

How far is ICT and especially the free web 2.0 tools used by the European SMEs in their daily business? Could the employees of SMEs afford taking part in IT trainings? If yes, which are learning forms they prefer? Are the trainings supported by the company?

For these and other questions intend to be answered by the online survey carried out in the frame of SME 2.0 Leonardo project, in which the employees and owners of 92 Hungarian and 33 Italian companies took part. The questionnaires are available in Hungarian, Italian and English language on the <http://survey.prompt.hu> portal.

The survey was not a representative one, we are not allowed to make far-reaching conclusions from the results, but at some points the figures worth to consider. The Italian and Hungarian versions of the questionnaires are a little bit different, but the crucial principles are exactly the same in them. The respondents in both countries are the micro-enterprises with yearly turnover below 2 million EUR, and with less than 10 employees. For about 50% of the responder persons are the owners of the companies.

The most frequent mentioned sectors are in both countries: education, trade, service industry and IT, but the IT among the Hungarian companies is only 12% while among the Italians is 52%. For this reason the figures related to the IT infrastructure and IT competencies are not comparable within the countries, it is not a surprise for instance that the Italian companies mostly working in the IT sector are much better equipped with ICT infrastructures than the Hungarian SMEs.

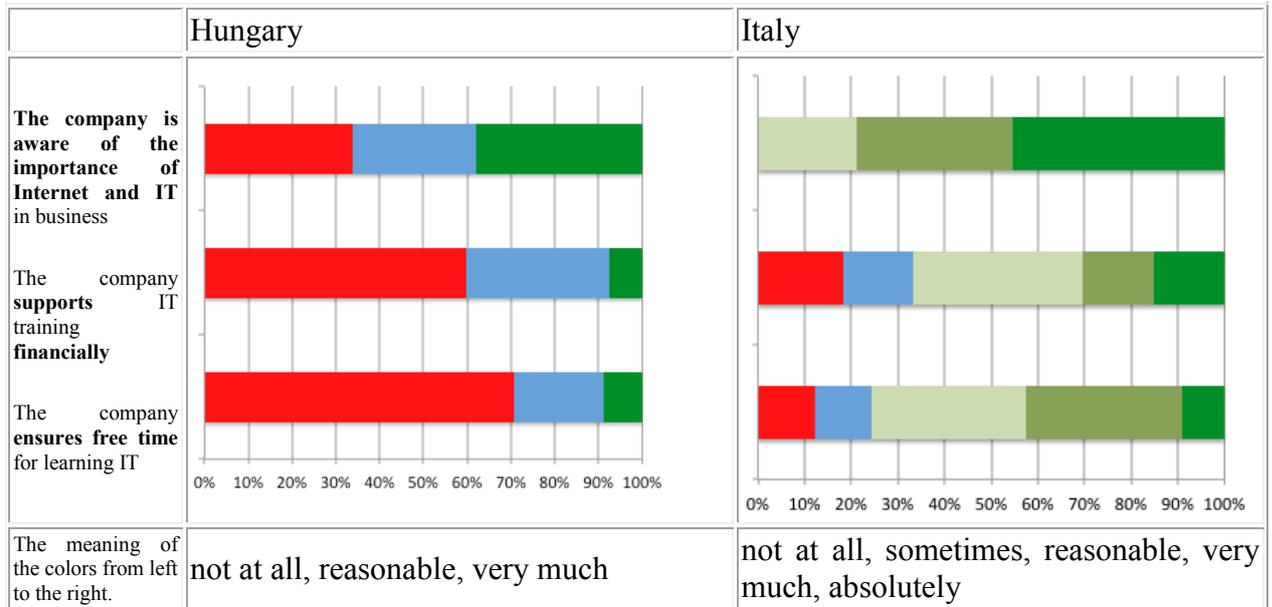
Similarly the figures of the online presence of the companies have to be analyzed separately, no reason for the comparison. The 93% of the Italians and 63% of the Hungarians has a website, which was created by a co-worker in the 58% of the Italian companies and of 40% of the Hungarians. Updating the site is the task of an employee within the company (IT: 94%, HU: 74%), and it takes only some hours in the 79% of the Italian companies. The figure in Hungary is much below (52%), and in more than 10% of the Hungarian companies need to wait for more weeks for updating the content of the website.

The question: "*Does your company offer any internal IT training?*" the 21% of the Italian responders answered "Never", while this rate in Hungary is **71%**. The difference is so big, what can not be explained by the fact, that the 54% of the Italian companies is working in the IT sector.

For the question "*What is your preferred style of learning?*" the option "*Learning from others colleagues in working time*" was chosen by the 37% of the Hungarians and 57% (higher with 20%!) by the Italians. "*Self learning from the Internet in spare time*" is liked in both countries (IT: 64%, HU: 57%), while the option "*Continually learning from the Internet in work time*" was selected by 54% of the responders in Italy, and only

by 41% in Hungary. The organized online courses was preferred with 10% higher cases in Italy than in Hungary.

The answers on the question: "Is the company supportive of learning & training?" highly differs between the two countries. The Hungarian questionnaire offers three, the Italian five options to be selected, as you see below:



The red bars in the Hungarian side are telling us a lot: the most of the Hungarian SMEs (65 from 92!) are not able to offer nor financial support, nor free time for the employees for taking part on IT training.

In the next group we were interested in: how far was the usage of IT tools (softwares/services) for project management, human resource management, online marketing and knowledge management significant? At the first sight there was significant difference between the two countries on only regarding human resource management: while the 23% of Hungarian responders stated that the company uses ICT for HR management, this rate in Italy was 48%. But the figures in the detailed answer lead again to useful consequences.

Human resource management

- (1) 18% of the Italian responders state that the company does not use any IT tools for explore the training needs, this rate in the Hungarian survey is **71%**.
- (2) On the question: "Does the company use IT tools for monitoring and organizing existing skills/knowledge in the company to harness them for better effect?", the rate of the answers "No/Not at all" in the Italian sample was 18%, in the **76%** in the Hungarian one.

Knowledge management

- (1) 21% of the Italian responders state, that the company does not use any IT tools for supporting the knowledge-sharing among the employees, this rate in the Hungarian sample 52%.
- (2) On the question "*Does the company use IT tools for identifying & storing core knowledge within the organization?*" the rate of "Not at all" in the Italian sample 24%, in the Hungarian **92%** !
- (3) On the question "*Does the company use IT tools for creating a central repository of knowledge & resources accessible by staff?*" the rate of "Not at all" in the Italian sample 27%, in the Hungarian **72%**.
- (4) On the question "*Does the company use IT tools for re-using knowledge & prevent duplication of tasks?*" the rate of "Not at all" in the Italian sample 24%, in the Hungarian **79%**.

Project management

- (1) Only the **3%(!)** of the Italian responders say that the company does not use It tools for supporting to keep with schedule and the deadlines of the projects, this rate in the Hungarian sample 62%.
- (2) Only the **6%(!)** of the Italian responders say that the company does not use It tools for supporting the control between the plans and the results of a project, this rate in the Hungarian sample **81%**.
- (3) On the question "*Does the company use IT tools for creating re-usable, standard project management procedures?*" the rate of "Not at all" in the Italian sample 24%, in the Hungarian **79%**.
- (4) On the question "*Does the company use IT tools for ensuring transparency of the state/progress of ongoing projects?*" the rate of "Not at all" in the Italian sample 18%, in the Hungarian 66%.

Online marketing

- (1) 18% of the Italian responders state that the company does not use any IT tool for gathering feedback & communications with customers more effectively, this rate in the Hungarian sample **70%**.
- (2) 12% of the Italian responders state that the company does not use any IT tool for elaborating marketing strategy, this rate in the Hungarian sample 60%.
- (3) 12% of the Italian responders state that the company does not use any IT tool for improving the place of the company in the hit lists of the browsers, this rate in the Hungarian sample 66%.

There are remarkable difference regarding the usage of the communication tools: according to the Italian responders usage level of the forum, a Skype és MSN is higher with 20% among the Italian companies than among the Hungarians, and more bigger the gap in the case of videoconferencing, which is used by 61% of the responders in Italy, and only 16% by the Hungarians.

The next group of the questions were related to the usage of the free web 2.0 tools. The level of the usage of social software and media-sharing tools is almost the same, but the eLearning solutions are much more familiar among the Italian responders than among the Hungarians: the difference is as many as 44%.

Regarding the free online marketing tools there is a big difference in Twitter (16%) and LinkedIn (34%) , in both cases we have higher values in Italy.

In the last question we asked the responder to give an e-mail address in case they were willing to join to a free online course in the fields the questionnaire dealing with. 83% of the Italian and 66% of the Hungarian responders noted the intention for taking part.

According the results of the two surveys the Italian SMEs are the winners in meeting the requirements of the information society. The fact, that the 52% of the Italian respondents are working in the IT sector, may distort the picture to some extent. But the quantity of the differences in most cases are so high, that it is not possible to ignore them. Another remarkable point is that the difference is not lower at the sector-independent questions, like the questions regarding the trainings. We do not seem to make too big mistake by concluding that learning is more organic part of the life of SMEs' employees in Italy than in Hungary. SME 2.0 project intends to make a small but effective step towards improving that situation.

The detailed results of the surveys are available in English here: [Italian Survey](#) (Pierfranco Ravotto, AICA), [Hungarian Survey](#) (Hartyányi Mária, PROMPT)

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