



BRIDGE
Full-capacity insertion for non-national workers in EU
member states

502366-LLP-2009-IT-LMP-2009

Progress/Final Report

Public Part

Project information

Project acronym: BRIDGE

Project title: Full-capacity insertion for non-national workers in EU member states

Project number: 502366-LLP-2009-IT-LMP

Sub-programme or KA: Leonardo da Vinci - Multilateral projects for the Development of innovation

Project website: <http://www.bridge-europe.eu>

Reporting period: From 01/10/09
To 30/09/10

Report version: REV0

Date of preparation: 20/10/2010

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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Executive Summary

The main aim of our project is to facilitate the integration in the labour market for non national workers resident in the European Countries, by improving the skills of professionals that support workers in searching for a job position.

It has been noticed how, often, traditional training addressed to the staff employed in job placements, help desks and orienteering clerks, and coaching specialists do not cover any of the intercultural and communication topics that might be relevant when dealing with workers coming from other countries. Our project intended objectives are:

- Identify target groups' needs, and analyse services offered at local level to compare those at international level, to detect lacks, find good practices and to elaborate shared solutions.
- Develop a network with interested groups from different countries, to help define the supporting tools; creation of virtual spaces to facilitate communication and knowledge and information sharing.
- Encourage job placement employees' professional training.
- Facilitate diffusion of the tools developed and promote a new attitude towards non nationals workers' job insertion

The project targeted the professionals working in areas such as job placement, coaching and orienteering as those that provide services that allow unemployed persons to find a suitable job, but also paid attention at other actors involved in the job integration process, such as Institutions and Authorities providing employment, coaching and orienteering services, associations supporting immigrants' social insertion, and companies interested in employing those workers.

The trans-national partnership is set up by 5 partners coming from 4 Countries, and presents a variety of entities specialized in market research, development of e-learning tools, human resource sciences, social services combined by a common mission; all of them are involved in vocational educational training.

The project benefited from a variety of expertise coming from the multidisciplinary consortium that equally contributed to results and products developed up to this moment. The partners pull out a strong effort to elaborate the most adequate multimedia tool on e-learning, as establishment of dissemination methods to enhance project's impact.

To provide a stable ground for the online training two surveys have been carried out. A preliminary survey took place to collect information on the actual service supplied at local level, the regulations and laws that ruling it, and the actions developed to support immigrants' work insertion, in order to better understand the situations in the partners' countries and study how the Regional/National authorities deal with immigration. Then, a more specific survey was conducted to better understand the needs and challenge that the three target groups (service providers, non national workers, employers) are facing at the moment in the partners countries.

Those two surveys are serving the aims of BRIDGE, such as, on one side, the creation of an innovative training tool, (available in the second year of the project);

and on the other, support to the territory for the creation of a network of actors involved in non national workers employment and support. In order to collect the data necessary to prepare the surveys, the partners organized different rounds of focus groups, where different relevant local actors were invited (representatives of Unions, local administrations, companies, associations and so on).

In the project's second year the partners will develop the prototype of an innovative intercultural training address to the staff employed in job placements, help desks and orienteering clerks and coaching specialists that will pilot it during a 4 month validation period. The results will then be presented to the same actors that participated in the initial focus groups, so to discuss with them if the training responded to the aims set at the beginning. The results will also be discussed with an expert that will support the partners in the final elaboration of the contents.

The tools developed will then be diffused thanks to a dissemination plan, which will guide the partners to its sustainability.

The website created by the partners (<http://www.bridge-europe.eu>) contains all the main information about the project, the partnership and the main public results up to date. The website will be also use as the main entrance for the online training, and will provide information useful to the groups targeted by the project.

Table of Contents

1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.....	6
2. PROJECT APPROACH.....	8
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS.....	10
4. PARTNERSHIPS	13
5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE	14
6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES	14
7. EXTRA HEADING/SECTION.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

1. Project Objectives

The importance of non-national workers in the EU job market is a clearly accepted and widely shared matter of fact, especially regarding those fields that European citizens are no more willing to cover. Employment is considered as an essential aspect of the integration process and the effectiveness with which it takes place eases considerably the achievements set by the Lisbon targets for employment and growth. Several studies support the idea that a 'suitable job position' is one of the main conditions to both increase quality of life and self-esteem.

Due to bureaucratic procedures and nationally intrinsic preservation systems protecting native citizens, in many cases school titles acquired in third countries are not recognized in EU Members States. Therefore, the majority of immigrants are employed for jobs that are not strictly linked to their education, or they accept positions for which they are over-skilled.

Moreover, it has been noticed how often job placement employees, help desks and orienteering clerks and coaching specialists do not receive any specific training aiming at supporting those non national workers, and there are not specific services targeting to them.

By identifying the real needs of the staff employed in job placements, help desks and orienteering clerks and coaching specialists, and by studying the services provided at local level, the project aims at developing innovative training material, to encourage professional training and personal development, in order to contribute to the proper adjustment toward flexibility and full capacity for immigrants' job insertion.

The creation of training tools, easily transmissible to the network and national/international actors, will facilitate and allow better job integration and social cohesion of non national workers, in the long period.

The project aims not only at increasing the cooperation between the training institutions but also at creating a stable and priory communication channel with the labour market actors and policies makers. That will facilitate the validation and the diffusion of the training suggested and the quality of the results proposed.

For those reasons the specific objects of BRIDGE projects are:

- Bring together the actors that are responsible for providing services to non national personnel, providing them with the possibility to meet and discuss on the topics, with support of common guidelines and creation of a connection with the final users.
- Study the structure and regulations of the labour market at local level, detecting if any special service is provided to non national workers, to then compare them and provide current framework of the situation in the partners Countries.
- Investigate the services offered and how the process works, in order to detect lacks and imperfections, possible implementation, CV development.
- Indentify the needs of the target group, in order to provide the most suitable intercultural training, updating their preparation and developing new skills.
- Encourage professional training of job placement employees, by developing

the intercultural competences of professionals working in those services;

- Facilitate the diffusion of the tools developed and promote a new attitude towards non nationals workers' job insertion

In terms of priorities, the BRIDGE project fits the contribution of Lifelong Learning to social cohesion, as not only aims at fighting underemployment for non national workers, but also to built a network of contacts among local actors in order to better support not only the workers but also their families.

2. Project Approach

The project approach is based on the cooperation among the partners that brought their know-how to the partnership during the first year of the activities. As planned in the project, the partners have been assigned the lead of a work package, in accordance to their expertise and previous experience.

The management of the project has been conducted by the applicant, C.I.S.A. Consorzio - IT, responsible also for the development of the e-learning training development, with support of the other partners. The quality management has been ensured by a quality plan prepared and then supervised by CIFESAL – ES, which will also be responsible for the evaluation of the main products in the project and for guiding the piloting. The dissemination process has been developed and lead by Provincia of Bergamo – IT, which, together with IAFE – PT have been responsible for the preparation of the questionnaires used in the surveys. The project website and the e-learning platform have been implemented and managed by Badegruber & Partner – AT, that will also support partners during the piloting test of the upcoming training.

The project main activity is the development of an e-learning course that has been made possible thanks to some support activities, such as surveys, focus groups and networking.

Prior to the surveys, the partners responsible for the task prepared guidelines to provide the common contents, the questionnaires and their rational, to facilitate data gathering and provide a common approach to topics investigated.

The surveys were carried out using questionnaires delivered in local languages to the target groups. The initial survey has been conducted during a round of focus groups organized by each partner and provided an overview of the current status of services and information offered to the new comers. The initial survey was an occasion to study how the territory is organized and who the key-information holders are, and thus involve them in an active discussion.

The second and more specific survey was conducted to better understand the needs and challenges that the three target groups (service providers, immigrants workers, employers) are facing at the moment, and was supported by three different questionnaires addressed to each of the mentioned groups.

The results of the surveys, collected in a comprehensive report translated in all languages of the partnership and also in English, provided guidance to the partners to set the structure of the training that will be prepared and tested in the second year of the BRIDGE project.

After the piloting, the partners will bring together again the same actors responsible for the initial survey, to double check with them the results of the training and to evaluate its effectiveness. The training will also be evaluated not only for its relevance to the target group but also for its pedagogical approach, by considering the appropriateness given the training objectives. Comments from the second investigation with the local actors and the results coming from the evaluation of the piloting will be used by the partners to correct and refine training contents.

The dissemination strategy has been formalized at the initial stage of the project in the dissemination and valorisation plan. Local actors have been involved in the process since the beginning of the activities, as they were active part of the initial surveys and will be involved again before the release of the final version of the material, so to bring the network again at the centre of the project, to check with them the real potential of the products, and not only allow them be passive receptor of the results.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The following are the products and results obtained during the first year of activities:

Networking

The creation of the network started with the elaboration of guidelines, prepared by Provincia di Bergamo, IT to provide the partners with a common strategy that allow them to communicate properly with the actors to be involved in the action. During the first meeting, the partners discussed and decided on the typology of actors to involve, so to have a wide range of informed interlocutors, coming from local authorities, unions, immigrants' associations, representatives of companies and representatives of companies associations, such as the institutions that possess the key information and that provide the services and/or support the non national workers.

The aim of the networking activity was to bring together the actors responsible for providing the service, offering them the possibility to meet and discuss specific topics (non national workers insertion and how the territory faces the challenges and issues that may arise) with common guidelines and create a connection with final users, but also involving the 'resource exchanged', the employees.

The starting point for the network creation were the focus groups, organized by each partner to develop a sense of interest and responsibilities toward the present action and to establish preferential communication channels with all the stake holders, but also to ensure project results' continuity, as even after the ending of the project, those actors will be able to adapt and enrich the training contents, with new experiences and information.

Survey & reports

Prior to the focus groups, the partners did a preliminary survey to gather information on the structure and regulations of the labour market at local level, in order to perceive if any special service is provided to non national workers, and then compare them with the partners to provide an update picture of the situation in the partners countries. That information and the one gathered during the focus groups were relevant to understand how the different territories organize their services to meet immigrants' needs in terms of employment. These conclusions tried to point out what are the strengths, the best solutions and the suggestions we observed from our vantage point.

The second phase of the survey was conducted with the support of a survey manual to offer guidance and explanation on how conduct the interviews and how to deliver the results. The manual, prepared by IAFE, PT included 3 different questionnaires and a table to collect the data resulting from the interviews.

Three different target groups were involved at this point of the action:

A - Non national workers: to find out the difficulties faced in their job insertion process and what was their perception in using the employment services

B - Managers and company's directors – to understand if they made use of the employment services to hire new employees, if they employ non national workers and what were the main issues related to their work insertion.

C - The staff employed in job placements (public/private), help desks and orienteering clerks and coaching specialists, as potential beneficiaries of the training, they were interviewed in order to identify the needs of the persons that work in those institutions, so to offer them the training contents they need.

The aim of the three rounds of questionnaires was to analyze the whole insertion process, to discover deficiencies and lacks in the job insertion of non national people, and also to provide alternative solutions, good practices and strong points, by the international cross examination of the information gathered. The information provided also allowed to investigate the most significant factors that contribute to immigrants' employment and how to increase it efficiently.

All the data gathered during the focus groups and with the questionnaires was then gathered in a comprehensive report, translated in all the languages of the partnership and it will be available on the project website and on a CD to facilitate dissemination.

Training development

The information collected was used by the partners to update the training structure proposed in the project:

- Immigrants employment and integration facilitation
- Legislation, documents needed and how to get them (different for each country)
- Social skills and inter cultural communication (adjusted to local cultural details, on a shared frame)
- Connections with the labour market: how to deal with managers, employers and labour consultants

In order to organize the contents in the most appropriate way, C.I.S.A Consorzio, IT prepared a protocol to provide specific information on the contents structure and organization. The 4 chapters have been divided into modules, containing contents, information, exercises and self evaluation questionnaires. The whole training will be completed by a glossary and a bibliography to allow participants further study on the topics and deepen the sections they consider more relevant.

The partners are currently working in the preparation of the contents, which will then be placed on the online platform to run the pilot in the second year of the partnership. The partners are also in the process to create the support manual that will be used to guide the trainers and trainees during the pilot.

Quality control

At the project early stage, a Quality plan was prepared by CIFESAL, ES. The aim of this document was to ensure that results are consistent and meet the goals set in the general project finalised and approved. This will be done with the use of check-lists to check timing, results achievements, resources use, responsibilities, and so on. The tool to monitor the progress of the activities and the accomplishment of the tasks is called Road map. Every 6th month, partners have to deliver an update on the progress of their work, to allow CIFESAL to check on the evolution of activities, and to provide support to the coordinator.

The evaluation will also cover the activities carried out by the partners. Evaluation focuses on the results of the project and includes the activities that allow checking the results obtained their correspondence with what is established in the project, to evaluate the reaction/participation of the parties involved in the development of the activities, to evaluate the intermediate products of the project. For this reason at the end of each meeting, the partners were asked to fill in a self evaluation questionnaire, which will be used to prepare an internal report on the progress of the partnership.

Dissemination

To provide information on the partnership and on the activities, the partners created a website. Designed by Badegruber & Partner – AT, it will host the training and provide additional information for the project's target groups.

Other two dissemination tools were created at the beginning of the project: a postcard as a small 'advertisement' tool to inform on and valorise the activities and the partnership; and a brochure that was created to illustrate the project and its aims. To facilitate diffusion at local level, the brochures were translated in all the language of the partnership.

All the activities under this task were planned thanks to a dissemination plan that provides support to the partners.

The public products of BRIDGE project can be found online on the project website <http://www.bridge-europe.eu>

4. Partnerships

The partnership is composed by 5 partners (C.I.S.A. Consorzio, CIFESAL, IAFE, Badegruber & Partner and the training sector of Provincia di Bergamo) coming from 4 Countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal and Austria). Even if the geographical coverage is a slightly shifted to the south west, the partnership has been more concerned about the Countries involvement with immigration than by their position. It was pointed out during the surveys that countries as Spain and Portugal are more prepared to deal with themes as immigration and social cohesion, probably due to their history; while the other two countries in the partnership, Italy and Austria, are a bit behind in such matters, as immigration has been a more recent issue.

The trans-national cooperation is supported on the partners' experience, based on the know-how and previous knowledge of the partners; for this reason, some were participated more actively in one phase other then another of the project. Support for the projects' success also comes from the multidisciplinary partnership, because it is constituted by entities that are specialized in market research, development of e-learning tools, human resource sciences, social services combined by a common mission; all the organizations are considered vocational educational training entities. By building such a consortium, the project benefited from a variety of expertise that equally contributed to results and products made up to this moment. The partners pull out a strong effort to elaborate the most adequate multimedia tool on e-learning, as establishment of dissemination methods to enhance project's impact.

European society is characterized by plurality, dynamism and different cultural elements. All those combined together create a complex and multicultural society, and the need of a common and shared re-elaboration is strongly needed. By bringing together different institution with different background and with expertise on a variety of educational fields, the partners intended to share and elaborate possible alternative solution to a real problem.

The cooperation is a necessary starting point to open and facilitate the discussion on the evolution of education system and to find common and shared solution on the re elaboration of strategies for a better social cohesion.

5. Plans for the Future

Management, quality and internal evaluation

The partners have planned two more meetings, one in November 2010 (Portugal) and one in July 2011 (Italy). After each meeting, the partners will provide an evaluation on the activities developed so far and the results will be enclosed in the second quality report, due by the end of the second year. The activities will be monitored continuously thanks to a Road Map, to check the ongoing activities and its achievement and a tool to control the financial progress.

Prototype development

The core of the project started by the end of the first year will involve the partners for the 1st segment of the second year too. They prepared the main framework for the training courses, and in the upcoming months they will create the training contents that will then be adapted to fit the e-learning platform. To support trainers and learners on how to use the prototype and to offer an overview on the procedures used to undertake the development of the contents, so to make clear the reasons behind the training, a training support handbook will be produced.

The training will be delivered in local languages, to facilitate participants' comprehension. The training manual will be available in English at its prototype form, and translated later on.

Validation/Piloting

The validation of the prototype is an important step to understand if the product created has accomplished its task. The target groups (job placements employees, recruiters, job insertion professionals) of each country, before the online piloting, are involved in a short introductory lesson. This serves the purpose of providing them with the necessary information to better use the platform and its contents, but also to engage them and let be active part of the action.

The participants will have 2 months to go through the online material and complete the process. After this phase is completed, the participants will be asked to monitor their own work, and provide a feedback on the effective of the training received.

A check list will be provided to support the monitoring of the improvement and achievement, to support the re elaboration phase. The partners will prepare evaluation forms, and test the participants before, after the training and after they put in practice the information.

Evaluation

The data collected during the evaluation from the learners, will be gathered in a validation dossier to facilitate international consultation. Local trainers are responsible for collecting and elaborating an organized dossier on the material created and developed during the activity. They will include the evaluation process and its results, and also the 'evolution' made by the participants and their

improvement. The local dossiers will then be collected and confronted to the ones of the other partners. This report is written by the external evaluator so to provide an impartial point of view. The evaluator will focus on participants achievements compared to the initial aims of the training.

Dissemination & networking

To increase the effectiveness of the developed material, the project team uses not only a multilingual website, but also a multilingual e-Learning platform to enable access to the produced material to a wide target group with different language backgrounds. The e-Learning platform will be efficient in the delivery of the online piloting and feedback collection throughout the project as well as a sustainable exploitation tool and online training environment after the project.

The results collected in the validation dossiers will be used by the partners to one final focus group before the international meeting for confrontation and consultation. This serves to put off the results at network level, and reopen the discussion table. Only that way the project will completely achieve its aims. At each round table will be invited representatives from the key categories, such us: job placement personnel and managers (both public and private), human resources managers, labour consultants, companies' managers... More time will be dedicated on the local findings, but the EU dimension will be also taken in consideration.

As a result to the local discussion, the partners will then correct and implement the final version of the prototype and the support manual during a workshop, where the trainers from each partners will contribute to the finalization of the training. This will include also a section dedicated to the major findings resulting from the finalization phase.

Products finalization

After the evaluation and the discussion with the local actors, at least 3 persons from each partners (a manager, a trainer and researcher or an expert we consider relevant for the final re elaboration of the material) will participate in a final workshop. The meeting is essential to discuss the final products finalization and external expert comments, and to create the final version of the online training. This final discussion will provide the partners with the opportunity to share the results of the training and observe the local implementation.

Final results, sample of the training material and evaluation results will be available online to every interested person at any place in the EU, deploying the e-Learning platform, to ensure the transfer of the innovative results of our project.

6. Contribution to EU policies

Employment is a key part of the integration process and the effective integration of non national workers into the labour market constitutes an important contribution to reaching the Lisbon targets for employment and growth. The European Commission encourages EU Member States to make immigrants' labour market integration a more explicit dimension of employment policies, concerning the important role they play in the European economy. Several studies support the idea that a 'suitable job position' is one of the main conditions to both increase quality of life and self-esteem; moreover, promotion of fundamental rights, non-discrimination and equal opportunities play also a crucial role in the process of integration. We can then assume that an adequate job position will be advantageous not only to European labour market and employment but also to European social life, as it will improve the integrations of non national workers in the different areas of society and everyday life.

It has often been noticed that current trainings addressed to the service providers, namely employment services and other services (like NGOs) that are not strictly related to employment but that end up acting also on this area due to the needs of the people they serve, are not adequate to the real needs and demands of the integration process of non national workers in the labour market.

In this context BRIDGE plans to create tools, easily transmissible to the network of national and international actors, to facilitate and allow a better job integration and social cohesion of non-national workers. The development of these innovative training tools includes support materials and manuals, on- and off- line training course and a website to be used by a variety of target groups (namely non national workers and services specialised in employment issues -Lisbon Key Competences). This will also contribute to the development of lifelong learning principles, providing learning opportunities on specific and useful contents to individuals that are either secluded from the traditional training and educational system or that cannot find those contents elsewhere.

As the training course addressed to adult learners (Sub-programme areas) will run online, the improvement on digital competences will also be relevant. So, by exploiting the ICT learning (Transversal policies) the partners are not only aiming at improving the knowledge of the participants in the specific contents of the project, but also providing the opportunity to gain experience in those transversal skills that are necessary and fundamental in the contemporary society.

The project is also addressing the Future Europe-wide initiatives, such as 'European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion (2010)', as the main beneficiaries of the project in the long term (non national workers and their families) will benefit from better prepared staff at job placements services and provide the support they might need to be better involved in the host society.

In order to encourage the best use of the results of the innovative products created by the partnership (Objectives of the LL program), so to improve the quality in training, the partners plan to create a tool that could be easily transmissible to the network, as most of the training material will be delivered on line, so to facilitate exploitation and further update.