

Learn Exchange: Share, learn and co-create

– A Learning Partnership project with Hungary and Portugal –

Go and visit organisations, companies and communities throughout Europe and you will notice big differences in the way they work. *Multinational companies, though, invest much time and money to standardise processes and procedures cross boarder to make them look the same. An OPEL dealership in Belgium looks the same as one in Portugal or Hungary, but only from the outside. From the inside, in the core of things, they are different.*

The difference, of course, is in the culture. Culture has to do with the people and their habits. Habits are rooted in the way of thinking and as a consequence in the way of dealing with reality. In our global economy, we could say that organizations and their people, wherever they are located, are confronted with the same kind of challenges: working together, dealing with change, work-life balance, handling conflict, leadership development and so on. In order to deal with all those challenges, learning and development processes are set up and facilitated by professional trainers all over Europe. And, given the cultural differences, we might expect differences in approach and methodology.

Those above have led to the goal of our Learning Partnership: facilitate the development of innovative practices and know-how in non-formal adult education.

By exchanging best practices, thinking and working together with trainers (and clients) from Belgium, Portugal and Hungary: 3 completely different countries, different cultures and different approaches.

The Learning Partnership

Former colleague & partner at Challenge Learning Belgium has long known the owner and leader of our present partner, Manmore Consulting, though never run joint projects with him. Manmore- a Budapest based organisation that has been working in the field of Training & Education of Adult learners for more than ten years - became the initiator and coordinator of our partnership. Manmore invited two more partners, one from Ireland (IanMcCclean) and one from Portugal (Sintese Azul), both from the field of trainings and education. Two of the partner companies have known each other from university times when they met as exchange students. Now, they were ready to find out how to start a professional project together. Unfortunately Ireland did not get approved, so three of us (Hungary, Portugal & Belgium) launched the project in October, 2008 in Belgium. (We keep

inviting our Irish partner as a “guest” to most of our meetings, hoping they would benefit from our knowledge sharing just as much as we do.)

Our Goals

We knew that all of us were operating in the more non-formal field of adult education, but we knew little about each others methods and best practices in the real working environment. Therefore we aimed to organize our project around so called LEARN EXCHANGES, which are 2-5 days meetings and workshops where we could learn as much as possible about and from each other. In our LEARNEXCHANGES, we meet and share our practices, methods and way of working in our field.

The most important subjects we are addressing in the project are:

- transferring *know-how and methodology* from and to partners
- collect and share *innovative practices*
- training trainers in Europe & outlining a possible common approach of an international *TTT course*
- *merging trends* in our field & the effects of the economical crisis
- creating a *Learning Network* and attract more European partners to join us in our efforts.

Results

We have conducted four LEARN EXCHANGES so far, one in Belgium, two in Portugal and one in Hungary. The most memorable one (and a great milestone of the project as well) was a widened LEARN EXCHANGE experience, a workshop that took place in Hungary this summer.

The workshop was organized by our LEARNING PARTNERSHIP Team: Manmore/Codebar, Sintese Azul and Challenge Learning Belgium. It was held at Atrium Agárd (see more at www.atriumagard.hu) a beautiful spot by Lake Velence. The meeting was non-traditional in the way that we also invited our „more than client” partners to the occasion to focus on our clients’ point of view in development projects. Bringing together the actors of different sectors turned this event into a special learning experience for all of us. As many as 26 partners: trainers, consultants, experts, HR professionals and learners came together in Hungary this August to share best practices, methods and experiences with each other during a three days Exchange (and some even stayed longer) and to start new initiatives in our field.

In the first half of the program, we talked about how the crisis affected our clients’ work and how we reacted to that. We first discussed the important aspects of the crisis from our clients’ point

of view then in a panel discussion we learnt about the different reactions and answers our consultants have given and are able to give in „turbulent times“. It was exciting to realize that there is no such thing as „the right way to do it“, instead each situation and problem requires tailor-made solutions and in order to give the right responses, we must change faster than our environment does.

In the second half of the program we continued discussing working methods we used in recent projects and other relevant topics that participants felt important and interesting to share with each other. Before closing the program, we discussed possible ways of cooperation and knowledge sharing between LEARN EXCHANGES and in a widened Learning Community. We agreed upon a number of initiatives – you will definitely hear about in the near future – and the way forward in the Learning Partnership project and the upcoming website. Our website was created in the meantime (www.learnxchange.eu), and we are constantly working on updating the site with relevant project information and outcomes of our meetings.

We are planning at least three more LEARN EXCHANGES until July, the end of our project. The emphasis these times will be on our future dream: a European Train-The-Trainer course. Something, that will always remind us on the beginning of our cooperation - this project - that gives us new perspectives every time we meet.

