



**National report on Pilot Process Implementation  
Institute of Entrepreneurship Development**

## **Finnish piloting report**

**Report compiled by:**

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# Cediwores - Partner level report on FI local/national pilot

## Introduction

This is a project partner level report on the local/national piloting of the Cediwores-developed tools/assessment processes carried out in Finland by Noema-CMI OY as the Finnish project partner.

The piloting process was implemented partially in parallel with the final design, development and production of the procedures, tools and forms for the Cediwores assessment process and its associated online assessment services.

This report will include summary descriptions of both the piloting stages involved as well as provide a summary report on the outcomes/results on the pilot. The report will be concluded with a set of recommendations and reflections on the piloting process and its outcomes.

## Piloting stages

The piloting activities were carried out in two major stages; a preparation stage where the readiness and commitment to the forthcoming piloting activities were generated, and secondly; an implementation stage where the tryout of the assessment process and its associated tools were tested/tried out according to predefined set of implementation stages.

### 1. Preparation stage

The preparation stage took place during the period from first quarter of 2012 and up to second quarter of 2013, starting with engagement of local stakeholders and concluded with the activation of the practical piloting with a set of rural/unemployed women.

#### 1.1. Preparation/consultation of advisory committee

Immediately after the first drafts for the assessment process, and the associated assessment tools, were formulated contacts were also taken by different regional and local stakeholders within the various rural communities in south-eastern Finland with the purpose to introduce and motivate them to participate in the project initiative as promoters and subsequently also as member of the FI advisory committee. After this initial promotional and scouting activity it was decided to put prime focus of the intended pilot towards a set of rural communities surrounding Savonlinna and the Savolax region.

#### 1.2. Translation/local adaptation of the pilot

Parallel with the advisory committee recruitment process it was also initiated the process of translation and adaptation of the procedures and documentation of the Cediwores assessment/certification process. Prior to the formulation of the final Finnish language version of these documents, opportunities were also given to the candidates of the advisory committee to review, comment and improve the Finnish versions of documents, tools and on-line services.

#### 1.3. Involvement promotion/selection/recruitment

The process of promotion, selection and recruitment of pilot assessment candidates engaged from the very start local representatives, stakeholder organizations, and identified advisory committee candidates. Even if additional assessment candidates from other regional/remote communities had indicated interest participating in the assessment, the selection/recruitment restricted the pilot participants to only those that closely matched the intended target population from the regional/rural contexts that matched our pre-defined profile and those being approved by the elected advisory committee. There was in total ten candidates selected, and through its rigorous selection process we were also able to secure their full and engaged participation throughout the full pilot time span scheduled for the Cediwores assessment/certification process.

#### **1.4. Information distribution/use of media/online system services**

As the Finnish pilot was one of the first to test the developed assessment/certification process, and the fact that the early piloting activities took place partially in parallel with the development/production of the on-line tools/services, it was also necessary to adopt a mixed modality approach to the pilot, involving usage of both paper-based draft versions of instructions, tools and forms combined with partial usage of early versions of the online assessment tools. During the early stages of the assessment certification process data were also in some cases collected firstly on paper based copies and there after the responses had been completed by the candidates, transferred to the online system.

#### **1.5. Preparation/pre-pilot support to pilot participants**

In order not to allow the finalization of the online tools for the assessment certification process to hinder or become barrier of the progress of the Finnish pilot were both the instructions and forms extensively explained manually during the initial face-to-face meetings with the assessment candidates. In a similar manner were also the instructions and process for review/validation/scoring of participant responses made in a mixed modality also for the initial involvement of the advisory committee in the assessment process. During later stages of the FI pilot online tools became more intensively used by participants as well as the advisory committee.

#### **1.6. Timespan for the preparation/recruitment stage**

The time span for the preparation/recruitment stage, almost a year, was not so extensive due to complexity of the assessment process but rather for the purpose of keeping in par with the progress of the project's tools design/production. The preparations for a future repetition or expansion of an assessment initiative using the Cediwores-developed assessment/certification tool is envisaged be requiring a preparation stage of three months or less.

#### **1.7. Experiences from the preparation stage**

The experiences from the preparation stage of the pilot where both valuable and much appreciated as it gave, besides the capability to implement an efficient piloting process, also great insight into daily life and realities of local rural communities and their struggle with employment issues, as well as the concerns and life situations of the women that were to become our assessment candidates. All concerned stakeholders gained an increased respect and understanding of the realities among unemployed women in rural communities. It also gave better insight and indications on potential actions and initiatives that could potentially improve the status and situation for these women.

## **2. Implementation stage**

The implementation stage for the Finnish pilot was carried out in full consistency with the predefined stages for the Cediwores-developed assessment/certification process, starting during the third quarter of 2013 and was completed during the fourth quarter of 2013.

### **2.1. Stages in pilot implementation**

The Cediwores assessment/certification process is proposed to include up to seven stages, from an initial submission of personal CV to implementation of candidate presentations. The Finnish pilot implemented all seven piloting stages, even if the upper level stages were applied by a fewer number of participants as not all stages were not relevant to all piloting participants.

#### **2.2. Stage 1 – CV ( applies all levels and minimum for undergoing certification)**

All piloting participants produced their own CV in the standard format adopted by the Cediwores project (EuroPass format). These CVs were first produced in Word format, proofread and thereafter converted in pdf file format for subsequent uploading of those pdf files into the online assessment/certification tool.

### **2.3. Stage 2 – Competency test**

The competency test applies to all certification levels and is set as a minimum for undergoing certification. All Finnish piloting participants were carrying out and completed the competency test, initially as an off-line and paper based assessment followed by an insertion of the candidate responses into the online assessment/certification tool once it was fully operational and functioning as expected.

### **2.4. Stage 3 - Philosophy statement**

The philosophy statement applies to candidates being assessed on levels C1-2, B1-3, A1-2. In the case of the Finnish pilot philosophy statements were formulated through interaction with and support from mentors/supervisors in cases where the candidates had difficulties or hesitance to produce more extensive written statements. The produced statements for respective piloting participant were also uploaded into the online assessment/certification tool with the assistance from the mentors whenever it was found required.

### **2.5. Stage 4 – References**

The fourth stage, collection of references, applies only to levels C1, B1-3, A1-2. As many of the pilot assessment candidates were found to be in the border line of this assessment level and their employment background was such that either no or very limited volume of references were available from them, this stage was only fully implemented for those cases where this stage was relevant to them. Candidates were however also encouraged to more consciously collect reference documentation for previous employments and assignments, and in future improve this stage of the assessment process.

### **2.6. Stage 5 – Online knowledge test**

The online knowledge test applies only to higher competency levels such as levels B1-3, A1-2. This assessment stage applied partially or fully to only few of the Finnish assessment candidates. For the purpose of not generating dis-motivation towards the assessment process among the lower qualified assessment candidates was this assessment stage only implemented for those that were clearly above the stipulated level thresholds, while still maintaining the opportunity to pilot/validate, reach experiences from and test the technical functionality of the online response collection mechanism for this online assessment stage. All participants having a competency at this level or above were also encouraged again to revisit, review and reflect on their own competencies in comparison with those implied by the knowledge test questions, e.g. in form of a post-assessment follow-up activity.

### **2.7. Stage 6 – Case study**

The sixth stage, review/analysis of a case study only applies to levels B1-2, A1-2, which none of the Finnish assessment candidate were fully belonging to. For this purpose no formal assessment stage six were carried out during the Finnish pilot, even though the case studies were also introduced/presented to most upper level candidates, and also discussed and elaborated with some of the candidates, even if it did not lead up to a formal assessment activity of this assessment/certification stage.

### **2.8. Stage 7 – Presentation**

This seventh stage, a verbal presentation in front of e.g. the advisory body formally applies only to the highest competency level candidates, i.e. levels A1-2. In the Finnish case there were nobody reaching up to this level of competency during the assessment processes, however in an informal manner, and carried out during the previous stages as verbal interactions and presentations in connection with meetings and consultations between the mentors/advisory body members, this concluding stage could be said to have been taken place but at a lower level of competency level expectations.

## **2.9. Time span for the implementation**

The Finnish staged pilot was carried out as incremental assessment process over a time period of approximately five months, during which regular contacts were maintained with all the initially selected piloting candidates. Interactions as well as the maintaining of the “participation spirit” were contributed to by all involved people from the national advisory body to mentors, supervisors, and participants.

## **2.10. Number and characteristics of piloting persons**

There were totally ten candidates involved in the Finnish pilot of the Cediwores assessment/certification process. All the female candidates were women from rural areas either being unemployed, in severe risk of being unemployed, or being in temporary employment or informal job assignments. The background of the candidates ranged from early school leavers to various levels of low or medium ranged professional areas and of various social statuses in the local communities.

## **2.11. Experiences from the pilot implementation**

The experiences generated from this pilot implementation could be viewed from different angles, such as; the tool functionality perspective, the advisory body perspective, the perspective of the mentors and supervisors, as well as from us as project partner and the pilot participants perspective. From all involved actors it was a unique learning experience and an insight generating endeavor. From an overall perspective we as project partner gained useful knowhow on how to implement, and possibly also improve the developed competency assessment and certification process, while the piloting participants gained useful awareness and confidence in the competences that they already possess, as well as useful indications on potential areas further competency development that they may benefit from engaging in.

## **3. Reporting of pilot results**

Both the progress and the outcomes of the staged pilot implementation were reported firstly to the national advisory body and to the project partners. The former took place through a combination of face-to-face meetings and via online interactions/virtual meetings. The project partner reporting took place in connection with periodic partner meetings as well as via emails and virtual community meeting rooms. This report is extensively a summary of the content and focus areas of these reporting activities.

### **3.1. Reporting to/from advisory committee**

The advisory committee was engaged throughout the piloting process, from its start to its conclusion, the interactions actions between the FI project team and the advisory committee was close and intensive, and was a major source for ensuring continuity and success of the pilot. Communication and reporting to and from the advisory committee took place both as face-to-face meetings and online communication via phones and email messages. Some forms of communication were ensured on a weekly or by-weekly basis, within which both progress reports and discussions on potential/envisaged problems or critical issues were ironed out. Both the project team and the advisory committee had access to the same piloting information and both responses as well as comments and reflections on the piloting activities were shared between the two. The advisory committee validated also collected response data as well as ensured that all involved participants were provided with instructions as well as were updated with regular progress reports at each stage of the piloting activities.

### **3.2. Reporting to/from participating persons**

All participants involved in piloting activities were communicated on a regular basis either by their engaged/allocated mentors, by advisory committee members and/or by the Finnish project partner representatives. The piloting candidates were therefore both regularly interacted with and kept up-to-date about the status and outcomes of each stage of the piloting process. Parallel with this periodic briefing process feed-back, reflections and experiences/opinions on the assessment certification process as whole, as well as the different stages included in the process, were also collected from them, and formed part of the inputs to the project FI partner during their formulation of process improvements and recommendations to the remaining project team members.

### **3.3. Reporting on progress/outcomes to project**

The FI project partner acted as a central hub for and during the piloting of the Cediwores assessment/certification process. Reports were produced both in informal conversations with the project coordinator and other project partners as well as more formally in connection with face-to-face meetings among the project partners and during on-line project partner meetings held during time span of the project. Feedback from these project partner reports were both commented, and taken into considerations in subsequent piloting stages, as well as communicated to the national FI advisory committee and piloting participants, whenever relevant.

### **3.4. Time span for reporting**

Reporting to/from the advisory committee, the participating persons and the project management/project partners took place throughout the different stages of the FI piloting stages, and was a natural part of the communication process maintained among all directly involved stakeholders in the FI assessment/certification pilot.

### **3.5. Experiences from pilot reporting**

As a result of the extensively informal but regular interaction and reporting processes adopted within the Finnish assessment/certification pilot, the reporting activities also became significant contributors to the motivation of all involved as well as an efficient manner in which the sustainability of the engagement was secured. For future implementations of similar piloting activities and/or assessment initiatives involving adults and more vulnerable categories of people, it is probably useful and productive to adopt a similar “soft approach” as was made during this FI assessment pilot. This soft-approach is being relevant at least within the Finnish/Nordic culture context.

## **4. Recommendations/conclusions from the pilot**

There are three major blocks of recommendations/conclusions/reflections that we can draw from this Finnish piloting activity, namely:

### **4.1. Recommendations and conclusions about the process of assessment**

It was found important and a preferred orientation among all stakeholders in FI pilot that the assessment process would be lifting forward/highlight competences as its main modality, rather than highlighting and focus on identification of lack of competences among the involved assesses. The desirable outcomes from an assessment using the developed process/tools should put a focus on mainly informally acquired competences perhaps not yet identified by the formal education system, and it should give guidance on and promote engagement in acquirement of new and potentially useful competences identified by the assessment certification process, and not be perceived as a tool for segregation of assessment candidates into different areas of competence or un-competence.

#### **4.2. Recommendations and conclusions about the assessment content**

It is essential that any assessment initiative having the ambitions and span of target groups as in the Cediwores assessment process also adjust its used language to the level of communication and readability matching the level of the assessment candidates. This may also require that the different assessment stages also adopt different language complexity levels for each stage so that the assessment process does not build up barriers for assessment candidates in their verification of non-lingual competences. It is also important that the means used within each stage of the assessment tool are not in themselves creating obstacles for identification/verification of the various key competences that are being assessed with the assessment/certification tool. The involved tools should not focus on measuring whether the candidates can use a particular tool well or not but should preferably be an optimal method for highlighting otherwise unrecognized competences among the assessment candidates.

#### **4.3. Recommendations and conclusions about target group selection**

The selections made in the case of the Finnish pilot were correct and in accordance with the prior defined and prioritized target group. The target group was also extracted from the culture and societal context which were to be focused on with this project. It was therefore never seen as we had selected the wrong target group for the correct assessment process, it was instead always assumed that the target group was correct and that, if needed the assessment process had to be modified, improved or reinforced whenever the selected target group experienced difficulties or expressed concerns about the assessment certification process.

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In the end of the Finnish pilot of the Cediwores assessment/certification process, all participants and engaged stakeholders expressed satisfaction from the experience, and that they had learned valuable lessons from the involvement in the piloting certification process, even if some of them experienced frustrations or concerns along the road towards the conclusion of the FI assessment pilot.

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