



WP 3 Needs Analysis: Understanding Training Needs of
Older Workers in SMEs and Use of Web 2.0 in SMEs

PROJECT REPORT
FINAL

31st^h May 2013

Issued by CLP Genova, IT

Sommario

LEARNING 2.0GETHER – OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT	4
THE ROLE OF NEEDS ANALYSIS.....	4
UK - NATIONAL REPORT SUMMARY	5
Spain- NATIONAL REPORT SUMMARY	13
Italy - NATIONAL REPORT SUMMARY	21
WP 3 MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS.....	28
ANNEXES.....	29

LEARNING 2.0GETHER – OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

Learning 2.0gether is a LLP Leonardo TOI project that aims to

- 1) Increase the ICT competencies of older workers (50+ years) in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) so they can use social media to improve and develop their business and online marketing and
- 2) Support young people (18-27 years) out of employment or education that have experience in using social media to train the older workers, providing them with valuable experience and increasing their chances to gain employment.

It will provide tailored training to the two user groups that focus upon their particular skills needs. Following the training, young people will be 'matched 'with local SME's to put their learning into practice and work with them to improve their online activities.

In this way, young people will gain practical work experience and improve their skills and confidence in the workplace.

THE ROLE OF NEEDS ANALYSIS

Learning 2.0gether relies on an extensive research phase, carried out in Work Package (WP) 2 and 3 (needs analysis), ensuring that the project is grounded in the evidenced data and needs of unemployed to be recruited as trainers in each country (WP 2) and **SMEs/ +50 workers (WP3)** prior to beginning the adaptation of the Web 2.0 skills training, e learning platform & soft skills package.

These WPs involved the target groups directly to ensure that the methodology is adapted based on current needs in the partner countries.

In this perspective, as for **WP 3** partners from UK, ES and IT undertook both desk research and a focus group with representatives of the target group to find out their needs and ideas on current gaps in training/learning provision from their perspectives of wanting to learn and utilize new technologies such as Web 2.0. Partners used the same questions across countries in order to aid comparison of needs and share problems/issues and strategies for resolving these.

This report represents a synthesis of the three national WP 3 reports (UK, ES, IT), which were planned according to a shared structure and set of headings to facilitate comparative reading. Thus, the complete national reports (and their attachments) are the annexes to this executive summary.

UK - NATIONAL REPORT SUMMARY

Background Information about Training Needs of Older Workers in SMEs & Use of Web 2.0 in SMEs – UK Overview

Figures from 2010 show that 22% of those aged 55 to 64 and 60% of adults over 65 have never used the internet, therefore understanding the barriers they face is increasingly important in an environment where the business and marketing depends on the internet (Taen, *Key Facts: Age, Demographics and Employment*: 2011). With an increased working age it is essential that smaller businesses harness the potential of older workers by keeping them up to date with emerging technologies and tools.

Focus Group Introduction

Aims and Organisation of the Focus Group

The focus group was carried out to determine the needs of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) and 50+ workers in terms of Web 2.0 training, providing the opportunity for both groups to:

- Understand the opportunities social media can provide for business marketing
- Discuss the barriers they face when using Web 2.0
- Discuss their learning and training needs in respect to using Web 2.0 for marketing purposes

It took place in the UK over lunch on Monday 18th February 2013 and lasted approximately an hour and a half, being facilitated by two staff from Inova.

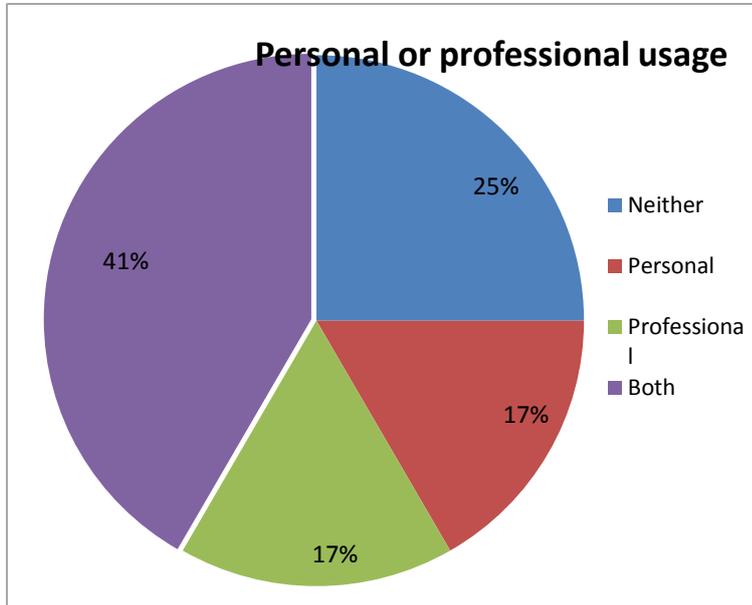
Overview of Participants Representative of Target Group

All 12 participants worked for SMEs or microenterprises; in order to get as much data as possible they covered a range of Web 2.0 abilities and usage. There were four participants involved who fell into the under 50 category, these workers all represented SMEs who employ 50+ workers and attended as representatives of their older colleagues, however even younger workers shared many of the same concerns regarding social media as their older colleagues.

Themes Emerging from the Focus Group

- Keeping business and personal life separate
- Time constraints

'Sometimes think I have enough keeping up with e-mails.... without going on social networks regularly'



- Security
- Social Media as a marketing tool
"...cost effective, open, easy to manipulate."

"Good for reaching wider community, reach different sections of society"

- The variety of tools available
- How to create client interaction

- Rapid change and age

"...by the time you have learnt there is a new technology."

Awareness of the role of Web 2.0 in the life of companies marketing

The majority of participants (83%) had a website to represent their business; other popular business marketing tools were Facebook and Twitter. It must be clarified that although many participants already had social media platforms for marketing purposes they were not regularly used.

How confident are you in using the tools?

All participants (including those under 50) who currently use social media, with the exception of one, felt confident in using it on a basic level but were unsure about the other tools available and about using it specifically for business purposes. Respondent's confidence differed across tools, with Facebook being the platform which was perceived to be the one used most confidently whilst Twitter was the one they were most unsure of.

If not currently using why not?

Three participants did not use social media at all. The following comments show how important these participants feel that their age is in their lack of social media usage:

"Age is an important factor; it is not natural for older people"

"I am probably just too old."

"I think it is an age thing too. Young people are doing it all the time."

"...No interest from a personal point of view so would need to know what the benefits are"

These participants were unsure of its effectiveness and that the possibility of negative comments from other users or privacy issues outweighed any potential benefits they could gain by using it.

How keen are you to start using them and why?

The majority wanted to start using social media for business and so that they can understand the advantages that come with it, such as keeping in touch with their target market and their needs.

"Useful to see what competition there is... other things on the market"

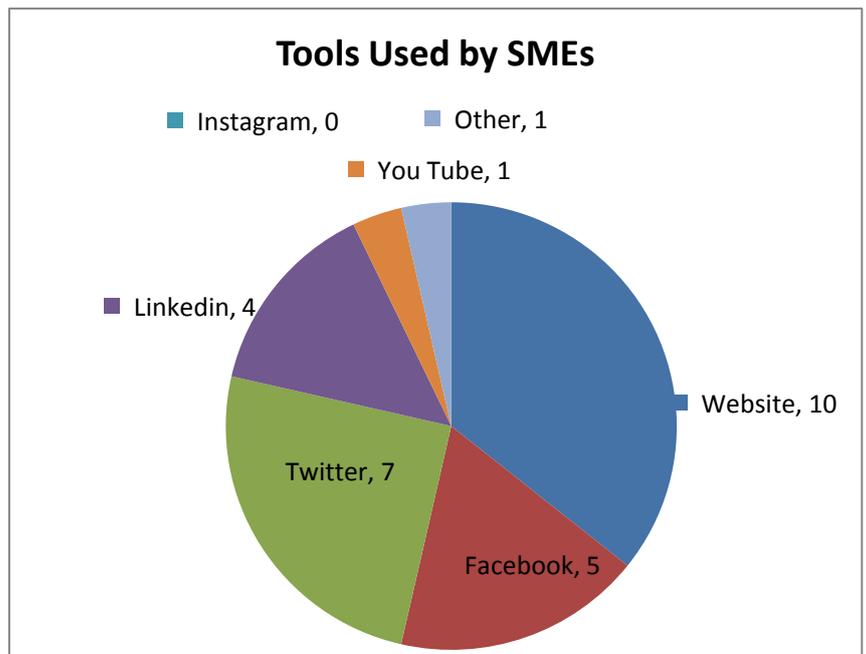
"Would like to know how it can be used to talk to people and share knowledge."

Companies' present approach towards Web 2.0

What is your company's current approach to social media and website use?

As a breakdown of those whose companies currently use social media the following were true:

- In-house social media department
- The company wrote the website content, an outside organisation creating a website around it
- Was given a website framework and adapted it to suit but came across issues and asked an outsider for help. The outsider was little help, resulting in the website being abandoned
- An outsider created a website and now the individual updates the content
- Social media generally used to publicise events



Participants seemed unsure of how frequently media outlets should be used.

How useful has it been for your business?

Other than social media’s use in advertising events the majority of focus group attendees found it difficult to assess its effectiveness or how many potential customers had been reached.

Can you share any best practice with the group?

- *"You must be careful how much time you spend with social media as it is important to interact but then you could end up spending hours with it"*
- *"Understand who your audience is and what you are using it for"*
- *"Use Facebook to link to blogs, your website and other social media"*
- *"It is also important to share other information which could be interesting for the target group"*

What difficulties have you faced in using them?

- *"Finding time"*
- *"Stimulating conversation"* e.g. two-way interaction

- *"Understanding the right social media for you"*
- *"Very difficult to get an 'audience'... people to like your page or to follow you"*
- *"I am scared that I will get a virus, offend friends and acquaintances or reveal too much"*
- *"Legal issues"*
- *"Privacy settings"*

Workers' own knowledge, level of use and possible preconceptions of Web 2.0

The workers participating in the focus group had varying levels of use and knowledge of social media. Three participants had no prior knowledge, six were regular users and the remaining three fitted into a middle category. The preconceptions which were evident from the focus group were that social media is more suited to use by younger people who have grown up with the Internet (i.e. under 30's); it takes a lot of time to manage and personal information can be easily misused. All, with the exception of 1, had limited knowledge of using the tools specifically for business and even the younger participants expressed a need for training in this area.

Gaps in training, advice and learning provision

Only two companies (20%) of those involved in the focus group provided training in social media. One provides it for other third sector organisations; the other company created a position for a volunteer to give training to their staff. This organisation found that the volunteer could be too quick when explaining issues and processes, thus making it difficult for the learner to follow and understand. The experience had not been positive for them.

Have you attended any Web 2.0 training before? In what area?

67% had not received any Web 2.0 training. Of those participants who had attended Web 2.0 training, two had had a diverse range in varying forms, including face-to-face and webinars. The majority of the training accessed covered general social media information and types of tools, e.g. LinkedIn and Twitter. One participant had attended many courses on social media but this gave general advice rather than tailored support helping them to achieve their own organisations' aims.

Interest in training

What do you think are the gaps in training and advice provision in terms of Web 2.0?

Respondents wanted examples of models that could be used to develop social media. For example a written guide or template to follow for specific aims relevant to individual business sectors.

If training was available would you take part in it?

Participants were interested in individually tailored training; some felt they needed very basic training whereas others felt that they wanted actual support in increasing their social media presence.

What type of training would you be most interested in?

- Different levels of training from beginner to advanced

*"Needs to be very much focused on how to use for **business** not just basic"*

- 'Hands on' – the learner physically completes the task and understands why they need to do it.
- Peer support as well as the ability to ask for help at any time.

"Someone on the other end of the phone to ask; a group every month to ask how they've got on and get support from."

What do you think the benefits of receiving training from a young person would be for your organisation?

It was generally agreed that learning from younger people is useful as they understand the topic. The quality of the trainer rather than their age was the main concern.

"I think I have learnt most of my stuff from younger people!"

How would you feel about being trained by young people?

The main feelings in regards to being trained by young people were that it would be good so long as there is mutual respect, jargon is explained and the trainers have the necessary skills.

"Need to want to learn it and the person teaching wants to be able to teach it."

"Teaching someone how to log onto Facebook needs a completely different skill set to how to use it for business effectively."

"I'd be worried about someone saying ah yes you're worried about that, that's a silly worry."

"...that it isn't in a condescending manner."

There were concerns that a younger person may not understand the needs of the older learner, the trainee not having the confidence to say they do not understand. It was also a worry that there would be a 'click click click' situation, whereby the younger person would do something so quickly the learner would not be able to absorb the information and use it themselves accordingly.

This feedback should be incorporated into the material for 'training the trainers'. The young people who will be trained need to learn how to support the older learners in doing it themselves rather than simply completing it on their behalf and expecting them to automatically remember. The young trainers should also be taught how to understand the worries of the older pupil and how they can help them overcome these worries without appearing to not care or sound condescending.

Conclusions and recommendations

From the information given during the course of the focus group and highlighted in this report the following recommendations can be made for any future social media training for SMEs and older workers:

- There should be different levels available
- Any training should be tailored towards the individual business
- Time is an issue: this should be considered when giving the training and when explaining the usage of social media in a business environment
- Issues regarding privacy and security should be addressed initially
 - Age is perceived as a hindering factor, however even younger workers in SME's have strong concerns about how they can use the tools for business purposes. The lack of social media use in SME's in the UK is not only a problem for 50+ workers but in the businesses generally, which lack training facilities and place greater stress on employee's time. Even younger workers in SME's require further training to use the tools effectively for business.

- Trainees should be supported and encouraged in their understanding and empathy towards older workers and the worries they have
- The trainers should allow the trainees to practice themselves
- A social media strategy template should be made available
- The concerns and needs of the trainee should be always in the mind of the trainer
- Trainees would like to learn about which tool is the most beneficial for their business
- Many potential learners need concrete evidence of the benefits of social media before investing time in it

SPAIN - NATIONAL REPORT SUMMARY

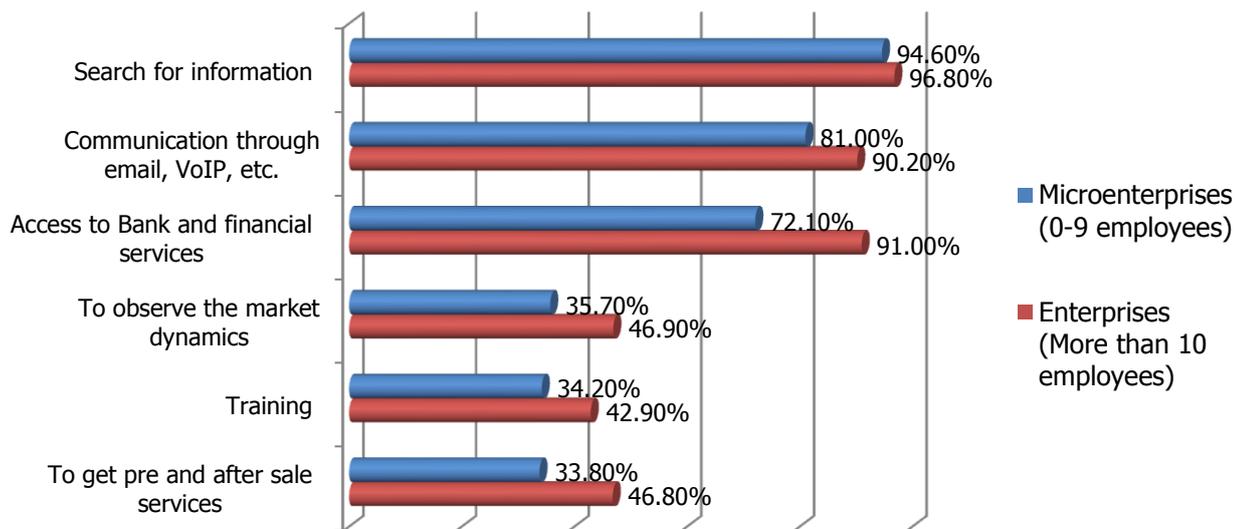
1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT TRAINING NEEDS OF OLDER WORKERS IN SMES & USE OF WEB 2.0 IN SMES – NATIONAL OVERVIEW/DATA

The National Directory of Businesses for 2012 established that there was a total of 3.199.617 and about 99,9% of them are considered as SMEs, that is, companies with up to 250 employees. Moreover, 55% of the total are companies without employees, owned by self-employed workers.

The importance of SMEs is crucial for the economy of the country, which competitiveness will depend on the degree of adaptation of these SMEs and self employed workers to the new economy. However, in the digital era, different reports point out that in 2011 (more recent available data) only 64,1% of the micro-enterprises (0-9 employees) had an Internet connection as compared to the 97,4% of the companies with more than 10 employees having such internet connection. The percentage is even lower if we consider those who having internet connection, access the internet for business purposes.

According to the report by the National Observatory of telecommunications and IS (ONTSI) about ICT in the Spanish micro enterprises, the most frequent uses of the Internet are the search for information, the communication through email or voice services and the access to bank and financial services.

The most frequent uses and the % of microenterprises with Internet connection using Internet for such purpose are illustrated in the following graph:



Source: ONTSI using data from the National Institute of Statistics 2011

Bigger enterprises are using the Internet more than the microenterprises. The main difference is observed in the access to bank and financial services, the access to pre and after sales services and the observation of the market dynamics.

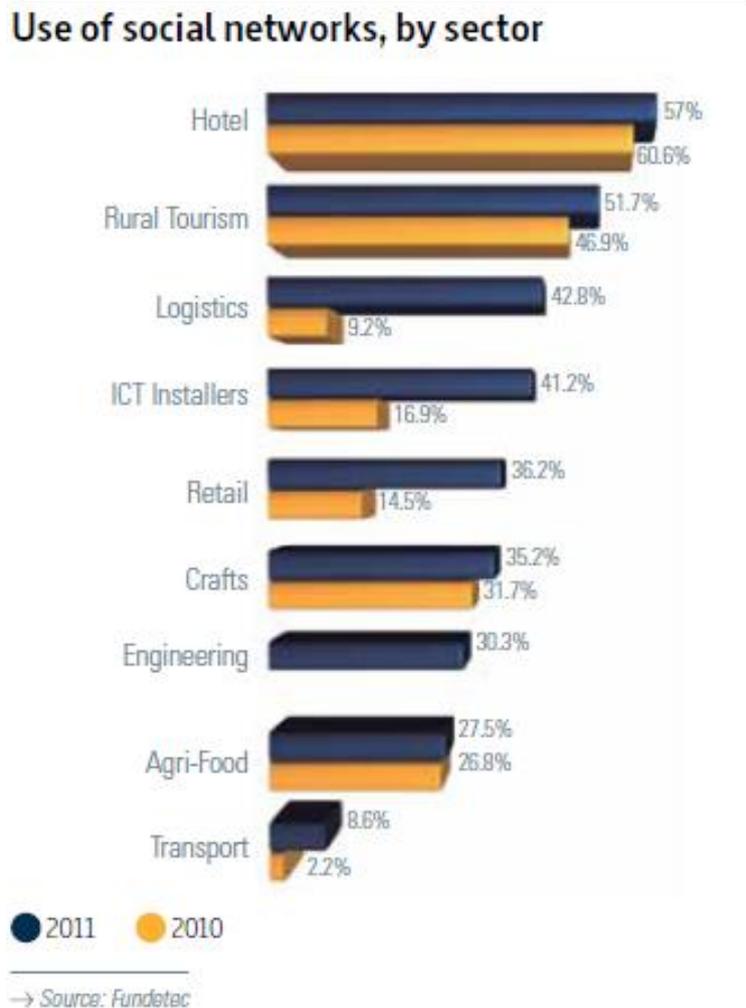
It is also interesting to analyse who are the people within the companies using the Internet. According to the report, the % of employees using a Internet connected PC at least once a week is higher in the microenterprises than in the bigger companies. In average, 54,5% of the microenterprises staff access the Internet at least once a week, while this figure is only 43,8% for the companies having more than 10 employees.

This is probably due to the multiple roles that employees have in the small businesses, because according to the same report, only 6,8% of the employees in microenterprises develop specific ICT task in the company, compared to the 30,2% of the employees in enterprises with more than 10 employees.

This report also analyse the companies having their own website. While 67% of the companies with more than 10 employees have a website, only 25% of the microenterprises have this website. The main services of the websites are the presentation of the enterprise and the access to catalogue of products. A very small percentage of microenterprises having a website offer advanced services through it: shop online (14,6%), online payments (7,4%) or online tracking of orders (5,9%).

The use of social networks by the businesses is not analysed in this report and we have to go to the reports developed by Fundetec also using data from 2011 and analysing the ICT penetration by sectors of activity and also the use of ICT by the self-employed workers.

The Report analysing the penetration by sector, "Sector-based analysis of the implementation of ICT in the Spanish SME", available in English language, analyses the use of social networks by the companies in the main economic sectors as showed in the following graph:



But this information is not disaggregated by size of the companies. However, the report focusing on the target group of self-employed workers, include a sub-chapter devoted to the analysis of the use of social networks by this target group.

According to this report "The self-employed worker and the Information Society 2011", the 92,1% of the self-employed workers having Internet access, declares to know what social networks are and the report says:

" The lack of knowledge about social networks is higher when the age increases. Therefore, for those self-employed workers having Internet connection and older than 50, the % of people who don't know about social networks increases up to 14,6% "

But knowledge doesn't mean use: only 45,7% of those declaring to know social networks, declare also to use them and again the age is determinant in this case. The % of self-

employed workers using social networks increases up to 67,5% for those under 30 years old while only 25,8% of the self-employed older than 50 having internet connection and knowing the social networks, uses them.

According to the sectors, the use of social networks is more frequent (over 50%) by self-employed workers in the sectors of hotel and catering (59,2%) and automotive, commerce and personal services (52,5%)

Regarding the specific social networks, the 94,9% of those declaring to use social networks uses Facebook, which is the most popular and register a big increase in use respect to the data from 2010, and far from it, there is twitter, used by 29,6% and LinkedIn (18,6%)

All these data indicates that there is an important number of SMEs, especially micro-enterprises which are not accessing the potential benefits of the Internet and social networks for the development of their businesses.

According to the survey conducted in 2011 by Fundetec, the main reason for the self-employed workers not accessing the Internet is that they don't think it can be useful for them.

They clearly do not know the possibilities offered by the Internet and are at risk of being excluded from a market that is more and more dependent on the online activities and transactions.

2. AWARENESS OF THE ROLE OF WEB 2.0 IN THE LIFE OF COMPANIES MARKETING

For the needs analysis of SMEs workers and owners older than 50 in Spain, a focus group has been developed. The group was held in Madrid last 9 of April 2013 in the Central Offices of UPTA Spain. The group was conducted by Isabel Contreras and there were 7 participants, 6 men and 1 women and all of them were self-employed workers having their own businesses and affiliated to UPTA. Most of the participants had not ICT or Web 2.0 skills.

The great majority of the participants were not really aware of the role that Web 2.0 is playing today in the life of many companies as a powerful tool for marketing and networking. They don't know about most of the uses and possibilities that the web 2.0 has. They feel that Internet is something useful for others, "*for the big companies*" but not for them.

Some of the participants declared to use the Internet for developing some daily administrative activities for the management of the business but not for promoting and advertising their businesses. They have the feeling that everything is changing and Internet is very relevant but they don't know yet how to use it, in some cases, and how to make the most of it in others.

Only 1 out of 7 participants showed a clear awareness on the essential role of web 2.0 for the life of the companies nowadays. Other 2 participants showed awareness but they had many doubts and false preconceptions.

In this sense, the results from the focus group clearly coincide with the results of the main reports published in Spain on this topic, especially the survey by Fundetec already mentioned in the previous point.

3. COMPANIES' PRESENT APPROACH TOWARDS WEB 2.0

Generally speaking, the participants in the Spanish focus group know but not use the social networks, in line with the results of the reports mentioned in point 1 of this document.

Most of the participants in the focus group showed their reluctance to use the Internet and the Web 2.0 tools for improving their business mainly because:

- They don't know how to use these tools
- They don't consider that it is necessary for them to use such tools.

The participants in the focus group think that Internet and the online social networks is useful only for big companies and businesses in specific sectors like tourism and even commerce but not for micro-businesses in traditional sectors as building works or even a lawyer's office.

On this regard, the comment by one of the participant was *"How many of you use the Internet to look for a builder? I bet that none of you"*

Therefore, the majority is reluctant to use the web 2.0 in their businesses because they don't see that the potential benefits can compensate them for the effort they have to do in learning about something completely alien to their daily work environment.

In addition, some of them pointed out arguments related to economic problems:

- Not all the micro-enterprises, especially in the most traditional sectors have access to the Internet
- Internet connection in Spain remains being one of the most expensive in Europe

- The economic crisis pushes them to focus their efforts in those traditional business activities that they certainly know that are working and providing them with clients.

Another argument given by some of the participants is that Internet is not the Panacea, or the solution for all the problems; on the contrary, they feel that start using the Internet obliges them to continuously think about and face new problems that they had never faced before, related to security, data protection, etc. The security of bank data for example was a concern for some of the participants.

One of the participants pointed out the fact that of course, the outstanding presence of the Internet in today's society is unquestionable, but Internet is so big, and there is so much information there that people having not enough competencies or knowledge to properly use the Internet can feel lost or "overwhelmed" in some way by such a load of information.

Only one of the participants declared to use the Internet and web 2.0 in his business and, also in line with the results of the previous studies, this participant is operating in the sector of rural tourism.

4. WORKERS OWN KNOWLEDGE/LEVEL OF USE (AND POSSIBLE PRECONCEPTIONS) OF WEB 2.0

Most of the participants have no contact with the Internet or the Web 2.0 tools. They know only about Facebook and Twitter mainly because of their children and they think about them only as entertainment tools, not something for businesses.

Some of them have a Facebook account but just for a personal, mainly sporadic use. Some of the participants declared that using social networks for personal purposes is quite easy and common but to use them for other purposes like marketing of the business for example creating events in facebook, requires of further knowledge that many people lack, regardless the age they have.

Other participants recognized that when they have had the need to use any website or programme on the Internet, they always asked for help to their relatives and friends.

5. GAPS IN TRAINING/ADVICE/LEARNING PROVISION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WANTING TO LEARN AND UTILISE THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES OF THE WEB 2.0

According to the report by the National Observatory of telecommunications and IS about ICT in the Spanish micro enterprises, only 3,5% of Spanish microenterprises provided ICT related training to their employees in comparison to the 17,4% of the companies having more than 10 employees.

The results of the focus group confirmed this fact since none of the participants in the focus group have received specific ICT/ Web 2.0 training neither has provided this training to their employees.

The gap in training, advice or learning provision for these workers is obvious since the great majority could change their mind if they get to know about real possibilities for their businesses and examples of other businesses similar to them which have succeed in using Internet and Web 2.0.

They declared that they didn't know about any courses or programmes that would train them on these issues. They feel that the free public funded courses addressed to this target group continue offering the same courses, not really adapted to the needs of the SMEs and the existing useful training courses on these matters are very expensive.

Some of the participants pointed out that, if the use of the internet by the SMEs seems to be so crucial, they are lacking support programmes by the authorities providing them with the necessary funds to invest in the required technology and get trained.

The economic crisis and the "survival strategy" that most of them are carrying out means that they are focusing on the daily activities purely related to their businesses and avoiding any other activities for which they don't clearly see the benefits.

6. INTEREST IN TRAINING (FROM FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS)

Apart from the initial reluctance showed by most of the participants, all of them said to be interested in participate in the future project activities and get trained because in some way they are conscious that they need to be up to date in the new tools, since they feel that they are getting totally left out.

However, at the end of the group, most of them were yet suspicious and sceptics on the benefits that knowing about using Web 2.0 tools would give them.

The main barrier for training that they pointed out is the lack of time that most people in small businesses have so they expect the training to be received to be clear, concise and direct to the point in order to not spend time in non relevant issues.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SMEs and micro-enterprises owners and employees need to be trained on how to use Internet and Web 2.0 tools but they need also to be made aware of the potential uses of these tools for improving and boosting their business, independently of the economic sector in which they operate. In this sense, the results of the focus group corroborated the results of the different studies developed in Spain in the last years.

The Learning 2.0gether project has to face the challenge of raising awareness of this target group and demonstrating them how necessary using the Web 2.0 is for their businesses.

Despite most of the people seems to have used social networks for personal purposes, the use of these tools for business purposes is another story and many people lack the knowledge and abilities for make such use. At this point, the limits of the age range seems to fade since not only the people older than 50 lack these abilities but also younger people.

They all liked the idea of being trained by young people because most of them think that it can be an opportunity for them and they feel empathy thinking about their own children.

They expect the training to be useful for them and not theoretical or difficult, since they lack the time to be devoted to it. The training that they will receive has to really help them to acquire the basic knowledge to perform in the internet and social networks and develop basic promotional activities for their businesses.

At the same time a raising campaign should be developed to demonstrate to those SME's owner and workers who don't use the web 2.0 yet, that it is a powerful tool, showing them practical examples and good practices that they can feel identified with.

ITALY - NATIONAL REPORT SUMMARY

1. Background Information About Training Needs of Older Workers in SMEs & Use of Web 2.0 in SMEs – national overview/data

As highlighted by the SBA Fact Sheet 2012 – Italy issued by DG Enterprise, in numerical terms Italy has the largest SME sector in the EU: 3.813 million SMEs (the manufacturing sector being the most represented), inclusive of 3.6 million micro-enterprises, a share (94.6%) in all businesses that surpasses even the EU-average (92.2%). This record also accounts for the physiological difficulty of the Italian business system in recovering from the effects of the crisis. As the report states:

“Since 2005, trends in the Italian SMEs sector in terms of the number of firms, employment and value-added creation have been disappointing. Recovery from the initial shock at the beginning of the financial crisis has been much weaker than in the EU as a whole. On all three indicators, the Italian SME sector appears to have fallen back to the levels of around 2005, i.e. long before the current crisis began. Microfirms are the hardest hit with the least dynamic recovery, while large firms appear to have ridden out the crisis — so far — fairly well. The forecasts to the end of 2012 point to a continuation of the overall, rather stagnant, trend. Like last year’s, Italy’s SBA profile reveals many weaknesses. Italy trails the EU average in 7 out of 10 policy areas”.

The Skills and Innovation area is one of them:

“One cause for particular concern is the indicators measuring the internet capacity of SMEs. Italian SMEs are much less present online than their EU peers. This may put them at a disadvantage as electronic media become ever more important distribution channels. The indicator for training also reveals some problems”.

Thus, *“Lack of internet-savvyness”* represents one of the critical obstacles hindering the path of competitiveness (and this comprises internationalization) and recovery, together with the inadequate levels of training participation displayed by the sector: *[...] “only 5% (EU: 11%) of microfirms’ employees participate in education and training. Given the extraordinary importance of micro-firms in Italy, this low level of training participation represents a far larger problem of a lack of development of skills in the workforce which in turn may pose a serious strategic threat to the competitiveness of Italy’s businesses.*

The “market of labour” surveys regularly issued by Istat provide interesting insights into the demography of this workforce - alternatively (and sometimes contradictorily) regarded by businesses as an “engine for growth” or “an outdated burden” - underlining the growth of the employment rate of 55-64 workers (39.7% in the first

semester of 2012), i.e. 1 Italian worker out of 4. As anticipated, most Italian SMEs still fail in exploiting the full potential of the Internet, especially in Web 2.0 terms (with the positive exceptions of the accommodation sector, which in recent years has been updating and re-designing its “presence” on line).

Corporate websites are often mere static reproductions of the company’s brochure, sometimes inclusive of pdf catalogues, e commerce is a rarity as well as Web 2.0 options: this is the picture outlined in 2009 in a research carried out by *Marketing PMI* (a blog dedicated to SMEs and marketing), which analyzed the relationship between Italian microenterprises and the Web.

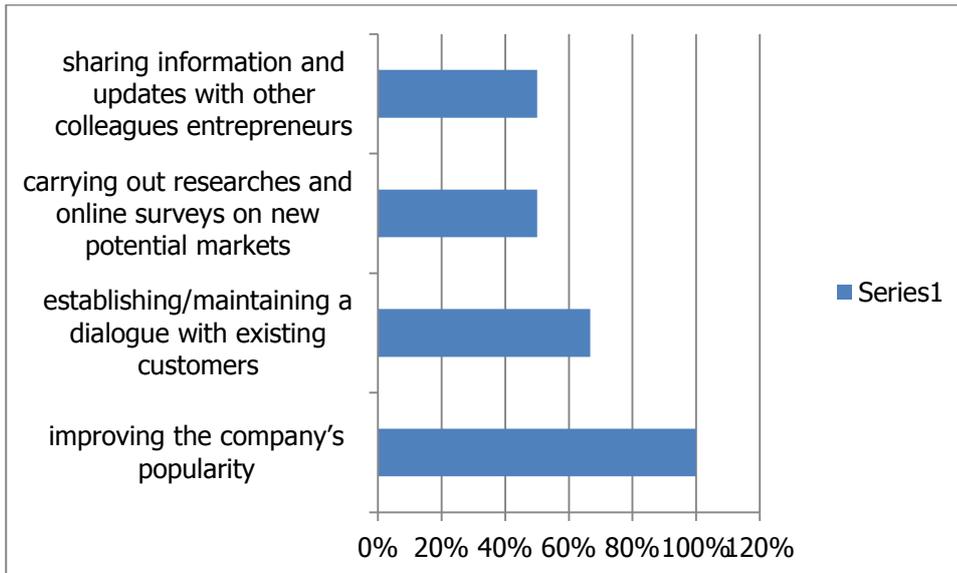
After 4 years, the results of the research are still up-to-date, as confirmed by the outputs of the needs analysis carried out through the Italian focus group of the WP3 of the L2G project.

WP3 needs analysis: focus group - participants at a glance

The focus facilitated by Ms Luisa Puppo (CLP’s European projects coordinator) was held on March 11th 2013 (15.00 – 16.30) in Genoa at the premises of CNA Liguria, the regional branch of CNA, the National Confederation of the Craft Sector and Small and Medium Enterprises. CNA took care of the recruitment of participants (6 people, 2 females, 4 men, average age approaching 45 – 3 people over 50), who included entrepreneurs, managers and staff. 5 of them work in an Entrepreneurial Organization (whose size and organizational complexity is parallel to a SME), 1 is a micro entrepreneur (publishing house). The composition of the group also allowed the adequate consideration of the points of view of both SMEs and over 50 workers. Ms Puppo opened the focus with an overview of the L2G project.

2. Awareness of the role of Web 2.0 in the life of companies marketing (from focus group findings)

Though their use of social media at company level is nonexistent (see section 3 for detail) – participants showed awareness of the role of Web 2.0 for business life, in terms of 1) improving the company’s popularity (100%); 2) establishing/maintaining a dialogue with existing customers, also with a view to proactively investigate their needs (66.67%); 3) carrying out researches and online surveys on new potential markets, with a focus on foreign markets (50%); 4) sharing information and updates with other colleagues entrepreneurs (50%).



The main downside to all these pluses, as for the totality of interviewees, is that of dedicated resources - time, coherent skills and costs. *"This is something that only very big companies can afford. For most smaller businesses it could be time-wasting and dispersive": "Most often the staff of small companies do not possess adequate Web2.0 competences. And even those who possess them do not have time enough".*

Furthermore, companies are not aware of these opportunities very often, and sometimes it is not just a matter of awareness, but of digital illiteracy. *"For several microenterprises the Internet itself is 'science fiction'. When you say 'Internet' for most entrepreneurs it simply means emails. So, how can the system compete, especially on foreign markets?".*

Notwithstanding these criticalities, the perception of the potential of Web2.0 is evident. *"Our organisation is committed to innovation, that's why we are putting forward at internal and external level the issue of ITC and Web2.0 training for entrepreneurs and staff.*

3. Companies' present approach towards Web 2.0 (from focus group findings)

100% attendees declared that their organization has an official website, one of them complete with an ecommerce section, but none features Web 2.0 options. *"I once opened a corporate Facebook page, but did not develop it."It was just an experiment to see how FB works".*

As anticipated above in section 2), the scant level of commitment to Web2.0 derives in turns from deep rooted criticalities in the 'vision' of the Internet. *"Some companies think that a website is just a showcase, an online version of printed catalogues". "Company's*

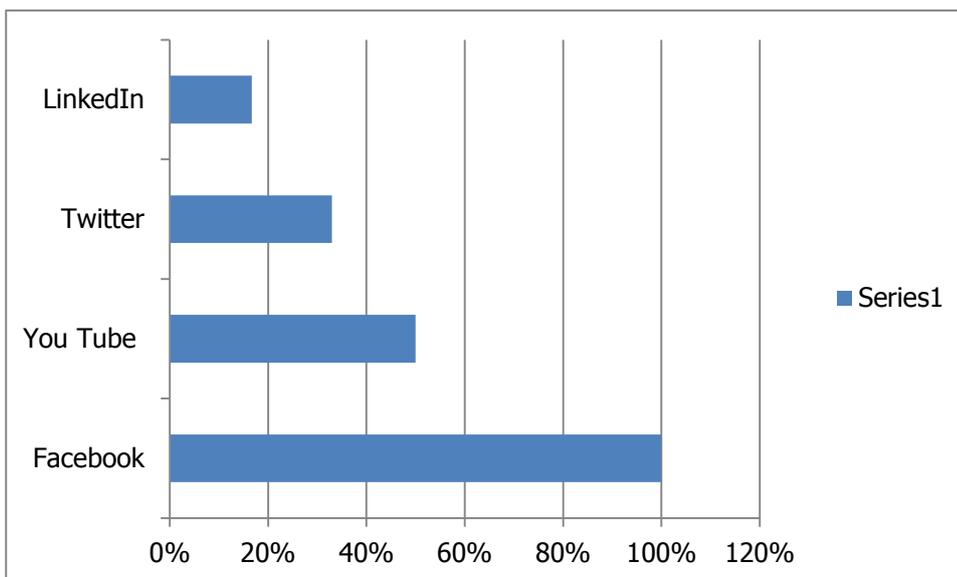
websites are usually inert, and like old business cards they often display outdated information”.

Updating is a central concern. *“Websites were planned by a web designer who still uploads the contents provided by companies once in a blue moon: that is, when they remember to send information and when he has time to do it”.* *“Keeping the company’s website updated is a very hard task because you have to depend on your external webmasters”.*

The potential of Web 2.0 to solve this “jigsaw” is fairly evident to attendees, who think that the Web will be one of the key channels to work on in order to reach wider audiences, both domestic and foreign (*“A Facebook page could help us in sharing contents and updates in real time”*; *“you could set up a platform for peer-to-peer networking among entrepreneurs”*), but the focus showed how much companies - firstly - should be helped in understanding and planning the reason and aims of their presence online.

4. Workers own knowledge/level of use (and possible preconceptions) of Web 2.0 (from focus group findings)

The issue was introduced through the investigation of the participants’ knowledge of Web 2.0 tools. Facebook ranks first (100%), followed by You Tube (50%), Twitter (33%) and LinkedIn (16.67%).



Other tools such as Pinterest and Instagram were not cited. None of the participants blog nor follows blogs. None of them has a Twitter account nor a LinkedIn profile, too. 33%

attendees have a personal Facebook profile and sometimes use smart phone application like Whatsapp.

Non-users stated that they are not interested in "getting social" because *"It's a waste of time and energy"; "I can manage my personal contact without that"; "I spend a good part of my working day answering emails and phone calls: that's enough!"; "It's a young thing: when I see friends checking up FB notifications on their smartphones I'm quite perplexed"*.

The point of view of over 50 participants is that during the last 15 years technological change has been too fast (and sometimes not interesting) to follow for those *"who started in the telex age"*. *"Skills get old, they age. And as you get older it is often difficult to keep the pace in a 360° perspective, you have to choose"*.

5. Gaps in training/advice/learning provision from the perspective of wanting to learn and utilise the new technologies of the Web 2.0 (from focus group findings)

Although the offer of ITC courses dedicated to businesses is varied and ongoing (especially as regards ESF training), participants stated that they do not know about dedicated Web2.0 training for businesses [N.A. several courses are being held in Italy to promote the access of retired "grandparents" (over 65) to social media in the perspective of active ageing].

Besides, they remarked that the provision of ESF courses often does not meet the companies' requirements in terms of flexibility and ad hoc contents, especially meant for microenterprises and small businesses – and this point is of peculiar importance as regards a *"mysterious"* subject like Web2.0. *"Training is hardly ever practical. We don't need theory, we need instruments to guide and plan our choices: for instance, it is not just a matter of learning how to set up the company's FB page, in the first place it is a matter of understanding if going on FB is useful and feasible for the company in terms of pros and cons"*.

The practical gaps of current training supply are even more evident in the case of older workers, who – as signaled in the previous paragraph – should be supported in selecting which skills to upgrade in the most time/effort-saving way.

6. Interest in training (from focus group findings)

Attendees appreciated the Learning2.0gether concept very much and are looking forward to participate in its proceedings. *"As an entrepreneurial organization, the support to training initiatives dedicated to digital competences is one of the key issues in our agenda, both at national and regional level"*, declared a participant.

"We commit to making our associates aware of the importance of these issues in the light of internationalization and competitiveness, which are not feasible in the absence of (re)qualification paths for both entrepreneurs and staff".

- Thus, not only did participants (100%) declare that they are willing to attend training sessions dedicated to Web2.0 (multi-level paths, structured as a mix of "on the job training" and "active learning", based mainly on SWOT analyses of social media in the perspective of SMEs and microenterprises), but they also expressed their interest in acting as "amplifiers" and "ambassadors" of the L2G training opportunities among their fellow colleagues and entrepreneurs, so long as solid warranties are supplied on the provision modalities and quality of the training:
- flexibility (time/place),
- personalization of contents,
- teaching approaches,
- delivery of handbook/templates/check lists....

Training of trainers is of utter interest, too: regardless of age, all participants stated that trainees should be *"made comfortable"*, their needs and learning styles understood.

For example, especially for 50+, face-to-face sessions are considered essential (*"standing in front of a monitor is not enough"*) to motivate learners and improve their Web 2.0 confidence.

Besides, it was underlined that one of the main constraints that prevent SMEs' participation in ESF "traditional" training courses is the fact of having to *"go to school"*, i.e. attending courses at the training centre venue and having to *"abandon"* the business premises: *"As a multitasking small entrepreneur, organizing my agenda in order to attend a course is the hardest of challenges: unexpected events and workloads start popping up the moment – so to speak - my foot is on the threshold"*.

Though the intergenerational learning bias of the L2G appealed them as well and was perceived as an added value (*"the young can help us to understand the professional value of social media, and we can teach them something useful about the world of work"*), questions were raised about the "formal" status of L2G young tutors – volunteers/trainees. "We want to help the young and get help by them, but we want a clear picture of the cooperation process.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of the L2G WP3 Italian focus group and on line survey confirmed the present *"lack of internet-savvyness"* of national SMEs/microenterprises signaled in the aforementioned "SBA Fact Sheet 2012 – Italy" by DG Enterprise.

The process of raising the awareness of the importance of Web2.0 for the life of companies should therefore include a significant preliminary focus on the role of the Internet itself in the marketing strategy of businesses, operational both in contents and approach.

Furthermore, the focus group confirmed the difficult relationship - based on both preconceptions and objective complexities - between SMEs/microenterprises and the world of training, especially in its traditional "classroom" declinations.

At the same time, participants expressed a genuine interest in participating in the following phases of the L2G project, which was perceived as functional in helping businesses to overcome these gaps (the fact itself of being asked to take part in the project's focus group - *"hear our voice"* - was regarded very positively).

As anticipated, they see themselves as possible "ambassadors" of the L2G opportunities among other entrepreneurs, provided that warranties are given about delivery and quality of the training, as well as the training of the young trainers and their official "status" within the project.

Thus, the results of the WP2 needs analysis are helpful in fine tuning the contents and approaches of the training which ought to:

- Be time/effort-saving
- Be personalized (especially in delivery)
- Be multilevel (from basic to advanced)
- Be practical and provide examples, case studies, templates and check lists
- Be micro enterprises focused (*"small companies are not the miniature of big companies"*)
- Be carried out by prepared trainers (especially in terms of soft and teaching skills)

At the end of the focus group Marco Merli, President and representative of CNA Liguria, expressed the hope of an enlargement of the age range of the SME's target group of the Learning2.0gether project. As underlined in this report, the strategic guidelines of CNA at both national and regional level refer to digitalization and Web 2.0 as priority challenges for SMEs in general, not just their 50+ employees. Opening up the age group of the target group would be considered very positively as an opportunity for the competitiveness of both businesses and staff.

WP 3 MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

The focus groups saw the participation of a total 25 people (12 in the UK, 7 in Spain, 6 in Italy), a multifaceted group – in terms of nationality, gender, age, professional backgrounds, sectors, Web 2.0 knowledge/ability. Two themes emerge from the focus groups:

- Low Web2.0 awareness among companies (especially Italy and Spain) derives from a more comprehensive lack of Internet-savvyness, especially as regards the role of the Net in the strategies and marketing of businesses
- Time, age and scarcity of initiatives tailored on SMEs and microenterprises are felt as the main constraints when it comes to training and updating of skills.

Through the contribution of the participants, it was possible to elaborate a shortlist of priorities and desires at European level as regards future social media training for SMEs and older workers:

- Be time/effort-saving
- Be personalized (especially in delivery), also in terms of the different learning styles of older users
- Be multilevel (from basic to advanced)
- Be practical and provide examples, case studies, templates and check lists
- Be focused on the needs and wants of small/micro companies
- Be carried out by prepared trainers (especially in terms of soft and teaching skills)
- Be inclusive of clear explanations about privacy and security.

Important to underline, the need and request to open up the age range of the target group in order to include 35/40+ staff was expressed in Great Britain, Spain and Italy, either during the focus groups or through informal feedback afterwards.

ANNEXES

UK NATIONAL REPORT

ES NATIONAL REPORT

IT NATIONAL REPORT