

Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of Innovations
Mandatory Training in Practice Firms at Vocational Education Institutions
LLP-LdV-TOI-2011-LT-0090

Generalization of Survey Results Related to PF Guidelines for Decision-Makers in Vocational Education, PF Trainers and Representatives of the Public

During the meeting of project partners (March 2012, Vienna) it was decided to carry out a survey by questioning at least 2 decision makers in education, 20 PF trainers and 20 representatives of the public in order objective feedback would be received from these target group representatives: evaluations, comments and pieces of advice for improvement of the guidelines and at the same time the grounds for discussions on opportunities to introduce mandatory training in PF at Lithuanian vocational education institutions.

The survey allowed us to check how these guidelines were understood and assessed by decision makers in the educational system and at schools, by PF trainers and representatives of the public.

The survey was held from October 2012 to April 2013.

The survey included the following persons:

- 3 representatives of the target group of decision makers in education;
- 14 PF trainers;
- 15 respondents of the target group consisting of the representatives from the public.

Target Group Respondent Data:

Decision makers in education	<p><u>Age</u>: 1 person between 51 and 60, 2 persons between 36 and 50 years of age.</p> <p><u>Occupation</u>: 1 vocational school principal, 1 specialist of the Ministry of Education and Science, 1 expert auditing vocational school curricula.</p> <p><u>Education</u>: 1 Doctor of Social Sciences, 2 persons with higher education. 50% of the respondents are over 36 and under 50 years of age.</p>
PF managers	<p><u>Length of pedagogical service</u>: from 1 to 24 years. On the average – 10 years.</p>

	<p><u>Subjects taught:</u> economics and basics of business, business management, marketing, business technology, finance and accounting, shop equipment, basics of management, science of commercial enterprise, economics of building enterprise, tourism marketing, business organization and planning, business training at virtual enterprise, insurance theory and re-insurance, property insurance, personal insurance, liability insurance, sale of insurance services, applied insurance programs.</p> <p>78% have experience of work at a business enterprise.</p>
<p>Representatives of the public</p>	<p><u>Age:</u> 33% - between 36-50, 27% - under 26, 20% - between 26-35, 13% - over 60 and 7% - between 51-60 years of age.</p> <p><u>Occupation:</u> 53% of the respondents – lecturers, teachers, students, pupils, 33% - specialists in different fields, the rest – did not state the occupation. 40% worked or still work in education and 60% of the surveyed have never worked in the field of education.</p> <p><u>Education:</u> 60% have higher education, the rest respondents divided up in equal groups with vocational, secondary or basic education accordingly.</p> <p><u>Number of children in a family:</u> 100% of the respondents stated that they had children under 18, 1 respondent pointed out he had studying children over this age. 73% do not have children who learn at present, 23% noticed they had learning children.</p>

Respondents’ Opinion on the Purpose of Use of the Guidelines

The decision makers in education would mainly recommend reading the guidelines to school principals and administration as well as to representatives of ministries, business representatives and educational policy developers. There have been several comments substantiating the purpose of use, that is to say:

“PF contribute to training of highly-skilled workers. By working in different PF departments the trainees may check their selection of the future profession and acquire practical skills at a virtual business enterprise.”

“It’s necessary to understand (to know, to realize) the added value provided for a young man in order the training process in PF would be included as mandatory.”

67% of the respondents from the public state they heard of the PF method earlier before familiarization with the guidelines, 20% said “no” and the rest respondents did not mark an answer. Most of the surveyed, 78%, state that they knew about the existence of PF, 12% know people who worked or work in PF. The respondents also mentioned that they visited PF and the lecturers said they even worked in PF.

PF Trainers’ Opinion on Basic Statements of the Guidelines

Having asked PF trainers which basic statements of the guidelines were important and which not, we received the following answers:

1. PF Trainer:

The PF trainer should have economic and pedagogical education, priorities for personal qualities, be competent, flexible and innovative. He shall be able to respond to a situation, to manage a team, to organize work in PF, to influence learning results and students’ motivation. It was mentioned that work experience at a real enterprise, familiarization with actual IT programs and legislative acts as well as applying them in practical activity by facilitating the PF operation in this way were important, too. Continuous training courses, consultations on introduction of novelties to PF are necessary because PF trainers play a key role in the training process and the competences and skills of the trainees acquired while working in PF depend on the goals and targets chosen by the trainers. Permanent improvement of professional skills is also necessary as work in PF requires additional qualifications and sophistication in various fields due to constant changes in business environment. PF trainers mention a shortcoming as well: in pursue of goals the number of hours per week is too few for the training process and the groups are too large – it’s necessary to divide them into subgroups.

2. How to establish PF:

It is important to provide new trainers with necessary methodological material and an exemplary programme plan. PF shall be similar to a real enterprise – an office with all sorts of equipment and furniture.

3. How to teach in PF:

The basic method is communication and cooperation. Pedagogical means – simulation of roles. Each trainee shall be responsible for his job and role in the enterprise (distribution of roles). Success in business depends on a good business plan therefore it is important to plan business and PF – purposefully to integrate new incoming employees into the already operating PF.

Most PF are for mandatory training, increase in hours and segmentation of large groups into subgroups.

The shortcoming: lack of motives provided for in the guidelines why mandatory training is necessary.

4. How to start day to day PF activity:

The main target is to motivate trainees to carry out everyday tasks and to give them independence in making decisions in PF activity. The problem: low trainees’ motivation, attendance, poor theoretical knowledge, lack of trainees’ initiative and creativity.

5. How to evaluate PF trainees:

Each PF has its own system of evaluation. PF trainees are familiarized with evaluation criteria, systems and evaluation organization.

6. How PF activity quality and stability shall be ensured:

It is difficult to ensure a high level of PF training when trainees’ motivation is low. Shortage of funds does not ensure a high level of learning, either. The school administration hardly perceives the importance of PF to a trainee. Vocational schools can hardly achieve the PF quality standards. PF continuity and stability – trainees work in already established practice firms.

7. PF – space for self-improvement of trainers:

It is important to deepen accountancy knowledge, to be interested in IT novelties – to cooperate with enterprises operating in this field of activity – program suppliers. Most trainers share experience and organize personal lectures.

Respondents’ Opinion on Importance of Contents

<p>Decision makers in education</p>	<p>One person’s opinion: <i>“The chapters “ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PF – INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY”, “USEFULNESS OF PF, ADDED VALUE AND PF ESTABLISHMENT”</i> are stated as very important, such as <i>“PF TRAINERS”, “CURRICULA”, “QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND OBSERVATION”, “CONTINUITY AND STABILITY ENSURING”</i> are stated to be important.</p> <p>Another representative thinks that all the chapters are equally important.</p>
<p>Representatives of the public</p>	<p>Reading the Guidelines would be most interesting to PF trainees, PF trainers and school administration as well as to parents,</p>

	<p>business representatives, education policy developers. Other respondents noticed that the Guidelines would be interesting to those who were closely related to this method: <i>“Mostly those who are closely connected with the questions analyzed in the Guidelines will read them.”</i> <i>“To business people as they are familiarized with the information that PF trainees who have done such practical training are ready for work in a real enterprise.”</i> <i>“Reading the Guidelines would be interesting to parents as they could see what opportunities their children will have in the future after completion of studies and could also get in the training process.”</i> <i>“To education policy developers – the information that such training courses and projects through which trainees are taught take place is useful and this could encourage them to grant more investments.”</i></p> <p>Some respondents expressed fear that school administrations and other employees of an educational institution could pay little attention to the Guidelines and also that PF trainers and trainees would read them but other people did not care about this.</p>
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Convincingness of the Guidelines

<p>Decision makers in education</p>	<p>1 person thinks that the Guidelines are convincing and 2 persons – that partly convincing. The opinion of one of them: <i>“It’s difficult to form a full view as nothing was known about such way of training before that.”</i></p> <p>Another respondent fails to notice substantiation and proof in the following spheres: “CO Functions” (p. 4), the interdisciplinary relations are not highlighted in “Training Goals” (p. 7), the important methods of training are not stated in “Usefulness for Education” (p. 9), no examples (p. 10), cooperation among teachers is not disclosed in “PF Establishment” (p. 12), “Annual Activity Expenses” – trainers’ expenses? (p. 14), “Possible CO Models” – failure to point out what and which in the Lithuanian example (p. 17), “Primary and Continuing Education of Trainers”</p>
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	<p>lacks structure and system clarification, integration into educational institution and amalgamation is not observed in “Trainers’ Teaching Strategies” (p. 19) and “Quality Management” (p. 21).</p> <p>In other respondent’s opinion it is necessary to make the material shorter and to present the usefulness, added value and other most important information visually – in schemes or diagrams.</p>
PF trainers	The Guidelines are 100% convincing. Only one respondent added that too few motives were given in regard to the necessity of mandatory training in PF.
Representatives of the public	<p>53% think that the Guidelines are convincing, 40% notice that the Guidelines are partly convincing and only 7% are of the opinion that the Guidelines are not convincing.</p> <p>Comments: <i>“The Guidelines give a matter-of-fact description of PF organizational and course of practice issues”. “More attention should be paid to people who know nothing or very little about this method”.</i></p> <p>The conclusion that the guidelines are convincing is reached. However, some places should be slightly corrected.</p>

Clarity of the Guidelines

Decision makers in education	2 respondents think that the Guidelines are written clearly, 1 respondent – that partly clearly and suggests paying attention to stylistics, terms and their explanation.
PF trainers	<p>86% responded that the Guidelines were written clearly – both for new and experienced trainers. Only 14% answered that they were partly clear for new trainers.</p> <p>Comments: <i>“Too complicated wording, a PF trainer shall be highly-skilled in different subjects (e.g. Deming circle). The organizational structure is too complicated, e.g. functions of the financial department. These Guidelines are intended for vocational schools and here it is spoken about the financial statements analysis.”</i></p>

	1 respondent suggests using “ <i>PF Model and Continuity</i> ” instead of the word “ <i>stability</i> ” which is not understandable to everybody.
Representatives of the public	47% of the surveyed noticed that the Guidelines were written clearly and 53% responded that partly clearly. Suggestions for clarity of the Guidelines: to look through the use of Lithuanian in the Guidelines, to write the terms both in English and Lithuanian, to pay more attention to exposition of the Guidelines, to explain abbreviations when used.

Length of the guidelines

Decision makers in education	1 person thinks that the Guidelines should be shortened and 2 persons agree with the length of the Guidelines. The respondent suggesting to shorten the Guidelines thinks that only the essence should be presented to decision makers in vocational training and it should be presented in a more visual way: less text, more schemes and figures illustrating the essence.
PF trainers	100% answered that the Guidelines should not be shortened. One respondent said that they could be slightly expanded.
Representatives of the public	53% of the respondents think that the Guidelines should be shortened. Comments: “ <i>Some parts of the Guidelines are too long and become as a large essay, if a reader wants to look through and get familiarized with the method, in some cases the amount of information is too large, if a reader takes interest in the method, as far as I understand, there is more material.</i> ” “ <i>The Guidelines are too long, there is no wish to read such a lot because while reading very many questions arise as it is</i> ” as well as “ <i>Too much information, a lot of things remain obscure</i> ”. There was a suggestion “ <i>to lay out the Guidelines in a more specific way</i> ”. 47% state that their length is good and some of them even notice that “ <i>The Guidelines assuredly should not be shortened.</i> ”

Supplementation to the Guidelines

Decision makers in education	In the opinion of 1 respondent, it would be good to include the problem-based training, case analysis training, etc. in the Guidelines but the other 2 respondents think that they shouldn't be supplemented or expanded.
PF trainers	71% answered that the Guidelines shouldn't be supplemented and 29% said that they should be. In addition, 79% of PF trainers think that authors should present more methods or data and 21% are satisfied with the material which is presented. Comments: <i>“More specific examples used in international PF, more and more detailed pedagogical methods and means should be presented, more motives that training in PF is necessary and that training in PF is one of the most important ways to expand, deepen and apply knowledge and skills of a trainee should be given.”</i>
Representatives of the public	87% of the surveyed think that information provided on a PF model is sufficient and only 13% are of the other opinion. The following suggestions were submitted: to present specific examples of what PF look like and what takes place in them, systematically to supplement the material to the Guidelines taking the changing life into account.

Respondents' Opinion on PF as Mandatory

Decision makers in education	<p>The following three opinions on a PF as a mandatory subject were expressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Thinking is in the right direction – it is necessary to include it in the curriculum.”</i> • <i>“PF should be a mandatory subject on the curriculum for students who have chosen professions in the field of administration and business.”</i> • <i>“Practice firms have been operating in Lithuania in an active and initiative way since 1993. It is a time-tested practical entrepreneurship training method demonstrating effectiveness of PF activity therefore it is necessary to think about mandatory PF.”</i>
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PF trainers	<p>The Guidelines form a positive attitude because sometimes educational institutions encounter the problems how to integrate a PF into the curriculum. Comments: <i>“It shall be purposeful training, stimulating entrepreneurship of trainees and career planning possibilities. The goals and targets of training in PF, requirements for trainers and firms, teaching methods, establishment and activity of firms, possibilities and advantages are described in a detailed and clear way.” “PF should be a mandatory subject on the vocational school curriculum because none of other subjects can provide trainees with such diverse practical experience and practical skills as may be acquired while working in PF. By working in PF trainees develop not only professional but also general competences what, in the opinion of employers, is very important. At the same time an educational institution may check the quality of providing trainees with the knowledge and skills in other subjects as the trainees having arrived to work in a PF shall practically apply this knowledge and skills to real situations.”</i></p>
Representatives of the public	<p>Very different opinions on the information provided for in the Guidelines regarding PF formation as a mandatory subject on the curriculum were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of them state that the information is presented in a clear and understandable way; • Other respondents notice that it’s difficult to say as information is not enough; • The rest mention that they have no experience in working out a curriculum therefore it’s difficult to answer this question. There was an opinion that the notions “Mandatory” and “Subject” should be discussed more broadly in the Guidelines.

Usefulness of the Guidelines

Decision makers in	The Guidelines are undoubtedly useful for representatives from
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education	school administration and the educational system of the country, i.e. for those who approve the necessity of including them into curricula and including them into the teaching plans of the curricula.
PF trainers	93% responded positively and only 7% answered that partly (the purpose of use of the guidelines is not clear). The new PF trainers consider the Guidelines as an excellent helper and guide in establishing a new PF or in starting to manage a PF already established because they contain a lot of necessary and specific information that could be applied in PF activity. 86% of experienced PF trainers answered positively and only 14% said that in part. New information about trainees' evaluation and motivation ways, problem solution and work optimization possibilities is found. Everything is presented in a very detailed way and it is clear what to start with.
Representatives of the public	<p>Most respondents state that the Guidelines are most useful for school administration, a little bit fewer of them state that for PF trainees. There was also an opinion that the Guidelines were partly useful for representatives of the educational system of the country and business enterprises. Comments: <i>“Consistent and logical exposition. It is easy to read.”</i></p> <p>Some respondents expressed fear that there were serious problems with the educational system of the country and that business enterprise employees little cared about employment of young specialists.</p>

Chapters of the Guidelines and Their Usefulness

Decision makers in education	1 respondent notices that some of the Guidelines chapters are less useful than other ones and that usefulness is not emphasized in Chapter 5 (“PF CURRICULA”) and Chapter 6 (PF QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND OBSERVATION”). The other 2 respondents state that all the chapters are useful. However, in the opinion of one of them, the contents should be presented more
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	visually (schemes, diagrams, etc.) with less text.
PF trainers	100% responded no, i.e. all the chapters were useful and topical as everything depended on the abilities and principles of the trainer.
Representatives of the public	67% of the respondents state that all the chapters are equally useful and only 7% stated on the contrary. 26% did not respond to the question.

Structure of the Guidelines

Decision makers in education	<p>The chapter sequence, wording, etc. are evaluated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent – 1 reply, stating that it’s clear and consistent; • good – 2 replies. <p>Comments: Some wordings mislead as in Lithuania they are treated in a distinctive way and not in the way they are usually treated in PF network and educational institutions. There is also too much of reiteration – it’s necessary to shorten the text and to give only the essence to decision makers.</p>
PF trainers	62% of the respondents evaluated with 5 points, 23% - 4 points and 15% - 3 points.
Representatives of the public	<p>47% of the respondents evaluated the structure of the Guidelines (chapter sequence, wording, etc.) with 4 points, 40% - 3 points and 13% - 5 points (1 – poor, 5 – excellent).</p> <p>Comments: <i>“The structure is clear, it’s possible to become confused among the chapters if only because of large amount of the text.” “There are quite a lot of sentences in the Guidelines the structure of which is not in conformity with the Lithuanian language standards.”</i></p>

Respondents’ Opinion on Country Examples

Decision makers in education	The examples presented by Lithuania, Bulgaria and Austria are interesting (1 answer); partly interesting (2 answers, because they do not reveal a general view and not always are of comparative nature).
PF trainers	8% answered NO and 92% answered YES.

Representatives of the public	73% state that country examples are interesting, 27% state that only partly. Comments: <i>“Not all the examples have equal comparative weight while evaluating the same things.” “The examples are interesting, only the question of partnership is not quite clear.” “It’s necessary to match up the first title-page with the Preface and the last 35th page.” “The country examples are interesting, only the differences between the educational system models of the countries may influence their application in Lithuania.”</i>
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Respondents’ Opinion on Usefulness of Country Examples

Decision makers in education	The examples provided by other countries are useful partly because in pursuing implementation of the PF method in Lithuania not everything can be applied. The contents of paragraphs 3.3 (“Establishment of PF Central Office”), 4.2 (“Primary and Continuing Education of PF Trainers”) and 5 (“PF Curricula”) could be improved.
PF trainers	84% answered positively and 8% - partly. Comment: <i>“The cultural, ethical and living habits are different in these countries therefore not all examples can be applied in Lithuania.”</i> 8% answered negatively.
Representatives of the public	The respondents state that the opinions of pupils/students themselves on different parts of the subparagraphs of the Guidelines are missing.

PF Trainers’ Opinion on Examples from Their Own Experience

75% of PF trainers answered that they couldn’t give examples from their own experience and 25% answered positively. **Comments:** PF trainers acquire more experience by participating in competitions and fairs. The used methods are *“polished”* and tested. A method of work by which a trainee is motivated is applied and it functions as follows: on completion of the practice week each PF trainee shall submit his work report stating what good jobs he did for PF by holding one or another post. The trainee works on motivated grounds and receives evaluation for this.

A PF rendering insurance services had an example when having arrived for familiarization with the PF activity and having talked with the trainees, one of the largest Lithuanian insurance companies

invited the major part of them to participate in the competition intended for taking posts for practical training. All the participants were admitted to practice and after the conversation with the PF Managing Director about his activities in the PF and prospects he was at once offered to do practice supervised by Vilnius Region Sales Manager (i.e. the practice during which the trainee could observe, learn and acquire practical managerial skills at a real insurance company) with prospects for further development of skills at their insurance company.

Respondents' Opinion on the Advantages of PF as a Mandatory Subject

Decision makers in education	Having read the Guidelines, all the respondents see the advantages of a PF as a mandatory subject included in the curriculum. Comment: <i>“Creation of the added value to the trainee himself and enterprises which will not have to make additional investments in training of an employee for themselves.”</i>
PF trainers	100% think positively of PF including in the curricula. Comments: <i>“Some vocational education institutions already have the training in PF included as mandatory (practical training in an educational institution) so the benefit and trainees’ motivation is obvious.” “The establishment of business and self-employment is highly promoted in Lithuania. A PF could serve as a primer for business establishment.” “The work in PF forms and provides the opportunity to improve practical skills, necessary for basic business functions performance in different areas of business, stimulates self-sufficiency, persistence, cultivates creativity, cooperation, responsibility for assigned tasks, gives the opportunity for familiarization with the country business peculiarities.” “The PF activity must be mandatory both at schools and gymnasiums and especially at vocational schools.”</i>

PF as Added Value to Vocational Schools

Decision makers in education	All the respondents think that PF gives an added value to vocational schools: better ratings among employers, students in better request.
PF trainers	8% answered negatively about an added value to vocational schools. They state that only students’ competences are

	<p>complemented but not to the school's added value. 92% responded positively. Comments: <i>"A student most often does practical training at enterprises but "office" work of a large firm rarely falls upon anybody therefore integration of PF into the teaching process gives a student the chance to be ready for work of broader profile in the future." "It depends on the PF trainer, his activity, contribution and the school heads' attitude towards PF. If the attitude is positive, the PF activity is supported and it's very useful both for the school and the students." "They are better trained for a future profession and have higher motivation and greater possibilities of applying the acquired theoretical knowledge to practice." "The value is great as students learn from their mistakes or correct the ones they did here. Only through such work ideas and strategies arrive and the enterprise analysis system is set."</i></p>
<p>Representatives of the public</p>	<p>50% of the respondents think that PF give an added value to vocational schools. 40% did not mark their opinion. There was none of negative answers. Comments: <i>"General competences are acquired in practical activity and integration within a real business situation is easier. The PF environment is dynamic and often unpredictable." "That would allow vocational school students acquire practical skills by doing business practice in PF, to develop the features attributed to entrepreneurship competence that are vitally important for a student to fix his position in the labour market."</i></p>

Respondents' Opinion on PF Impact on Employment

All **decision makers in education** think that practical training in PF is a favourable prerequisite for successful employment of trainees.

92% of PF trainers responded positively stating that practical training in PF is a favourable prerequisite for successful employment of trainees.

Information which is Most Missing in the Guidelines

As far as PF Guidelines are concerned decision makers in education lack arguments substantiating the necessity to include a PF in the curriculum by relating it to the subject teaching programme and application to the labour market.

PF trainers miss problems solution, e.g. financial issues, PF office furniture and equipment, providing with software, renewal of the methodological material, etc. A PF trainer encounters the difficulties which he is not always able to solve. There is a shortage of information about any change in PF activity, attaching any new branch of activity, usage of document samples as meanwhile the documents adapted by PF themselves are used and other – as accepted by most topical rules for documents preparation.

Conclusions

During the partner meeting to propose the following improvements for the Guidelines in terms of content and technical aspects:

- To present the usefulness, the added value and other items listed above in schemes;
- To shorten the Guidelines for decision makers in education: not to repeat the same information in several chapters;
- To add arguments substantiating the necessity to include a PF in the curriculum by relating it to the subject teaching programme and application to the labour market;
- To add arguments why the PF model is better than lessons or practical classes, what position the practice in PF takes among other practices, namely at production laboratories or workshops;
- To include a sample of a PF curriculum;
- To look through the examples presented by the countries and to decide which should be left. To pay particular attention to the country examples of paragraphs 3.3 (Central Office), 4.2 (Primary and Continuing Education of PF Trainers) and 5 (PF Curricula);
- To explain the terms of PF or CO in a more detailed way by listing the functions as no explanations of what it is are given anywhere else;
- To add arguments and proofs to the following spheres: “CO Functions” (p.4), “Training Goals” in which the interdisciplinary relations are not highlighted (p. 7), “Usefulness for Education” where the important methods of training are not stated (p. 9), no examples (p. 10), “PF Establishment” which lacks information about cooperation among teachers (p. 12), “Annual Activity Expenses” – trainers’ expenses (it’s not clear about what expenses it is spoken) (p. 14), “Possible CO Models” – failure to point out what and which in the

Lithuanian example (p. 17), “Primary and Continuing Education of Trainers” lacks structure and system clarification, “Trainers’ Teaching Strategies” (p. 19) and “Quality Management” - no integration into educational institution and their amalgamation is observed (p. 21);

- To pay attention to stylistics, terms and their explanation;
- To emphasize the usefulness in Chapter 5 (“PF CURRICULA”) and Chapter 6 (PF QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND OBSERVATION”);
- To individualize the Guidelines in order the needs of each country were met;
- To change the font used in the Guidelines into *Times New Roman*;
- To correct the Lithuanian language;
- To make the text laid out and structured;
- To look through the terms, to write them in English and Lithuanian and to explain the notion “*mandatory*”;
- To look through and improve the text of recommendations;
- To improve the title-page;
- To improve the text of the Guidelines Preface for PF trainers.