



2nd Multiplier Symposium – 2nd September 2015
Pitesti, Romania

Event Report prepared by AOA Arges & Meath Partnership

Project Title: Harnessing the Learning Assets within the SME Business Community
Project Acronym: SYNERGY
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Introduction

In the evening of 2nd September 2015, the second Multiplier Event, Roundtable Symposium, of the SYNERGY was hosted by AOA Arges, the Business Association of Pitesti, at the Ramada Hotel, Pitesti. The purpose of this event was to introduce the SYNERGY project to a cross-section of stakeholders from the business and VET sector in Pitesti and surrounding cities. The symposium also afforded the project consortium an opportunity to present and test the latest developments of the project namely the prototype of Synergyexchange.eu, our approach and content for the mini-learning formats and how we proposed to engage the VET sector through the Train the Trainer programme, specifically the Learning Event in Ireland.

In total, 48 individuals attended the event and it was facilitated in English and Romanian. Attendees were business owners, business advisors, university students and lecturers, VET organisations, trainers and project partners.

The event was chaired by the President of AOA Arges, Mr. Dan Vasile Ionescu who introduced the project partners, introduced the format, agenda and speakers and welcomed those in attendance.

Introducing the SYNERGY Project

Adrian Neagu from AOA Arges introduced the SYNERGY project to the audience in Romanian and provided some basic information on the following aspects:

- the rationale behind the project
- the target group of the project and how they will be reached by partners
- the challenges and opportunities for the project
- the key outputs of the project

SYNERGY Mini-learning Training Course

Annamaria from ARES, responsible for leading the project team in the development of the mini-learning format training courses introduced the prototype of the mini-learning format resources and demonstrated the benefits of such an approach whilst outlining the pedagogic strategies and e-didactics that are at the heart of this output. To support the creation of a suite of mini-learning resources on the Synergy Platform, Annamaria outlined our plans for the Transnational Learning Event in the Ireland in 2016 and the opportunities that this event would afford those in attendance to develop their own professional competencies as VET practitioners.

Train the Trainer Programme

Nikolaos presented the core concept and approach to the Train the Trainer programme and explained that we are trying to support the VET sector to be more responsive to the needs of business. Nikolaos delved into the structure of the proposed TTT programme and why the project consortium is responding to the needs of business owners and VET trainers in this manner. As we move into the second year of the project and in order to support the networking, exchange and interaction between the two target groups, we have shifted the approach from singular focus groups to mixed focus groups – in order to leverage the experience of both target groups to enrich the content (MLF) development in advance of the training sessions planned for Ireland in February 2016.

Synergyexchange.eu

In order to practically introduce one of the key output of the project, Antti Kanen from Innoventum demonstrated the key features of the Synergy Platform walking through the main functions and explaining how and why business owners and trainers would use the platform.

As this is the first prototype of the synergyexchange.eu, all attendees were requested to register on the site and provide constructive feedback in English or Romanian to AOA in terms of functionality, useability and accessibility of the platform.

Symposium Discussion

After the formal presentations, Adrian and Dan facilitated a Q&A followed by a formal networking event in which project partners were available to interact with the attendees responding to questions and receiving critical appraisal and input. The following comments and questions were raised during the roundtable discussion for partner consideration and feedback. These are direct quotes from the attendees:

- Congratulation on the idea – very creative idea to consider offering this proposition to both businesses and trainers
- Need to think about interactivity of the platform in terms of feedback to users and how do we manage the quality of the training input
- Multitude of demands on business owners today, take Facebook for example, every business needs to have a profile but business owner don't always know how to set-up and manage this system, so there is a need for this type of training for small business without having to commit to days of formal training during core business hours
- There were two recommendations focusing on the issues that arise once the project is over: 1. How can the project be sustained and 2. making sure that results are available with real opportunities to transfer the learning and build on it. Etallia, was a similar best practice project example with a similar idea but for the hospitality sector
- What type of business topics will be covered and how can they be accessed – how will business owners know that this very innovative solution exists?
- What level of interaction, networking is possible on the platform and can you create closed groups of networks?

This discussion was very fruitful, and the feedback was very constructive in relation to how the project plans to progress.

Closing Words

Jennifer and Adrian thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to this evening's event and officially closed the Symposium. A copy of all the presentations and the event report will be available on the project website by 15th September 2015.

Photographs of the Multiplier Event

