

WLP - Case story 2 - Italy
Presentation 2.1: Support for the development
of a *regional learning community*
with a focus on *workplace learning*
Prepared by Pekka Kämäräinen & Elmo De Angelis

Case stories for the Leonardo da Vinci project
Work & Learning Partners
Bremen 7.11.2006

Contents

Introductory remarks

[Section 1: The regional starting points](#)

[Section 2: The transitional phase](#)

...

[Concluding remarks](#)

Introductory remarks

The 'case stories' consist of a series of presentations that have been prepared for the Leonardo da Vinci project 'Workplace learning partnerships (WLP)'. This presentation is the first one of the two linked stories that are based on the **Italian case. The first presentation** focuses on the that paved the way for a community-building process among regional enterprises in the selected pilot region. The second presentation focuses on the selected content areas and on the facilitation for learning communities.

The first section provides an overview on the preconditions and the basic difficulties in promoting workplace learning partnerships in the selected region. The commentary spaces present further information why it was difficult to apply similar partnership models as were available in the German cases (see the German case story 1).

In the next section the Italian case story continues with the exploration of the potentials of networked and web-supported partnership concepts. The commentary spaces give information on the kind of cooperation arrangements that have been agreed on.

[Move to next section...](#)
[Back to the contents...](#)

Section 1: The regional starting points

The starting point for the national activities of the WLP project was provided by the initial contacts of the Italian R&D partner (Training 2000) and a group of regional industries brought together by their regional industrial association.

In the beginning phase the discussion explored the prospect of partnership-based cooperation with very few concrete starting points. The Italian industries have not established close relations to vocational education and training (VET) provisions. Equally, the industries expected the training-related cooperation in which they would commit themselves to support their competitiveness. This provides obstacles for regional community-building because the enterprises can be competitors to each other.

Therefore, it was essential to find a way to overcome the difficulties and to find common interests that provided a basis for a community-building process.

Section 1.0.

[Move to next section...](#)
[Back to the contents...](#)

Section 1: The regional starting points

Commentary space 1

In a joint situation assessment the prospects for partnership-based cooperation were narrowed down on the basis of the following arguments:

- In Italy the legal frameworks do not support any rotation of trainees between companies. For the participating enterprises such rotation arrangements could be critical regarding their competitiveness on regional markets.
- The analyses of company-specific learning potentials were welcomed as means to get feedback on where the companies stand in terms of workplace learning.
- The role of networked and web-supported learning was an open issue to be explored and discussed on the basis of the information from the WLP project.

Commentary space 1

[Context and issues](#)

[Key points](#)

[Lessons](#)

Section 1.1.

[Move to next section...](#)
[Back to the contents...](#)

Section 1: The regional starting points

Commentary space 2

The key points for bringing the partnership creation forward can be characterised in the following way:

- Although the participating enterprises did not see a possibility to rotate trainees between companies they were openness towards some form of regional cooperation.
- In spite of the limited cooperation with traditional training providers there was a positive openness to develop self-organised and customised learning provisions.
- In spite of the limited experience with web-based learning there was a positive expectation towards easily customised and usable learning models.

Commentary space 2

[Context and issues](#)

[Key points](#)

[Lessons](#)

Section 1.2.

[Move to next section...](#)
[Back to the contents...](#)

Section 1: The regional starting points

Commentary space 3

The main reasons for bringing the developmental process forward (even if the first encounter didn't offer an immediate solution) were the following:

- The partner enterprises and the facilitator (Training 2000) could agree on the perspective of developing a regionally applicable partnership concept.
- The immediate follow-up phase (the Learning Potential Analysis) was providing useful information for the companies and linking the group work to relevant regional facts.
- The regional group process was being supported by the WLP project. The facilitator (Training 2000) was seen as an *active* mediator between the trans-national project development and the regional group process.

Commentary space 3

[Context and issues](#)

[Key points](#)

[Lessons](#)

Section 1.3.

[Move to next section...](#)
[Back to the contents...](#)

Section 2: The transitional phase

In the transitional phase the WLP project had drafted some key ideas how the training providers and partner enterprises could prepare themselves regional self-organised and web-supported learning provisions. Equally, some practical steps were taken to set up shared platforms and company-specific learning environments.

The support that were provided at that stage of the WLP project drew attention to

- a) partnership development and to related agreements,
- b) on the use of portfolios or 'personal learning environments' and
- c) on the use of weblogs and blogging systems in partnership cooperation.

Although the inputs from the WLP project were not very sophisticated tools, instruments and packages, the regional industries felt confident to continue the process. The support from the WLP project had not put them into the position of consumers of ready-to-use products. Instead, the simple tools had passed the ownership of the planning process to the regional group that was taking steps to become a learning community.

Section 2.0.

[Move to next section...](#)
[Back to the contents...](#)

Section 2: The transitional phase

Commentary space 1

The transitional phase was characterised by a shift from the question 'how to make use of external partnership models' towards developing a specific model for that regional context. This shift of emphasis changed the role of participating enterprises from 'consumers' to co-developers. In the beginning this was related to development of joint web resources. Later on this change characterised the whole scope of organising joint learning activities.

Commentary space 1

[Context and issues](#)

[Key points](#)

[Lessons](#)

Section 2.1.

[Move to next section...](#)
[Back to the contents...](#)

Section 2: The transitional phase

Commentary space 2

The key point for promoting the process was the fact that the partner enterprises (saw themselves as 'owners' of a developmental initiative. In addition to this they saw that the trans-national cooperation project was able to provide this initiative some support. Yet, it was clear that it was up to the partners themselves to find the contents and to agree on the cornerstones of the learning arrangements.

Commentary space 2

[Context and issues](#)

[Key points](#)

[Lessons](#)

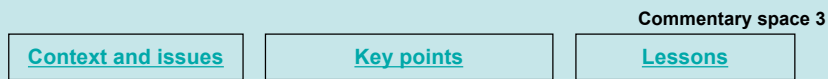
Section 2.2.

[Move to next section ...](#)
[Back to the contents ...](#)

Section 2: The transitional phase

Commentary space 3

The critical factor in the movement from the initial discussions to planning of joint learning activities was the ability to identify common areas of interest. Secondly, it was of crucial importance that the enterprises could see the possibilities to shape actively the individual learning models and to relate them to the organisational environment. From this point of view the enterprises were ready to go beyond the existing training provisions and to start planning their own contents.



Concluding remarks

This presentation has focused on the experiences that the Italian partner of the WLP project has made while supporting the creation of a regional learning community. The presentation has focused on the initial difficulties and on the critical steps forward.

It is worthwhile to note that these pioneering steps have been taken within the national sub-project of a European cooperation project. In this context the Italian partners have had the challenge and the freedom to develop the kind of partnership concept that can be adjusted to the needs of the local industries. At the same time they have been required to report on their progress for the joint European cooperation project.

In the context of the WLP project the Italian community-building process has been the pioneering case for a country-specific piloting agenda. At the same time it has been a test case for the mutual support between a European umbrella project and a country-specific sub-project that is involved in a dynamic pilot activity.

[Back to the contents ...](#)