

SME Counselling

NEWSLETTER No. 1

Highlights:

1. PROJECT PRESENTATION
2. PARTNER ORGANISATIONS BRIEF PRESENTATION
3. INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS
4. CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Project Presentation

As lifelong learning is very important for every human being, it is clear that people need **guidance about learning at all stages of their lives**. The **need to improve access to general and vocational training** for those generations that are already integrated into the labour and employment markets means there is a demand for increasingly needs-oriented vocational information, **guidance and counselling**. SMEs' employees are usually overworked, employers usually lack resources, and there are not always incentives for investment in human resources development.

Consequently, the **target groups** considered by the **SME Counselling** project are **SMEs (both managers and employees)**. A special consideration is intended for some particular categories in danger of exclusion from the labour market: **older employees and women**.

"Front-line" counsellors come from enterprises (SMEs) and they require the extension, improvement and upgrading of their initial vocational training and continuing vocational training and education. Front-line counsellors' qualification should take into account the whole spectrum of *formal, non-formal and informal learning*. In this respect, the project has several specific objectives:

1. identifying the desired profile and creating a **training package** (*curriculum, methodology, instruments, evaluation criteria and certification provisions*) for developing new social skills for front-line counsellors
2. elaborating a "**scheme**" with an European dimension, for providing **internal guidance fit for SMEs**, with particular attention for older people and especially for women
3. **networking** with stakeholders in the area of lifelong learning, in view of lobbying for curricula improvement for technical qualifications and for qualifications and competences **recognition**.

The activities foreseen to be performed in the project:

- Identification of European, national and local **stakeholders** and their current level of involvement
- Identification of SMEs workforce **needs for lifelong learning** enrolling and of best practices for addressing these needs
- Development of a scheme for providing **during-the-job internal "front-line" information-advice-guidance-counselling** services

ⁱ This project has been financed with the support of the European Commission. This document does not necessarily represent the official position of the European Commission or the Leonardo da Vinci Centre and the responsibility of the content lies with the initiators of this material alone

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- ☒ **Training of trainers** of internal "front-line" counsellors
 - ☒ Making ready for public the «Internal "front-line" counselling **guidelines for SMEs' managers**»
 - ☒ **Dissemination and recommendations** for the educational institutions, for including social skills development in all levels curricula.
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The SME Counselling project considers that first ("front-line") approach of employees, in view of lifelong learning, fostering the metamorphosis of SMEs into "learning organisations", should come not from foreign / external bodies, but from in-house well-known persons. When new technologies require higher qualifications, managers' roles shift from technical and organisational issues towards more social and educational aspects. Their job would be to foster awareness on the culture of learning within own organisations, skills development, leadership commitment, continuous improvement and lifelong learning, as essential prerequisites for successfully employment of the principles of the EFQM Quality Model. New management techniques (*coaching, mentoring*) should be enriched; hence the managers should also be able to give "**front-line" information-advice-counselling** on lifelong learning and act like "**on-the-job" learning facilitators** or **learning brokers**."

2. Partner Organisations Brief Presentation

P1 – ECOMET, Romania

Eco-metallurgical Researches and Surveying Center (ECOMET) from POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest was founded by U.P.B. Rector decision no. 7 / 31.01.2001 on the basis of Senate Bureau decision.

The activity objectives are multiple branch of science researches, continuous formation of human resources, and surveying in environmental protection. The research staff consists in professors, researchers, PhDs and students.

A large number of projects from National Researches Program (RELANSIN, INFRAS, INVENT, CERES, AGRAL) are being developed through our center, as well as direct contracts with economic companies. ECOMET was and is directly involved in international projects (PHARE and Leonardo da Vinci). By Continuous education and e-learning, ECOMET provides post-university specialization in eco-industrial domain. Our competence on these educational form bases are certified by diplomas emitted by POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest.

ECOMET organize professional formation lectures for students and young graduates. The leading point of these lectures is to enter in contact with the usual requests in finding a job in an institute or commercial company.

ECOMET has a modern laboratory for environmental factors (water, air, soil) analysis. This laboratory has been accredited in November 24th 2003 conform with SR EN 17025-2001.

As a recognition of the high scientific and technological level of this laboratory, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth granted us an EXCELLENCY DIPLOMA and First Reward at CONRO 2003. Having the benefits of specialists in our field participation, a high level material base, placed in an university environment, Eco-metallurgical researches and surveying center (ECOMET) is the best choice in solving the necessities and pretensions in environmental protection domain.

P2 – CNIPMMR, Romania

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Leonardo da Vinci

The aim of CNIPMMR is to improve the business environment in Romania, by supporting different initiatives for changing and improving the current status and SMEs' performances.

Main roles and activities of CNIPMMR are:

- ***Social dialogue partner, involved at every level of dialogue at national and local levels (local authorities, public authorities – ministries, governmental agencies, Economic and Social Council of Romania)***

Therefore, CNIPMMR is involved in evaluation and discussion of laws proposed in Romania and has the experience and means to promote opinions and changes in accordance with the actual economic and social environment in Romania.

- ***Coordination of the local and regional structure of SMEs associations***

CNIPMMR has a focal position in relation with its associations from all over the country, and this role is also specific for communication and dissemination of information, using two-direction channels (providing general information towards regional and local levels and gathering information from these levels and providing it to central public authorities). This role enables CNIPMMR to use its structure as receiving/transmitting points in a network of communication in favour of improving the business environment in Romania.

- ***Studies and analysis of the economic and social environment in Romania and in specific areas of interest***

CNIPMMR issues annually the "Charter of Romanian SMEs" and prepares different studies on regional basis, concerning specific areas of interest (such as use of ICT, influence factors for development, etc.).

- ***Organisation of relevant events with national coverage***

For example, CNIPMMR organises yearly the ROMANIAN TOP OF PRIVATE COMPANIES, based on the analysis of financial reports of the registered companies in Romania. It celebrates yearly the ENTREPRENEURS' DAY at national level, to enhance the visibility and contribution to the national development of such category of persons. More events are organised for dissemination of information, exchange of experience, business opportunities, etc.

- ***Service provider and coordination of local SME Business Centres organised by local and regional structures***

CNIPMMR has experience both in identifying needs for support services and in providing suitable solutions to satisfy these needs. Additionally, for adding value to the experiences obtained in different fields of activity and geographical areas, CNIPMMR coordinates the development of a network of such local service centres, enabling the exchange of experience and flow of information. Main services provided include training and consulting related to business development and improvement, process management, social responsibility, financial management, communication, access to funding, etc. It facilitates also access to specialized services, on the basis of agreement with specific service companies, with sound activity in Romania.

- ***Coordination of international projects***

CNIPMMR has coordinated Phare and Leonardo da Vinci projects and was involved as partner in more international projects, funded either by EC programmes, bilateral agreement or national funds.

P3 – API Varese, Italy

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Leonardo da Vinci

Associazione Piccole e Medie Industrie della Provincia di Varese (API Varese) is a representative and institutional body whose primary aim is to defend the interests of industrial and service small and medium enterprises, to promote the qualification of the local area providing services to the associated enterprises

API Varese enrolls 1000 companies employing about 18.000 people.

API Varese operates as a structured organisation at province, region, state and EU levels; at the same time has set-up its own consulting company (APISERVIZI VARESE S.r.l.) and a grant credit consortium (FIDI-API) in order to better assist the associated enterprises. The Association has the overall aim to provide companies with technical, commercial, IT and management services. With respect to training it organises and promotes courses, seminars and workshops addressed to qualification of human resources of different industrial sectors.

API is partner in several national and EU funded projects

P4 – Provincia di Varese. Italy

Provincia di Varese is a local authority who only "recently" acquired new important areas of responsibility such as labour, vocational training and education, in particular: *Vocational training - since 1980, Apprenticeship - since 1996, Labour - since 1999, Education - since 2001.*

The Provincia di Varese organization model consists of:

- *a central structure that assure the local policies planning (The Labour, Vocational Training and Educational Department)*
- *eight Public Employment Services*
- *an Employment Service for disabled people*
- *41 Informalavoro (information centres located by Municipalities)*

The Vocational Training Department of the Provincia di Varese deals with planning, coordination, financial management, monitoring and evaluation of vocational training provincial system. It coordinates 20 local training centres with 2.000 students and € 11.000.000 budget.

P5 - Groen QA Expert bv

Groen QA Expert is an independent consulting company, established in 1998 and has built up a recognised position in the field of quality assurance in the Netherlands, as well as in foreign countries.

Groen QA Expert renders the following quality assurance services to institutions and businesses: Implementation, testing, management and improvement of quality systems. These services are performed according to the guidelines stated in ISO 9001, ISO 17025, ISO 14001, Good Practices: GLP/GMP/GCP, and HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points).

Services consist of consultancy, auditing, training, and quality improvement management, nationally and internationally. Flexible, tailor-made, ad hoc quality assurance activities according to actual quality guidelines are comprised. Characteristic policy in all activities is the transfer of knowledge on the basis of a thorough scientific background combined with professional ideas about quality management processes.

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P6 - The Academy of Humanities and Economics, Lodz, Poland

AHE is the oldest and currently the largest private higher educational institution in Lodz with over **20 thousand** students studying at **10 departments**, with the possibility of obtaining both bachelor and master degree. It employs numerous outstanding scientists, academics and experts-practitioners. The Polish Ministry of Education has authorised the Academy of Humanities and Economics as an accredited institution of higher education.

Main activities of the AHE are focused on:

- **pedagogical activities** (almost 20.000 students) in the form of bachelor, master and post-graduate studies
- **publishing activity** (among publications there dominate book positions and scientific articles of AHE employees, there is developed exchange of publications with other universities. The AHE publishes own Scientific Scripts)
- **seminar activity** (seminar activities devoted mainly to the computer science field, pedagogical issues including andragogy and modern philosophical problems, anthropology of culture and linguistic researches)
- **scientific research** financed from own and external sources (inter alia: Committee of Scientific Research – Komitet Badan Naukowych)
- **organisation of national and international conferences**

AHE is a significant institution of **persistent adult education (life long learning)**. It provides courses and trainings regarding:

- economical, social, pedagogical sciences;
- trainings developing interpersonal skills for top management and working teams, both from the human resources management field and building task crew along with development of their professional qualifications.

P7 - Byweb Formacao e Informatica, Portugal

Byweb head office is in Lobão and Formation Department is in Lourosa, Santa Maria da Feira – Portugal and started its activity in 1999. The main purpose of its services is the conception and the development of innovative projects, which involve the use of the new communication and information technologies and mainly the Internet.

The enterprise is recognized by INOFOR on the following domains: diagnosis of the formation needs, intervention planning or formative activities, conception of the interventions, programmes, instruments and formative supports, organization and promotion of interventions or formative activities, development / execution of interventions or training activities, attendance and evaluation of the interventions or formative activities.

The services offered include:

- Design and Communication: *Corporate Identity; Sites' conception, construction, lodgement and managing*
- Multi-disciplinary Consulting Services: *Educational and Professional Training Projects, Management Development Projects, Social Development Projects*
- Marketing and Entrepreneurial Communication: *Elaboration of Communication and Public Relations Plans, Marketing Assesory, Press Assesory.*
- Organization of Professional Events: *Seminars, Exhibitions, Workshops.*

P8 - TEHNE

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SME COUNSELLING DEVELOPMENT OF A "FRONT-LINE" ADVICE - GUIDANCE - COUNSELLING SCHEME FOR SMEs' EMPLOYEES

TEHNE - Center for Development and Innovation in Education is a non-profit organization, aiming to support educational initiatives through projects and programs covering areas of non-formal education, formal curriculum development, education for democratic citizenship, education through ICTs, e-learning, lifelong learning, and in-service teacher training. As a non-governmental organisation, without political purposes, TEHNE promotes the European principles and values in the field of education through innovative approaches and technologies.

Three essential missions stands for the pillars sustaining the activities and projects developed by TEHNE:

- Promoting, supporting and monitoring the implementation of ICT in education and training, with a focus on e-learning and computer assisted instruction.
- Promoting and sustaining actions in the field of education for democratic living and active citizenship.
- The evaluation of social programmes with a significant education component.

The expertise of TEHNE as an active Romanian NGO in the field of education is built through the experience of experts' boards, involved by TEHNE in its educational programs: researchers, academics, practitioners, combining different types of expertise: from grass-root level to decision-making.

High-level experience of TEHNE is reflected by the partnerships with different types of institutions - governmental, non-governmental, private and public.

TEHNE is a member of SEE-ECN, supporting the network in local research and projects. SEE ECN (South East Europe Education Cooperation Network) is developed by Centre for Educational Policy Studies (Slovenia) and KulturKontakt (Austria), within the framework of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. The project is developing systematic on-line presentations of educational systems in the countries of South East Europe in comparison with the systems of other, mainly European countries. Thus, the project is improving access to information on main changes in the educational systems of particular countries. It improves access to research, legislation, documents, information sets etc. and presents individual experts and institutions. All the data and information are available on the web and are gradually provided in languages of the region covered by the project. (www.see-educoop.net)

P9 - APIMM Fagaras

Association for SMEs Promotion is affiliated as a local branch of CNIPMMR and its mission is to represent the SMEs interests at local level. It is located in the central region of Romania and it has been involved in several support actions at local level.

Its main roles in the project are to secure input from its members and to provide feedback, in view of improving the project products. As a partner, Asociația de Promovare a IMM-urilor Făgăraș takes part in the following activities: *research the current position regarding the development of managers' social skills and the current position on counselling offered for SMEs employees; survey and analysis of needs in Romania; testing of training tools; dissemination and organisation of local events; support for project evaluation and training products review.*

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3. International Meetings

The SME Counselling project planning includes five international meetings of the partner organisations. It also includes a Final Conference in Bucharest, with partners' participation.

The first international meeting, with participants representing all project partners, was organised by ECOMET and took place in Bucharest, on 7 - 8 October 2004.



Besides presentation of partner organizations, group working for detailed actual Gantt chart development and project management aspects, the 1st international meeting of the partners was an occasion to clarify some of the terms and phrases used in the project proposal, such as:

- SMEs should have access to needs-oriented vocational information, *guidance* and *counselling*, especially for those generations that are already integrated into the labour and employment markets
- *"Front-line" counsellors* – persons from SMEs, in need of the extension, improvement and upgrading of their initial vocational training and continuing vocational training and education. Front-line counsellors' qualification should take into account the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning
- *"learning facilitator"* profile, at the interface between SMEs' employees and professional counselling workers and organisations
- The project started from the idea that first ("front-line") approach of employees, in view of lifelong learning, fostering the metamorphosis of SMEs into *"learning organisations"*, should come not from foreign / external bodies, but from in-house well-known persons.
- When new technologies require higher qualifications, *managers' roles* shift from technical and organisational issues towards more social and educational aspects. Their job would be *to foster awareness on the culture of learning within own organisations, skills development, leadership commitment, continuous improvement and lifelong learning*, as essential prerequisites for successful employment of the principles of the EFQM Quality Model.
- New management techniques (*coaching, mentoring*) should be enriched; hence the managers should also be able to give "front-line" information-advice-counselling on lifelong learning and act like *"on-the-job" learning facilitators or learning brokers*.

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- This project will develop an *internal information, guidance and counselling "front-line" provider*, able to foster awareness and to support *basic advice* when lifelong learning is in question.
- The project will focus mainly on developing an *additional role for the managers within SMEs, who will need to be able to give "during-the-job" both technical and social/educational advice.*
- *"front-line" guidance and counselling services* are:
 - not an alternative to the interviews with professional guidance workers
 - merely a preparatory phase, as a first approach of creating lifelong habits among employees within SMEs.

4. Contact Information



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