



# PROJECT ESPRIT

Experiential Supporting  
Programmes  
for Innovation in  
Training

## NEWSLETTER

Issue n. 1, May 2008

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Threshold

## 1. The Project **ESPRIT** - *Experiential Supporting Programme for Innovation in Training*

The **Project ESPRIT – Experiential Supporting Programme for Innovation in Training**, co-funded within the Leonardo da Vinci Programme Multilateral Projects on the Transfer of Innovation, aims at promoting the transfer and integration of innovative experiential education and training methodologies, based particularly on outdoor education, in education and training systems in Italy and Lithuania.

**ESPRIT** is based on the results of the pilot experience *NEXT – New Experiences in Training* (Leonardo da Vinci 2004-2006) and addresses the need to innovate education and training methodologies currently used by the education and training system in the partner territories. These systems are in fact still focused on traditional curricula and methods and therefore appears still very distant from the social and labour world and cannot foster change and development.

Specifically, **ESPRIT** intends to favour the valorisation and inclusion in technical/professional schools and training agencies in the partner territories of **experiential methodologies based on outdoor education**, as these are particularly effective in helping young people develop transferable skills (communication and analysis abilities, ability to work in a team, self-esteem, etc), necessary to lead a positive social and working life.

**ESPRIT** works therefore directly with **teachers and trainers** as crucial players in innovating national education and training systems, in order to enable them to properly favour learning and to give effective answers to the needs of their pupils, personalising the educational processes and adapting

them to the problems affecting young people.

The final beneficiaries of **ESPRIT** are the same **students/trainees** and especially those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, considered more at risk of social exclusion, drop outs, etc., who require specific skills and abilities to improve their interaction within the context they live in and to learn how to better cope with the challenges of society and of the labour market.

Special attention will be given by **ESPRIT** to encouraging **co-operation** between schools, training agencies, universities, employers' associations and local authorities, so as to favour local coordination between the actors involved in the education and training system and strengthen the relation between this and the labour market.

**ESPRIT** has a duration of 24 months (November 2007 to November 2009) and foresees the participation of **TECLA** Association as project leader, the **Provinces of Lecce, Teramo, Matera, Pescara and Potenza** in Italy and the territory of the **Zeimaitija College** in Lithuania, as well as of the scientific partners **BSJ** (Germany), **Project Outdoor Education** (Italy) and **Threshold Consulting** (United Kingdom)

ESPRIT includes the implementation of the following activities:

- ✓ **analysis of the education and training systems of the partner territories**, to identify critical issues, strengths, etc.
- ✓ **adapting of the experiential education and training methodology**, defined in the NEXT project, to the 6

territories and to their education and training systems

✓ **organisation of experimental workshops**, with the aim to transfer the adapted methodology to the teachers/trainers of the 6 territories

✓ **shared planning of training modules and extra-curricular activities** in the 6 territories and gradual integration in their education and training systems

✓ **institution of Local Committees and signing of Local Training Pacts** between schools, training agencies, employers' associations and local authorities of the 6 territories

✓ **valorisation, dissemination and communication activities**, including refresher courses on the methodologies for teachers/trainers, local seminars to raise public awareness and a final national seminar

✓ locali di sensibilizzazione

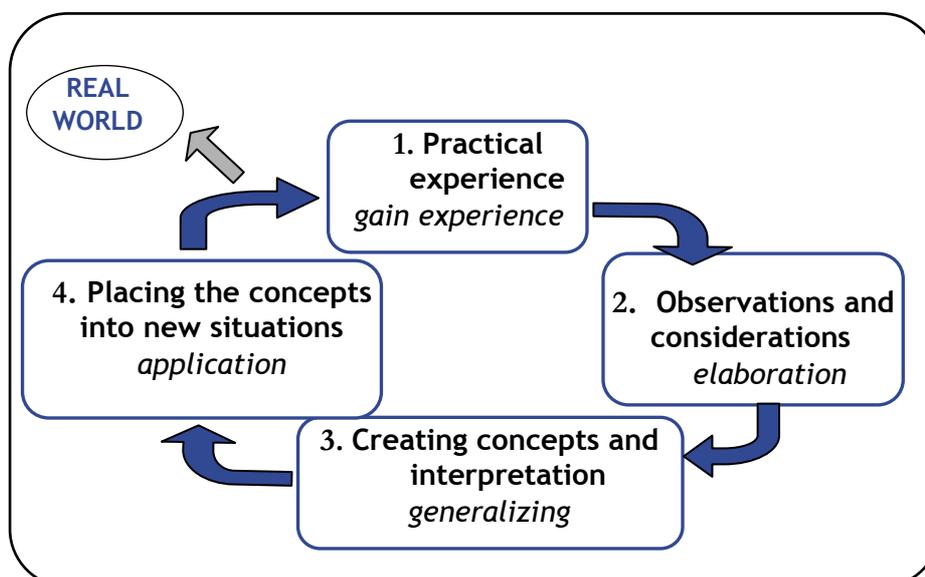
## 2. Experiential training/education

### Project Outdoor Education

**Experience-based training** is an innovative methodological approach, based on working outdoors, individually or in groups, involving all participants physically, mentally and emotionally. The idea underlying this approach is that the best way to fully understand how to behave in a different manner is to have to behave in that manner because circumstances do not allow otherwise.

Experience-based training methodologies, such as Outdoor Training, City Bound and Rock Climbing, stimulate learning transversal skills such as teamwork, communication and relating with others, and to estimate, appreciate and use personal resources in the best possible way, to deal with limits and make the best of the opportunities that arise. It is difficult to develop these skills when receiving traditional-type training because the skills are buried deep within an individual (who in some cases is not even aware of having them). The experience-based approach can de-construct learning contents allowing the young person to be actively part of what is happening (learning by doing) and be stimulated to take on a more active role and one he/she is fully aware of.

Below is a drawing of the learning process through the **experience-based learning cycle** of Lewin/Kolb:



A crucial phase in the experience-based learning cycle is **debriefing**, that is, considerations on what has happened and on the dynamics deriving from the events. It is a time to return ideas, and time for feed-back, for the interpretation of the process, for a first attempt to rationalise the event. In this phase young people:

- ☞ Think carefully of their recent experience;
- ☞ Express their opinions, feelings, thoughts, emotions regarding their behaviour;
- ☞ Give feedback on the behaviour of their fellow students/trainees and on what they have said;
- ☞ Receive feedback from their fellow students/trainees;
- ☞ Receive feedback from the trainer and together they process events, interpreting them and forming hypotheses on what has happened.

The debriefing process ends with creation of models. Starting from the comments, the considerations on behaviour during outdoor activity and comparing these elements to situations experienced in the reference context, more general considerations and comments are made, creating a **model for guidance in future situations**.

### **3. Focus on ESPRIT Partners**

#### **The Provinces of Teramo and Lecce, partners of the project NEXT**

##### **The Province of Teramo**

Innovation in the techniques and methodologies related to teaching and vocational training has high priority in the Province of Teramo, as it is directly linked to the territory's economical development and growth. It also helps achieve the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy that identified social and relational skills (such as self-confidence, communication skills, organisational skills, ability to work in a team and show initiative) as necessary requirements for an individual's successful entry in the labour market but also for social integration. Thus, it was particularly useful to introduce trainers and teachers working in schools and training agencies to the new methodology of Outdoor Training (OT), that literally means "training outside the door" or, in a more liberal translation, "training outside the classroom, beyond conventional limits". This need prompted the Province to join the Leonardo da Vinci "NEXT - New Experiences in Training" project that ended in 2006 and subsequently to join the ESPRIT project.

The NEXT project was divided into a phase of research, a phase of interaction

and sharing experience and information with European partners, and a phase of planning the prototype model for training and testing. It relied on a vast local partnership made of training bodies such as: ENFAP of Teramo, IAL-CISL, Consorform, the Provincial Public Training Agency and schools and institutions of the territories, such as the Provincial School Office, the school Istituto "A. Zoli" of Atri, the Art School Istituto d'Arte "Grue" Castelli, the comprehensive school Istituto Comprensivo "C. D'Alessandro" of Teramo and the Middle School "F. Savini" of Teramo.

All these bodies and institutions became part of the Local Training Pact whose aim was to promote, test and spread locally innovative training procedures through:

- production of testing laboratories to favour transfer of the developed methodology to the entire territory;
- activation of synergies and professional links that help public and private subjects communicate, leading to planning a negotiated and united intervention on the factors and valorisation of human resources processes;

- improve effectiveness and efficiency of the education/training system and of active employment policies as fundamental factors to start positive growth processes.

This led to the residential laboratories whose first phase was held in May 2006 and involved 15 participants, all teachers of schools and training agencies, who were taught the new methodology.

The model was judged positively and therefore the testing phase was started, involving students directly. Two classes of students were chosen to test the outdoor training method. The residential training held on 25th and 26th May 2006 also

involved the teachers and trainers trained in the first module. The teachers who attended the first phase of testing prepared a training model, to use in the greeting and guidance phase of students from State Schools at the beginning of a new school year.

Without doubt, testing and applying the methodology has made the Province of Teramo the leader in the innovation process of teaching strategies in Italian schools. Joining the new project ESPRIT will mean achieving further objectives with the creation of the Local Committee and transfer of the new methods to the neighbouring territories.

### **The Province of Lecce**

The province of Lecce has taken a keen interest in supporting the development of the Salento area in a *European dimension*. In 1995 it created the EU Policies and Local Development Sector that in time achieved brilliant results. It has played an ever increasingly important role in the European growth strategies of Salento. Proof of this is in the project "NEXT - New Experiences in Training", which was greeted with enthusiasm by the 11 schools of Salento that took part in the testing.

This project involved the Senior Education Body of Salento. Special attention was placed on vocational training because in many professional schools there is a high percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with social problems, at higher risk of dropping out of school. The project began with the 'Thematic Meeting' held in Lecce in May 2005, where 11 were present, together with representatives from the Senior Education Body and from TECLA and POE. Here the Local Training Pact was shared, as a tool for cohesion between the various parties involved, to create a "network" within the local Vocational Education and Training system.

Once the group of schools joining the project had been defined, three Operative meetings were held in June,

July and September 2005. The aim was to develop the content of the Local Training Pact, co-ordinated by a Local Management Committee.

The *Testing Laboratory* was held in May 2006 in the farm Masseria APPIDÈ, in Corigliano d'Otranto, in the heart of the Salento region. This site was chosen by the province of Lecce for logistic reasons (as it was easily accessible to all participants) and because it supported the natural context required for effective application of the *Outdoor Training* method. This method infact requires participants to stay in the same place where they are trained, as even free time activities favour cohesion in the group. The testing phase ended in June 2006, when the group met again to analyse and assess the experience and to evaluate how to apply the testing in other territories of the province.

*Outdoor Training* allowed to unite educational and training institutions with different skills and qualifications and to reciprocally share and compare experiences. It achieved its aim of creating and testing models for development of *knowing how to be* through experience-based learning.

The Laboratory ended by studying in detail and comparing the Experiential Learning method, that is, planning

exercises and activities to test the method with students in schools. It must be remembered here that this method does not replace ordinary teaching activities but it can be used by teachers (of any subject) for *adventure learning*, aimed especially at helping young people *at risk*.

It also became clear that it was necessary for all teachers and trainers to help their colleagues directly try the method, by bringing up the subject in the Class Teachers' Meetings.

In September 2006 a territorial coordination structure, promoted and sponsored by the Province of Lecce (Educational Policies Sector and EU Policies Sector), was started with the aim of introducing different types of intervention for different types of recipient (without forgetting the specificity and the unity of the project). At the same time it aimed at making the best of and appreciating *guidance* and resources already present on the territory.

The Province of Lecce took part in the Final Conference of the NEXT project, held in Kielce (Poland) in October 2006. While assessing and comparing the different teaching and training strategies it became clear that testing and application of the Outdoor methodology had allowed the province of Lecce to start, together with the training institutions involved, an innovation process of the very concept of "teaching". Experience-based training methodologies completely change traditional work and promote group interaction abilities, functional communication and relational skills in a real context, discovering and using personal resources in the best possible way, managing problems and looking for answers.

For this reason it is important to continue with the same enthusiasm and ESPRIT represents the necessary step to take towards the future, to fully achieve the objectives of active citizenship and employment listed by the Lisbon European Council.

## 4. News on project activities

### **Kick-off Meeting of the project ESPRIT - Rome 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2008**

The **Kick-off Meeting of the project ESPRIT** (Rome 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2008) represented a very useful occasion for all the project partner to get to know each other and to discuss in detail issues related to the project activities, role of each partner in their development of the actions and to administrative and financial aspects.

The first meeting of the Transnational Steering Committee (14<sup>th</sup> of January), management body chaired by TECLA as project leader and made up of all the partners, addressed issues such as objectives, foreseen activities, expected results, etc. of the project ESPRIT, also based on the achievements of the project NEXT.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January the first meeting of the Scientific Coordination Unit, management body made up of TECLA as project leader and of the scientific partners BSJ, POE and Threshold, planned the activities, methodology, etc. related to the Action 1 "Analysis of needs and feasibility", that is the research and analysis on the 6 partner territories and their vocational education and training systems.

### **Action 1 "Analysis of needs and feasibility"**

The Action 1 develops in the first few months of the project ESPRIT and foresees the analysis of the 6 partner territories (Italian Provinces and territory of Zeimaitija College) and of their education and training systems, with the view of identifying, defining and sharing the main issues and problems affecting the educational and training system of the six territories involved and in particular the effectiveness and quality of those systems and their practices and methodologies. This territorial analysis aims at highlight issues related to:

- ☛ Territories (employment sectors, etc.)
- ☛ Education and training systems (number and types of schools and of other actors involved such as associations, etc.)
- ☛ final beneficiaries, namely students and trainees (features, problems, etc.) and policies and initiatives in their favour
- ☛ teachers and trainers (methodologies used, problems affecting their work, etc.)
- ☛ alternative and additional learning strategies existing, to use alongside traditional/formal methods

In the framework of the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in the 6 partner territories, focus groups and interviews with teachers and trainers coming from local schools and training agencies were carried out.

In May 2008, TECLA and POE will develop a SWOT analysis of such data and draft a territorial Report on the Italian/Lithuania contexts.

At the same time, the Province of Lecce will formulate a Report containing the assessment of the impact of the experiences carried out after the end of the project NEXT, namely the testing of the learnt experiential methodologies on the final beneficiaries of the project in

some technical-vocational schools of their territory in the year 2006-2007.

The results of the Analysis will be used by BSJ and Threshold in order to update and adapt the experiential training methodology (based on outdoor education) defined in the project NEXT and contained in the Document "Remarks and ideas about the use of adventure and outdoor activities in social pedagogic work concerning the transition from school to professional life"

### **Action 5 "Territorial cooperation between key players in vocational training and Local Training Pacts" – Territorial Meetings**

Action 5 activities, developing for the whole duration of the project, aim at improving the cooperation and territorial coordination in the field of education and training, in order to favour the integration among the systems of education, training, vocational guidance and insertion in the labour market, in close connection with the currently existing territorial programming tools.

To this end, Local Committees (LC) made up of territorial key players in the educational and training system, that is schools, local authorities, training agencies, universities, employers' associations, etc., will be created both in Italian and Lithuanian territories.

For these reasons, both Italian Provinces and Zeimaitija College is engaged in the organisation of territorial meetings aiming at promoting ESPRIT, verifying the interest of taking part in the LC and at planning the activities foreseen together with the schools and training agencies.

On this occasions, focus groups and interviews with teachers and trainers took place.

The first round of meetings have been held in Italy and Lithuania in March and April, while further meetings are scheduled for May and June.

## 5. NEXT EVENTS

Second Meeting of the Scientific and  
Coordination Unit (SCU)  
Marburg, Germany - 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2008

The second meeting of the Scientific Coordination Unit of ESPRIT will be held in Marburg, Germany, in the offices of the scientific partner BSJ.

At this time the partners TECLA, BSJ, POE and Threshold will discuss the results of the WP1 and the planning of the WP2, as well as the organisation of experimental workshops to be held in autumn 2008

ESPRIT web site on line in May

ESPRIT website [www.leonardo-esprit.eu](http://www.leonardo-esprit.eu) will be active from the beginning of May.

The website is an essential element for communication between partners but especially for communication and promotion of project activities and results.

The project website will contain detailed info on the project, Local Committees of the partner territories, experimental workshops and the experiential methodology. The website is a useful tool for the dissemination of the project results and it can be easily accessed by schools, training agencies, local actors and general public.

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**For more information on the project  
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