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ECORYS



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Key points

Talk-IT is a flexible English Language Programme tailored to respond to the needs of businesses that want to support employees who do not have English as their first language by increasing their understanding and application of English in the workplace.

Lead Partner -



GEMS NI Ltd

www.gemsni.org.uk

Partners

Ballymun Job Centre

www.bmunjob.ie

Center for Advanced Technologies (CTANM)

www.ctanm.pub.ro

Euregio Qualifizierungs- und Technologieforum (EQT)

www.eqt-ahaus.de

Supra Vita Language Studio (SVLS)

www.supravita.hu

Nauczycielskie Kolegium Języków Obcych (NKJO)

www.nkjo.kalisz.pl

Website: www.talk-it.eu

Talk-IT Newsletter



GEMS Northern Ireland Limited are the lead partner in the Talk-IT Leonardo Da Vinci project that runs from October 2009–October 2011

Initial Research Shows Potential for TALK IT

All partners participating in the TALK IT Programme undertook a comprehensive research analysis to identify key aspects of the unique environment in relation to the ICT sector within their country. This information will be used to provide practical evidence that there is potential for the TALK IT programme to meet the needs of local ICT employers and inform the development of the subsequent IT provision.

According to the primary and secondary research carried out there is strong evidence that the ICT sectors has a big influence in each of the economies in terms of numbers of companies, employers and finance it generates.

The use of business English is also a big factor in an organisations ability to develop and grow their businesses in terms of generating relationships with new partners and markets. As a result many organisations look for business competence as a pre-requisite for recruitment and are subsequently willing to commit resources to developing their staff in this area.

Overall our research shows there is a need to develop English language beyond the need to communicate and be related to key business tasks such as presentation and negotiation skills, understanding technical documents and articles and the language of meetings.

Some of the key points from each research report is highlighted below. * It should be noted that partner organisations may be at different stages of the research process.



Second Transnational Meeting, Eger, Hungary

Research overview

Germany

The teaching of English language is well embedded throughout the German vocational education system based around reading and writing skills for communication which leads to a certain general proficiency in English amongst the population. The increasing need for both potential and existing employees in the IT sector to communicate in English has emerged as a critical competency requirement for the IT industry with on many occasions being a pre-requisite for recruitment. Furthermore it is the opinion of our German partner that offering provision like TALK IT could be an additional recruitment tool that would allow them to recruit from a target group that has low English skills and subsequently tackle the current skill shortages.



It is also interesting to note that both our German partner and the employers who were contacted as part of the research process both felt that the trainer/tutor plays a key role in terms of getting optimal value from the programme in terms of their ability and the relationship with the employer.

While overall the programme transfers reasonably well, employees in Germany would be more familiar using a diary system to monitor progress as opposed to mid-term evaluations that were used in the original package in Belfast. The employers also felt it would be beneficial to provide a temporary moodle for collaboration between employees and the trainer during the duration of the course. It was highlighted in the research that there are thousands of business English courses available in the German market so making the programme IT related and as specific as possible to employer needs should provide that unique selling point and make it more attractive to potential users.

Hungary

Unlike the situation in Germany where English was a prominent element of the vocational/education system, historically this was not the case in Hungary. SVLS highlights that “the Hungarian language is one of the millstones around Hungary’s neck that has isolated Hungarians from their neighbours.” Furthermore because Hungary has fully opened to the West, the burden to master the world’s predominant business tongue is even greater now, especially for the younger generations who make up the bulk of the work force.



According to the research, statistics show that language knowledge plays a vitally important role in almost every job in Hungary, particularly in such areas where a degree is required. Further there is a national emphasis placed on improving skills when in work, with Hungarians appreciative of all manner of formal training programmes. As a result the vast majority of employers provide practical support through financial assistance or work time advances to facilitate employees carrying out training. In summary the number of well educated professionals is growing, and while there is no accessible data bases about the problems of using the English language for business purposes, based on interviews of our partner companies we can conclude that there is no current provision to fill the gap between general English and professional language. The Talk IT programme therefore presents the potential through a wide variety of methodological tools to improve active skills for those who have strong English but lack practice and self assurance for using it for professional situation such as negotiation, presenting and taking minutes .

Republic of Ireland

The ICT sector in Ireland comprises of 1,300 companies of various sizes from home grown starts-ups to the worlds largest software companies. It is the largest exporter of software in the world, with an average seven billion (euro) worth of software exported annually, resulting in seven of the worlds top 10 leading ICT companies having substantial bases in Ireland.



In the companies surveyed, a high level of fluency in English was considered a prerequisite, as it is the language used in all aspects of working activities from record keeping to dealing with customers and work colleagues. A number of the respondents also felt that work was required to improve the business English of staff in record keeping positions and strongly believe if their employees English was improved there would be great potential to increase in customer satisfaction, standards of customer service, employee satisfaction and improved team integration.

Similar to the experiences of our German partner the role of the Trainer delivering the programme was seen as key to its success by the companies surveyed in Ireland. It was generally felt that the tutor would require at least an intermediate level of ICT knowledge and that they also had the capacity to provide accreditation and an accurate assessment of the progress made by participants by the end of the course.

Romania

All the world's major ICT companies are present in Romania due to the quality of its human resources and the fact that it is a quickly developing market, with one of the highest rates of skilled programmers in Europe. There are over eight thousand software and IT services companies in Romania with many multinationals creating Research and Development, production and/or service centres in there. Romania is very much a quickly developing market particularly since the millennium and is now 13th in the world as per the number of IT graduates .

The government have put strong emphasis on strengthening the research base, providing competitive financial incentives to decrease the digital divide in society and furthering certification programmes for IT professionals in Romania. They have also placed ICT as a key strategy and strategic priority for the national economy with a total of EUR383m has been earmarked for Romania's ICT sector for the 2007-2013 period from European Union Structural Funds.

CTANM established that the IT company identified for the pilot required assistance with all aspects of IT and business English terminology particular in relation to presentation skills, the ability to explain ideas and negotiate, the formal language of meetings, grammar, business accounting understanding financial documents, technical documents IT articles, project management books, sales related documents. The capacity to improve on writing e-mails, business letters and presentations reports was also highlighted along with telephone presentation and the need to improve employees comprehension of English text and pronunciation.

Overall the Pilot IT company highlighted that improving English language communication would mean avoiding misunderstandings, save time and money and their business process would become more effective thus improving their prestige and performance.

Poland

According to the Central Statistical Office and Concise Statistical year book of Poland 2010 Poland has 2088 ICT companies that employ 238, 600 people. Accordingly ICT companies make up 14% of the total businesses in Poland today. Our Polish partner NJKO has contacted a number of major multinational organisations throughout Poland who have expressed an interest in participating in the TALK IT pilot programme . These include a garment manufacturer and an upholstery furniture business, the biggest of its kind in Poland and a aircraft company.



3rd Transnational meeting, Bucharest, Romania



Progressing According to Plan

As lead partner GEMS NI are delighted to report that progress and development of the project are going according to plan. The partnership is an originally constituted and works within a genuine spirit of cooperation, endeavour and respect. Three transnational meetings have taken place to date with seven out of the eight projected work packages either begun or completed.

Other key tasks carried out to date include the design of a project logo, the development of the project intranet and website and Locus Management from Belfast appointed as external evaluators.

All partners have held meetings with a number of potential employer partners to establish and develop relationships as a pre-requisite to carrying out the pilot programme and as you can see from this issue all partners have conducted and submitted research reports to determine the environment and context of each country.

Key Steps Still to do

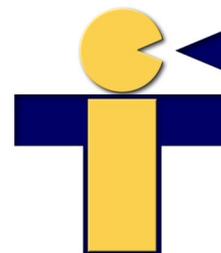
Although the project progress is very much on track there are a number of key tasks that the partners need to tackle to ensure that TALK IT meets its original aims and objectives. They include:

To customise Talk-IT programmes and begin pilots in Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Poland and Romania with a flexible approach to meet the needs of employers and employees to enable maximum impact. Evaluation procedures will be implemented to assess the quality of the products throughout the pilot, involving the opinions of both employers/employees.

To utilise dissemination and promotion activities as they arise and use all avenues to highlight and promote results of the programme leading to the identification of potential commercial opportunities; We envisage that dissemination activities that are also on-going through the lifetime of the project will increase to maximise impact of the project and capitalise on the relationships built up with employers as the results of the pilot become known in each country.

It is a key aim to promote best practice and give credibility to the programme. Options have already been discussed and will be considered in greater depth throughout the remainder of the project.

Sustainability of the project is also a prime objective of the programme. The partners will continue to discuss their commercialisation plans in depth to not only develop a platform for TALK-IT as a quality learning experience across Europe but also the possible customisation for other sectors. Factors such as the results of the pilot, views of employers and intentions of project partner will



TALK-IT Work packages overview

Work package 1 October 2009- September 2011 Management of the Consortium	Work package 2 October 2009- September 2011 Quality Assurance and Evaluation	Work package 3 October 2009- September 2011 Dissemination & Exploitation/ Promotion and Awareness Raising	Work package 4 October-December 2009 Key Steps in Developing the Talk-IT Programme
Work package 5 January -June 2010 Research and Needs Analysis	Work package 6 April-December 2010 Preparation/adaptation and Transfer of Educational Activities and Products	Work package 7 April-December 2010 Development of Trainer Guidelines	Work package 8 January-June 2011 Piloting and Testing the Products

ECOTEC are now Ecorys

As of 04 October 2010 our name will be Ecorys. ECOTEC has been a member of Ecorys for over a decade and the change reflects our current position as the UK business of Ecorys.

Ecorys is a highly-renowned European-based research, technical assistance and consultancy company utilising the expertise of over 550 staff in 11 countries. Ecorys will continue to deliver projects from neighbourhood level to regional, national and international level, as we have done for the past 25 years as ECOTEC. new web address will be www.uk.ecorys.com



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