



U-COACH

Leonardo Da Vinci
ES/09/LLP-LdV/TOI/149037

U-COACH Validation Report

Circulation: Confidential
Partners: Eurocrea Merchant
Authors: Gianluca Coppola - Silvia Farina
Date: 30 September 2011
Doc. Ref. N°: U-COACH-WP7 Validation Report

COPYRIGHT

© Copyright 2009 The U-COACH Consortium

Consisting of :

- Universidad de Extremadura (UEX)
- Fundación para el desarrollo de la ciencia y la tecnología en Extremadura (FUNDECYT)
- Stichting Bussiness Development Friesland (BDF)
- Innovate
- Projects in Motion (PIM)
- Eurocrea Merchant Srl
- Xlab
- Agentia pentru Dezvoltare Regionala Nord-Est

This document may not be copied, reproduced, or modified in whole or in part for any purpose without written permission from the U-COACH Consortium. In addition an acknowledgement of the authors of the document and all applicable portions of the copyright notice must be clearly referenced.

All rights reserved.

This document may change without notice.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Comment
01	30-09-2011	First issue
02		
03		
04		

Executive Summary

The aim of this document is to give information about the results of the U-COACH system Pilot test, carried out with representatives of the target public, i.e. managers, executives and managers of European SMEs in the participating regions.

This report introduces first a brief presentation of the SMEs sector and the use of executive coaching in the countries involved in the project, i.e. Malta, Ireland, Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia and Italy.

The second part of the document describes the results of the assessment, the strengths and weaknesses of the self-learning system U-COACH. It also indicates which improvements must be implemented in the system.

Table of contents

1. MALTA	5
1.1. State of executive coaching in Malta	5
2. IRELAND.....	6
2.1. Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)	6
2.2. Challenges facing small businesses	6
3. NETHERLANDS.....	9
3.1. SME's in Friesland	9
4. ROMANIA	11
4.1. Profile of Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)	11
4.2. Contribution to the economy and society.....	12
5. SLOVENIA	13
5.1. Introduction - quick overview	13
6. ITALY	14
6.1. A focus about the executive coaching in the region.....	14
6.2. Does coaching improve Business Performance?	14
7. SPAIN	16
7.1. Executive coaching in Spain.....	16
7.2. Executive coaching in Extremadura.....	17
7.3. Preliminary conclusions based upon the field work	18

1. MALTA

1.1. State of executive coaching in Malta

Executive Coaching Management in Malta is rapidly receiving recognition as an effective and successful intervention for Professionals and Organisations to address individual performance gaps. An increasing number of companies in Malta offer their services to assist today's managers in developing the skill sets and competencies they need in order to be successful in today's business environment. Most of the companies that offer their executive coaching services provide tailor-made coaching sessions, with the aim of developing managerial skills to executives in congruence with their developmental paths. In most cases, the content of the available sessions is structured on the areas to be addressed and scheduled to fit the individual's and organisational exigencies.

These one-on-one coaching sessions can in most cases be customised around specific areas for leadership development for each manager. The main goal of these sessions is to help executives reduce staff attrition, improve communications, enhance their leadership skills, increase sales and profits, take their development to the next level and to assist executives in formulating solutions to their challenges and difficulties.

The majority of executive coaching companies and agencies have included the following topics and key skills in their sessions and coaching plans:

1. Enhancing People Skills;
2. Assertiveness;
3. Leadership in Action;
4. Mastering Communications;
5. Managing Discipline;
6. Developing Others;
7. Motivating and Engaging Others;
8. Empowerment;
9. Time Management;
10. Identifying Performance Gaps.

2. IRELAND

2.1. Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Over 97% of businesses operating in Ireland today are 'small' – they employ fewer than 50 people. There are approximately a quarter of a million small businesses in Ireland. This figure represents more than half of the total private sector, non-agricultural workforce. Small businesses are important for a number of reasons:

They provide regionally distributed employment around the country, deliver a huge range of local services, and contribute to the economic, social and cultural life of the entire population.

They pay 50% of VAT on services (over €4 billion), 11% of corporation taxes (around €530 million) and 37% of income taxes (€4 billion).

They form an essential part of the supply chain for larger firms, and in particular are part of the support infrastructure needed to attract and retain foreign investment.

The performance of the small business sector is thus an important contributor to the overall quality of life and standard of living in the country.

2.2. Challenges facing small businesses

In this changed business environment, there is broad agreement on the challenges facing small businesses today. According to the Small Business Forum, the main issues identified include access to finance; management capability; innovation; ICT audits for small businesses; better regulation; balanced local authority charges; access to information and advice as well as infrastructure. Each of these is briefly discussed in more detail below.

Access to Finance: While the problem of funding for small business has eased somewhat over the past decade with the improvement in the investment environment and the drop in short term interest rates, small businesses continue to report difficulties in obtaining

appropriate levels of finance for start-up and growth. These difficulties appear to be more pronounced for: Businesses in the services sector, with limited capital assets.

Management Capability: The performance – and even the survival – of a small business depends on the competence and capability of its management. The quality of management affects productivity, profitability and sales growth. Work carried out in Ireland has shown that the level of general management skills in Irish small businesses is relatively poor, particularly in specific functional skills such as human resources, marketing and finance, and in forward planning and strategic management.

Innovation: Innovation is imperative throughout the enterprise sector as Ireland progresses towards a knowledge-based society. The type of innovation most often referred to is technological innovation, which is rooted in scientific research and development (R&D), but other types of innovation are also important, and more relevant to the majority of small businesses, particularly in the services sector. Very few small businesses have the resources or the expertise to engage in R&D. Those that are unlikely to become R&D performers – and particularly companies in the services sector, should be encouraged to use the best available expertise to help them constantly adapt and be innovative in their businesses. This should help them to bring their operations into line with international best practice, to increase productivity and profitability, and to win new markets.

ICT audits for Small Businesses: The effective use of ICT by the entire small business sector will be critical to sustained productivity and growth in the years ahead. The Small Business Forum agrees with the assessment of the Government's eBusiness Strategy that many SMEs need to make better decisions about Information Technology (IT) investment, to manage the IT facilities they already have, and to make more and better use of these facilities. The Small Business Forum believes that the low uptake and limited use of ICT by small businesses is due to a low level of awareness of the benefits presented by the technology.

Better Regulation: Regulation is necessary and beneficial to society in general, to consumers, to the environment and to businesses themselves. However, regulation carries compliance costs, and much of these are borne by businesses. In recent years, the

Government has taken a number of positive initiatives, including the introduction of Regulatory Impact Analyses for new regulations and the establishment of the Business Regulation Forum. However, small businesses are required to bear compliance costs that are disproportionately high, with a resulting loss of competitiveness. The Small Business Forum found that the most burdensome regulations for small businesses are those relating to health and safety, employment, and tax and VAT administration.

Balanced Local Authority Charges: The rapid growth in the number of households and businesses in recent years has brought about a greatly increased demand for local authority services. Continually increasing local authority charges are a significant issue for all businesses, but particularly for small businesses. Increased charges – commercial rates, service charges (water and waste), planning and development fees and development charges – are impacting negatively on competitiveness, and stifling growth.

Access to Information and Advice: Despite having access to a very wide range of information sources, far too many entrepreneurs and small business owner/managers in Ireland are without a readily available single point of contact to answer the questions that inevitably arise at each stage of business development. As a result, they are frequently referred from one organisation or individual to another, and may ultimately get advice that is inappropriate or sub-optimal.

Infrastructure: The very success of the Irish economy over the past ten years has put a huge strain on our physical and social infrastructure. The National Development Plan has played a significant role in closing many infrastructure gaps, but despite these investments, deficiencies remain. Infrastructure developments continue to lag behind demand in many parts of the country, particularly in four key areas:

Broadband: Broadband take-up in Ireland is significantly slower than in many other OECD countries.

Transport: An efficient transport infrastructure is essential for enterprise development.

Energy: Noting that electricity costs increased by 40% between 2001 and 2004, the Forum is concerned that liberalisation of the energy market is not having the desired effect in reducing prices or improving quality of service. It also notes that very significant investment is needed in order to cater for predicted economic growth.

Waste management: Waste costs are a major issue for Irish business.. Lack of access to suitable recovery and disposal outlets has a negative impact on every enterprise in Ireland.

3. NETHERLANDS

3.1. SME's in Friesland

Friesland has relatively many small & medium sized enterprises, which are responsible for 75% of the total employment in Friesland. The total amount of SMEs in Friesland is approximately 59.000. The biggest economic power of Friesland is the south-west of the province. The driving force in Friesland is the agricultural sector and the industry. The commercial sector is an upcoming sector in Friesland.

General description of small Enterprises

The definitions of small and medium enterprises as defined by the European Commission are as follows: medium: less than 250 employees , small: fewer than 50 employees micro: less than 10 employees.

Small and medium-sized firms are very prominent in Friesland. Over two-third of total employment in the province is concentrated in this sector. These enterprises are mostly micro and small companies located on the industrial zone. In Friesland there are also some enterprises based in residential areas, in private houses. These companies are mostly micro enterprises, where the owner of the company started the business up from his own home. There are, however, a few multinationals for example in the agri-food sector.

Contribution to the economy and society

SMEs are the engines of the total Dutch economy : 99.7% of total business is covered by SMEs. Those 99.7% companies are responsible for 58% of the turnover in business. The number of entrepreneurial activity in the province of Friesland increases every year.

Particularly in construction and business services , more people start their own business.

Without SMEs the economy does not work at all. Especially in today's economy, with its dynamic and relatively small, specialized markets there are enormous opportunities for companies in the SME. SMEs are also important for the livability of neighborhoods. SMEs is very important in the society when it comes to employment and innovation. Nowadays, the companies in Friesland also choose more and more for sustainable business.

Trends

Every year there are some trends concerning SMEs. Wise and fast response to changes and trends is one of the key characteristics of good entrepreneurship. Especially for smaller businesses, it is not always easy to keep a clear view on the changes and trends in the market.

Nowadays there are some trends in Friesland in the area of the SMEs:

- Survive the economic crisis and be stronger than before.
- Move the unique expertise in the organization into services for customers and revenue.
- Start with online marketing.

Generic challenges facing SMES

SMEs in Friesland expect to get more out of their business target. Not so much because of the economic recovery, but thanks to improvements in their own entrepreneurship. SMEs also expect to gain more notion of their business. Investing in knowledge and efficiency are high on the priority list.

The biggest challenges for SMEs at this moment are:

- growth in number of customers
- more business with existing customers
- Improve the gross margin.

There is a clear shift visible compared to previous years because in those years there was an accent on investment and growth.

4. ROMANIA

4.1. Profile of Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Number and general description of SMEs in the North-East region

In Romania, the number of SMEs is different from one region to another owing to some differences in the development level, entrepreneurial spirit and culture.

The North-East Region has the smallest number of SME's by 1000 inhabitants, only 12.6%, while the total SME's number is 47,180, the micro-enterprises representing 86.3% of the total SME's. Within the region, Iași (27.2%), Bacău (20.7%) and Suceava counties (18.8%) have the biggest share of SMEs, at the opposite pole being Vaslui County (8.5%).

Region	SME - Total	
	Number	%
Total Romania	319816	100
North - Est	37240	11.6
South - Est	40828	12.8
South	36086	11.3
South - West	26163	8.2
West	28577	8.9
North - West	43728	13.7
Center	38723	12.1
Bucharest - Ilfov	68471	21.4

SME represents a very important part of the regions economy, with a share of 11,7% of the total SME on national level, both in 2000 and 2001. The share per 1000 inhabitants has the lowest value compared to the other regions during 2000-2002 (12,18 SME/1000 inhabitants -2000; 12,27 IMM/1000 inhabitants – 2001 and 9,17 IMM/1000 inhabitants – 2002). The turnover for private equity SME on national level during 2000-2002 has a small share, despite the large population and area of the region. The SME distribution according to economy sectors (commerce, services, industry) is correct according to the national trend. The private equity is prevalent and due to micro and small enterprises.

4.2. Contribution to the economy and society

SME sector represent an important source of local and regional dynamism. Even though the big firms remain a key factor in restructuring the productive system, from a regional viewpoint SME activity is of strategic importance in the region's economic reconstruction, provided SMEs are included in a well-structured environment, in a coherent territorial network, involving links, relations, exchanges between them and other economic agents (like banks, higher education institutes, training centers, consulting firms, chambers of commerce, local public administration).

Trends

- The removal of any administrative, financial, legal, barriers that still hinder SME start-up and development;
- The provision of assistance and information to SMEs;
- Encouraging cooperation and partnership between firms;
- The development of technological and innovation capacity of SMEs;
- The development of a durable entrepreneurial base.

Generic challenges facing SMEs

- Decreased domestic and export demand;
- Very difficult and costly access to finance and refinance;
- Increasing the share of debt cashed (domino effect);
- Delayed refunds of VAT to taxpayers;
- Increasing taxation and eliminating deductibility for certain expenses;
- Rising inflation.

5. SLOVENIA

5.1. Introduction - quick overview

In a recent article on the Slovenian web portal for entrepreneurs "Mladi Podjetnik" about the importance and effects of coaching, the author Andreja Anžur Černič - one of the most active coaches in the country - starts with the following thought: "There's more and more talking about coaching in Slovenia, however, there's very little (too little) done in practice. The benefits of coaching are still not known enough, even in the business sector."

Her observations can be supported even more with the notion, that there is only one certified coach, Barbara Cukjati, and that only recently the European Coaching Institute (ECI) opened its doors in Slovenia. Barbara Cukjati was the first accredited coach in Slovenia, and still remains one of the very few ones with accreditation.

The head of the ECI, Mr. Franci Čeč, stated for the Zlata Nit (publishing-research project of one of the biggest newspapers Dnevnik) that in current economical times, coaching is very important and a viable solution to avoid the downturn or crisis. However, the number of companies that reach for such solutions is still very small.

To even further prove that the coaching, especially executive coaching, the only public survey about the notion of coaching between managers, done by the named Mrs. Cukjati, was made in 2007. The survey was made within 74 companies, however, the aim of the survey was to determine what coaching means to the executives/HRM people. The most common form of perception of the word is "coach is practical and goal-focused form of individual learning that is being used by the management in order to improve efficiency, career planning and making and enforcing changes in the business process." The survey also showed, that only 8% of the companies think that official accreditation of the coach is important. It is therefore not surprising that one of the priorities of the ECI in Slovenia is raising awareness of the importance of the accreditation. This comes to no surprise, since coaching is only started to be used in practice and that the "natural selection" has not been done yet.

The confusion between what coaching means and what are the benefits, why the accreditation is needed, etc. come also from the fact, that the terms "coach" and "coaching" do not have a translation in Slovene. There are some attempts to use a word "trener" (trainer, direct engl. transl.), however the word does not enclose the whole concept of the word "coach" as understood in English.

6. ITALY

6.1. A focus about the executive coaching in the region

Coaching is an innovative discipline to learn and improve their leadership style, the quality of corporate management, define new business strategies and growth of its employees. The executive coaching is a new discipline in Italy, which has its roots in neuroscience and business management. The executive coaching, in fact, is a highly personalized and location based on experience or "action learning" to address and overcome their challenges. Together with the manager and coach, agree a development plan that follows the rhythm, timing and objectives of the manager. The one-to-one match in real time to changes in individual and business needs. The result is a development of rich, relevant and effective, essential for those who have little time and many responsibilities.

6.2. Does coaching improve Business Performance?

The experience of Eurocrea Merchant shows that companies obtain substantial benefits from the Executive coaching, including:

- provide appropriate support to managers play a new role, also related to corporate reorganizations;
- acquire innovative tools and new ways to obtain a consistent performance improvement;
- have an independent and trusted interlocutor with whom to discuss sensitive and complex issues of business;
- ensure that new managers environments as quickly as possible after recruitment;
- provide the opportunity to experience an intense personal development before a promotion to ensure its success;
- develop and use new skills for an existing role or, of course, new;
- develop and transfer skills that are "asleep" or intended to be renewed;
- manage a transition period in their careers;
- create a strong team spirit, to improve team performance, particularly in sales;
- provide stimulating learning experience for a manager to help him pursue a successful career, retain and motivate;
- Give managers who are considering major policy changes for your company, the possibility of a forum for reflection and careful with their private coach.

Coaching is a highly effective methodology that supports the person to:

- manage change with courage, creativity and flexibility by aligning professional values and objectives;
- to focus on strategies, identify the limits and proceed to overcome a personal, professional and business;
- improve relationships with others, discovering the most appropriate strategy to achieve the objectives.

7. SPAIN

7.1. Executive coaching in Spain

According to E.M.C.E 08 (the Market Survey of Executive Coaching in Spain) “Managing my team more efficiently” and “improving interpersonal relationships” (60-70%), followed by “managing change”, “managing time”, “balancing professional life/family” and “re-orientating professional career” (about 40%) are the main areas of work chosen by the clients (coachees) who receive Executive Coaching.

Coaching is a temporary relationship in which the coach, without undermining the autonomy and responsibility of the coachee, helps and supports him in the attainment of a goal which he could not achieve on his own within a desired period.

It is not consultancy, training, tutoring, psychoanalysis, mentoring, psychotherapy or counselling. It is a relationship in which both parties are on an equal footing, unlike previous cases in which the consultant, trainer, etc. takes on the role of “expert” and wields the power.

E.M.C.E 08 is a survey aimed exclusively at executive coaches who say that, of the 4,117 coachees who have required their services, 51% correspond to the profile of “other directives and mid-level executives” and 16% to “top executives-Board management” Male coaches work more (41%) with the “top executive” and “mid-level executive” profiles than female coaches (26%). They have all been hired by 487 “organizations” (companies and other entities) and 269 “private professionals” (self-employed people and executives who invest their own economic resources to benefit from the service).

The decision to contract the service is taken by Human Resources in 47% of cases, by the company chief executive in 26% of cases, and the coachee himself in 25% of cases.

When the “head manager” is responsible for the decision, he tends to prefer men (68%) over women (32%). If the “coachee” does the hiring, the opposite is the case, 67% prefer women to men (33%). When Human Resources does the hiring, the ratio is 52% men to 48% women. “Head managers” hire more coaches with “over 10 years” experience (29%) than the group in general (10%). The “head manager” usually hires (between 16% and 36% of the time) for the “top executive—Board managers” profile.

This year, 89 coaches state that they have had 1,882 “new” coaches, that is to say, an average of 21.1 coachees per coach, compared to the forecast for 2008 of 28 coachees per coach.

The number of sessions carried out is 10,575, that is, an average of 123 sessions per coach; those polled foresee a sharp increase in the number of session (207) for 2008.

91% of the sessions are face-to-face and 9% over the phone.

The average fee per coaching session, when hired directly, is 305 €, compared to 241 € in 2005.

The average fee per session for coaches with “less than 1 year’s” experience is 239 €, with “more than 1 year’s” experience, 352 €, and with “more than 10 years” experience, 483 €.

In Spain, coaching is, as yet, a young profession. A few isolated experiments were begun in the 90’s, but the real boom has taken place during the last five years.

A balance in the gender of the coaches (52% male, 48% female). 64% in the 31-50 age range. 56% reside in Madrid and 21% in Barcelona. 39% have a university degree in “psychosocio-philosophy” and 22% in “sciences”, while the remaining 39% pertain to the “others” category. Science graduates are predominantly male (83%), whereas psychosocio-philosophy graduates are mainly women (65%). 86% consider specific training in Coaching to be “essential”, and 13% “advisable”. 43% have “1-5” years of professional practice, 32% “less than 1” year and 25% “more than 5” years.

7.2. Executive coaching in Extremadura

Although there is some institutions well organize, in terms of quality systems observation and effective communications, offering executive coaching training, this situation is not spread in other regions as Extremadura.

We can point some institutions as AECOP (<http://aecop.net/>), ASESCO (<http://www.asescoaching.org/>) or ICF (<http://www.icf-es.com/>) that offer a wide range of information about coaching, courses and contacts in order to keep interested users informed. In other hand, only AECOP is exclusively dedicate to executive coaching while other also offer personal coaching.

The big picture in Extremadura shows a less professionalize profiles in coaching and with lower levels of association. We can find AECOP Extremadura, still in a developing process and GESTIONARTE (<http://www.gestionarte.eu/>), an organization working in the field of management and strategies.

We can also find some others freelance coacher barely associate, that also offer coaching sessions both personal and executive as the coacher found on <http://www.coachingextremadura.es/>.

It's also important to highlight the effort made by the regional government to increase the positive perception of the coach from the companies. The government (Junta de Extremadura) it's been also providing with funds the training to enterprises throughout private business schools.

In conclusion, even though, in Spain there are some organizations providing executive coaching services, in Extremadura we can find a lack of knowledge and an appropriate background to assume executive coaching as an essential part responsible of the development of an enterprise. Some efforts have been made by Junta de Extremadura but not enough yet to spread and standardize this type of training.

7.3. Preliminary conclusions based upon the field work

According to the report and the field work, it seems that enterprises are clearly interested in strengthening their management skills and they are also aiming to offer their workers a better way to achieve their goals inside the company.

Some statements in the executive coaching scorecard show high levels of agreement and some others, of disagreement. Nevertheless, most of the scores have been placed in the grey zone in between.

Those statements representing a high level of agreement are those related to how the enterprises' skills should be improved. This way, most of the enterprises consider that their company is into a continuous improvement, are also interested in developing an effective communication. The enterprises also show a high level of commitment with the personal development and planning strategies in their organizations.

In other hand, enterprises strongly disagree when they are asked if their executive skills are developed enough or if they wouldn't spend time in coach training if they had the chance to be enrolled in such a training program. This way, there is a common agreement in disagree with those statements: "I don't have enough time to spend with a coach", "I don't trust executive coaches", "we have sufficient and appropriate leadership skills and tools", "we have sufficient and appropriate time management tools" and "we have sufficient and appropriate personal development tools".

In a evaluation of the level of awareness about leathership, strategic planning, communication, personal development and time management, it seems that most of the enterprises consider all this items equally relevant for their companies. Leathership is lightness the most important while time management importance is lightly less meaningful to them.

In other hand, there is a big scarf between the most important characteristic of a training programme and the third most important. According the field work, to follow a problem and exercises based learning programme is the most important item to the enterprises. It shows the interest of the companies in going trough a know-how based programme instead a know-what educational programme. In other hand, the easy access (in terms of physical access) to training material is the lower awareness.

In conclusion, the field work shows that enterprises are aiming to improve their management skills the same way they are open to facilitate the personal improvement. In general they consider the impact of enrol in a coaching programme as a strength instead a tread to their activity. The companies also show high levels of commitment with the coaching training activities as they consider positive to their improvement to follow a coaching training. In other hand, the organizations are clear about how a practical education could be more appropriate to their needs.

8. Results of the Pilot test

The U-COACH pilot test was conducted in Malta, Ireland, Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Italy and Spain, aiming to assess, test and validate the self-learning system, the knowledge base, its self-diagnostic tool and the support service developed in the project, with the direct participation of the immediate recipients.

The goal has been to detect faults and possible improvements in the materials, contents, tools and support system.

Different methods were used to reach the companies, trying to involve a great number of representatives of the small and medium sized enterprises of the seven European countries of the partners. In particular, managers and employees were contacted by email, telephone and in some cases they were visited in person.

In each country, the partners distributed questionnaires to be filled by representatives of the target group, leaving them the opportunity to remain anonymous, if they wanted to. Despite about 100 companies were contacted in each country, a total of 120 filled questionnaires were gathered and analysed.

The most common trends emerged from the statistical analysis of the answers provided are listed in the present document following the thematic order of the survey.

For what concerns the **Contents and Materials**, the survey revealed that the majority of surveyed companies gave positive feedbacks in a scale of answers going from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree): 76% declared that the contents and the materials were useful and relevant to the training of a manager (88 answers 1 or 2, out of 115). The same is to say about other questions: technical issues were considered clearly explained and demonstrated; the training materials introduced new and innovative elements; the contents of each module were sufficiently exhaustive; the arguments were useful in order to feel the gap of managers' acquaintance and the case studies were relevant and useful.

The U-COACH training programme consists of **six phases in a circular process**. By means of each of the phases, the user gets to know the key aspects of the executive coaching process between an executive and an employee in the figure of the leader

coach. It is advisable to follow the phases, but the user can navigate in a circular manner through the different resources offered by the system. 75% of the surveyed managers/entrepreneurs that tested the system, followed the steps proposed in the programme, while the rest preferred to select each time the section or argument of interest.

Among the **6 training phases**, the first one – Understanding the concept - was considered the **most valuable** for 60% of surveyed SMEs, but also the other phases were considered important: Assess needs, Identify goals, generate plans, apply tools and reinforce the commitment learning were considered most valuable by 40 to 30 % of answers. It is evident, therefore, that the SMEs that took part in the pilot test, consider the developed system as a complete programme on executive coaching, in which all the sections are necessary in order to have a comprehensive training. Users can navigate in the system following the steps order they prefer, but it is clear that all the phases are necessary and complementary to the others.

The participants were also asked about their **motivation to do the training**, choosing the answers from 1 to 5 (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) for each of the following reasons:

- To improve my knowledge: 85% marked 1 or 2;
- I am interested in the topic: 65% of positive answers, but 23% neither agree nor disagree (answer N° 3);
- To improve my skills and competencies: 79% marked 1 or 2;
- To improve the working conditions: 56% agrees, but 20% neither agree nor disagrees 3 and 18% disagrees;
- I trust the training provider: more than 80% marked 1 or 2;
- It seems high quality course: 70% of 1 or 2.

The results of this section show that managers and entrepreneurs are interested in improving their knowledge, skills and competences by acquiring new methodologies and tools in Executive coaching. A bit less obvious seemed to be their motivation to really improve the working conditions in their companies. Moreover, the majority of surveyed companies already knew and trusted the provider of the training, demonstrating the consortium experience in the development of innovative materials and their proximity with the world of SMEs.

The **evaluation of the system** was split into three parts:

1. The registration procedures is good or very good for 90% of surveyed people;
2. The user-friendliness of the system is also considered of an high level (79% of good and very good)
3. The functionality of the website is average for 24%, but also good for 53% and very good for 21%.

The **overall evaluation** is positive: in a scale from 1 to 5, 76% of answers were 1 or 2, while 20% neither agree nor disagree.

Moreover, 113 people out of 120, would **recommend this training to other people**.

The most common trends emerged from the statistical analysis of the answers provided showed a **general appreciation of the U-COACH system**, with a majority of positive feedbacks.

It doesn't mean, of course, that the U-COACH system is perfect, there rooms for improvements:

- The consortium should take a look to some technical issues, as they are considered not clearly explained and demonstrated by 10 people (it is actually only 8%)
- Among the programme phases, the last one – Reinforce the commitment and learning – could be slightly revised in order to favour its application, as 38% of surveyed managers considered it less valuable.
- The motivation of the trainee should be reinforced on the side of their willingness to really improve the working conditions in their companies.

The U-COACH assessment and validation procedure basically confirmed that the best way to deliver a useful and comprehensive training programme is to involve the direct recipients in each phase, from the initial needs analysis, to the development of innovative contents and materials to be tested with the beneficiaries' involvement.

The statistical analysis of the U-COACH validation test is available in the table below.

Note: the total number of answers is not the same for each questions, because the user decided autonomously to reply to some questions rather than others.

U-COACH PILOT TEST - RESULTS

		Agree Disagree					TOT RISP	Agree Disagree				
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
1	Content and material [1. I have a good opinion of the training material in general]	40	56	19	1	0	116	34,48	48,28	16,4	0,862	0
2	Content and material [2. The contents appear relevant related to the training of a manager and useful.]	36	52	24	3	0	115	31,3	45,22	20,9	2,609	0
3	Content and material [3. Technical issues are clearly explained and demonstrated]	37	47	23	9	0	116	31,9	40,52	19,8	7,759	0
4	Content and material [4. The training material introduces new and innovative elements respected to other training materials related to Executive Coaching]	41	44	27	2	2	116	35,34	37,93	23,3	1,724	1,72
5	Content and material [5. The content of each module is sufficiently exhaustive of the dealt argument]	19	58	32	5	4	118	16,1	49,15	27,1	4,237	3,39
6	Content and material [6. The contents were clear and exhaustive]	27	50	30	8	1	116	23,28	43,1	25,9	6,897	0,86
7	Content and material [7. The arguments are useful in order to feel the gap of your acquaintance]	33	44	31	4	2	114	28,95	38,6	27,2	3,509	1,75
8	Content and material [8. The case studies are sufficiently exhausting to expose the real situations about techniques, tools and instrument of environmental issues?]	30	43	36	5	1	115	26,09	37,39	31,3	4,348	0,87
9	9. Did you follow the steps proposed in the programme?	yes no					112	yes no				
		84	28					75	25			
		Most valuable ... less valuable						Most valuable ... less valuable				
		1	2	3				1	2	3		
10	10a. Which of the 8 training phases were most valuable to you? [Understand concept]	57	36	3			96	59,38	37,5	3,13		
10	10b. Which of the 8 training phases were most valuable to you? [Assess needs]	50	40	6			96	52,08	41,67	6,25		
10	10c. Which of the 8 training phases were most valuable to you? [Identify goals]	45	42	9			96	46,88	43,75	9,38		
10	10d. Which of the 8 training phases were most valuable to you? [Generate plans]	32	40	22			94	34,04	42,55	23,4		
10	10e. Which of the 8 training phases were most valuable to you? [Apply tools]	30	40	27			97	30,93	41,24	27,8		
10	10f. Which of the 8 training phases were most valuable to you? [Reinforce the commitment and learning]	26	32	36			94	27,66	34,04	38,3		
		Agree Disagree						Agree Disagree				
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
11	11a. What has been your motivation to do this training? [To improve my knowledge]	60	39	15	3	0	117	51,28	33,33	12,8	2,564	0
11	11b. What has been your motivation to do this training? [I am interested in the topic]	32	45	27	12	0	116	27,59	38,79	23,3	10,34	0
11	11c. What has been your motivation to do this training? [To improve my skills & competencies]	48	42	23	1	0	114	42,11	36,84	20,2	0,877	0
11	11d. What has been your motivation to do this training? [To improve the working conditions]	28	37	26	19	3	113	24,78	32,74	23	16,81	2,65
11	11e. What has been your motivation to do this training? [I trust the training provider]	47	46	18	3	3	117	40,17	39,32	15,4	2,564	2,56
11	11f. What has been your motivation to do this training? [It seems high quality course]	34	47	28	6	0	115	29,57	40,87	24,3	5,217	0
		Poor	Average	Good	Very Good			P	A	G	VG	
12	Website and tools [12. Evaluate the registration procedure]	0	7	39	42		88	0	7,955	44,3	47,73	
13	Website and tools [13. Evaluate the user friendliness of the system]	1	21	53	34		109	0,917	19,27	48,6	31,19	
14	Website and tools [14. Evaluate the functionality of the website]	2	28	63	25		118	1,695	23,73	53,4	21,19	
		Agree Disagree						Agree Disagree				
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
15	15. Overall evaluation of the self-learning system	25	59	22	3	1	110	22,73	53,64	20	2,727	0,91
		yes no					121	yes no				
17	17. Would you recommend this course to other people?	113	8					93,39	6,612			
18	18. Any other comments or suggestions?	<p>Very good, easy to use, well done!, Thanks, like the course; Muy interesante muy concreto y muy directo, Gracias, me a parecido muy util; Congratulations for creating a useful tool for our jobs. It's quite easy and it helped me a lot to identify personal and professional improvement areas; Sería interesante seguir profundizando en ello; I'd like to have more presencial courses of this kind in my town.</p>										