

EuroCRAFTS 21
making european handicraft sustainable



Recommendations

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Content

- Recommendations of Austrian partner..... 4
- Recommendations of Finnish partner 6
- Recommendations of Hungarian partner 9
- Recommendations of Slovakian partner12
- Recommendations of Spanish partner15

Valorisation Report - Austria



Sylvia Brenzel, Florian Heiler – plenum

Vienna, December 2010

In Austria the piloting was implemented successfully. Very pleasing from our point of view was that all pilot companies have an affinity to the issue of sustainability. In most of the cases the company owner identified Opportunities of Sustainable Economic for the own business. Obviously sustainable activities always stand and fall with available resources in the company and costs.

The work with the companies has also led to a constructive discussion not only with the issue of sustainability in their own company but also among employees.

The feedback of the companies was very positive. The participants found the discussion about their own company and the reflection about sustainability very valuable.

According to the feedback of the participants it was challenging to work with the Self-Assessment-Sheets at the self-evaluation (Self check Crafts). The working material seemed very complex from their appearance and challenging to many participants. Many experienced the requested content ridden with prerequisites. Another problem was that some participants couldn't make ratings, because of lack of knowledge.

The participants found the topics and content of the specialization modules as suitable for their company. Also the explicit terms of sustainability was appreciated.

Recommendations of the companies:

- Workshops in the duration of about 4 hours were well-organized and feasible and sufficient.
- The agreement of a basic and common understanding of sustainability is reasonable and in fact, necessary as a basis for the workshops.
- An idea was that participants should get a general input and work out their understanding of corporate sustainability.
- To let the participants develop sustainability profile (strengths, challenges, resources, etc.) has proven its worth. Together with the coach the companies were able to identify and prioritize issues in terms of sustainable development.

Recommendation on European level:

- There are different approaches to the topic sustainability. We recommend considering country specific characteristics and topics, especially in the introductory workshops. See the recommendation above, that a common understanding of sustainability is crucial for the working process of EC21.

Recommendations - Finland



Raisa Leinonen, Sirpa Rynnänen
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Kuopio, December 2010

Qualification and consulting concept pilot project has been successfully implemented in Finland. Both Finnish trainers and the companies that participated learned a lot about the subject and the concept.

An easier and lighter version of the current material would be more usable for the kind of companies which participated in Finland. The fact that the participants were self-employed entrepreneurs working mostly alone is an important factor to pay attention to for in the case of such companies the time available to dedicate to this kind of projects is limited. For trainers this presents a clear challenge and underlines the importance of motivating the participants and reminding them of the importance of lifelong learning to improve the company's sustainable development and give tools for a future-oriented way of thinking.

Trainers and consultants are required to have strong business skills. They should also already possess basic knowledge of sustainable development. The material was really wide to adopt and apply. In the other hand it was also good thing after getting familiar with it because it took so deep and close look into company's things that almost everything were analysed.

Finnish trainers had very different knowledge and skills to the things that the project material was discussed. Also some of the trainer's language skills were not sufficient to absorb educational material in English. Part of the material was translated by professional translator; and other part by KAD trainer and her assistant. If all the material had been translated in Finnish, it would have motivated all trainers to use the material independently. One of such cases was the S4 Marketing Concept workshop held by KAD trainer. Here other trainers were involved as learners rather than trainers. One solution could be a constructing an even more thorough TtT workshop and trainers' network, where new trainers could get support from the more experienced trainers. This would also be used to gather information about the best practices and implementations. Network web pages exclusively for the trainers use could be one possible tool for such purpose

In Kuopio Academy of Design also a number of students were involved in the project. The subject was quite easy to integrate in the students' professional studies, internship and thesis. Students' role was to work as assistants cooperating with the KAD pilot companies. The feedback from the experience was positive and the student felt they learned a lot about both sustainable development and entrepreneurship in the process.

When trainers are familiar with the educating materials, many opportunities for it's efficient use rise. Trainers can create special combinations of the material for different kinds of target groups. The existing material and concept is also easy to apply for different kind of target groups and companies.

One example of such of creative combining of the material was the extra workshop on Lifecycle thinking. The workshop was held 6 th October 2010 in Kuopio Academy of Design, as a part of two students' project with final thesis. Both students co-operated with the clothing companies and aimed to make their product life cycle more sustainable. Combined materials were B1-A1: Sustainable development, S4-D3: 4x3 P's: Sustainable Marketing check, S10-A1 Life Cycle Thinking (PPP) and S10-A3: Life Cycle Checklist. Both the enterprises and students were satisfied and the workshop helped to make the product development process of the companies better as well as more sustainable.

The companies that participated to the project generally found it to be useful and worth dedicating their time to. As the concept of the training is further developed it could also be presented to e.g. government institutions as an additional education for professional working in the field. The content of the education entity could be integrated to entrepreneurship courses organized by the employment offices. Sustainability is an important theme in business and therefore this kind of information can be considered to be of great importance to entrepreneurs who are just getting started with their business activities.

Kuopio Academy of Design could also offer tailored courses to craft sector businesses where the material developed in the pilot project could be used. The material could also be applied to create pre-structured courses or theme-seminars for the local businesses.

From an educational point of view, sustainability can be considered to be one of the important themes that follow through the entire curricula of studies. In Kuopio Academy of Design we aim to include sustainable development as a point of departure and a way of thinking which is increasingly relevant to all actions in the field of design. We are also in the process of preparing a number of projects with different funding sources with the aim to educate and increase the knowledge of the small business sector of the vast field.

Recommendations

To sum up our experiences from the two pilot project the next some ideas for future references will be presented in the following chapter.

Our experience indicates that e-learning courses could be a valuable addition to the existing materials. If given the opportunity of e-learning, more target group companies could be reached not forgetting the possibility to attract new target groups. Train the trainer workshops could be targeted especially for e-teachers. As with all education, the cultural differences and academic traditions of each country should be taken into account. Each country could have its own e-academy and e-learning courses. This would also help to solve the challenges of the language barrier, which was also discussed during the pilot projects. Sustainability is a globally relevant theme that should be widely discussed and developed.

Emphasizing the role of e-learning would mean developing courses designed to be suitable for e-learning purposes. One of the factors behind this suggestion are the wishes stated by the companies who participated in the pilot project as they wished to have more self-learning material available on the topics discussed in the learning materials.

During the process, another theme linked to e-learning was discussed. There is an existing need a network for the trainers which would allow them to share their ideas and bring up the experiences on the subject of best practices. Such a network could be extremely useful to especially starting trainers since it would enable them to easily contact more experienced trainers for back up support and serve as a platform for an effortless exchange of ideas. As a practical implementation of the idea, a network website was suggested.

Recommendations - Hungary



**Zsuzsanna Tráser Oláh -
Chamber of Commerce and Industry Csongrád County**

Szeged, December 2010

Based on the evaluation sheets in general, the overall satisfaction with the programme was very good. Participants found that the content was understandable and interesting; they especially appreciated the competence of the presenters. Those who attended it were very active and open to sustainability issues. The concept and process of self-check seemed to be too novel for the participants of Kick-off, but finally two participants volunteered to take part in the adaptation of the Self Check.

In the Kick-off event the representatives of the university showed interest in the Qualification and Consultation Concept, and started looking at parts that may be incorporated into teaching materials for students. Enterprises admitted that they rarely think so consciously about sustainable development, since for the time being, they are trying to fight against the effects of the crisis and keep their enterprise running, however, the workshop made them think in a broader sense. The media showed also interest in the project and asked us for interviews.

The volunteering pilot companies were open to the method, however, they found a bit unusual to reflect on their own enterprises according to the questions of the self-evaluation questionnaire. Some questions they found irrelevant to their operation and business environment and a little bit difficult to answer (Note: we formerly had agreed that we would not amend the original questions, but would ask all of them without exception). At the same time they appreciated the newness of the approach and they think that they may use the process again at a later stage of their business operation. At the processing and assessing workshop, they were surprised to see the Radar diagram that illustrated their strengths and areas for possible development. In general, it can be stated that these small crafts enterprises are quite good at doing their business activities and delivering services, however, they are not very much aware of planning and evaluating their results. Nowadays, their main task is to maintain the company's safe operation since due to the financial crisis, they do not have much chance for growth and spectacular development.

We found the S4 Module adaptation very successful. Participants enjoyed the active participation and the interactive way of processing the topic, however, some of them pointed out that the amount of content was a bit too much, and they had to work under pressure of time. There was a very open space and supporting atmosphere. Participants showed mutual interest of each other's opinion. Our experience was that some of the exercises would have needed more time for in depth work, but in the framework of such a workshop, we could not jam every important aspect of marketing into the programme. In general, we can state that quite many people think that they know a lot about marketing; however, our experience was that the level of knowledge and information about the topic differed a lot, this meant a sort of obstacle to feel that the training brought about real added value.

We handed out hard copies of the presentation and working materials, and additionally we gave to them a booklet on marketing the content of which had been delivered in a training programme offered to small and medium sized companies.

The workshop of S2 was intense and mainly based on interactive exercises, which was appreciated a lot by the participants. Unfortunately, there were only a few ones who had attended the S4 module adaptation, though; the two modules are closely linked together. They enjoyed the exercises that offered good opportunity for them to reflect on their own business operation. They found the workshop inspiring, and they thought that they would use the newly learnt information and methods in the future. Under the pressure of the everyday running of their enterprises, they tend to forget to look at their wider business environment, the customer's satisfaction, thus such refreshing experience may make them more aware what they should do to ensure the future sustainability of their company. We would like to point out that the S2 Module itself is a little bit general and only a few sustainability management aspects are incorporated into it. In spite of this, we tried to focus on sustainability issues taking into consideration that knowing exactly what the needs of customers are is a key issue in the successful running of the business.

The development and the adaptation of the S11 Module on Project Management was an interesting experience for both the developer-trainer and the audience. Some of the participants were quite experienced in project writing and implementation, however, they pointed out that they could understand the link between the theory and practice of project management more clearly. In their feedback, they also emphasized the value of dialogue and interactivity. The presenter was under pressure of the amount of information to share and the limitation of time. Elements of such topic would need hours to discuss.

In spite of some critical statements, the topic was interesting for the participants; they especially highlighted the importance to change the attitude of small enterprises. They do not need to be experts and knowledgeable in all aspects of project management, however, they should shape their attitude and become more project-orientated. This is very much in connection with the future sustainability of the crafts enterprises regarding access to financial funds that can be spent on innovation, introducing new technology and sustainable production processes. The content of the training material is quite broad so future users and trainers can adjust it to the needs of the target groups.

Recommendations

According to our experience as trainers in the self-check, at small companies (especially private entrepreneurs), it is maybe more useful to do the questionnaire together, to interpret the questions helping the agreement between the respondents. Right at this stage, it is also useful to point out some of the weaknesses and strengths to help the evaluation process. The instant reflection may help the enterprises to become more aware of their present situation and to see the needed future actions.

Our experience was that unfortunately the topics of Marketing and Project Management are more popular than Sustainability in Hungary among the small companies. We find more effective to pass on sustainability information and knowledge in a way that in the adaptation we incorporate elements or components of specialized modules emphasizing sustainability aspects to have a good mixture of knowledge sharing and shaping attitudes, and draw attention to the importance of the companies' sustainability. This method of implementation can be an excellent mode for valorisation as well since in the future training programmes of the Chamber we can reuse and recreate the already tested way of deliverance.

As the valorisation activity we would like reorganize the network of trainers. Because of English as a working language there was a pre-selection of TtT participants. Thanks to the translation work now lot of materials are available in Hungarian.

In this pilot testing phase the number of participant was more than 60, so the project team thinks that these workshops were very successful. We would like to continue this work in the future.

Recommendations - Slovakia



Ján Václav, Ľubica Žovincová

Trenčín, December 2010

Qualification and consulting concept (QCC) pilot project has been successfully implemented in Slovakia. Both Slovak trainers and the companies that participated learned a lot about the subject and the concept. The concept is pioneering the sustainability approach to the level of the smallest business in Slovakia.

With respect to character of materials trainers appreciated both as approaches of sustainability so possibility of flexible adaptation of materials to the tailor made form. Content of QCC is made on professional way combining the wide scope of topics by keeping simplicity for understanding. The materials offer very practical tools for providing the consultancy in many areas of sustainability of business. Large library of working materials that is available for consultants allows them to work more close with a group or an individual. Working materials are source of inspiration in process of helping to find the optimal solution for development. Some methods like role play or brainstorming are not common for many representatives of handicrafts and/or small companies. However the EC 21 tool in hands of experienced trainer is a strong tool for advisory services in a small and/or medium size companies.

Slovak pilot companies find the topic of sustainability as very interesting and useful. Efficiency of EC21 tool used by the handicrafts, small company themselves depends on their ability to analyse information in it. Their ability to absorb content also depends on their overlook upon the different topics and time limits (overloading by operation of company) they can spend to go through the QCC. With no doubts the EC21 tool has a potential for the personal improvement. Mostly the Basic modules B1 and B2 are well developed and supplemented by guidelines. Basic modules create reference point for sustainable development. Specialized modules offer added value to this basis.

It is appropriate to encourage the small companies to contact the relevant consultant capable to provide wide scale consultancy reflecting at least basic aspects of sustainable development of production and/or services or to contact and consult the concept with contact point for EC21 concept (project partners and their mediating bodies). Promoting inter connection of crafts, SMEs with the trainers and other advisory institutions is practical also from the aspect of supplanting the businessmen with knowledge's which are beyond the EC 21 Consultancy and Qualification concept. There are obligations (like legislation, codes...) that have to be communicated to companies in the same time as EC 21 concept.

In complex there was no problem to absorb EC 21 QCC adapted to native language under leadership of good trainer. Adaptation of parts in another then native language has very low absorption potential in handicrafts and small companies. Better situation could be in medium size companies and trainers which used to have at least one German, English, Spanish or Hungarian speaking person.

Recommendations

With regard to applicability of EC21 QCC by a sole handicrafts or SMEs we recommend to adopt other parts to native languages and conduct awareness on necessity of sustainable behaving of companies.

With regard to effective applicability of EC 21 QCC into company life we recommend to combine the sole initiative of company with external consultancy assistance of relevant expert.

We recommend continuing in training of trainers so there will be more relevant experts/ trainers available. These trainings could be internal within structure of own organisation so external.

To give a possibility to find a relevant expert or organisation which will be able to provide consultation on sustainability approach we recommend networking of contact points providing consultancy on sustainable development of businesses (like project partners and their mediating bodies). This networking might be ad hoc initiative at national or cross border level. But it might be in a form of more organized form of European network project, mobility initiative or exchange of participants at specialized trainings within the Europe.

With regard to further transfer of philosophy of sustainability a special teachings or courses could be developed for the grammar, vocational schools and Universities in Slovakia. In first step it could be based on small ad hoc lectures. Potentially it could rise to a semester study. However there should be eliminated risk of theoretical direction more than in practical direction. The content of the education entity could be integrated to entrepreneurship courses organized by the employment offices.

We are aware of trend of e-learning courses. From practical point of view we see positives in accessibility and backing up learning material necessity of teaching process in training institutions and school. With regard to effective applicability we see perspective in a form of combination with a life training (blended learning).

With regard to further development of concept in further professional education we see perspective in development of concept for system of European acceptance of competencies on sustainable development of businesses that will allow recognising this skill within the Euro (kind of ECDL on sustainability).

Recommendations - Spain



Ana Moreno Avena – GesMA

Valencia, December 2010

The project EC 21 has been applied successfully in the participant companies, which have shown from the beginning a great interest by the subject of sustainable development. The adapted original materials (B1, B2, S3 and S4) have demonstrated their validity of innovation transfer. The adaptation as much of the specific modules how from the basic ones it has turned out to be a bring up to date of the present time subjects, the relation with the regional and national organizations, as well as examples of more specific connection of information for the Spanish companies.

Specific units chose have covered the expectation and interests of the participants. However it could be covering a wider part of the possible facets to develop for the knowledge improvement on the application of a sustainable management in the company with more specific modules. From the company site, there is a serious interest to more specific knowledge and this need could be responded with the next adaptation and translation of the rest the already existing units of the original project.

The product helped through the practical involvement of the participants with the exercises to a better understanding and identification with the topic, as well as to introduce a management plan to improvement the sustainability of the company in the future.

Recommendations

Our recommendations to the original product from the QCC into the EC 21 are:

- a workshop between 2-3 hours per specific module was for our companies all right, because the good qualification level of the participants (manager), but other way it have to be longer or complemented with some kind of homework,
- always a general introduction about sustainability to the company is necessary, if there are new companies or you're visiting the company team,
- also to the specific modules to establish the relation between sustainability and the module topic trough the exercises (e.g. marketing concept),
- to give more information about sustainability before the realisation of the Self-Check, recommended is a company internal workshop, depended of the qualification of the participants, with trustable internal persons,
- more modern media materials involved in the workshops, like films, internet information pages, e-learning tool, etc.
- It will be recommended for more time efficiency to do the "Train the Trainer" workshop in a compact workshop only one day about the B2 Basic Module and short introduction B1 about sustainability development.
- more examples of implementation from the specific modules topics,
- a short version of the QCC or EC21 in a print form, like a guideline of "sustainable management for handicraft" could be a more attractive product for the consultants, teacher and manager to reach to the topic.