

CITIES

Italy

Language Training



Good Practice Executive Summary

1. Description & objectives of programme

The possibility of increasing one's language skills is indispensable for ensuring professional growth and to enable work mobility. In many instances, linguistic and cultural training acquires a decisive importance for a worker's integration into a company, particularly for those coming from other countries. The project was designed starting from the noticeable influx of workers originating from the Balkan area, often finding employment in SMEs in the mechanical engineering and construction sector, both in Italy and in Germany. Specific language learning tools were designed, aimed at these people, in order to ensure their professional re-qualification, as well as to contribute to their integration in the company's organisational systems.

The products developed were **two language courses (Italian and German) based on didactic & information materials to be implemented in Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian. An English edition was developed as well in order for the course to reach a higher number of learners from countries other than BG, PL and RO.**

The aim of the CITIES language course is **to improve the users' employability** by:

- enabling the learning and development of technical language skills;
- supporting the learning of everyday language in order to actively participate in the socio-economic and cultural life of the destination country and overcome problems of communication and integration.

The course was produced on both paper and multimedia format. The focus of the course contents is concentrated on the theme of Safety in the Workplace.

2. EU policy it implements

The project can be positioned among the recommendations of the European Council Report on “*The concrete future objectives of education and training systems*”, where it is stated that “the learning of foreign languages as part of education and training is important not only for the cultural enrichment of the individual but also as a contribution to mobility and European competitiveness”.

3. Main target groups, numbers targeted & trained

The CITIES project was addressed to a particular category of workers coming from Central and Eastern European countries (BG, PL and RO) employed in Italian and German SME's in the engineering (IT) and construction (DE) sectors, who often meet with discrimination in the work place.

The idea of combining awareness of the theme of work safety and linguistic knowledge could make a significant contribution to helping workers:

- find and/or keep jobs,
- improving their skills
- be more competitive on the labour market.

Knowledge of languages represents an important step to help the development of curricula and mobility of labour from one county to another.

4. Targeted levels & competencies based on CEFR

The project beneficiaries are workers coming from BG-PL-RO having an A1-A2 CERFL level in IT.

Nonetheless the course was designed to reach also absolute beginners and for this reason all the texts – except for the tests/drills) are bilingual.

5. Length of training

It was not possible to define a length of time for completion of the training since self-teaching/self-learning for working learners is impossible to plan in terms of duration. The learning objective of the course was not connected to an efficiency assessment in terms of time to reach the objective, but rather concentrated on the quality of learning.

6. Quality Assurance of Training

The CITIES training course in itself was not subject to Quality Assessment or Quality Assurance procedures, which were concentrated on the design of the e-learning platform containing the online version of the course (also available on CD-ROM).

7. Sustainability

The CITIES project was funded by the European Commission and this aspect undoubtedly made it easier to carry out the products (Italian course on paper, CD-ROM and on-line) and sustain the expenses for the language expert and the ICT expert in charge of the design of the learning platform. After the CD's and the hard copies of the course have been distributed, new copies of the course may be printed at the employers' expenses. No agreement was made among the partner concerning commercialization of the product.

8. Transferability assessment

The practice can be transferred to any other language and also the vehicle subject (in the case of cities, the theme of safety in the workplace) can be adapted to different sectors.

1. Description & Objectives of Programme

The programme (i.e. the CITIES project) lasted 24 months, from October 2004 to October 2006 and was promoted by a Consortium among Italian, German, Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian partners.

The project was supported by the Leonardo da Vinci 2004-2006 funding and had a total cost of EUR 377.062 (25% of which self-funding).

innovative aspects of the programme

The methodology proposed for the training courses helps people who often work and live in disadvantaged conditions; it is based on the maximum flexibility and personalisation, with two formats (paper and multimedia) and takes into consideration factors such as night shifts, little access to careers training, low qualifications and slow learning times.

The course proposes an innovative methodology particularly through its visual aspect. The training programme foresees gradual and systematic teaching of safety regulations and has the advantage of presenting dynamic, interactive material at an elementary level for users who need a direct and user-friendly relationship between text and image, especially as regards workplace signs, understanding of which is subsequently transferred within the learning process. The user is thereby able to understand the fundamental relationship between these elements which are indispensable for correctly carrying out the work/linguistic tasks proposed. Moreover, users will often find images (and animation) to be more interesting than texts, especially when they have little or no understanding of the local language. In these cases a multimedia teaching programme represents an indispensable tool for training, since it starts from a non-linguistic game form to teach and develop knowledge of texts, rules, regulations and foreign idiom.

Existing traditional methods are often insufficient to fulfil the new training needs for an increasingly multi ethnic working population. ICT is an ideal instrument to integrate into the professional and didactic sector in question.

The CITIES method of **game-based virtual visual learning** can certainly be considered an exercise of linguistic knowledge in a practical environment. Virtual visual learning has the aim of improving the ability to operate in a concrete, multilingual work context – albeit simulated.

The course is highly interactive and is not simply finalised at the transmission of past knowledge but rather corresponds to the integrated elaboration of “visual” knowledge aimed at answering specific requests of knowledge management for various levels of demand, organising the electronic production for the training and re-qualification of the intellectual work of the specific target both for new emerging professionalism (skills building) and in the framework of the renewal of professional skills in various working sectors (competence leveraging). The course is organised on interaction in a multi ethnic community and aims at making the match between demand for knowledge and training offer as efficient as possible, setting up the necessary elaboration and cognitive integration.

The project develops as a system generator of ad hoc linguistic knowledge answering current needs for the training of “human capital” in an extra

European context of guest workers. It focuses on the themes of plurality of the representation of linguistic knowledge and consolidated learning (with paper manual and user-friendly interactive CDROM) aimed at producing the cognitive base needed to set in motion a vast multilingual collaboration for learning, diffusion, and use of the rules of environmental and work safety.

2. EU Policy the Training Implements

The training **promotes lifelong learning and learner mobility and ensures the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work.**

The most important role in delivering this kind of training product is played by Employment centres, employers' associations, trade unions – and in the case of CITIES, by Public Health Services due to its use of the theme of safety in the workplace and accident prevention. Employers are involved to a lower extent though it would be important to achieve their full and convinced involvement in the theme of integration through language learning.

The short-term objective of the training is to help integration, develop language skills and provide the learners with useful themes for their work context, whereas its long-term objective – to be developed in synergy with institutions and social parts is to promote a policy of cultural exchange encouraging mobility of workers.

The sectors mainly interested by the training were the **engineering and construction sectors** (mainly SME's).

Since the funding was used for the design and implementation of the paper and online versions of the course (aimed at self-teaching) and no class activity was performed, the definition of the cost of the public finance per trainee is not applicable to this practice. All the same there was no employer financial contribution since the course was not meant to be accessed during the work hours.

The programme impacted on various levels:

- on individual workers in a professional context the tool helped to fit in companies from a social point of view (through improved communicative ability), increase personal safety, and on a professional level to have a better grasp of some basic aspects of working in a company;
- companies could provide their workers with a product aiding language and technical knowledge;
- employer's associations made the product known in their member companies as a tool to help the professionalization and integration of foreign workers;
- for the pertinent countries (RO-PL-BG) it was a tool for the acquisition of linguistic competences and help mobility and employment chances of workers.

The course aimed at acting on a training level on foreign workers expressly requiring help in integrating in their new country of residence. Apart from problems linked to language communication and those linked to ethnic, social

and religious differences, problems relating to regulations and rules governing the rights and duties of employees are treated in the course. Another problem treated is that of the workers' perception of the risk of accident, illness, and the behaviour to adopt to avoid danger for them and to others.

The course was distributed through the partners' network of companies starting from associations of SMEs and associations working on each national territory.

3. Main target groups, numbers targetted and trained

- Employers
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Women
- Migrants
- Young people
- Other

The targeted languages were IT and DE (official EU languages) and were elicited as a result of survey activity carried out prior to the project design.

4. Targetted Levels & Competencies based on CEFR

Targetted levels & competencies based on the CEFR											
Languages		Targetted Competencies									
L1	Target Language	Understanding				Speaking				Writing	
		Listening		Reading		Spoken interaction		Spoken production			
		level	Competency or partial competency	level	Competency or partial competency	level	Competency or partial competency	level	Competency or partial competency	level	Competency or partial competency
BG	IT	B2	PC	B1	PC	B2	PC	B2	PC	A2	PC
PL	IT	B2	PC	B1	PC	B2	PC	B2	PC	A2	PC
RO	IT	B2	PC	B1	PC	B2	PC	B2	PC	A2	PC
BG	DE	B2	PC	B1	PC	B2	PC	B2	PC	A2	PC
PL	DE	B2	PC	B1	PC	B2	PC	B2	PC	A2	PC
RO	DE	B2	PC	B1	PC	B2	PC	B2	PC	A2	PC

5. Length of Training

The training was carried out in autonomy **in autonomy through multimedia/digital means.**

6. Quality Assurance of Training

NOT APPLICABLE TO THE SELECTED PRACTICE

7. Sustainability Options

The practice was carried out thanks to the LdV funding. For internal organizational reasons the promoting organization chose not to develop it towards other target languages / themes.

The training in itself does not depend on further funding since the course is complete and needs no tutor's support.