



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

**WP 3: The needs of SMEs & micro-businesses
thinking of taking on a trainee placement
in Italy, UK, Turkey and Iceland**

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1. Introduction

Funded with support from the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Get Mobile project (<http://www.getmobileproject.eu>) aims at providing training and guidance materials to SMEs (esp. microbusinesses) and female graduates (esp. unemployed in Business and Sciences) to encourage both under-represented target groups to participate in future European mobilities.

Partners from the UK, Netherlands, Italy, Turkey, Iceland and Greece are working together (2011 – 2013) to meet the project's objectives.

During the first months of 2012 Italy (CLP Genova), UK (Inova), Turkey (Pendik Municipality) and Iceland (VMST) carried out desk researches and focus groups to investigate the needs of SMEs & micro-businesses as regards the provision of support and information/training services related to hosting mobility placements. The main findings of the analysis were integrated with relevant data and information at European Level. The results of the desk research were confirmed and amplified by the findings of the focus groups (see annexes), which saw a total attendance of 28 SMEs and micro businesses. The aim of the focus groups was the fine tuning of the desk research results so to build the basis of the following steps of the project through the active contribution of entrepreneurs.

SMEs profile

The analyses carried out at national level during the project show that the strengths and weaknesses of SMEs and micro businesses reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the whole European economy, caught amidst the threats and opportunities of global crisis, the issues of credit and competitiveness being of utter importance for all those businesses that are fighting their way to survival and - hopefully - growth.

- IT, UK, TK, IS: 4 economic systems based on SMEs and micro business
- SME's mostly work in the service industry and agriculture
- Number of women starting up their companies is growing

Common trends

- The path to internationalisation is paved with threats (global crisis, competition...) and opportunities (market evolution, innovation...)

- Access to information is a major critical issue for most of them, as well as recruitment (domestic and international).
- Great employment and growth potential
- Not many SMEs involved in EU mobility/ mobility programmes tailored to Universities

Common gaps

- Language barriers
- Lack of information/awareness
- No channels to advertise placements
- No peer support or case studies to rely on
- Shortage of resources in SMEs

Skills for business competitiveness and internationalization

Participants selected a list of priority skills to be developed/enhanced by both entrepreneurs and staffs.

- Management
- Communication
- Marketing
- Finance
- Project management
- Problem solving
- Language
- Interculturality
- Enthusiasm and passion.

Mobility programmes

The focus groups also provided important information as regards the companies' attitudes towards networking and mobility programmes for international placements in terms of both gaps and advice:

- lack of awareness about mobility programmes – linked to the more general problem of access to information
- interest in knowing more - who/what/where/when/how

- need for support (information on opportunities, deadlines and requirements, guidance, training for hosting organizations...)
- appropriate length (suggested): from 3 weeks to more than 6 months
- relevance of peer-to-peer advice and communication
- role of networks to foster business competitiveness
- the prospect of a get mobile network to exchange best practices and information about mobility programmes and international business opportunities is welcome

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The GET MOBILE project offers an exceptional occasion for developing and testing pilot contents and activities planned to meet the needs and wants of European SMEs and microenterprises as regards the theme of international female graduates placements. The overall findings of WP3 confirm the results of researches carried out at European level and provide a set of common gaps (see above) identified through the direct voices of the enterprises who took part to the GET MOBILE national focus groups.

The “needs and wants” scenario outlined by the entrepreneurs also features useful indications as regards the ways in which GET MOBILE could concretely fill these gaps in terms of **recommendations**

1. raising awareness: dissemination and communication activities (e.g. newsletter, events, emailings...)
2. need for support (information on opportunities, deadlines and requirements, guidance, training for hosting organizations...): establishment of a virtual “one-stop-shop” (GET MOBILE website) and drafting of a practical handbook (business manual) rich in “how to...” information and advice as well as templates, check lists...
3. relevance of peer-to-peer advice and communication: case histories, success stories, interviews, as well as development of the Get connected zone
4. role of networks to foster business competitiveness, exchange of best practices and of information about mobility programmes : development of the Get Connected zone