

Title and acronym: Micro-enterprise Learning Partnerships [ME2ME]

Project type: Erasmus + Project Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices – Strategic Partnerships for Vocational Education and Training

Ref. no.: 2017-1-PL01-KA202-038280

Promoter /Coordinator: INNEO – Studio Tworczego Rozwoju Poland

Duration: 01.09.2017 to 31.08.2019

Total project cost: 277579 Euro

Total expenditure (grant) for the University of Pitesti: 19787 Euro

Local coordinator for the University of Pitești: Assoc. Professor Dr. Georgeta CHIRLEȘAN

Summary:

Micro-enterprise Learning Partnerships - ME2ME, is an innovative project that aims to develop bespoke peer-to-peer learning networks in real and virtual environments where micro-enterprise owners can share their knowledge and skills with other business owners supported by duly trained VET professionals. The owners of micro-enterprises are the key decision makers where learning in this sector is concerned and by attracting business owners to these new learning environments the project will improve the potential for learning within each micro-enterprise engaged especially for staff or workers with low skill levels.

Developing closer working relationships between the world of education and the world of work is a major priority for all Member States to try and ensure that VET provision responds to the needs of the market place. Bringing VET professionals and micro-enterprise owners together within the framework of the ME2ME project will help to cultivate positive attitudes and relationships that can be difficult in real-world settings.

ME2ME proposes an innovative approach to help foster learning in the micro-enterprise sector by encouraging micro-enterprise owners to engage in a peer learning network where business owners can share knowledge and skills to support their business objectives. The consortium will provide learning opportunities on a wide range of ubiquitous technology platforms opening up access to education and training resources. Partners will introduce VET professionals into this bespoke learning environment enabling them to get a better understanding of the training needs of micro-enterprises allowing them to develop training solutions that are relevant and appropriate for the target group.

ME2ME will provide appropriate continuous professional development resources to support the

work of VET professionals as facilitators of learning in these new on-line environments and will provide appropriate induction training for the micro-enterprise owners engaged to ensure that the proposed peer learning complies with quality standards. By encouraging micro-enterprise owners to engage in education ME2ME will help to smooth the path for workplace learning for employees working in the micro-enterprise sector. It is well documented that micro-enterprise owners are the key decision makers where learning in the sector is concerned and encouraging them to engage in learning will have a positive knock-on effect for their employees.

The digital era provides unique opportunities for the development of innovative learning content and materials. The planned mini-learning format resources are examples of how widely available digital platforms can be used to create learning materials and provide remote access to the materials developed ensuring that access to training and qualifications for all is improved.

Objectives:

Management training improves company performance, productivity and profitability and reduces corporate failure rates (OECD Report on Corporate Failure, 2012). This OECD research also singled out "managerial weakness, inappropriate training offers, time poverty, and poor linkages between educational bodies and micro-enterprises as key factors in the failure of small businesses" highlighting the "low uptake of training, especially among owner-managers of micro-enterprises". The ME2ME Project recognises that owner-managers are the key to learning in the micro-enterprise sector and the more they can be encouraged to participate in learning the more likely they are to promote a culture of learning in their companies.

The aim of the ME2ME project is "to support the transformation of the European economy into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy by developing and implementing a bespoke learning

environment for micro-enterprise owners to ensure the development of SMEs and to enable this dynamic sector realize its true potential”.

The project objectives are to:

- grow a culture of learning within the micro-enterprise sector by cultivating positive attitudes towards learning among business owners;

- develop peer-to-peer learning networks in each partner country;

- help bridge the gap between business owners and education service providers by bringing them together in on-line networks;

- train VET tutors to develop media-rich mini-learning-format resources that address specific skill needs in the SME sector to help make VET more responsive to the needs of business.

Outcomes:

1) Research & Audit Phase. A comprehensive research process is envisaged to identify key learning needs of VET professionals to be included in the proposed CPD curriculum to support them to work with micro-enterprises through non-traditional learning platforms; identify the skills needed to help VET professionals produce media-rich mini-learning format learning resources; identify the induction to pedagogy needs of micro-enterprise owners to ensure that they can participate fully in the micro-enterprise to micro-enterprise learning networks; identify key

learning areas to be addressed in the mini-learning format training resources to be developed as prototypes and the most appropriate media formats to use in producing the media-rich resources.

2) Development Phase.

a) CPD curriculum development: design, development and testing of the new ME2ME CPD curriculum. This development work will respond to the learning needs identified in the research phase and by regular peer reviews conducted with the local stakeholder forums.

b) Induction training development: design, development and testing of the induction to pedagogy training programme for micro-enterprise owners to ensure that they understand the basic principles of pedagogic best practice before engaging in the peer-to-peer learning partnerships.

c) Mini-learning-format resource production: design and development of a digital toolbox of mini-learning-format prototype resources to address specific gaps in education provision for micro-enterprise owners that were identified during the research and audit phase.

3) Production Phase: the CPD curriculum will be produced in media-rich formats to support face-to-face and blended learning in a variety of settings and on a range of technology platforms; the induction to pedagogy will be produced for use in a series of 4 facilitated workshop sessions; the mini-learning-format prototype resources will be produced as media-rich, bite sized learning tools.

4) Implementation Phase: partners will deliver the CPD training to VET professionals in each partner country; partners will deliver the induction to pedagogy training to micro-enterprise owners in each partner country.

5) Developing Web Platforms: all on-line platforms will be developed, tested and updated throughout the project life-cycle.

Partnership:

1. **INNEO – Studio Tworczego Rozwoju (Poland)**
2. **Kaouno Mokslo ir Technologiju Parkas (Lithuania)**
3. **Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative Limited (United Kingdom)**
4. **Pandokrator Ltd. (Hungary)**
5. **University of Pitești (Romania)**
6. **Future in Perspective Limited (Ireland)**
7. **Reintegra (Czech Republic)**
8. **INNOVENTUM OY (Finland)**