



# Evaluation of the consultation with users

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## Background

The Travors project set out to transfer innovative training courses devised in the UK, to Austria, Estonia, Greece and Spain.

The transfer process was guided by two significant procedures which were backed up with documentation and with advice from the UK partners: The Design Guidelines, and the Learning Needs Analysis (LNA). This report concerns the LNA, and evaluation of the users' responses to the project.

The project has also been evaluated in detail, with respect to the performance of the training and its adherence to the design guidelines, and also with respect to the quality of delivery mechanisms. These are covered in separate reports.

The users of the project were to be organisations and individuals engaged in advising unemployed disabled people about employment. They were the direct users of the service. The 'end users' or ultimate beneficiaries will have been individuals and employers who were advised by the project trainees after completion of the project. It has not proved practicable to secure consultation with these end users, largely because of the complications involved in securing contact and collaboration with the clients of 19 different organisations in three sectors. Quite early in the project, it was agreed that consultation with users would be practical and useful, and that it would be derived from the application of the LNA by project partners.

## The LNA

The LNA is a formal procedure for consultation with an organisation that is to receive training. In Travors, that procedure is presented as a form containing a set of structured questions, accompanied by a detailed guide to its application. The LNA aims to gather information on organisational goals, skills and working methods already in use, and by comparison with skills required for the intended tasks, to define what skills must be taught, and how to teach them. The LNA calls for information from managers and staff to be trained as well as documentary evidence to support the design of training services. It incorporates key information required to meet the Design Guidelines, concerning both skills and individuals and the working environment.

Used to its fullest extent, it is a demanding and thorough analytical tool, and is in effect the principle process by which a selection of teaching methods and materials is made. It provides a detailed analysis of the skills and organisational goals of users, and the Travors partners agreed to use it not only as a basis for developing their training trials, but also as the method by which they would consult the users – that is to say, the organisations and individuals receiving the training. But the LNA is not in itself a questionnaire that a user can complete in order to express their views. It is a guide to effective selection of training materials, and needs to be interpreted after

the training has taken place in order to extract their opinions of the consequences of the training

## Procedure

The training partners, in Austria, Estonia, Greece and Spain were asked to administer the LNA to those who volunteered to take part in the trials of the training. These were both their employing organisations, and the employees who received the training. In some cases, the individuals came as solo volunteers, not sponsored by their employers. The analysis was less complete for these.

In addition to the evaluation of training provided before, at the end of, and some time after training, the training partners completed a post-training questionnaire which took information from the LNA and from their own experiences of the training events.

The questionnaire aimed to ask questions of relevance to

- organisational goals and commitment to training
- the possible impact on employment of disabled people
- the relationship to government programmes or standards in each country
- what was taught and the change that followed
- the impact of the design guidelines on the training that was delivered.

This questionnaire was analysed and the results are presented here.

It should be noted that the results cover four countries, applying training in different ways (as required by the project design), and over quite a short time. The training itself was at pilot stage, and the trials small scale. So results must be interpreted with caution: alternative training designs may have elicited different results; the results of different countries may not be conceptually consistent and differences of interpretation may have clouded the results. For these reasons, we present the results at a fairly general level.

## Results

### Who was trained?

Only Spain worked entirely with NGO employees. The overall picture was:

<b>What kind of organisations undertook the TRAVORS training?</b>	n
a) Public	6
b) NGO / not for profit	9
c) Private / for profit	4

which, given the positive results of the evaluation of training, broadly confirms the suitability of the training for different sectors.

<b>What are the organisations' main fields of operation?</b>	n
a) Health	6
b) Disability Employment support or advice	14
c) General Employment support or advice	7
d) Social support	12
e) Other	7

Many organisations cover more than one field of operation. This is not unexpected, as support to people with disability often involves a primary focus, such as health or social care or employment, and then entrains other forms of activity.

<b>Who was trained?</b>	n
a) People whose job already involves employment of people with disabilities	62
b) People whose are new to employment of people with disabilities	15

This was expected from the design of the project: the training was aimed at employment advice specialists.

These three tables suggest that we have been successful in reaching the target audience.

## Organisational goals and behaviours

The next questions were about how organisations responded to the training on offer.

<b>Did the training fit with the main business goals of the organisation you trained?</b>	n
a) Exactly	8
b) Quite well	9
c) A little	1
d) Not at all	0

As should be expected, the targeting of organisations by partners was appropriate to the project. This is important for the project success, but also for the effectiveness of the training.

<b>What result did the organisations want to get out of the training?</b>	n
a) New ability to support disabled people	2
b) Improved ability to support disabled people	12
c) New ability to support employers of disabled people	0
d) Improved ability to support employers of disabled people	5

The Spanish partner noted that participant organisations wanted to improve their workers' abilities to support both employers and disabled people. In Greece the training was taken by individuals, not organisations. The emphasis on improvement over new ability presumably reflects the accurate selection of organisations with existing responsibility for employment advice by partners. But it also suggests that organisations are willing to undertake training, a positive sign for future applications.

Each country was asked to evaluate whether the training provided the results that the organisations were seeking:

<b>12. Did the training provide (or attempt to provide) that required result, bearing in mind that it was a pilot project?</b>	n
a) Yes	4
b) To some extent	0
c) No	0

Perhaps this question invited a positive answer too easily. Its phrasing was intended to recognise the innovative nature of the training and to value the attempt as well as the concrete result. It shows that the partners were both selecting suitable trials users, and delivering what was intended.

<b>Was management willing to support the TRAVORS training?</b>	n=ALL	% of PUBLIC	% of NGO	% of PRIVATE
a) Yes	3	17	11	25
b) To some extent	8	50	56	0
c) No	3	0	11	50

Note: some data are missing; totals do not add to 100%

Support by management for new skill application is often a feature of successful training. The ambiguous results here, not unexpected, suggest that efforts to encourage management support would not be wasted. We might guess that the public sector and NGOs are somewhat more supportive than the private sector, but must bear in mind that five of the NGOs, all judged to be supportive to some extent, were in one country- Spain.

<b>Was TRAVORS training used as a way of overcoming organisational problems that need other types of solutions?</b>	n
a) Yes	1
b) To some extent	7
c) No	5
d) Do not know	6

Organisations sometimes turn to training as a solution to problems that may not be related directly to the skills that are being taught. It seems that may have been the case for some of our users. As the training took place during a period of increased and still-rising unemployment throughout Europe, we might guess that employment support organisations would want to increase skills of their workers, but would do so in reaction not to a positive lack of skill, but to market conditions.

## Application of skills and future plans

<b>Will trainees be rewarded on the job for their new skills?</b>	n
a) Yes	0
b) No	8
c) Do not know	11

Disappointing as this result is, it cannot be unexpected. Rewarding staff for acquisition of new skills – we deliberately left the type of reward unspecified – can be a useful motivating factor. But in a pilot project such as this, the employer is unsure of the outcome, and understandably unwilling to commit. It seems quite likely that will also be the case in full-scale applications of the training.

<b>Are key personnel in the company ready to accept and apply the new skills of the trainees</b>	n=ALL	% of PUBLIC	% of NGO	% of PRIVATE
a) Yes	12	33	89	50
b) No	1	0	0	25
c) Do not know	6	67	11	25

On the other hand, the training is accepted by the organisations. This is a very positive result. Had the training been unsuccessful in their eyes –through lack of effective skill development, or interference with work, or cost – the expressed support might have been much lower.

<b>Is the organisation committed to continuing the training?</b>	n=ALL	% of PUBLIC	% of NGO	% of PRIVATE
a) Yes	5	0	33	50
b) No	5	33	11	50
c) Do not know	9	67	56	0

At this stage it is encouraging to have some organisations committed to continuing the work. Our UK experience is that it is difficult to secure long-term commitment to training, in any sector, and to have achieved this during a pilot project is good.

The views and plans of the training partners are just as important as these raw numbers. We asked them whether they intended to use the training in future, and received positive responses:

<b>Have you been asked to provide more training of this kind, OR will you continue to use this kind of training in your own organisation or business?</b>	n
Yes we have a definite request and will be using the training	2
We definitely will offer the training or include it in our work, but have no definite requests yet	2
We have no plans to offer this training after the project ends.	1

The Greek partner, who had no plans to offer the training after the project added *“we are pleased to build on this training and materials to provide services to organisations providing vocational rehabilitation”* and on this basis we may say that all partners intend to apply the training that was transferred and developed in the project.

The Estonian partner noted that *“Training could even up skills and attitudes of advisors and contribute to creating corporate organisational culture in the aspect of treating clients. The reason why organisations are not ready to continue with trainings is due to the lack of the financial resources”* – an observation that reflects the onset of the recession during the project, and one that should be read in the context of all the partners’ continuing commitment to its success despite the difficulties that ensued from the recession.

<b>Are there other organisational goals or problems which could be helped by training projects?</b>	n	% of PUBLIC	% of NGO	% of PRIVATE
a) Yes	2	17	0	25
b) No	2	17	11	0
c) Do not know	14	67	78	75

This table suggests there are some, if not many, opportunities for further training activities: success in exploiting them will follow partners’ own local efforts to identify the priorities of each user.

## The social and policy context and value of training

The Travors project began with an appreciation that different countries' legislative framework and programmes for employment of disabled people have an impact on employment and also on the operation of support organisations. For that reason we encouraged training partners to *adopt* those parts of the training that were most suited to their needs, and to *adapt* them to local circumstances. We could not hope that training employment advisors in new or higher skills would result in an immediate and dramatic change. But we were confident at the outset that suitable skills are essential to the results that advisors are able to achieve, and so contribute to public policy as well as to personal support. Some of our questions probed this aspect of the work.

We asked respondents to estimate the comparative importance of broadly defined obstacles to employment of disabled people. To do this, we asked them to distribute a total of ten points among three factors.

	AUSTRIA	ESTONIA	GREECE	SPAIN	ALL
<b>What do the organisation(s) you trained think are the main obstacles to the employment of disabled people in your country or region?</b>	Please award points out of 10 to each – more points for more severe obstacles – to make a total of 10 for all three				
a) Culture or attitude	4	3	3	4	3.5
b) Economic situation	2	4	5	3	3.5
c) Skills and knowledge	4	3	2	3	3

The small differences between countries could not reasonably be said to imply more than the personal judgement of the respondents. But it is interesting to note that the importance of skills and knowledge is judged everywhere to be no more than a contributory factor among barrier to employment of disabled people. This is quite reasonable. One cannot expect advisor's skills, nor the capabilities of disabled people themselves to outweigh the cultural context or economic realities. But we should then ask whether training is able to make a difference. The countries' responses were consistent with the previous replies:

<b>Was training the right kind of effort to make towards removing these obstacles?</b>	n
a) Definitely a very good way	1
b) A useful contribution	3
c) It was what we had available	0

<b>Did the training succeed or take steps towards a solution?</b>	n
a) Yes	1
b) To some extent	3
c) No	0

<b>TRAVORS training was directed at the skills of Advisors. Do you think this was an effective way to help more disabled people into suitable work?</b>	n
a) Yes	4
b) To some extent	0
c) No	0

The partners, reflecting on their work after the training trials, clearly have a realistic view of what can be achieved: to train advisors and advisors' trainers makes a useful contribution to the problem of high unemployment among disabled people. In itself, it is an effective way to help people into work. But it does not remove all the social and economic problems that exist.

We asked questions about the Travors training and government policy and standards, to gauge what potential impact it would have at national level, and to judge how our Standards Document, separately developed and published by the project, would be received.

<b>Does the training you offered contribute to or support Government Policy</b>	
a) Yes very much	2
b) To some degree	2
c) It compensates for a lack of policy (or weak policy) in this area	0
d) Not at all	0

Although we expect that from a UK perspective, one country might be judged to have a weak policy on employment of disabled people, that does not seem to be reflected in their own self-judgement. But the Travors training is seen as relevant in all countries. We very much hope that means that there will be more opportunities for application of the training, and in a context that is supportive of its goals and methods.

<b>Are there any officially recognised standards for people who offer employment advice in your country?</b>	
a) Yes	2
b) They are being developed	1
c) No	1

The phrase 'employment advice' was chosen to open the question to all kinds of advisors, not only those who support disabled people. The partnership has developed a set of 'meta-standards' that can be used as guidelines for the creation of 'local' or national standards, but would not supercede them. The partnership discussed this approach in one of the meetings, and agreed that such a high-level guide could be used in many settings, and could, using the approach 'adopt and adapt' contribute to high quality standards in countries where there are none.

<b>Did TRAVORS training contribute to standards?</b>	
a) It provided new ideas and concepts	3
b) It provided practical ways to support people who want to reach the standards	3
c) Not really	0

The training itself was seen as contributing to standards, both conceptually and practically.

Travors training was founded on the notion of self-efficacy of tutors, advisors and clients. This well-researched concept was realised through training designed to firm guidelines which aimed to create training that enabled the students to learn skills effectively, and to practise them in their work. Throughout, the notion of empowering students and clients was to the fore, and that is also a key theme of the project standards document.

## What was taught

Finally, we confirmed what was taught and gathered some reactions to the approach.

<b>Which Skills Modules did you teach / learn</b>	<b>n</b>
a) Generic Skills	4
b) Working with Employers	3
c) Work Focussed Interviewing	2
d) Case Management	2
e) Job Seeking Skills	2
f) Job Maintenance	0
g) Train the Trainer	3

<b>Why did you choose these?</b>	
a) These skills were missing or needed to be improved	4
b) These were convenient for the trials	2
c) These enhance the capacity of the trained organisation to help disabled people into work	2

16 modules were used to create the training. The selection was led by the LNA process, but partners were invited to adapt the content from the extensive library of materials supplied by RNL Ltd and VRC Ltd. Generic Skills were to be part of every course, since they underpin all the activities of Advisors. It is good to see the emphasis on employer-focussed skills; the UK experience is that these skills are important to success, but often overlooked in advisory services. The choice of modules was, as hoped, governed mainly by skills analysis, with convenience – a weak reason for selecting a module – being less important.

<b><u>TRAVORS training followed definite published guidelines. Did they make a difference to the way you trained?</u></b>	
a) Yes	3
b) To some extent	0
c) No	1

Here again we see a positive acceptance and learning from the Design Guidelines. The training and adherence to the Guidelines has been fully evaluated by DWP in its report, which brings out important lessons about successes and things that can be developed for future course or projects.

<b>Was it possible to change work-related behaviours among those you trained</b>	
a) Yes, as planned	0
b) To some degree	3
c) No this was difficult	0
d) Not sure / do not know	1

We hoped for more intensive post-course follow-up than was in fact possible; the results of the post-course evaluations are fully reported in DWP's own evaluation report. Here we simply asked whether the overall goal of changed workplace behaviours had been achieved. The results are encouraging, and not, we think, overly optimistic. Changing behaviours is a difficult undertaking; even though it was supported by the Design Guidelines, the 'adopt and adapt' approach, and the flexibility over delivery styles and mechanisms, this was a small scale trial of a training programme. We think, given the results of the extensive and independent evaluation by DWP, that the result shown here – of some success - should be encouraging to further efforts and applications.

## Conclusions

### Who was trained?

We have been successful in reaching the target audience. The emphasis on improvement of skills over new ability reflects the appropriate selection of organisations to participate in the trials.

The training is broadly confirmed as suitable for public, NGO and private sectors, and for organisations that cover more than one field of operation such as health or social care or employment.

We think that in future, efforts to encourage more support for training by management would not be wasted. But the training is accepted by the organisations. This is a very positive result. Had the training been unsuccessful in their eyes –through lack of effective skill development, or interference with work, or cost – the expressed support might have been much lower.

Organisations sometimes turn to training as a solution to problems that may not be related directly to the skills that are being taught. The application of the LNA, probably in a simplified form, can help overcome this.

Organisations and partners are committed to continuing to apply the Travors training and principles. To have achieved this during a pilot project is good. Two definite requests for training have been reported by partners, to which RNL and VRC can add more from within the UK. and all partners are expecting to continue. We think there are some opportunities for further training activities: success in exploiting them will follow partners' own local efforts to identify the priorities of each user.

### The social and policy context and value of training

The Travors project began with an appreciation of different countries' legislative framework and programmes for employment of disabled people. We encouraged training partners to *adopt* those parts of the training that were most suited to their needs, and to *adapt* them to local circumstances.

The importance of skills and knowledge is judged everywhere to be no more than a contributory factor among the obstacles to employment of disabled people. Training, however, makes a useful contribution to removing the obstacles to employment. It is an effective way to help people into work. But it does not remove all the social and economic problems that exist. The Travors training is seen as relevant in all the trials countries.

The partnership has developed a set of 'meta-standards' that can be used as guidelines for the creation of 'local' or national standards, but would not supercede them. The training itself was seen as contributing to standards, both conceptually and practically.

### **What was taught**

16 modules were used to create the training, and it is good to see the emphasis on employer-focussed skills. The choice of modules was, as hoped, governed mainly by skills analysis, with convenience – a weak reason for selecting a module – being less important. There was positive acceptance and learning from the Design Guidelines. The training and adherence to the Guidelines has been fully evaluated by DWP in its report, which brings out important lessons about successes and things that can be developed for future course or projects.

The aim of our training was – among other things - to change and improve workplace behaviours. The results are encouraging, and the reporting is not, we think, overly optimistic. Changing behaviours is a difficult undertaking in a small scale trial of a training programme. We think, given the results of the extensive and independent evaluation by DWP, that the results shown here should be encouraging to further efforts and applications.

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## Appendix: Members of the Travors Partnership

Contact us for more information or to join in our work. We are able to share expertise and develop Travors products for wider use.

For more details on TRAVORS please see our web page: <http://www.travors.eu>

The Project partners are

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