Market and the deepening of European integration.

² 96/C 232/31

"Cooperation in the field of productive technology between micro-enterprises in the metallurgical-mechanical sector in the Midi-Pyrenées and Cataluña"

The project partners developed their cooperation in three phases: firstly, by creating a working group composed of 2 technicians each from CEAM and CCIT; secondly, by carrying out a study into the metallurgical-mechanical sector in the participating regions to establish which sub-sectors offered the best prospects for cooperation; and thirdly, by creating a common service to encourage continuing cooperation between enterprises in the Midi-Pyrenées and Cataluña. A questionnaire was sent to enterprises in the sector, as a result of which 126 firms in Cataluña and 43 in the Midi-Pyrenées indicated their willingness to cooperate. The majority of these enterprises employed between 4 and 9 people. Following this, conferences were held to publicise and distribute the study to these enterprises and a list of those who had asked to cooperate was compiled and sent to prospective partners. Finally, a meeting was held between 20 enterprises from Cataluña and 8 from the Midi-Pyrenées, which in turn led to 35 individual meetings.

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Partner: Chambre de Commerce et
d'Industrie de Toulouse, France

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 July 1997

Duration: 12 months

Total cost: 319 900 €

Subsidy: 159 950 €

"Handicoop: Transnational Cooperation between Crafts and Microenterprises in Bavaria and Trento"

By bringing together micro-enterprises in the wood and metal crafts sectors, the partners aimed to access new markets, notably that of Western Bohemia in the Czech Republic. An initial meeting of project managers selected 15-20 enterprises from each region. This followed an extensive publicity campaign in Bavaria and Trento to advertise the project to local firms. These enterprises were then invited to a meeting in Munich and were thereafter given advice and assistance, on a permanent basis, on the accessing of new markets. This included individual counselling on cooperation projects, an interpretation service, the development of market strategies for Bavarian and Trentino enterprises, joint seminars on the Western Bohemian market and a joint visit of entrepreneurs from the regions to Pilsen to establish contacts with entrepreneurs in Western Bohemia.

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Partner: Associazione Artigiani e Piccole
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Timetable:

Starting date: 1 March 1997

Duration: 22 months

Total cost: 80 000 €

Subsidy: 40 000 €

"Regional bridge building between Dalarna and Veneto"

Enterprises in the woodworking sector were the principal target group of this project, which aimed to identify new markets, opportunities for common product development and synergies in the fields of marketing and sales. Several contact meetings were organised between the entrepreneurs participating in the project, and other enterprises in Dalarna and Veneto were informed about it via existing communication networks and the mass media. The project assisted enterprises in these regions to develop their transnational trading activities and to participate in international fairs, and gave them additional training in export marketing and the introduction of the Euro. Contact was also made with the Chamber of Crafts in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder and with tourism projects in the partner regions.

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Partner: Confederazione Nazionale
Artigianato Padova, Italy

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 December 1996

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 154 862 €

Subsidy: 77 431 €

"Partners for new markets"

Building on existing transnational cooperation in the wood, metal, electrical and electronic sectors, the partners aimed to develop a system of support services for enterprises in the participating regions. Following an initial campaign to promote further cooperation in these sectors, the partners established a steering committee to oversee the development of the programme. This committee also included representatives of enterprises benefitting from the project.

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Partners:

Chambre des Métiers de la Grand Duché
de Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Handwerkskammer des Saarlandes,
Germany
Handwerkskammer Trier, Germany

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 February 1997

Duration: 18 months

Total cost: 84 064 €

Subsidy: 42 032 €

"Transnational cooperation to assist craft businesses in the souvenir market"

Tourism is crucial to the economic development of Ireland and Corsica, and the souvenir market offers a potentially significant source of income for local craft enterprises. The partners carried out a study on "crafts and the souvenir market" to identify the barriers to greater participation by craft enterprises in this market and to select participants in the project. In addition, a promotional campaign was launched to promote and facilitate the access of craft goods to the souvenir market. The campaign primarily targeted tourists and aimed to increase their awareness of craft goods, stressing their local economic implications, their cultural links and their quality. Two seminars were organised to disseminate this information and to promote networking amongst the craft enterprises themselves.

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Partner: South Down/South Armagh LAG Ltd., Ireland

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 September 1997
Duration: 18 months
Total cost: 176 997 €
Subsidy: 88 499 €

"Transnational cooperation between Aquitaine, Navarra and the Pais Vasco"

Taking advantage of the close geographical proximity of the participating regions, the partners aimed to make local enterprises aware of the benefits of cross-border cooperation and to analyse the obstacles to further development of such activities. 14 enterprises were selected to participate in the project - 6 from Aquitaine, 4 from the Pais Vasco and 4 from Navarra. Following an analysis of the difficulties they had faced in establishing transnational links, the partners identified, for each of these enterprises, 2 enterprises in their region which might be interested in cooperating with them. The participants were also given advice and information in areas such as the Single Market, freedom of movement and establishment, VAT and fiscal and legal matters. Finally, 77 individual meetings were arranged between the participating enterprises and possible partners, following which 16 enterprises went on either to exchange information or to negotiate with a view to establishing a cooperation agreement.

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Partners: Chambre de Commerce de Bordeaux, France
Cámara de Comercio del Pais Vasco, Spain
Asociación de la Industria Navarra, Spain

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 February 1997
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 60 000 €
Subsidy: 30 000 €

"Franco-Italian cooperation in the distribution of artisanal foods"

France and Italy represent important markets for producers of artisanal foods, a fact which the partners sought to exploit by establishing cooperation between enterprises in the areas of distribution and exchange of information about market opportunities. In time, the partnerships established between the participants in this project could serve as a model for other enterprises in this sector looking to expand into new markets.

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Partners: Confédération Générale de l'Alimentation de Détail, France
Associazione Artigiani della Provincia di Vicenza, Italy

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 February 1997

Duration: 16 months

Total cost: 104 100 €

Subsidy: 52 050 €

"Accompaniment of micro-enterprises in niche sectors in the French and Italian markets"

Modena is one of Italy's leading provinces in terms of exports. However, enterprises from some sectors have not fully benefitted from the initiatives aimed at ensuring the presence of firms from Modena in external markets. These are small enterprises who, because of their size and/or specialized production, have difficulty in participating in classic promotional initiatives (missions abroad, trade fairs etc). Such enterprises play an important role in the local infrastructure by means of their use of innovative technology, specific know-how or products with a strong commercial potential, but lack the commercial structure to enable them to market these products abroad. This project aims partially to remedy this deficiency by giving these enterprises the chance to establish relations with similar businesses in France.

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Partners: Chambre de Commerce de Roanne, France
Chambre de Commerce de Saint-Etienne, France

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 March 1997

Duration: 13 months

Total cost: 61 170 €

Subsidy: 30 585 €

"Young and Night 2000"

The Italian partners aimed to produce a low- or non-alcoholic drink which would meet the needs of young people frequenting nightclubs, drawing on local traditions and resources (with a special emphasis on biological products) while also determining the possibilities for commercialisation of the product in cooperation with their German partners. 3000 interviews with young people were carried out in Salerno, and 5000 questionnaires distributed, and a further 1000 interviews were carried out in Frankfurt, where an additional 2000 questionnaires were handed out. 25 part-time jobs were created to carry out this work. The partners believe that 200 new jobs could be created in this sector if the results are followed through. The low-alcohol drink has been produced, and will be marketed in due course.

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Partners: CGIL-Bildungswerk-Umbria
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Associazione Noctoura-Laboratorio
Ratafià, Italy

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 March 1997
Duration: 18 months
Total cost: 208 000 €
Subsidy: 104 000 €

"Cooperation between enterprises in Baiona and Bidasoa"

The objective of this project was to promote cooperation agreements between enterprises in the border regions of Bayonne and Bidasoa in research and development, trade, training of employees and the search for third markets, customers and suppliers. Priority was given to enterprises with less than 10 employees in the chemical, electronic and metal sectors that did not have any previous experience of foreign trade. Meetings were arranged between all the participating enterprises and a trade fair took place at which they were able to exhibit their products. The project involved a total of 51 enterprises from the Bayonne region and 46 from Bidasoa.

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Partners: Chambre de Commerce et
d'Industrie de Bayonne, France
Chambre de Métiers des Pyrénées-
Atlantiques, France

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 January 1997
Duration: 12 months
Total cost: 152 044 €
Subsidy: 76 022 €

1997

A number of specific problems facing crafts and small enterprises were identified during the preparatory conferences held prior to the Third European Conference of Crafts and Small Businesses in Milan on 20-21 November 1997, and the 1997 **call for proposals for assistance for crafts and small businesses**³ concentrated on the areas in which these problems were judged to be most acute. In particular, it called for actions to promote:

i) transnational cooperation

As a complement to the work being carried out under the 1996 call for proposals, priority was given to the establishment of networks between women, young and co- entrepreneurs.

ii) joint participation of crafts and small enterprises in trade fairs and exhibitions

Support was available for marketing activities, preparatory workshops or meetings, interpreting costs and the costs of promoting participation by women entrepreneurs.

iii) a European culture and spirit of enterprise

Eligible activities included the creation of a European prize for women entrepreneurs, actions aimed at promoting the craft sector amongst young people, their parents and teachers, and actions in favour of the founders of enterprises in disadvantaged urban areas.

iv) financing and access to credit for craft and small enterprises

Priority was given to assisting potential entrepreneurs, or entrepreneurs whose business was less than five years old, in areas such as financial management training and gaining access to credit. A further objective was the promotion of best practices in microlending.

v) vocational training for craftsmen and founders of small enterprises

Emphasis was placed on the training of apprentices, heads of enterprises or co-entrepreneurs and instructors, with the aim of helping them to acquire formal qualifications, and on exchanges of experience and the dissemination of best practices.

vi) access to information and services through the development of computer applications

Professional and intermediary organisations were encouraged to help craft and small enterprises benefit from the opportunities offered by new information technologies.

vii) training of Euro-advisers from the supporting bodies

Craft organisations were encouraged to improve their and their members' involvement in Community actions by designing European management courses for their advisers.

³ 97/C117/17

TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

"Business excellence in the outermost regions of the European Union"

Enterprises in the outermost regions of the EU face very specific, but similar, difficulties in gaining access to European and international markets. The main challenges they face are to improve their international communications, to expand subcontracting services in the area of transport and distribution and to conclude association or cooperation agreements with other enterprises. In order to achieve these goals and to improve the competitiveness of small local enterprises, the partners have established a continuing training programme to help them gain access to international markets. Entrepreneurs are being encouraged to make use of new information technologies, subcontracting, business agreements and EU programmes in pursuit of this goal. Further information about the project can be obtained at www.cabtfe.es/up-net/.

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Partners: Chambre de Métiers de la Guadeloupe, France
Chambre de Métiers de Martinique, France
Chambre de Métiers de la Réunion, France
Associação dos Jovens Empresários dos Açores, Portugal
Associação Comercial e Industrial, Funchal, Portugal

Timetable:

Starting date: 30 January 1998
Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 457 955 €

Subsidy: 228 977 €

"Transnational cooperation network to assist young entrepreneurs in the craft and small business sector"

By promoting enterprises during their start-up phase (0-5 years), the partners aim to ensure the successful development of businesses run by young entrepreneurs. The project is designed both to guide and encourage entrepreneurs' spirit of initiative, and also to raise the profile of the craft sector amongst young people and the general public. Against this background, the partners are establishing a transnational network based on a common assistance and guidance system that will be transferable to other EU countries. The network will develop forums for contacts, provide targeted transnational training, establish accompanying promotional tools and implement a strategy for transferring the results of the project.

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Partners: Maison des Métiers de
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Chambre des Métiers de Moselle, France
O.C.ClaM.Asbl., Belgium
Handwerkskammer Saarlandes, Germany

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 January 1998
Duration: 36 months
Total cost: 584 000 €
Subsidy: 292 000 €

"Eurosources: New Sources for Enterprises"

"Eurosources" aims to prepare young entrepreneurs to run businesses in the new sources-of-employment sector by helping them to design projects with a transnational focus and by providing them with information, skills, advice and support. The first phase of the project included a local analysis of potential demand. This also helped develop the capacity to transfer the project results to other areas through suitable forms of cooperation. The second phase involves the establishment of a network of selected entrepreneurs, thereby creating a forum for the exchange of information and experience on forms of cooperation. Further information can be obtained at www.jeune-entrepreneurs.org/eurosources/.

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Partners: APME/FEM, Europe
CEAJE, Spain
NCMV, Belgium
ANJE, Portugal
Communicare, Sweden
CNA, Italy

Timetable:
Starting date: 28 January 1998
Duration: 32 months
Total cost: 720 000 €
Subsidy: 360 000 €

"EMBNeT - The Ethnic Minority Business Network"

EMBNeT aims to identify and transfer best practices for the development and expansion of ethnic minority businesses at EU level and to assist ethnic entrepreneurs in overcoming business obstacles and regulation constraints. The partners are establishing a trans-European multi-sector exchange network on current information and practices in the area of migrant and minority enterprise development, promoting private-public partnerships aimed at fostering ethnic minority business creation and elevating this issue onto the EU agenda so as to raise awareness of ethnic minority businesses and the barriers they must overcome. Its activities are targeted at intermediary organisations of ethnic minority businesses, financial sector representatives and national and local authorities. An EMB-NeT website was launched recently, and is accessible at www.embnet.com.

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Partners: Migration Policy Group,
Belgium (Members in France, Germany,
Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and UK)
London Enterprise Agency, UK

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 September 1998
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 803 972 €
Subsidy: 401 986 €

JOINT PARTICIPATION OF CRAFTS AND SMALL ENTERPRISES IN TRADE FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS

"Pic Trade Fair"

The participating regions are organising 3 trade fairs aimed at promoting local production and strengthening measures to sustain economic, tourism-related and cultural activities for craft and small enterprises. The project is developing local and transnational relations between these enterprises through regular exchanges of information and experience, both at local level and via transnational conferences or colloquia on the problems faced by small enterprises in rural areas. The first trade fair took place on 7-9 May 1999 near Pic St Loup, the second will be in Montiferru in the Spring of 2000 and the third is scheduled for Spring 2001 near Sevilla.

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Partners: Camera de Comercio,
Industria y Navegacion de Sevilla, Spain
Comunità Montana del Montiferru, Italy
Timetable:
Starting date: 30 January 1998
Duration: 42 months
Total cost: 619 572 €
Subsidy: 309 786 €

"Joint stand for trade fairs organised by technology agencies"

The project aims to enhance the competitiveness of small and craft businesses in this Alpine region by giving them the opportunity to take part in specialised international trade fairs and exhibitions through the intermediary of a public technology or innovation agency. The agency selects the businesses that will take part (approximately 200-300), informs them about the project and establishes a series of profiles of these businesses. These profiles are recorded in various databases, and there is a joint stand at international trade fairs and exhibitions, where the participating businesses are able to conclude cooperation or trade agreements and obtain information to enable them to remain competitive on international markets.

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Partners: Camera di Commercio di
Trentino, Italy
Schalter für Technologie, Italy
Vorarlberger Technologie Transfer
Zentrum, Austria

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 February 1998

Duration: 32 months

Total cost: 203 200 €

Subsidy: 101 600 €

"Espace Europe Crafts Fair"

Espace Europe fills the gap created by the need for European craft businesses to gain access to stable, long-term markets and the consumer's desire for novel products that are not mass-produced or standardised. The project involves organising an annual fair at EU level which is open only to craft exhibitors. Assistance is provided for exhibitors unused to taking part in such events. The fair provides an opportunity for craft businesses to internationalise, make business contacts with other exhibitors and with larger-scale economic operators, and to acquire management know-how. This should enable them to engage in more comprehensive production and financial planning. It is intended to increase the impact of the fair from year to year, with specific themes being chosen depending on the exhibitors taking part, so that in future it becomes an essential reference point for the large-scale marketing of European craft products. A memorandum of understanding has been signed between a number of European craft fair organisers to create a network for craft fairs.

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Partners: Gremio Provençal de
Artesanías Varias de Murcia, Spain
Associação Comercial de Beja, Portugal
Association of Handicraft Producers of
Athens, Greece
Handwerkskammer Erfurt, Germany
Vilniaus Prekybos, Lithuania

Timetable:

Starting date: 27 January 1998

Duration: 18 months

Total cost: 1 057 382 €

Subsidy: 528 691 €

A EUROPEAN CULTURE AND SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE

"Craft and micro-enterprises - Memories for the future"

The craft sector is both an important generator of wealth and a key factor in safeguarding traditional culture. This project aims to make young people, their parents and the general public aware of its significance in this respect, and to demonstrate the role of small enterprises in the process of economic modernisation. It encourages young people to take on jobs in the craft sector, promotes individual initiatives in job creation and is attempting to move the craft and micro-enterprise sector into the mainstream by enhancing its value in an economic and social context. The tools being used include a variety of audiovisual media, such as videos and CD-ROMs, and a catalogue of businesses to provide information on craft activities and to demonstrate their innovative and motivational features.

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Partners: Associação Galega de
Artesãos, Spain

CRAT, Portugal

SOLIDARIOS, Portugal

CIDEC, Portugal

Timetable:

Starting date: 30 January 1998

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 272 802 €

Subsidy: 136 401 €

"SAFE: Support and training service for entrepreneurs"

SAFE is intended to assist young, unemployed graduates in setting up their own businesses. As a first stage, interested young people have been selected, given personal advice on setting up a new business and have attended a business management course. After setting up their businesses, the participants will be given support during the start-up phase and other measures will be implemented in parallel to promote a spirit of enterprise. The promoters estimate that 5000 young graduates and other groups interested in setting up new businesses will take part in the training and advice phase, and that about 75 businesses will be set up at the end of the training phase. This should result in the creation of between 75 and 150 new jobs.

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Partner: Comune di Pesaro, Italy

Timetable:

Starting date: 30 January 1998

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 444 242 €

Subsidy: 222 121 €

"Eyge-Net - The promotion of young and women entrepreneurs in the craft and micro-enterprise sector"

Eyge-Net has created 5 centres, 4 in Greece and 1 in Italy, to provide support services for young and women entrepreneurs. The partners aim both to promote entrepreneurship and develop a financial tool, with the cooperation of local and regional authorities, applicable to these target groups. Following a study to identify the main needs and obstacles that confront the participating entrepreneurs, training programmes have been devised that will help to prepare potential entrepreneurs for their business ventures. It is envisaged that each support centre will assist and monitor the creation of 60 enterprises over the 3 years of the project. The partners will also create a web page linking the new enterprises with the support centres and disseminate the results of the project via seminars and contacts with public authorities and sectoral representative organisations. Further information can be obtained at www.dimitra.gr/eugenet.

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Partners: Ipirus Development Agency, Greece
Crafts Chamber of Larissa, Greece
General Secretariat of Youth, Greece
Dow-Stoker Ltd., UK
Comitato Impresa Donna, Italy
CNA Bologna, Italy

Timetable:
Starting date: 30 January 1998
Duration: 36 months
Total cost: 995 030 €
Subsidy: 497 515 €

"Floor for business starters in local crafts business centres"

This project aims to help bring about the revitalisation and development of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the project partners' cities by setting up and improving business services, and by simplifying access to these services. It seeks both to improve the quality of services on offer to small and craft businesses and to encourage cooperation between these businesses to promote technology transfer. The project began with a preparatory phase (planning, assistance and marketing, choice of participating start-ups), to be followed by a trial phase and a steering phase. Its methodology includes moderated workshops, questionnaires and discussions with experts. Lasting results should include the development of instruments for Micro Business Management, the creation of an EGE (Existenzgründer-Etagen or business incubator floors) network, and continued commitment from the partners in their respective cities. Further information can be obtained at www.gruender-info.de.

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Partners: Bexley Council, UK
Ayuntamiento de Gijón, Spain
Regeneration Trust Clerkenwell, UK
Timetable:
Starting date: 6 May 1998
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 305 629 €
Subsidy: 152 814 €

"Women's Enterprise Development"

Currently, women are seriously under-represented amongst entrepreneurs and owners of small businesses, and an important potential for growth as well as increased employment could be exploited by encouraging more women to set up businesses. The partners are seeking to overcome the obstacles to this by setting up a network of resource centres where experienced businesspeople act as "mentors" for budding female entrepreneurs and where the specific problems relating to the sector can be addressed. The resource centres will also offer advice and support in areas such as basic economic knowledge, family affairs, credit and finance, taxation and other legal and administrative matters.

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Partners: University of Vaasa, Finland
International Foundation of Women
Entrepreneurs, Spain
Almi Företagspartner, Sweden
VFQ, Austria
Fundación Laboral WWB, Spain

Timetable:
Starting date: 31 January 1998
Duration: 36 months
Total cost: 1 164 292 €
Subsidy: 542 813 €

"Strengthening awareness of opportunities in small and craft enterprises"

Under this project, the role of young people and women within the craft and small enterprise sector is being strengthened by encouraging the exchange of know-how and experience between schools and organisations representing these types of enterprises. The partners' goal is to establish a business-style organisation within each participating educational institution in order to promote the principles of entrepreneurship. Activities include the organisation of theme days at each school and the development of a new training system for tutors.

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Partner: Nässjö Kommun, Sweden
Timetable:
Starting date: 1 February 1998
Duration: 14 months
Total cost: 530 260 €
Subsidy: 265 130 €

FINANCING AND ACCESS TO CREDIT FOR CRAFT AND SMALL ENTERPRISES

"Innovation in small firm credit finance: Learning from successful models of micro-lending"

This research project aimed to improve the financial situation of micro- and small enterprises by transferring the experience of successful microlending. 8 outstanding lenders to micro-enterprises were analysed using the "benchmarking" management tool and a survey of "best practices". The results of the exercise are intended to provide practical answers to the crucial questions surrounding small firm lending, namely security, transaction costs, support and acquisition of clients. The conclusions of the study will be made available to operating lenders in the banking sector with the aim of implementing its findings in the lending procedures of banks.

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Partners: Personal Finance Research Centre, UK
Centre for Alternative Social Analysis, Denmark
Facet BV, Netherlands

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 February 1998
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 580 463 €
Subsidy: 290 169 €

"OPTIFI 2000"

OPTIFI 2000 has as its target group approximately 100 newly-established small or micro-enterprises in the commerce and distributive trade sectors, a large majority of which are micro-enterprises in the textile trade. This sector is characterised by a high proportion of women entrepreneurs. Services provided to the participants include information on financial management and access to finance, general business advice and the development of training and self-learning tools. These tools will be transferrable and will be re-used within the support bodies promoting the project.

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Partners: Industrial Development and Education Centre, Greece
AGEFOS PME Corse, France
CGPME Ajaccio, France
DRCA Ajaccio, France

Timetable:
Starting date: 29 January 1998
Duration: 36 months
Total cost: 570 935 €
Subsidy: 285 000 €

VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR CRAFTSMEN AND FOUNDERS OF SMALL ENTERPRISES

"FO.P.A. - Vocational Training for Craftsmen"

FO.P.A. is designed to encourage the development of high-quality craft businesses, to reduce unemployment, especially amongst young people, to resurrect and catalogue the skills of master craftsmen and to preserve minor cultural assets. A training system is being developed, using new technologies, to put in place specialised support mechanisms for passing on skills and the establishment of new, approved operators in this sector. The CIAR have produced a comprehensive analysis of the craft industry in Italy, through which they have identified 19 traditional crafts which are in danger of disappearing. A video of craftsmen at work is being turned into a CD-ROM so as to allow the widest possible diffusion of these techniques. The AN.KA organised a meeting of 25 local craftsmen, and are trying to create a high-quality local souvenir industry based on woodcrafts.

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Partner: Karditsa Development Agency
(AN.KA S.A.), Greece

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 January 1998

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 334 474 €

Subsidy: 167 237 €

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

"EDITA - Information platform for the cross-border business activities of small and craft enterprises"

EDITA aims to create a cross-border electronic information and communication system to strengthen the flexibility and capability of craft and small enterprises. These types of enterprises are normally unable to build up important staff resources to react rapidly to short-term business opportunities. By disseminating modern information technology to these enterprises, it is intended to prepare entrepreneurs to adapt to a rapidly-changing market environment and to use these new technologies in the field of electronic commerce. A web page for EDITA was launched recently at www.edita.org.

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Partners: MKB, Netherlands
NCMV, Belgium

Timetable:

Starting date: 30 January 1998

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 600 000 €

Subsidy: 300 000 €

"Women's Enterprises Electronic Networks (WEEN)"

WEEN aims to increase the number of women's enterprises using information and communication technologies to access information and participate in electronic networks, thereby increasing the effectiveness of their business and their cooperation with other EU businesses. The project involves the provision of training and consultancy to 12-15 agencies and through them to over 144 women entrepreneurs. It also involves assisting these agencies to set up their own electronic networks, bulletin boards, newsletters and websites to enable them and their members to communicate electronically with their members and members of other European networks. Further information can be obtained at:
<http://legacy.unl.ac.uk/ween/index.htm>.

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Partners: BIC Emilia Romagna, Italy
International Educational Links, Greece
WITEC, Germany
Hackney Chamber of Commerce, UK
Business Link London City Partners, UK
Islington Chamber of Commerce, UK
London Chamber of Commerce, UK

Timetable:
Starting date: 31 March 1998
Duration: 36 months
Total cost: 678 637 €
Subsidy: 339 319 €

"CREATE"

CREATE (Craft Enterprises Assisting Young Disabled Entrepreneurs) aims to support young disabled people who either run or would like to set up their own business. The partners have established a website (CREATE-ABLE) to give disabled entrepreneurs the opportunity to promote their products to a wider market and to enable them to network and gain access to advice. This website will eventually be extended to allow the partners to link up with similar organisations in other parts of the EU. In addition, they are mounting an annual craft fair to promote the products of disabled entrepreneurs. CREATE-ABLE is accessible at www.create-able.com. Some 200 entrepreneurs have already registered their interest in advertising on the site.

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Partners: Lavanagh Centre, Ireland
Solideur S.R.L., Italy
Timetable:
Starting date: 1 January 1998
Duration: 36 months
Total cost: 235 000 €
Subsidy: 470 000 €

"Eurocost"

Eurocost aims to install a telematic service for Greek micro-enterprises in the automobile repairs sector, thereby facilitating the transfer of know-how and innovation and helping micro-enterprises to improve their services and meet the challenge of growing competition. 80 micro-enterprises have received the necessary on-the-job training to enable them to use the new technology. An on-line service provides each enterprise with information on the costs of spare parts, on-line video conferencing, technical assistance and an intranet connection with all the other participants as well as the project partners. The Italian and German partners have contributed their expertise towards helping to implement the service in Greece. Eventually, it is anticipated that the service will be extended to more than 4000 enterprises.

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Partners: POVEAM, Greece
TELENET, Greece
Handwerkskammer Hamburg, Germany
AIRA, Italy

Timetable:
Starting date: 25 February 1998
Duration: 30 months
Total cost: 950 000 €
Subsidy: 475 000 €

TRAINING OF EURO-ADVISERS FROM THE SUPPORTING BODIES

"Euroadvisers"

A body of Euroadvisers is being trained to help craft and small enterprises to play a greater part in EU policies and programmes. The first stage of the project was for the partners to establish a framework of competences for the advisers, then to design a relevant training course based on these core skills. An experimental pilot training action will then take place on 18 separate days, with 16 advisers drawn from French, Italian and Spanish support organisations. This will enable them to make use of their knowledge to assist local enterprises in taking advantage of European opportunities. The results of the project will then be made available elsewhere in the EU in the form of best practices.

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Partners: CGPME Rhône-Alpes, France
AGEFOS PME Rhône-Alpes, France
CREA, Spain
API Bergamo, Italy
Ecole Supérieure Internationale de
Gestion Rabat, Morocco

Timetable:
Starting date: 28 April 1998
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 250 575 €
Subsidy: 115 185 €

"Cross-border training: Euroadvisers and women entrepreneurs"

A network of Euroadvisers is being established to provide women entrepreneurs running small enterprises with training and information on all aspects of business management, and in particular on EU measures affecting small enterprises. During the first stage of the project, the partners began by selecting people to work as Euroadvisers and trained them in European affairs of direct relevance to small enterprises. They also selected enterprises run by women to take part in the second stage of the project. In this second stage, the partners are organising training courses and disseminating relevant information to participating entrepreneurs. Following this, they will publish an explanatory booklet setting out the training activities and the information that has been provided to the participants. This material could then be disseminated to women entrepreneurs elsewhere in the EU.

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Partners: Chambre de Commerce de
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Asociación de la Industria Navarra, Spain
Chambre Régional de Métiers du
Midi-Pyrénées, France
Chambre Régional de Métiers
d'Aquitaine, France

Timetable:
Starting date: 30 January 1998
Duration: 30 months
Total cost: 216 511 €
Subsidy: 108 256 €

1998

SMEs and craft enterprises have a particular need to strengthen and develop their human resources in order to make them more competitive and to maximise their potential for creating jobs. The 1998 **call for proposals for projects in the field of training and related support services for small and medium-sized businesses**⁴ aimed to encourage the development of human resources in this sector by promoting training, counselling and awareness-raising schemes. It included the following five objectives:

i) promoting access to training for sole proprietors (one-person firms)

Based on an audit of the training needs of sole proprietors, innovative training methods should be devised to meet these needs and facilitate the access of sole proprietors to training. In addition, instructors belonging to representative organisations should be trained in these methods to enable them to promote and conduct such courses.

ii) awareness-raising, training and counselling for young people on starting a business

The aim is to foster a spirit of enterprise amongst young people outside the labour market and the education system, and to encourage them to set up businesses, by designing innovative methods of support to meet their specific needs.

iii) promoting the development and/or dissemination of recognised training courses for assisting spouses

Training courses for assisting spouses (entrepreneurs helping their spouse to run a business) should be designed which take into account their specific needs and their problems in gaining access to training. This should be reinforced by the development of transnational partnerships between representative organisations, business associations and training organisations to publicise training courses for assisting spouses and exchange best practices.

iv) promoting innovative management techniques and methods of work organisation in micro- and craft enterprises

The aim is to identify best practices in innovative management techniques appropriate to micro- and craft enterprises, and to develop a better awareness of their needs amongst suppliers of training. Actions should include the development/assessment of multi-media techniques (CD-ROMs, Internet etc.) for in-house training, and the transfer of these to enterprises by developing training modules based on self-evaluation and benchmarking.

v) promoting the spirit of enterprise in secondary schools by virtue of partnerships between education authorities and the organisations representing the craft and small business sector

Eligible actions include a campaign to increase awareness amongst students of how to run their own business, and the development of a European Prize for Young Entrepreneurs.

⁴ 98/C 263/14

PROMOTING ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR SOLE PROPRIETORS (ONE-PERSON FIRMS)

"Development of training for sole proprietors"

The objective of this project is to facilitate access for sole proprietors to specialised training, which will help entrepreneurs to acquire new skills and to identify and adapt to the conditions necessary for the growth of their business. The partners will identify the obstacles sole proprietors face in accessing training in France, Italy and Spain and will develop a training programme that is responsive to the individual needs of participating enterprises. This programme will provide advice to entrepreneurs and make use of new training techniques involving distance learning and multimedia tools. Employees of the partner organisations, and of other professional bodies, will be trained to deliver these programmes via special training "platforms". The tools developed as a result of the project will eventually be transferrable to similar organisations elsewhere in the EU.

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Partners: CGPME Rhône-Alpes, France
APMI Bergamo, Italy

CRE Aragon, Spain

Timetable:

Starting date: 30 April 1999

Duration: 12 months

Total cost: 378 971 €

Subsidy: 189 485 €

AWARENESS-RAISING, TRAINING AND COUNSELLING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON STARTING A BUSINESS

"CONTIS - Consulting, Training and Information Services for Young Entrepreneurs through the Internet"

CONTIS aims to improve young entrepreneurs' skills and help them adapt to changes in the business environment by developing training and consulting modules that are available over the Internet. The partners will create a website addressed exclusively to young entrepreneurs in the sectors of trade and services. Services on the site will include advisory and business services, new management and marketing techniques and funding opportunities. Information will be in English, Greek and Portuguese. Each version will consist of a part relating to common contents (e.g. management and marketing strategies and techniques) and a separate national content, including information about local authorities, legal structures and procedures, the tax system etc., in each participating country.

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Partners: Hypertech S.A., Greece
KEK XINI, Greece

ISQ, Portugal

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 August 1999

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 397 720 €

Subsidy: 198 860 €

"From valorisation to transmission"

By developing training modules for young female entrepreneurs, the partners aim to establish a model of organisation and assistance that can be pursued in future projects both in the participating countries and elsewhere in the EU. Enterprises will be targetted according to the following criteria: they must be based on an associate structure, they must consist exclusively, or almost exclusively, of young women entrepreneurs, they must be launched on limited capital following the training of the entrepreneurs, they must be engaged in innovative activities, they must be ready to accept young people on placements (stagiaires) and the entrepreneurs must be willing to impart their experience to others.

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Partners: Camden Training Centre, UK
IRFA, France
SURT, Spain

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 January 1999
Duration: 12 months
Total cost: 120 560 €
Subsidy: 60 280 €

"IMOSTART – Innovative Model for Starters of SMEs"

IMOSTART aims to establish an innovative training and guidance model for young starters of small and craft enterprises (aged between 18 and 27). An initial audit has been carried out to determine their educational and training needs, the sectors in which they are most likely to be able to succeed and the obstacles that they face in setting up their own business. Following this, a series of transnational workshops will be held between the partners to bring together different national examples of best practice, and the training and guidance model will be evaluated and monitored by a transnational steering group. Instructors will be trained to provide courses using the new model, which will then be tested through one business representative organisation in each participating country. Following completion of the model, there will be a seminar to inform enterprises, training institutes and experts about it.

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Partners: APIP, Spain
IDEC, Greece
Clef Insertion, France
NCMV, Belgium
Vormingsinstituut KMO Oostende, Belgium
Kamer van Koophandel en Nijverheid Oostende, Belgium

Timetable:
Starting date: 1 March 1999
Duration: 15 months
Total cost: 206 820 €
Subsidy: 103 410 €

"Visa for Entrepreneurship"

The partners aim to establish "enterprise creation points" to inform and raise awareness amongst graduating students, via conferences and press notices, about starting a business. Following this initial stage, the participants will be offered training modules to enable them to find out more about what is involved in setting up their own business. This will serve to increase their employment options when they complete their studies. For those who do not want to start a business, there will be a supplementary module on project management, which will teach them how to design projects and will increase their marketability for prospective employers.

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Partner: BIC Kaiserslautern, Germany

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 January 1999
Duration: 36 months
Total cost: 284 900 €
Subsidy: 142 450 €

"Entrepraining"

The Entrepraining partners are analysing the training and consulting needs of entrepreneurs in the participating regions via individual interviews and a working group involving the entrepreneurs. Following this, they will identify niches and market opportunities in these regions, as well as innovative ways of meeting this demand, and will carry out a comparative analysis of the methodologies and services provided by social organisations. Following a survey of the participating entrepreneurs, a support system has been developed to help them overcome problems and to meet their needs. This includes personalised assessments by professionals of the various parts of their company and advice on training, business plans, legal paperwork and grants and economic assistance for setting up a business. An essential element of the project will be the creation of a discussion forum over the Internet, which will constitute a permanent source of dialogue between the participating organisations and entrepreneurs and will promote the exchange of best practices, experiences, methodologies and conclusions.

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Partners: AGDER Research Foundation, Norway
ZEUS Ltd., Germany
Gpdm mbH, Germany
Centro Produttività Veneto, Italy
AS International Consultants, UK
Trafford Business Venture, UK
Shena Simon College, UK

Timetable:

Starting date: 4 March 1999
Duration: 16 months
Total cost: 521 248 €
Subsidy: 260 624 €

PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND/OR DISSEMINATION OF RECOGNISED TRAINING COURSES FOR ASSISTING SPOUSES

"Euro-BCC"

Euro-BCC aims to disseminate information on an existing French training programme (the BCCEA) to the partner organisations in other countries. The BCCEA diploma includes four measurements of skill, which are recognised by industry, relating to entrepreneurs who assist their spouses in running a business. Besides this, the partners will develop a common training module on the EU, which could serve as a fifth measurement. This would cover areas such as the impact of the treaties, the single currency, the future development of the EU and its implications for small enterprises.

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Partners: Institut de Formation pour les
PME Bruxelles, Belgium
Centre de Formació Empresarial I
Ocupacional Vilamallà, Spain

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 January 1999
Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 159 487 €

Subsidy: 79 743 €

"Co-Working Wives"

Co-Working Wives aims to develop training courses for women assisting their husbands in the running of their business, which must be a small or a craft enterprise. The first stage of the project comprises the assessment of qualification needs in 60 enterprises in each partner country. This will be compiled through a transnational study and during the first partner workshop in the UK. During the following stages, 3 more international workshops will be held in each of the other partner countries, training modules will be combined to form curricula corresponding to regional/local needs and pilot training courses for co-working wives will be organised leading to proposals for certification. At the end, a communication strategy and an international forum for further assistance to co-working wives will be created.

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Partners: Kilmarnock College, UK
Affärskultur AB, Sweden
Ecoles de Langues, France
Comenius Institut, Czech Republic
IFB Schulen Pirna, Germany

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 January 1999
Duration: 30 months

Total cost: 854 804 €

Subsidy: 427 402 €

"EUROTRAIN - European diploma for women co-entrepreneurs"

EUROTRAIN aims to identify the best training programmes available to women co-entrepreneurs working in small and craft enterprises in the EU. Drawing upon the experience of these programmes, the partners will develop a European diploma for women co-entrepreneurs that will be recognised in all the Member States. A group of experts will develop a training programme based on existing best practices, following which successful participants will be awarded the new diploma. The action will be widely publicised to ensure that as many co-entrepreneurs as possible are informed about it. Following the completion of the training programme, the partners will seek official recognition of the European diploma throughout the EU and will establish a network of organisations offering this type of training to women co-entrepreneurs.

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Partners: Comitato Impresa Donna, Italy
ACTIF, France

AEM/FEMENP, Spain

APID, Italy

APME, Portugal

Dansk Håndværks Kvinder, Denmark

UFG Baden-Württemberg, Germany

Timetable:

Starting date: 28 January 1999

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 426 610 €

Subsidy: 213 305 €

"COLEA - Co-entrepreneurs in craft enterprises and SMEs"

COLEA will establish a common framework for training for women co-entrepreneurs in small and craft enterprises. It responds to an identified need amongst co-entrepreneurs in the participating regions, and will begin by analysing this demand for further training. The partners will develop an appropriate methodology which reflects the needs of both co-entrepreneurs and the types of enterprises in which they are working. The final product will be available via the Internet in order to facilitate access for the target audience and to permit distance learning. The project will also include the training of instructors, to be followed by a trial training action. Upon completion, the COLEA methodology will be transferrable to other parts of the EU.

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Partners: Chambre des Métiers de la
Vendée, France

EFESO Bologna, Italy

Timetable:

Starting date: 1 March 1999

Duration: 24 months

Total cost: 351 850 €

Subsidy: 158 333 €

PROMOTING INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF WORK ORGANISATION IN MICRO- AND CRAFT ENTERPRISES

"Best practices in food production"

The target group consists of micro- and craft enterprises in the agro-food sector in the Abruzzo and Aquitaine. By introducing best practices in production techniques, the partners hope to improve the performance of these enterprises. Following an initial exercise to identify and gather examples of best practice, the partners will undertake the training of consultants and future trainers, make entrepreneurs aware of the advantages of introducing new production techniques and advise them on how to carry out a self-evaluation of their production systems. It is intended that the introduction of the new techniques will be the start of a process of continuous improvement. Databases will be compiled to help compare different local techniques of production and will eventually be linked to similar databases further afield. Information can then be disseminated to entrepreneurs in other EU countries.

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Timetable:
Starting date: 1 January 1999
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 902 140 €
Subsidy: 451 070 €

"Net Quality"

Net Quality aims to promote the use of new management organisation and marketing techniques by small enterprises in the tourism sector and to promote the exchange of expertise and knowledge. The partners will analyse the current situation in the sector to: identify the key training needs for small enterprises; identify IT-based best practices in advanced management and organisational techniques; develop the necessary IT tools for the desired applications and best practices; develop and field experimental innovative training modules for transferring those best practices and tools to small enterprises; familiarise training institutions and personnel with these training modules and with the needs of small enterprises; and use networks to disseminate best practice and training modules along with information on training organisations.

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Institut BIT, Spain
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Timetable:
Starting date: 1 May 1999
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 1 000 000 €
Subsidy: 500 000 €

"Action to promote new and innovative management techniques"

This project aims to develop a qualification that will enable participants to apply new and appropriate techniques and strategies in management and resource productivity to their business. The action will proceed in six phases: identification of modern and innovative management techniques adapted to the needs of small and craft enterprises; development of a qualification (taking into account apprenticeship training modules available over the Internet) that can be used in enterprises; awareness-raising amongst small and craft enterprises; development of a specific programme to advise these types of enterprises on the management of resources; qualification of participants in the two training modules (techniques in management and the management of resources); evaluation of the project; and dissemination of the results.

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Timetable:
Starting date: 31 January 1999
Duration: 24 months
Total cost: 722 415 €
Subsidy: 361 208 €

"Managing independent workers and subcontractors"

The partners aim to study and develop strategies and networks to increase the effectiveness of domestic and international labour networking in small communication enterprises. The project will identify best practices in managing independent workers and subcontractors in the graphic and media sectors in the participating countries. It is intended to create on-line labour exchanges to enhance the opportunities for independent workers and subcontractors in advertising agencies, magazines, multimedia design houses and pre-press operations in printing houses. The partners will also develop skills and strategies for managers who use such operations as a means of encouraging a flexible workforce and new subcontractors both domestically and across Europe. The project will simultaneously increase the competitiveness of small enterprises by keeping employment flexible and providing access to pools of trained professionals.

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Timetable:
Starting date: 1 August 1999
Duration: 15 months
Total cost: 470 490 €
Subsidy: 229 995 €

**PROMOTING THE SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
BY VIRTUE OF PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATION AUTHORITIES
AND THE ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTING THE CRAFT AND SMALL
BUSINESS SECTOR**

"The European Awards for the Spirit of Enterprise"

These awards aim to stimulate and promote entrepreneurship amongst young people in the 15 Member States of the EU. In addition, through this initiative, small enterprises can gain wider recognition and business exposure. The awards identify the best initiatives in 4 separate categories: Best European Enterprise Concept at School; Best European Small Enterprise Initiative; Best European Young Entrepreneur; and Best European Innovative Enterprise. The participants will take part in regional, national and European events. This will offer young entrepreneurs not only a chance for recognition, but also an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with their peers.

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Timetable:
Starting date: 1 August 1999
Duration: 12 months
Total cost: 1 040 538 €
Subsidy: 268 975 €

Preliminary conclusions

Although the pilot actions described here are at different stages of the project cycle, a number of preliminary strategic conclusions can be drawn from the experiences so far:

- * **Transnational cooperation activities** are a good way of encouraging small and craft enterprises to broaden their markets and to learn about new methods of management, production, marketing and so forth. However, these activities need to be well-targeted to ensure that they meet the specific needs of the sector.
- * Small and craft enterprises welcome the **establishment of European networks**, particularly where these bring together members of groups with similar but specific needs (e.g. young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, co-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs from disadvantaged minorities). **Information and communication technologies have a key role to play in the creation and development of such networks.**
- * There is a clear need to **disseminate best practices** in fields such as access to finance, training and advisory services. Easily-accessible **databases and Internet discussion pages** for entrepreneurs are tools that could be considered as a means to help promote best practices.
- * An understanding of new technology is essential to the survival of many small and craft enterprises. Entrepreneurs should therefore be encouraged (via **faster diffusion of technology, improved management skills training programmes** etc.) to make more use of innovation and new technology to assist with the management of their businesses, the development of their products and their ability to compete in the global marketplace.
- * It is vital to continue to **promote the sector at European level to provide it with a new and dynamic image.** This could be developed through awareness-raising activities such as European Prizes for Young Entrepreneurs and Artistic Crafts, as well as the use of new media such as CD-ROMs and videos, and business games or experience, in order to promote entrepreneurship among students.
- * Entrepreneurs need to be able to access reliable support services. **Networking of advisory bodies and creation of quality guarantees** could be first steps towards encouraging small businesses to use external advice services. Future actions could include the **gathering together of existing on-line services** into **user-friendly directories**, **mentoring schemes**, and the **linking of training and consulting services.**