

“Towards a More Innovative Workplace”

Project Reference №: 2014-1-BG01-KA202-001634

D 1.3. Compiled report on training requirements and specified business problems

The general characteristics of the InnoWork course outlined in this document are based on the results from a Europe-wide survey among **198 SMEs and 101 VET providers** from **Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Lithuania, Portugal and the United Kingdom**.

The purpose of the survey was to identify the current situation of and attitudes towards workplace innovation and learning in order to develop suitable learning materials and approaches for the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their trainers. The survey was conducted in the period from **23.02 to 12.03.2015**. It consisted of 23 questions ranging over a large number of subjects regarding creativity and innovation of the SMEs. The questions were designed in view of guiding the project and researcher teams in developing training materials that have the potential to positively influence creativity and innovation processes within SMEs.

1. The areas where creativity and innovation are used the least according to the SME respondents were:

- Communication
- Human resources
- Work well-being
- Accounting and administration
- Optimising company processes
- Optimising individual work processes
- Saving resources and improving processes

Examples about these particular areas from the organizational life can be provided as illustrations in the InnoWork course. While the neglected areas may be given some priority, the areas that are more commonly associated with creativity and innovation should also not be omitted from the training materials inasmuch as trainees are likely to expect guidance and suggestions on enhancing the positive impact of already developed approaches and practices of applying creativity and innovation.

2. 38% of the SME respondents state that creativity and innovation tools, methods and approaches are not used in their company or they are not aware of it.

Innovation tools, methods and approaches have to be demonstrated and referenced to in the learning materials. The preference should be on tools and approaches that feature practical elements or whose application in practice is relatively uncomplicated, not

particularly costly and would not require major overhaul of company processes and structures.

3. The methods, approaches and tools mostly used in the surveyed SME companies are co-operation with clients (67%), training (57%), co-operation with other organisations and companies (57%) and creativity techniques (55%).

There are methods that are fairly related to similar to those listed as most widely used: co-operation with clients, training, co-operation with other organisations and companies. These related creativity techniques should be used in the training methodology of InnoWork as their application and uptake in practice would bring genuine added value and new improvements, yet could build on already existing practices and would thus be perceived as more feasible and practical and less threatening, disruptive and costly.

4. The most popular barriers to creativity as perceived by the respondents comprise: Lack of time, Lack of other resources, Lack of empowerment and encouragement for staff, Lack of experience with creativity and innovation, difficulty to organise it on practical level.

All these barriers should be addressed in the InnoWork training materials. The materials should be short so that they are not too time-consuming. Different methods and approaches for encouragement and empowerment of the staff should be proposed. The concepts of creativity and innovation should be presented as simply as possible. The materials should instill the belief that creativity and innovation are not confined to large companies and are perfectly manageable in SMEs, too. Furthermore, their positive impact on SME competitiveness should be stressed in order to provide incentives to overcome any possible feeling of unease with the disruption of routine, the introduction of novel requirements and the implementation of new and untested approaches and concepts pertaining to innovation and creativity. As many examples as possible of the practical application of creativity and innovation to the work tasks should be provided.

5. The respondents feel that it is the management (45%) and the right interpersonal relations/workplace atmosphere (43%) that support their own creativity and innovation at their own workplace. Approximately 1 out of 3 mentioned colleagues in similar tasks and a bit more than 1 out of 4 mentioned innovative and motivating working environment. The elements and persons supporting the person's individual creative and innovative process to greatest extent are: Management, Workplace atmosphere (interpersonal), Innovative and motivating working environment, Colleagues in similar tasks.

Topics devoted to each of these 4 elements supporting the creative and innovative process should be included in the training materials. The focus should be on detailing ways to enhance the impact of these workplace elements on employees' creativity, e.g. strategies and styles that management can adopt to motivate more creative responses among employees, approaches to improving working space and optimizing interpersonal arrangements and team and employee interactions to capitalize on diversity and people's

innate creative problem solving skills, or comprehensive guidelines for building an innovative environment through rethinking organizational structure, culture, strategy and production processes.

6. Less than half (43%) of the respondents have received innovation and/or creativity training at their own workplace. The remaining 57% have received training predominantly in the form of Seminars and lectures (64%) or Discussions and debates (61%). Literature and case studies and Learning by doing were the other popular training approaches used.

Innovation and/or creativity training is popular among SMEs but it has been delivered through more traditional learning approaches. The InnoWork course can complement such existing training lectures and discussions by adding materials for self-training and learning games. These additional materials can be used by trainers to encourage self-improvement and reflective engagement with the issue of creativity and the trainee's performance at the workplace. They would also allow for the introduction of more interactive learning tools involving groups and facilitating the development of skills for teamwork, taking responsibility and leading others.

7. Those that have received innovation and creativity training at their workplace, had received training mostly in idea generation (50%), creativity techniques (39%), idea management (36%), change management (34%), product and service innovation (32%) as well as innovation and strategy (32%).

Idea generation and creativity techniques are well known aspects of creativity and innovation, therefore it is not necessary to focus too much on them in the InnoWork training materials. Instead, the focus should be on the processes of creativity and innovation within the organization (and with an additional focus on SMEs), including issues such as innovational leadership, organizational innovation plans, organizational culture, open innovation, etc.

8. Almost half of the respondents (48%) think that training in real work settings is the most useful learning approach for them. Approximately 1 out of 3 finds that training led by an instructor or a mentor, and e-learning are most useful approaches.

According to the interviewed VET providers, SMEs mostly prefer workshops (54%) and on the job training (52%). Broadcasts (4%) and use of text books/reading material for self-paced training (11 %) are least preferred forms of training.

The InnoWork training combines both e-learning approach and possibility for instructor/mentor led training. The InnoWork methodology should envisage training sessions in real work settings, while allowing for sufficient flexibility to use the training materials in different learning environments.

9. The majority of the respondents within SMEs, 61%, are willing to spend a maximum of 2 hours on training in a week. The majority of the respondents among VET providers (58%) believe that half-day training sessions (3-4 hours) are by far the most preferred duration for a training session among SMEs. According to the respondent VET providers, SMEs are not willing to use over four hours per week for **online** training. 1-2 hours (35%) is indicated to be the most preferred duration.

The training materials of InnoWork should be organized in short modules and one module should not take longer than 2 hours of self-learning time.

10. The respondents were also asked what motivates them to take part in training. They suggested that gaining knowledge (70%), advancing personal (64%) and professional development (62%), obtaining practical benefit (58%) and improving performance (51%) would be the most motivating factors for taking part in training.

The InnoWork training should therefore clearly focus on allowing trainees to obtain new knowledge. Learning outcomes concerning knowledge should be set for each different chapter. In addition, the introductory parts of the chapters should underline how the training will improve the personal/professional development of the learner (in terms of both skills and competences), and point out the practical benefits that are expected from the learning process (i.e. the development of an innovation plan of the organization).