



Business Intermediary Organisations e-learning Network (BIOeNET)

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

BIOeNET is a Development of Innovation project funded by Leonardo da Vinci Programme under Lifelong Learning programme approved in 2010.

The project is aimed at two target groups, short term and long term target group. During the life of the project the short term target group consist of Business Intermediary organisations (BIOs), European Umbrella organisations (Organisations that act on behalf of European BIOs at European level) and selected Training providers. The long term target group are the Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs). After the end of the project the short term target group will also become long term target group.

The BIOeNET project has three key objectives:

- To develop a technical e-learning platform where the European Business Intermediary Organisations can host and share online training materials – it is envisaged that BIOs will use this platform to share and access training materials for the ultimate benefit of their member SMEs.
- To establish a membership network of Business Intermediary Organisations interested in sharing online training resources.
- To encourage BIOs and other training providers to use the e-learning platform, as a central “repository” of training materials, for hosting and promoting a wide range of SMEs focussed training materials develop for or by BIOs.

The project consortium consists of nine partners, six out of which are BIOs themselves and are therefore best positioned to develop a platform for BIOs and whose strength are in their networking potential. The partnership further consists of technical partner, innovation centre and an academic partner who between them will address the technical developments, operational aspects of the project running and VET work package.

The project is based on PRINCE project management methodology. The work packages include quality management, dissemination, exploitation, technical platform and network. The testing work package followed the V Model of Software testing. The project elicited and implemented feedback from users in two different stages, the initial user consultations during user needs analysis and also in the testing stage where it will be checked whether the platform fulfils the specification outline at the beginning.

The project delivered all the results as outlined in the proposal with the major achievement being the technical platform for e-learning materials. Content on this platform is and will be continually updated. The other objective was a network membership model for which is also in place and ready to accommodate members. A major achievement was engagement with the EU umbrella organisations who were very positive about the project which opens up options for new sustainability opportunities.

The future plans include an intensive membership recruitment drive and additions to the portfolio of courses on the platform. Discussions and meetings have been planned with organisations potentially able to offer commercialisation and sustainability options. Third meeting with EU umbrellas was planned for December 2012, which will hopefully also open up sustainability options.

Project website: www.learnsmarteurope.net

Table of Contents

1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.....	6
2. PROJECT APPROACH.....	8
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS.....	11
4. PARTNERSHIPS.....	14
5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.....	16
6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES.....	20
7. EXTRA HEADING/SECTION.....	23

1. Project Objectives

Note: Although the project's official name is BIOeNET, during the project lifetime, the partnership decided to come up with a name that is more illustrative of the purpose of the project and less misleading (It was found that BIOeNET was often associated with biology and other such related disciplines). Therefore BIOeNET has been changed to LEARNSmart Europe (by the way of vote amongst the partners) and these two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this report.

BIOeNET project main goal is to increase the range and quality of European SMEs' online training provision in response to the Communication from the EU Commission "New skills for new jobs" (Dec 08).

The project aims to achieve this through Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs), as it was recognized that these organisations e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations, Business Federations, either provide or recommend a large proportion of training and services across Europe, for example, the network of European Chambers alone trains around 2.7 million people per year.

The project encourages the re-use and improvement of existing e-learning materials developed by Business Intermediary Organisations which have applicability outside their immediate membership but have not been made more widely available due to cost, resources or competitive constraint.

The BIOeNET project has three key objectives:

- To develop a technical e-learning platform where the European Business Intermediary Organisations can host and share online training materials.
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- To encourage BIOs and other training providers to use the e-learning platform, as a central "repository" of training materials, for hosting and promoting a wide range of SMEs focussed training materials develop for or by BIOs.

The project benefits European BIOs, the projects primary target audience and the key short term target group (any not-for-profit organisation that provides business support and/or training to businesses e.g. local/national Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations/Federations, etc) who:

- are currently participating or have participated in the past in EU funded projects
- are providing training to SMEs
- have e-learning materials and wish to share them

The main benefit to the BIOs is in being able to provide a training service to their member SMEs which will improve their membership base and consequently also the level of skills amongst SMEs.

Training providers are the second user group and the main benefit for this user group is the fact that the primary target audience, BIOs, will facilitate access to potential clients by marketing the platform to their SMEs and with it also marketing the leaning materials of the training providers (providing they upload

The improvement of the BIOs training provision will ultimately benefit BIOs members, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the long term key target group of the project. SMEs will have access to the right training, benefit from a wider range of quality materials and subsequently improve their competitiveness and overall performance.

It is expected that the project will achieve the following benefits:

- Provide growth opportunities for SMEs
- Improve training provision made available by Business Intermediary Organisations
- Enhanced reputation and exposure of partners
- Development experience as a member of a well-organised consortium
- Gaining experience in valorisation activities
- A learning experience for partners staff
- Additional service and training offerings by partners
- Encourage European & regional government backing for the development of online learning materials by business intermediary organisations for the ultimate benefit of SMEs
- Encourage central government backing for new online learning technologies.
- Improving contacts/collaboration opportunities with already established wide network of regional and European partners (e.g. Chambers, employer associations, development agencies, training organisations)
- BIOeNET project support of the principle 8 of a Small Business Act, a policy framework aimed at improving the overall approach to entrepreneurship with focus on SMEs:

“Upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation”

During the consultation carried out in the User Needs Analysis, the partnership has engaged with this short term target group, exploring more specifically the training needs of their members and inviting them to join the network and share their materials on the platform.

During development stage of the platform, a feedback session was held with BIOs in order to ensure that the requirements from user needs analysis are still valid and that the partnership is on the right path with its development.

2. Project Approach

The BIOeNET project partnership aimed to develop a technical platform where e-learning materials will be stored and shared. The project also aimed to encourage the re-use of existing e-learning materials developed by Business Intermediary Organisations.

To achieve this, new technological approaches were employed as well as a large scale involvement across Europe by Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations, organisations who are influential and work with SMEs.

This also include an innovative way of working together, as although online learning platforms particularly in the academic and large business already exist, there is no learning platform which facilitates collaboration and resources sharing between Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs). Some of those BIOs (the short term target group of the project) have invested in their own learning systems to improve their training provision, others have training materials developed in previous projects, as it is the case with the project partnership.

In parallel to the technical platform development, the project will develop a membership network for BIOs and other organisations that wish to join the platform and share their materials.

In order to explain how to the project attempted to achieve its main goal, the main activities carried out by the partnership will be detailed below:

The BIOeNET project consortium carried out a User Needs Research, as one of the main activities in Year 1, in order to have a picture of the training needs of Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs), Umbrella Organisations and training providers. This has helped to define the most important characteristics of the different partner countries on an individual basis and from a global point of view. Three different questionnaires were designed, based on a series of qualitative and quantitative questions to determine the best way to implement training measures. The aims of the consultation were the following ones:

- To determine the interest generated by these entities in relation to training.
- To define the main obstacles European SMEs encounter in gaining access to training.
- To determine the current status of BIOs and detect training deficiencies.
- To identify the perceived benefits of good training in SMEs.

The results of the consultations were obtained from the surveys of these three targeted groups in each of the countries of the consortium. Most of the surveys were to be carried out by face-to-face interviews in order to help obtain better results from the sample group, when this was not possible, some of them were done via telephone or email. During the process it was also noted that use of online questionnaire facilitates speedy responses as in current times a lot of communication is happening online.

The results showed the priority areas of training considered by the BIOs to be included on the platform. Once these results were available, the research & content provision activity started considering the specific criteria of the training materials to be included on the platform. The main aim of this part is to develop assessment criteria to decide which type of e-learning should be included in the platform and piloted during the second year. It has been decided that due to the fact that majority of the EU projects would develop materials that would in some shape or form support SMEs and what is more, they would be intensively

seeking sustainability options, one of the sources of the learning materials will be ADAM, the EU projects database.

At the same time Virtech, the technical partner, monitored the technical basis of results of the partners' research at this stage in order to ensure that it is possible to include the sourced e-learning materials on the platform from a technical perspective.

The platform development started off with a research into various technological tools and as a result of this survey, the two tools were selected to fulfil the needs of the project – DRUPAL for the public interface and an open source learning software, MOODLE, for the platform. This software facilitates compliance with SCORM, an IT standard which ensures that the platform has better sustainability option if it is standardized. As a pilot, a course developed by the partnership previously has been uploaded. This was followed by other courses supplied by partnership following the research into ADAM as well as their own organisational materials.

The membership network of BIOs that was developed together with the e-learning platform was based on the "Network Charter", the operating model of the Project Networking Environment and commercial framework.

The network charter describes and sets out the different types of membership and outline what are the responsibilities of the members and also includes important guidelines about copyright and IPR.

Testing and Validation of the technical platform has taken place during the lifetime of the project in order to validate the project products. Extensive technical testing was carried out by technical partner and partner responsible for this task. The partnership has also engaged will engage with other BIOs and SMEs as part of the user testing exercise.

In terms of the added value of the approach used, this would need to be addressed from three different points of view, as per below.

From a pedagogical point of view, the BIOeNET project is using a well-accepted open source e-learning to develop the platform. DRUPAL & MOODLE are the systems selected for this and they will allow the partners to manage the content in a simple way. MOODLE offers possibility of both content management and learning management systems. As part of the content management system, the platform can accommodate a vast range of learning materials starting from simple texts to videos, through to quizzes and interactive games. Moodle also offers the possibility of the learning management system which involves interaction with the user for example assigning roles and learning tasks within the system.

From an organisational point of view, the inclusion of a wide range of different types of BIOs (Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations, SME Federations, Development Agencies and Centres of Innovation) enabled the project partnership to reflect the interests and concerns of the potential target audience for the platform and therefore to also regularly comment and feedback on the features in the development stage. It has also meant that the partnership had an incredibly powerful potential in terms of connections as out of the nine partners four were closely involved with the EU umbrella organisations (Eurochambres, UEAPME and Business Europe), cooperation with which was throughout the project lifetime as well as after seen as the ultimate networking and sustainability outcomes.

These pan European organisations were also relevant from the political point of view, as the involvement with these would also help to ensure that the project direction is in line with wider European business needs for example the recommendation of EC that pan European intermediaries collaborate closely together. Further aspects of the political point of view were

concerned with the fact that the project supports the EU 2020 strategy which is aimed at making EU smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. Through its deliovery, the project particularly supports one of the seven flagship initiatives of this strategy, Agenda for new skills and jobs. It further supports the Small Business Act, a policy framework aimed at improving the overall approach to entrepreneurship with focus on SMEs. BIOeNET particularly supports the principle 8 of this act, "Upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation".

In terms of the evaluation of the project, it has been recognized that external, independent and objective input is very useful in order to successfully complete the project. Therefore, after carrying out a tender process, a consultancy company was appointed to carry out the external evaluation of the BIOeNET project. The key results of the evaluation are two formal reports:

- An Interim evaluation report (end-of-year 1)
- A final evaluation report (end-of-project)

The interim evaluation addresses whether the project has achieved its objectives by the dates set out in the work plan and whether it is still on track to achieve its objectives by the end of the project.

The purpose of final evaluation is to draw conclusions on the design, implementation and degree of success of the project in the light of its objectives and indicators and to identify lessons learnt. The evaluation will also provide a series of six-monthly informal feed-back reports to assist the project assurance efforts of the project team.

Regarding the dissemination strategy, the main aims during the first year of the BIOeNET project were to create awareness and understanding of the project and its capacity, as well as to engage with the target group in order to carry out the user needs analysis.

The project has developed a number of strategies in order to achieve this:

- Creation of marketing materials
- Production of newsletters
- Attendance to events and conferences
- Usage of technology tools, such as the project website, social media tools
- Use of networking at three different levels: local, national and European.

The exploitation and sustainability strategy of the BIOeNET project is divided by the different target groups.

The first main group is SMEs or end users of the e-learning platform – The project will engage with them through their membership within Business Intermediary Organisations.

The second main group is formed by Local/ Regional/National Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs), EU umbrella organisations for BIOs and selected Training Providers.

Collectively, this group will ensure sustainability of the platform and that training materials and resources will be added to the platform. It is envisaged that the main responsibility in disseminating the project and attracting attention to it after the end of the project will rest with national BIOs and European Umbrellas as having a huge influence across European states, these will be expected to encourage their member national BIOs to in turn encourage their members to use the e-learning platform and network for benefit of their member SMEs.

Also certain dissemination activities are expected to last beyond the lifetime of the project e.g. certain types of marketing materials e.g. pull up banners, technology tools including project website, social media, articles in the websites of partners, google rankings and many others.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

It is believed that an assessment of the project's results and other outputs clearly demonstrates that the majority of the objectives outlined in the original proposal have been achieved to one extent or another – especially during the final year of the project.

In terms of achieving the objectives set out for the project in the original proposal the approach taken by the project now offers a wide range of organisations access to online training facilities that they might otherwise not have had in a way that encourages re-use of existing online resources and facilitates the use of existing training materials. It does this by seeking out BIOs which have already developed online training resources and offering them a new platform on which to host and share those resources and which aids the translation/re-use process and offers an environment for the wider promotion of these outputs. The project has also been successful in developing rules and business processes which will encourage BIOs to share and collaboratively further develop the training resources that have already been developed before offering them to their membership and other SMEs.

The BIOeNET membership “offer” also seeks to encourage member BIOs to provide their existing materials to the other BIO members (and their member SMEs) free of charge, wherever possible, whilst still being attractive to those BIOs who still wish to see a “return” on their earlier investments.

In terms of The BIOeNET major results expected of the project the e-learning training platform (result 1) is one of the major successes of the project and can be accessed via this link: www.learnsmartplatform.net. It includes an attractive project website which provides the one of the primary dissemination and promotion tools as well as the repository for training courses and a CMS environment for developing and adapting courses using Moodle facilities. A number of courses have already been uploaded onto the platform in order to provide potential members with reasons to use the platform. The platform is attractive and easy to navigate and is thought to be very suitable for both the membership recruitment activities and the course hosting needs. Although much of the groundwork was laid in year one most of the visible aspects were implemented in year 2. In addition to this, interaction with one of the training providers, Coventry University, has led to a very useful commercialisation option which is currently being negotiated and which will in short term ensure that the platform can continue as Coventry University are happy to contribute towards the maintenance of the platform.

A “platform access” environment has also been developed which reflects the approach defined in the Network Charter and the sustainability & exploitation plans (Result 2). This integrates with a range of manual processes for the granting of access permissions which is coordinated by CWCC. This is now a robust system prepared to accommodate various types of members and its operation has been mastered by the CWCC staff members which means that the maintenance will be more effective as it will be the technical partner as well CWCC maintaining it.

Meetings with stakeholders in year 2 led to substantial changes being made to the Network Charter, the Commercialisation Plan and Service Level Agreement documents. Links to all of these documents are now available through the project website and they are linked to “selling documents” which seek to explain the BIOeNET “proposition” and what BIOs can expect from being BIOeNET members and what is expected of them.

The approach to membership development and promotion was also revised during year 2 following the three umbrella group meetings held in Brussels in February 2012 –reflecting the

potential levels of dissemination and promotion support offered by the three umbrella groups (UEAPME, Business Europe and Eurochambres) once the platform was ready for use by their memberships. The project has also been able to generate considerable interest amongst training organisations who regard the approach as very interesting and worthwhile and who have indicated their keenness to be involved once the final products are in a “stable” condition. Lists of potentially interested BIOs have also been developed during the user needs research phase of the project and will be used as part of the membership recruitment process.

The presentational aspects of the project portal are also thought to be one of the successes of the project whilst the involvement of the three major European Umbrella organisations was a particular success for the project from both dissemination and a sustainability viewpoint. Good contacts have also been made with other EC funded projects through the ADAM research and may result in subsequent involvement and collaborations (such as the planned collaborations with the EC funded PROMIS project).

The partnership can also be particularly satisfied with the level of dissemination that has been accomplished during the project. It has been noted that following design of a provisional project flyer followed by an official project flyer, 3,487 of these have been distributed across nine partners. All partners have further included the project in a number of publications which reached over 5,500 people.

Other means of dissemination included events, seminars, conferences etc. and total number of 27,161 people were engaged through these activities.

From a technological viewpoint the use of Social Media technologies has helped to ensure that the project is keeping up with the latest technical developments and the type of access styles that are likely to appeal more to online learning users in the future. The reliance of the project on open source development tools also provides a good example for other projects and will allow for the experience to be replicated in future.

In terms of impact on target groups, the platform had an impact on the umbrella organisations as it made them think of and consider their e-learning strategy and potentially use ours. Through the platform these organisations could also see the potential for some concrete actions on behalf of their members which will promote collaborative action (one of their key missions) and increase the attractiveness of the umbrella group membership offering

Impact on BIOs themselves was limited because membership recruitment was delayed but it did raise awareness during the research phase and the dissemination activities and many more are now aware of the possibilities and interested in seeing what is finally on offer through the platform. This is planned to be addressed by the end of this year and early next year.

There was also impact on training organisations in terms of seeing BIOs as a target audience and making concrete steps to provide this type of online training resources available to them on reasonably attractive commercial terms.

Unfortunately, it has to be said that along with the positive developments, there were also some issues during the project. In the early stages of the project, the partnership encountered difficulties in understanding the main rationale behind the project and what the main target groups of the project were. This was mainly due to complex nature of the project as the concept is rather innovative and has not been done before. This has impacted on the user needs analysis as the partners were not clear about the user groups which needed to be further clarified causing delays to the work package.

Later on in the project, two further issues occurred; organisational restructures took place in organisations of two partners, CWCC and EL. This has resulted in delays of the progress of work packages and of the whole project. On CWCC's side this led to further issues still, in form of their financial manager leaving, which meant that the junior staff was left to tackle a lot of issues they were not familiar with, resulting in further delays of the project. Both of these have resulted in work packages 6, 7 and 8 not delivered until month 24 as opposed to the month 16 which should have been the last one for these work packages,

Nevertheless, the partnership believes that the concept has been proven by the fact that what was seen as the heights of dissemination and sustainability, engagement of the EU umbrella organisations, is successfully under way and it is hoped that it will continue after the project.

4. Partnerships

The BIOeNET project aims to increase the level of training support provided to Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by European Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs).

The project partnership hopes to develop a platform which encourages the re-use of existing e-learning resources whilst facilitating the development of new online resources based on existing training materials whilst enabling the BIOs to be more interactive.

In order to achieve this, the project has selected a complementary, varied, experienced and well-connected partnership that is bringing the best from each country and contributing to development of a successful project.

The partnership is formed by seven Business Intermediary Organisations, representing the variety of these organisations, e.g. Chambers of Commerce (UK, Slovenia, Romania), Industry Associations (Bulgaria), SMEs Federations (Sweden), SMEs Technology and Innovation Centres (Italy) and Development Agencies (Lithuania); one international business college (Spain) and one e-learning technology specialist (Bulgaria).

The following nine organisations form the partnership of the BIOeNET project:

1. Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce (co-ordinating partner) from the UK
2. Foretagarna, Swedish Federation of Private Enterprises
3. Democenter-SIPE, a SME technology and innovation centre from Italy
4. Virtech, a software and R&D company from Bulgaria
5. BIA, Bulgarian Industry Association
6. CPU, Slovenian National Chamber of Commerce
7. EL, Enterprise Lithuania (Regional Development Agency)
8. CCIPH, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Prahova, Romania
9. Aliter – Escuela Internacional de Negocios – an International Business School based in Madrid

The quality of the partnership is not only enabling engagement with a number of European BIOs, but also a representative sample of European countries and a varied interaction at different levels (local, national and European).

One of the strengths of the BIOeNET partnership is the existing links at local, national and European level. The local level is covered by each of the partners in their respective area where they are able to engage with the relevant BIOs, part of the short term target group of the project. In regards to the national level, the links are established by being members of national umbrella organisations, such as British Chambers of Commerce in the UK.

The European level is covered by CWCC, BIA and Foretagarna that belong to three main Pan-European organisations acting on behalf of European BIOs (Eurochambres, Business Europe and UEAPME) and have very good contacts there.

As described in the exploitation & sustainability of the project, one of the challenging objectives is to engage with these Umbrella organisations and facilitate wider inclusion of the BIOeNET platform within training provision of their members (BIOs) through this group.

In terms of the working relationships, some of the partners have already taken part in previous Leonardo funded projects together, which has built an excellent working relationship among them, facilitating the integration of the new partners and giving support when needed.

Working in a transnational partnership has proven to be a very enriching and interesting experience. The mixture of different countries, cultures and backgrounds of the partners make the project an ongoing learning experience where everybody shares their knowledge in order to achieve the best results possible.

The partnership is working well together in a harmonious and supportive manner. The partner meetings have been conducted in an efficient and constructive way and the partners socialise well together during and after the meetings.

There were a few instances where very positive connections were also made outside the partnership. This included the contact with a company called PROMIS, which was recommended to the partnership by one of the EU umbrella organisations, UEAPME. The PROMIS has also started off as an EU project that developed a management system for SMEs and is a great example of how such project can develop into a very well established company. The CEO of PROMIS, Caterina Berbenni-Rehm is a very enthusiastic individual and has a lot of ideas on potential collaborative activities. As part of these ideas she is working on her main product being standardized across Europe. CWCC and Foretagarna (partner 2) have supported her on this journey and is likely to become involved in the process of standardisation over the next few years. This will be very beneficial to all involved as Caterina will be gaining support of respectable companies whilst for CWCC and Foretagarna it may be seen as favourable for a company such as chamber of commerce of federation of private enterprises, both of which are working with SMEs to be involved in this process as it is essentially aimed as SMEs.

Another useful connection outside the partnership has been made with Coventry University's lecturer, who is a target user (a training provider). CWCC has been working with him quite intensively and the benefits of this cooperation are great for both sides. Since they will be uploading a course for engineering SMEs into the paid section of the platform, the project will be gaining additional materials for the platform as well as a potential commercialisation and sustainability options which may grow further, whilst they will gain a direct route to their target audience as CWCC has a lot of SMEs engineering members which will be useful for the University especially now in times of economic recession when increasing demands are being put on the lecturers to bring in funding.

5. Plans for the Future

The lead partner and the other partners have a genuine interest in seeing the project succeed and hence have a rather wide selection of well-thought-through plans (and many 'plans B') for after the end of the project. These plans will aim to capitalize on the result produced by the project – the platform, as well as all the networking efforts to date. The steps to be taken in the near and more distant future are described below, in order of priority:

1. Follow-up meeting has been arranged for 12th December with UEAPME and CWCC is in the process of arranging meetings with Eurochambres and Business Europe in order to take advantage to the visit to Brussels. In this meeting the Learnsmart Europe platform (LSE) will be offered to UEAPME (and potentially others too).
2. At the same time, discussions are planned with Open Aula, a training provider, who expressed interest in the collaboration and potentially taking on the platform after the end of the project. If there is serious interest from this organisation, it may be offered to UEAPME (at the meeting in December or later on) as a potentially commercial platform package which would completely fulfil project's sustainability aspirations. If not the platform will be offered to UEAPME as a prototype for now, whilst potentially looking for more viable commercial platform (Possibly PROMIS).
3. UEAPME will also be asked to collaborate with CWCC or one of the other project partners on two projects that are currently in preparation by the BIOeNET partnership to extend BIOeNET project, FP7 - research for SME and a Leonardo project focussed around ADAM, European projects database.
4. Eurochambres will be also contacted in follow up of the meeting, either on 12th December whilst the partners are in Brussels or via email later on, presenting them the platform which has been designed taking into consideration their ideas from the last meeting e.g. potential for interaction between chambers. Eurochambres will also be offered collaboration on the two projects mentioned above, FP7 and Leonardo.
5. CWCC is going to get back to Coventry University's Business Development Office after their request for a meeting to discuss contracts and charges in relation to their uploading a course on the 'paid-for' Learnsmart Europe platform. It is hoped for the meeting to be organized in December 2012. If this proves to work this presents a great commercialisation option which would enable for the platform to pay for itself.
6. Business Europe will be contacted again probably in December or January in follow up of the meeting held in September and CWCC intends to discuss format in which project should be presented to Business Europe's members, as per the last conversation in September. They will be specifically pointed to the course by Coventry University which they were especially interested in the last meeting.
7. There are potential opportunities with all three umbrella organisations as the partnership learned that it is in line with EC recommendations that the pan European Business intermediaries collaborate together more in the future.
8. If this top-bottom approach does not work too quickly and the response from UEAPME, or other EU umbrella organisations is negative or non-committal, the CWCC will start with the bottom-top approach and embark on the process of promoting the membership to the individual Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs) starting with UK as a pilot. Over 3000 BIOs were identified for these purposes. The contact will take on a form of an e-shot to BIOs, introducing the platform and its benefits and inviting them to join the network. This should increase the membership base dramatically.
9. Around the same time, CWCC will attempt to be re-establish contact with British chamber of Commerce (BCC) after the previous contact retired. The intention is to follow up on the letter of support given to CWCC last year as well as the commercialisation option offered by the HMRC through BCC. If response is vague or

- non-committal, CWCC will also inform the BCC that emails will be sent to all their members inviting them to join the network. This will be done so that no negative presumptions are created by possibly appearing wanting to take over as a network.
10. In the meantime, CWCC, as a former content work package leader will continue going down the list of projects found on ADAM database and contacting them. This will at the same time be further research and form basis for the new project CWCC is hoping to submit as a continuation and extension of BIOeNET.
 11. Another contact has been found recently which is the Trade Associations Forum (TAF). It has been discovered that a staff member at CWCC has a direct contact in this organisation, Richard Fairclough who is the head of benchmarking. It is envisaged that due to this being a personal contact, this will be followed up by a personal meeting where project can be presented. It is worth mentioning that TAF is a member of Confederation of British Industry (CBI) which could also be a useful link for future contacts.
 12. A CEO of an organisation whose contacts were provided to the partnership by UEAPME at the first meeting is very keen to collaborate with BIOeNET as well as to hold a second meeting on, this time in UK and with CWCC's CEO, is intending to travel to UK early 2013 to discuss commercialisation options.
 13. In addition, CWCC has also discovered a slightly different type of (although slightly lesser as it is bilateral chambers only) EU umbrella organisation, Council of British Chambers of Commerce in Europe (COBCOE), and if none of the above plans work out intends to contact establish contact with Council of British Chambers of Commerce in Europe (COBCOE) and promote the project to them in the same way. However, even if the other plans work out same solution can be offered to all umbrellas either separately (which could make a base for another project) or as one (which will be in line with the recommendation of EC about pan European intermediaries being more collaborative as mentioned above).
 14. The partnership indeed intends to continue dissemination, wherever feasible and relevant. This would include marketing materials e.g. pull-up banners, translated version of which have been put up each of the partner organisations. Partners will also maintain the links to the project on their websites and continue promoting the project on their social media accounts as well as through their communications e.g. online magazines, bulletins and journals. They will further attend events and where possible promote the project and recruit new members. The project will also remain on ADAM where it will be permanently advertised to other BIOs and various other organisations.
 15. Networking will also continue on various levels and as demonstrated in the previous bullet points at the beginning of this list, there will quite a few opportunities for this.
 16. In addition, CWCC has also very recently been approached by a Turkish organisation interested in transferring BIOeNET project under Leonardo. An email was sent back however, with no response as yet. This will be followed up if a week time from now onwards if no response is received by them.
 17. Targeted dissemination efforts will be made in relation to recruitment of training providers and other relevant organisations part of membership base so that more materials can be added to the portfolio.
 18. Opportunities to obtain materials to be added to the platform will be sought out where possible.
 19. Questionnaires have been put on the website in order to obtain feedback from members and potentially improved the platform according to this, of course within financial constraints.
 20. Leonardo website also offers opportunities to include information on projects in their e-flashes and newsletters and in the events, news and case studies section. If the project succeeds at least in few of the above points, it may be useful to share the success and include a story in one of these options.

It should be said that the partnership has the best intentions of the project at heart and would be very happy to see it succeed and will attempt to fulfil all of the action points above and in the time specified, however, this will happen within the financial and time constraints of the partnership which means that few may be carried out later than envisaged.

6. Contribution to EU policies

By developing a technical platform for sharing e-learning resources and in defining a commercial framework through which Business Intermediary Organisations (BIOs) and training providers from across Europe can share SME learning resources, the project is seeking to meet the requirements of the **December 2008 EC Communication on “New Skills for New Jobs**.

The work of the project in this regard is particularly relevant to those parts of this Communication in which the E.C. undertook to

“Promote dialogue between business and education and training providers, for the establishment of partnerships to meet medium-term skills needs” and to “Support platforms of companies, training providers to jointly design targeted training courses”.

The creation of the platform to host online e-learning materials specifically written to meet the needs of SMEs will allow SME staff to link into 'a framework of learning' at whatever stage of learning they are, thus meeting the **Lisbon European Council’s strategy of “adaptation of education and training systems to lifelong learning and contributing to the Lisbon Treaty aims regarding the development of partnerships for growth and jobs**.

The project’s work on identifying relevant good practice examples in VET and developing a best practice guide the project will also be seeking to **promote the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework**. This will be achieved through developing guidance which defines how the establishment of national qualification frameworks has occurred in the project partner countries and explaining how the competences required to engage in further learning and the labour market are acquired and recognised throughout general, vocational, higher and adult education (including the non formal and informal learning offered by the e-learning platform).

The project is also in line the **Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative “An agenda for new skills and jobs”**. This is because the project seeks to contribute to the creation of conditions for modernising labour markets through facilitating the acquisition of new skills which will enable our current and future workforce to adapt to new conditions and potential career shifts, reduce unemployment and raise labour productivity. In particular, the project will give a strong impetus to cooperation in education and training involving all stakeholders (including a very wide range of BIOs and training providers) and by reinforcing the attractiveness of vocational education and training.

The project also aims to increase the range & quality of online training provision available to SMEs across Europe through the development of an online learning repository (available to BIOs and the SMEs that they work with) and in doing so will help address the **Life-Long Learning Priority 3 (Developing Vocational Skills considering the labour market need – New Skills for New Jobs)**. To achieve this the project has worked closely with a range of BIOs (e.g. Chambers of Commerce) to define what online learning resources are most needed by their members to promote creativity, competitiveness, employability and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit, to improve their competitiveness, encourage innovation and foster lifelong- learning amongst SME staff.

By setting up a technical platform & commercial framework in which BIOs across Europe can share SME learning resources, the project meets the requirements of the **December 2008 EC Communication on “New Skills for New Jobs –** where the E.C. undertook to “Promote dialogue between business and education and training providers, for the establishment of partnerships to meet medium-term skills needs” and “Support platforms of companies,

training providers to jointly design targeted training courses” in support of the EEnterprise Priority.

The availability of a learning platform which can also be used to translate training materials will enable on-line learning materials to be translated into all European languages including ethnic languages, not just the major European languages. The sharing and adaptation of training materials by BIOs across Europe will help towards achieving the Diversity Priority to **promote an awareness of the cultural diversity within the network.**

The project also seeks to contribute to a number of Life Long Learning Objectives as well as some Leonardo Specific & operational objectives i.e.

- **Lifelong Learning Programme Objectives addressed by the Project**

Life Long Learning Objective c: *To help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning*

The e-learning materials on the platform will be open to all European BIOs & their SME members, thereby improving the accessibility of learning within Europe. The technical platform will facilitate the translation of content & the development of context sensitive materials , thereby improving the attractiveness of learning materials to SMEs. The development of assessment criteria will ensure that only high quality materials which meet European SMEs training needs are included on the platform.

Life Long Learning Objective k: To encourage the best use of results, innovative products and practices and to exchange good practice:

By encouraging BIOs to contribute SME focused e-learning materials to the platform the project is making “best use of innovative products.” The creation of the commercial framework & networking environment so that diverse organisations can collaborate to develop their outputs will “lead to the exchange of good practice.” Promotion of standards & encouragement of the integration of the platform e-learning resources into European VET provision will “improve the quality of education & training.”

- **Leonardo Specific Objectives Addressed by the Project**

Leonardo Programme Specific Objective a: To Support participants in training and further training in the acquisition and the use of knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal development, employability and participation in the European labour market

Setting up the platform will enable SMEs across the eight partner countries to access e-learning materials that meet their needs. The network will encourage European BIOs to work together to offer training & capacity development to their members that would be impossible in isolation. At the outset the partners will contribute learning materials to help young people become entrepreneurs & materials to help SMEs trade internationally, thereby improving employability & labour market participation.

Leonardo Programme Specific Objective b: To support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems institutions and practices

The creation of a technical platform which can translate & enable local contextualisation of e-learning materials plus the set up of a commercial framework to allow European BIOs to share SME learning resources is an innovative improvement to European training systems. The expertise of BIO members in defining what online learning resources promote competitiveness & employability plus the inclusion of assessment criteria will ensure high quality platform materials which meet the needs of SMEs.

- **Leonardo Programme Operational Objectives addressed by the Project**

Leonardo Programme Operational Objective 2: To improve the quality and to increase the volume of co-operation between institutions or organisations providing learning opportunities, enterprises, social partners and other relevant bodies throughout Europe

The creation of a commercial framework and networking environment between European BIOs where they can interchange resources and ideas, collaborate on training initiatives and exchange best practice will “improve the quality & volume” between organisations who offer training and capacity development to SMEs. The aim of recruiting new BIOs to the network during the lifetime of the project will also improve the volume and quality of co-operation.

Leonardo Programme Operational Objective 3: To facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of innovation and training: other than at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others;

The involvement of Training Provider platform members in the network will lead to new approaches on materials development. This will be complimented by the exchange of best practice between the members. The inclusion of partners from eight European countries in the project, plus the creation of a technical platform which can translate & enable local contextualisation of e-learning materials will be instrumental in transferring innovative training practices across Europe.

7. Extra Heading/Section

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