



HEAL- TRAIN: Unhealthy Life Assessment Training

Progress Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

The HEAL – TRAIN project develops a Vocational Education Training (VET) programme for professional researchers (e.g., market research agencies, private and public health organisations—and food—related research institutes) who assess the needs of consumers with specific medical conditions, such as cardiac diseases and diabetes for innovative new food products and services in purchase.

This VET programme combines consumer behaviour science and health science practices in order to customise existing scientific research methods within a health related context. In addition, this programme fosters best professional practice within an ethical framework and in the long run facilitates the development of services, which increase the quality of life for the specific consumers target group.

HEAL - TRAIN is implemented by a consortium which presents great experience in practices of innovation and in scientific and research background regarding health and food issues in consumer behaviour research.

The aims of HEAL – TRAIN are:

- To enhance the skills and competencies of professional researchers and health professionals, who focus on consumer research in relation to health issues.
- To transfer such knowledge to market research and health professionals through customised static, dynamic and interactive training methods.
- To develop and implement quality assurance procedures for the evaluation of the educational material that will be created.
- To encourage stakeholders' involvement in this VET programme so as to enhance the dissemination of knowledge both in partner countries and in countries across Europe.

HEAL TRAIN customises existing qualitative and quantitative approaches and pilot test them to the needs of the specific consumers' context. It will mainly develop an innovative educational material within a framework of conformance to ethics and will organise training seminars for professional researchers in 3 countries (Greece, Ireland and Italy) in order to pilot test and evaluate the developed educational material. Last but not least, it will disseminate the developed material, which at the end will be in the form of an e-learning training programme, to any other interested party in the European Union, at the project's final conference.

During the first year of operations, HEAL – TRAIN has managed to finalise the Curriculum & Syllabus, the content of the 6 Course Modules, the Training Implementation Plan and the 90% of the Trainer's Guide. In order to prepare this material, around 160 people around Europe have been contacted and almost 75 interested parties responded in HEAL – TRAIN's request for specifying the trainees' needs that set the base for the development of the educational material.

HEAL – TRAIN's following step is first of all to organise during February – March 2009 training seminars in Greece, Ireland and Italy for professional researchers in order to pilot test and evaluate the developed educational material. The feedback collected will be used in order to finalise – update the content of the training material.

At the end of the project, HEAL – TRAIN will develop an e-learning training platform in order to facilitate the further dissemination and exploitation of the training model and the scientific knowledge developed and adapted during the specific VET programme. The e-learning training platform will be in the form of software which will promote methods of self-training and open and distanced learning. It will facilitate the connection with additional potential application fields, customers and business opportunities.

More information for HEAL-TRAIN is available at the project's website: www.healtrain.eu.

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1. Project Objectives

Individuals with cardiac and diabetic symptoms and their families require many new and innovative food products and services to maintain quality of life. Professional market researchers lack domain specific approaches to assess the true needs, wants and desire of such individuals and their surrounding families.

The currently used qualitative and quantitative marketing research approaches have not been adapted to take into account respondents' everyday life issues and social and cultural environmental factors that influence their lives. The above described deficiency results in decreased quality and flows in the validity of research findings.

The overall objective of HEAL-TRAIN is to provide professionals in Europe with academic training and especially innovative, quality assured, practical, everyday research tools. These are needed to successfully and ethically design and implement pioneering domain validated qualitative and quantitative approaches in researching patient needs of European citizens with the now epidemic cardiac decease and diabetes medical conditions.

The aims of HEAL - TRAIN are:

- To enhance the skills and competencies of professional researchers, who focus on these specific health-related problems and aim to develop innovative products and services for improvement of the quality of life through the adoption of tertiary level research validated instruments, protocols, qualitative and quantitative processes adapted with particular reference to these vulnerable populations.
- To transfer such knowledge to professionals' *domain-specific* training needs through customised static, dynamic, interactive and updated training interfaces.
- To ensure that the sequence and nature of stakeholders' involvement guarantees target professionals' participation in the development and validation of the training materials, easier diffusion and uptake in the partners' countries.

HEAL- TRAIN's target user group consists of professionals active in assessing needs/wants/desires of CVD and diabetes patients and their families regarding new products and services that improve their diets and overall life quality. These professionals are primarily identifiable under the overall heading of market research agencies-related freelancers. They are secondarily identifiable under special branches of dieticians and behavioural nutritionists' associations. Their main needs are domain specific quality assured, practical, everyday research/research management tools, needed in assessing needs/wants/desires of patients with cardiac decease and diabetes medical conditions.

They currently appear to: a) lack knowledge and skills in conducting research in the above mentioned contexts, b) have insufficient scientific expertise in these issues, c) be familiar with the needs of these patient categories, d) lack of integrated knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as the proper use of them in the specific contexts. Long- term beneficiaries are these professionals, the European industry as well as the European patient citizens themselves. The exact impact is difficult to estimate, but the earlier available figures regarding the problem indicate major benefits. Private assimilated research institutes and non-for-profit organisations which intervene and investigate the issues of behaviour and needs on these specific populations are also a target group.

At the same time, HEAL-TRAIN will improve the capacity of the EU vocational education and training system through the set-up of an international network with the participation of interested individuals, organisations and SME's. The project aims to cover the existing lack of formal and non-formal specialist training at an EU-wide level.

The expected results of the project shall be a continuing vocational training product oriented to the provision of useful and practical knowledge and skills to interested managers and staff of pertinent organisations in order to perform their management, organizational, monitoring and quality-check and control tasks for pertinent market research correctly and successfully.

2. Project Approach

The project will launch specific actions in order to reach its abovementioned aims. These actions, which adopt a follow up procedure, are summarised into the following:

- Development of educational material
- Implementation of training seminars, including their assessment and evaluation of the training material by the trainees' and their feedback to be received,
- the dissemination of the training methods and knowledge, and finally
- the exploitation of knowledge with the development of e-learning platform

In more detail, the **design of the educational material** (Training Kit: Curriculum & Syllabus, Course Modules, Trainer's Guide, CD-ROMs) was initially based on the development of two questionnaires, one for topic priorities and the other for the trainees' needs. The questionnaire for topic priorities was distributed to partners for completion. It included questions for: 1) the emerging topic priorities based on the concepts of the modules suggested in the proposal and adapted in the kick-off meeting; 2) the current research methods in health- and consumer-related contexts and 3) the strengths and weaknesses in the procedure of adaptation. The aim of this Questionnaire was to have a further indication of the most important topics and to harmonize existing scientific knowledge among partners, and to feed and improve the design and the content of the Curriculum & Syllabus and the Course Modules.

Based on the findings from the previous Questionnaire, a more detailed Questionnaire was developed so as to identify the actual training needs of the target groups. The Questionnaire was translated in the HEAL-TRAIN's working languages (EN, IT, EL) and was distributed to almost 160 interested parties/stakeholders/target groups from Greece, Ireland and Italy for completion. Based on the responses received, the indicated training needs were taken into consideration so as to formulate the final list of curriculum topics.

The **curriculum and syllabus** is based on the concept of compulsory/core and optional modules. The optional modules are focusing on the three main research approaches: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. This structure has been decided so as to provide the option to trainees to select modules that are related to their interest and/or to their expertise.

Another mechanism that will be used in order to test and validate the developed training material, before launching the e-learning platform of HEAL – TRAIN, is the **implementation of the training seminars**, using static and dynamic-interactive ICT training methods, and the pilot case studies. Based on the results of the Training Seminars there will be a final revision of the training package including any adaptations which need to meet the needs of the trainees. The final training package will be tested through Pilot Case Studies conducted in real research context. The quality assurance of this working process will be also assessed by evaluation of the results and the level of suitability of training programme in this research field. The applicability of the training material will also be based on the comparison of the results of the Training Implementation Plan with the objectives of the programme in relation to the following main factors: Course participation; Integrity of Curriculum contents and methodologies; Quality of training material; Applicability in the use of the training kit.

Additionally, a Quality Assurance Platform of Training will be developed, which aims to: a) provide a harmonised training solution adaptable for every European country; b) provide access in scientific knowledge regarding methods of consumer research in professional researchers and c) allow the exchange of this scientific knowledge from universities to society and market. It also aims to promote good practices, as it introduces ethical dimensions and principles in research. Additionally, it aims to introduce variability in exploring

consumers' needs and to allow European or National Authorities to assess the quality control procedure of the VET programmes in this specific sector. Finally, it aims to provide market agencies with a Quality training programme which will be respectful and attractive for industry.

HEAL- TRAIN's dissemination activities aim to share the results of the project with the professional community interested to the addressed topics in order to promote vocational training, to attract potential stakeholders and generate expectation towards the project results, in order to prepare its exploitation, and to clarify the application fields, customers and business opportunities based on the reactions to the dissemination activity. The tools used for the dissemination and promotion of the project's activities, include:

- the establishment of a network of collaborations, point of contacts, sources of information in Europe. HEAL – TRAIN has already a database of almost 160 interested stakeholders in three European countries.
- the availability of information and news to attract the attention of people. This information can be found in the project's website, under news section.
- the production of newsletters, brochure, the maintenance of web based information. HEAL – TRAIN produces every four months a newsletter which is available to the project's website www.healtrain.eu. HEAL TRAIN's brochure is available for download through the project's website.
- the participation to workshops, conferences
- the monitoring and the management of the dissemination activities

Finally, HEAL TRAIN will develop an **e-learning Training Programme** in order to facilitate the further dissemination and exploitation of training model and scientific knowledge developed and adapted during the specific VET programme in the sector of market consumer research and medical research institutes. The development of the e-learning training programme is based on an innovative software in relation to existing vocational education and training systems and provides a number of opportunities which are: a) the familiarization of target groups with the methods/procedures used for creating results and new products taking into consideration consumers' needs; b) the familiarization of target groups with the suitable software to explore and validate these procedures; c) the greater access of knowledge through the use of the software.

The added value of this project is envisaged to address the refined identification of the exact needs of CVD and diabetic consumers, contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of the suffering European citizens and their families. It will additionally encourage and support the development of innovative products and services maximising growth potential by fostering new businesses. Last, but not least, it will increase professionalism and competitiveness of the European professional sector by making them able to promote specific services and products to those people.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

In respect to the overreaching goal and to the first year's activities, HEAL -TRAIN has finalised the Curriculum & Syllabus, the content of the 6 Course Modules, the Training Implementation Plan and the 90% of the Trainer's Guide.

Until today, 160 people around Europe have been contacted in order to respond to HEAL – TRAIN's request for specifying the trainees' needs out of which 74 respondents provided their input which set the base for the development of the educational material.

In more detail, the Curriculum & Syllabus defines the scope of the modules program and provides an exhaustive structure of each module. It is structured according to the 6 identified modules based on the concepts derived from the questionnaire for topic priorities and the questionnaire for specifying trainees' needs and is based on the concept of compulsory/core and optional modules. The optional modules focus on the three main research approaches: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. This structure has been decided so as to provide the option to trainees to select modules that are related to their interest and/or to their expertise. HEAL – TRAIN's modules finally selected and elaborated are presented below.

HEAL – TRAIN Training Course Modules:

1. CVD and Diabetes: Everyday life, psychological, social and cultural dimensions (**CORE**)
2. Introduction to the basic methods of consumer research: quantitative and qualitative approaches (**CORE**)
3. Ethics in research: A critical approach (**CORE**)
4. Methods and tools in quantitative research (**OPTIONAL**)
5. Methods and tools in qualitative research (**OPTIONAL**)
6. Mixed methods research approach (**OPTIONAL**)

Following the development of the course modules, the next step was the development of an instruction manual for trainers, the **trainers' guide**. This manual contains explicit instructions on how to run the training seminars and contains selected examples for trainers in order to actively involve the trainees in the seminar process and achieve an interactive method of teaching.

Based on the curriculum and syllabus and the course modules, the time schedule and the duration of each module were also defined. For this reason the **Training Implementation Plan** was designed, taking into consideration the amount of the material that needed to be covered and the number of trainees in each country. The purpose of this document is to provide a clear description of the methodology for delivering the training seminars and developing the pilot case studies that will run in each country.

The Implementation Plan illustrates the design, development, delivery, evaluation and support of the training seminars. This training plan outlines what training will take place; who will benefit; and how, when, and where the training will be conducted.

Furthermore, the Implementation Plan of the training seminars and the pilot case studies ensures that:

- Training is delivered to meet the requirements identified in the Training Implementation Plan.
- Training is delivered within timescales which are consistent with the overall implementation of the project.

- There is a coherent and consistent activity plan and understanding among partners regarding their roles and responsibilities in the training process (training seminars and pilot case studies).
- The quality of the outputs from the seminars and the pilot case studies meets the project's objectives.

The project's website (www.healtrain.eu) was launched during April 2008, presenting information on the project's activities. The project's newsletters which are issued every four months, as well as HEAL-TRAIN's brochure are also available for download from the project's website.

Until today, HEAL TRAIN has developed a stakeholders' database which includes around 160 interested stakeholders, out of whom more than 50% has already participated and provided feedback on issues addressed to the VET programme that is developed so far.

4. Partnerships

The present consortium was based upon the co-existence of great experience both in practices of innovation and in scientific and research background regarding health and food issues in consumer behaviour research. Logotech (Greece) has a long track-record in innovation policy, strategies and technologies around Europe. UCC (Clinical Investigation Unit, Cork University Hospital, Wilton, Paediatrics and Child Health, Ireland) and INRAN (National Institute of Research on Food and Nutrition, Rome, Italy) have a long scientific and research tradition in involvement in European Union projects and in conducting research related to the fields of health, food and nutrition. This co-existence of experience and knowledge is another innovative element of this co-operation between innovation and health, food and nutrition in the field on research.

Logotech undertook the responsibility of planning and managing the entire project, and the part of developing new innovative initiatives, even beyond from its current state of interests. It is a current matter of its interest to encourage co-operation between enterprises and academic institutions. Logotech, UCC and INRAN undertook the development of innovative adapted training methods and methods of research regarding medical sensitive and health-oriented research environments. More specifically, UCC has an experience in developing new practices and research tools in order to manage research in medical-related contexts, as well as serious experience in implementing and assessing training practices. INRAN is a quite active Institute in the field of theory-based consumer research with “heavy” relation to statistics and psychological models. This background explains the leading role of INRAN in the development of educational material and UCC in the implementation, assessment, evaluation and feedback of the educational material developed. InfoProject (Greece) is very active in providing its experience in developing training software and Indiktos (Greece) in providing supportive services in editing and publishing of training material.

The benefits of implementing this project in cooperation with partners from other European countries are presented as follows:

- ❑ The project represents an original effort to establish a link with health professionals in view of providing solutions to specific population issues within the Vocational Education. In the framework of the project, the trainers will partially share training strategies to introduce health related solutions, a common monitoring scheme and a nucleus of common learning resources and services for trainers.
- ❑ HEAL-TRAIN project offers the necessary channels for easy and direct communication and exchange of views between trainers in three European countries. Thus a mechanism for a European interaction is provided, in contrast and in complement, to the up-to-now existing national mechanisms.
- ❑ HEAL-TRAIN customises the access to training course material on a common basis but in multiple languages, thus using existing material in user-friendly distance training environments, overcoming the lack of knowledge of the required language. A common base for the evaluation of existing information by trainers with different backgrounds will also be established.
- ❑ HEAL-TRAIN contributes to the sharing of newly created resources, thus reducing the costs on a European scale and giving the opportunity to access material created by experts.
- ❑ HEAL-TRAIN develops a platform for the virtual interaction of trainers and trainees (dissemination).
- ❑ HEAL-TRAIN offers support to co-operative educational projects that can unite and utilise the abilities of trainees residing in various countries. This adds to the means for organising trainees in groups on a European scale.

- It will help the accumulation of experience in training matters and will offer to the European trainers the means for accessing it in an open way, thus profiting from the interaction.
- It will create a Training Network, spread in few European countries at the beginning, offering a common minimum interaction base for the educators. Also, this Network will be used for the extensive evaluation of a common core of courses, by different, in terms of background, sets of educators thus extracting useful conclusions.
- It will have as end result a prototype system as well as a methodology for the distance and vocational training process. The experience gained by HEAL-TRAIN can be combined with the results of other EU projects for the development of an overall strategy that can be used towards the creation of a common European educational system.

5. Plans for the Future

Future plans include the development of the training seminars and the pilot case studies, the development of the e-learning training programme and the organization of the project's final conference.

The training seminars and the pilot case studies are planned for February – March 2009 and will be organised in parallel in the three partner countries, i.e. Greece, Italy and Ireland. The trainees, who will participate in the course, will be professional researchers, staff working in the field of consumer marketing research and in medical research institutes and health professionals.

The duration of the training seminars will be from 6 to 7 days. The curriculum and syllabus indicates the order in which the modules will be taught each day of the seminars. In the first day of the seminars, trainers will introduce the curriculum and the syllabus of the taught modules. During the training process and the last day of the training seminars, evaluation questionnaires will be distributed to trainees for completion.

The pilot case studies will follow after the end of the training seminars and will last 3 days. The pilot case studies will help trainees to apply skills that they have acquired from the training seminars. Pilot case studies will be designed according to the research approach (quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods approach) that trainees have selected in the seminars. Three (3) pilot case scenarios will be developed based on the three research approaches. At the end of the pilot case studies, trainees will be given an evaluation questionnaire for completion. These evaluations will form the basis of three national reports that will be produced, with remarks, comments and results regarding the quality assurance of the implementation of the tasks and the evaluation process of the training materials and methods.

Following the implementation of the training seminars, the e-learning Training Programme will be developed in order to facilitate the further dissemination and exploitation of training model and scientific knowledge developed and adapted during the specific VET programme in the sector of market consumer research and medical research institutes. Another important objective is to facilitate connection with additional potential application fields, customers and business opportunities based on the reactions to the dissemination activity. The experience which will be gained in using IC Technologies in using dynamic-interactive methods to train target groups of professional researchers from market agencies and medical research institutes will be used and materialised in this e-learning training programme.

The E-Learning Training Programme will be training software which will promote methods of self-training and open and distanced learning and training. More specifically, it will further disseminate and exploit the results and training experience gained during the whole project and materialise the structure of courses modules developed and implemented so far. This will be a very important result of the Project, as it will guarantee the evasion of discrimination in vocational education and training in the target group of professional market researchers.

The e-Learning Training Platform HEAL-TRAIN will be tested and become operational during September till December 2009 and will be presented during the International Dissemination Conference in Dublin.

HEAL – TRAIN's final conference will be organized in Dublin during November 2009. This conference will present the project's aims, outcomes and the implementation processes of the training seminars and pilot case studies. Additionally the e-learning Training Programme will be presented and the training Kit produced by the project, will be distributed to the around 300 participants expected to attend the conference.

6. Contribution to EU policies

HEAL-TRAIN project aims to contribute to the following EU policies:

Lisbon Education & Training Progress Indicators: Open Learning Environment - Population aged 25-64 participating in education and training

The project will encourage participation in continuing vocational education for a variety of ages and will promote changes in thinking about how learning and knowledge is acquired. There is now a greater focus towards competence development and the integration of learning with work. Future continuing vocational education and training policies should be based on new forms of reciprocal recognition between the training world and the productive world. They have to be based on lifelong learning attitudes, which have to be carefully built through learning and education policies and practices.

Lisbon Key Competences: Learning to learn

This project will provide professional researchers with tools of assessment and self-assessment regarding strengths and weaknesses of their skills and qualifications. It will try to increase the awareness of competence, knowledge, skills, and new opportunities for these target groups in continuous learning within the context of knowledge-based society. It will also facilitate access and assimilation to scientific knowledge on the sector of their interest, encouraging the adoption of a new knowledge-oriented culture of learning.

LLP Horizontal policies: Promoting equality between men and women and contributing to combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation

Combating against discrimination on disability is a fundamental aim of this project, as it promotes social awareness and respect to ethical-related and food-related issues for consumers with Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes. The increase of professional skills of professional researchers who conduct research projects relating to food in consumer groups with such kind of vulnerability emerges the importance these professional researchers to have a special vocational education and training in order to be able to understand the sensitive conditions and issues of these consumers and be more able to manage research projects in such “sensitive” contexts and provide industry with more accurate information about food-related needs of these consumers.

