

debote

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISER TRAINING AND EXCHANGE



North Karelia University of Applied Sciences Publications
C: Reports, 35

debate

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISER TRAINING AND EXCHANGE

FINLAND // ESTONIA // HUNGARY // ITALY // LATVIA // SWEDEN

INTERREG IIIC project 2005 – 2007

Anna Liisa Westman
Kirsi-Marja Toivanen-Sevrjukova
Ulla Asikainen
Liisa Timonen

North Karelia University of Applied Sciences
Joensuu 2009

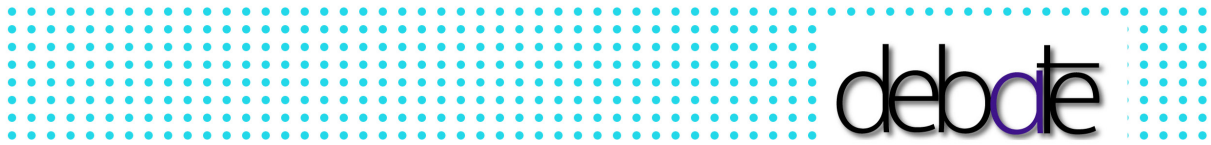
Publication Series C: Reports, 35

Editor in Charge Ph.D. Anna Liisa Westman

Editors Anna Liisa Westman
Kirsi-Marja Toivanen-Sevrjukova
Ulla Asikainen
Liisa Timonen

ISBN 978-951-604-097-7
ISBN 978-951-604-096-0 (pdf)
ISSN 1797-3848
ISSN 1797-3856 (pdf)

Printed by Juvenes Print Oy, Tampere



DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISER TRAINING AND EXCHANGE

<http://debatenet.info>

FINLAND // ESTONIA // GREECE // HUNGARY // ITALY // LATVIA // SWEDEN

PARTNER REGIONS...

- Itä-Suomi (East Finland) (FI)
- Värmland (Wermland) (SE)
- Eesti (Estonia) (EE)
- Latvija (Latvia) (LV)
- Nyugat-Dunantul (Western Trans-Danubia) (HU)
- Liguria (IT)
- Dytiki Ellada (Western Greece) (GR)
- Attiki (GR)

North East South West
INTERREG III C

CONTENTS

Forewords.....	7
Contributors	8
1 INTRODUCTION	9
2 PROJECT COORDINATION AND CONSORTIUM.....	11
2.1 Project Administration and Roles of Partners.....	12
2.2 Project Consortium	14
3 THE PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISERS (EBA).....	19
3.1 Surveys.....	19
3.2 Business Advisers' Professional Profile.....	23
3.3 Certification of BA/EBA Qualification.....	26
4 EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISERS.....	28
4.1 Personal Learning Plans (PLPs).....	28
4.2 Educational Structure for Business Advisory	35
5 INTERNATIONAL PILOT EXCHANGE PROGRAMME.....	38
6 DISSEMINATION AND EVALUATION	41
6.1 Cooperation, Communication and Dissemination	41
6.2 Evaluation	43
7 CONCLUSION	46

Appendices

1. PLP Interview Form
2. EBA Core Competencies
3. Summary of the Training Programmes
4. Newsletters 1, 2, 3 and 4

Forewords

The initiative for the Debate, Development of the European Adviser Training and Exchange Project was elaborated among business advisors and representatives of educational institutions in Eastern Finland in 2003 – 2004. After a short, but intensive regionally implemented preparatory project, it became evident that there is a need for an international and interregional development project carried out by a large partnership of advisory and educational organisations around Europe. In the final project consortium there were representatives from seven countries: Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Italy and Greece in addition to Finland. North Karelia University of Applied Sciences acted as a Lead Partner of the Operation, which was implemented in 2005 – 2007. Ms. Nina Holopainen was selected as project manager who coordinated the wide international consortium.

The operation addressed the three key challenges of regional development in the European context: 1) the growth of the regional economies is to a large extent dependent on the well-being and stability of SMEs and entrepreneurship, 2) personal, lifelong learning facilitated through more elaborated forms and approaches of adult education and in-service training, is a fundamental tool of regional development and even more, a guarantee of the sustainability of the results of the development processes, and 3) international cooperation has become an essential corner of regional development.

The most concrete outputs achieved in the Debate project were 1) establishment of the association for business advisors in Europe 2) tailor-made training programmes and educational modules for business advisors and 3) the networks of advisory organisations and educational institutions to promote forthcoming development initiatives and to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation.

At this stage, almost two years after the end of Debate, we want to express our warmest thanks to all Debate partners and other contributors, who are too numerous to be named. The special appreciation goes to Nina Holopainen, who devoted herself for the operation with exceptional enthusiasm and expertise. Her energetic approach carried us through the project shortcomings and success. Debate was an excellent learning process for all of us.

We, as editors of this book, would like to offer our readers an opportunity to see how different partners consolidated their aims, ideas and practices and how they worked together for the enhancement of entrepreneurship, education and regional development in Europe.

In Joensuu, 25th March 2009

Ulla Asikainen, Liisa Timonen, Kirsi-Marja Toivanen-Sevrjukova and Anna Liisa Westman

Contributors

Anna Liisa Westman, Ph.D., Chief Editor. Ms. Westman works as a principal lecturer at the Centre for Business and Engineering.

Kirsi-Marja Toivanen-Sevrjukova, Ph.Lic. Ms. Toivanen-Sevrjukova works as a principal lecturer of Language Services at the Centre for Business and Engineering.

Ulla Asikainen, M.Sc. works as a Director of the Centre for Natural Resources.

Liisa Timonen, M.Soc.Sc. works as an Education and Development Manager at the Centre for Natural Resources.

All contributors represent the Lead Partner, North Karelia University of Applied Sciences.

1 INTRODUCTION

This publication highlights the most important functions and outcomes of the Debate project. Debate, the short for the Development of the European Business Adviser Training and Exchange Project, was implemented in 2005-2007 with the financial support from INTERREG IIIC North Zone and the Finnish Ministry of Interior. It was carried out by a consortium of nine (9) regions and 16 business advisory agencies and universities in Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Sweden and Finland. The project was coordinated by North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (formerly called North Karelia Polytechnic) in Finland. The budget of the project approximated 1.1 MEUR.

Entrepreneurship is one of the corner stones of the European policies of regional development both in urban and rural contexts. The growth of regional economies in Europe is to a large extent dependent on the well-being and stability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and that, in turn, sets demands to the competencies and knowledge of entrepreneurs, business experts, consultants and educators. However, Business Advisers (BAs) and the European advisory systems have not been fully equipped to support their client SMEs in the present economic situation and contemporary society, characterised with internationalisation, rapid and constant changes and uncertainty. Due to the growth of export – import activities between the enterprises within the EU, the BAs are facing a situation where they lack both qualifications to assist their clients with the international business itself but also the tools and methods to facilitate the learning and development of their clients in the international contexts and networks.

The Debate project was started on the premise that the European business advisory could be developed by the collaboration and networking of BAs, their clients, advisory centres and educational institutions at the regional and pan-European level. The aims of the Debate project were as follows:

- 1) establishment of an acknowledged, more positive **professional image and status** of a European Business Adviser, adding to the mutual trust between BAs and their clients,
- 2) construction of a professional profile for a BA by defining the **criteria for the BA's qualifications and competences** and official guidelines/standards for certification,
- 3) establishment of a **structure of information and knowledge resources** for the European business advisory with the acknowledgement of the scientific and collegial/tacit knowledge as well as concrete tools, methods and practices,
- 4) creation of **international network**, association of BAs, European BA exchange programme, eNetwork with a methodological database, regional working groups of BAs, educators, trainers and researchers and
- 5) development of (in-service) **training programs**, based on the professional profile of a European BA and including an international exchange programme.

The purpose of the following chapters is to report some of the most important steps, activities and outcomes of the Debate operation. However, this work is not the official final report of the Project. The more detailed progress, financial and project reports are available from the Lead Partner upon request.

Chapter 2 of this report discusses project coordination and administration. It also presents the partners of the Debate project and their main responsibilities in the Operation. The following chapter concentrates on the professional profile of business advisers. The starting points in designing the professional profile were a pre-survey and a survey. In the survey process, the Lead Partner was represented by Mr. Tenho Kohonen. Moreover, the certification of business advisers' qualification is referred to in this chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on the educational structure for business adviser training. Personal learning plans (PLP) were developed in each of the participating countries and this process is included in this chapter. Curricula for national educational products are discussed together with the learning environments. Chapter 5 includes issues of international networking. The international pilot exchange programme is described and reported by Ms. Liisa Timonen.

In Chapter 6 the dissemination and evaluation of the Project are summed up. The evaluation was conducted by the Hungarian partner. The concluding chapter focuses on the outcomes of the Debate project and discusses the future implications and effects.

2 PROJECT COORDINATION AND CONSORTIUM

The Debate project, including representatives from business advisory, education and research, was managed and coordinated through international workshops, regional working groups and the virtual workspace called Allu. The desired outcome of the Project was crystallized as “Improved Quality of Business Advisory”, which was pursued by various activities of the participants as illustrated in Figure 1.

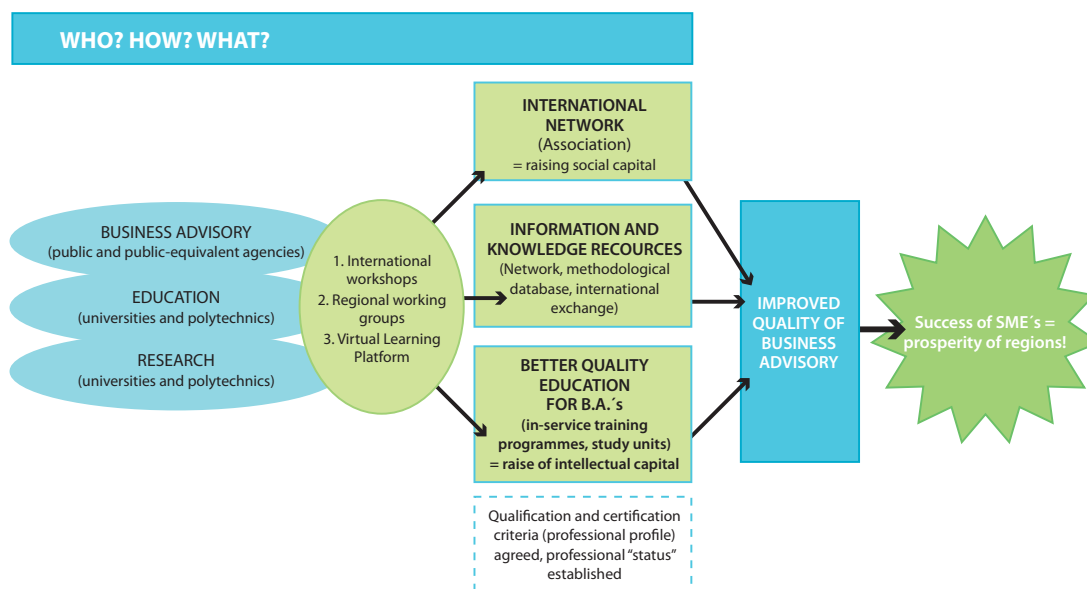


Figure 1. The main activities of the Debate project

The Debate project was based on Community Initiative Programme, Interreg IIIC, North Zone. Interreg III as a community initiative aimed at stimulating interregional cooperation in the EU between 2000-06. Interreg IIIC was financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It was amended due to the EU enlargement and approved by the Commission on 19 October 2004.

North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (earlier North Karelia Polytechnic) in Finland functioned as the Lead Partner. The project consortium consisted of 16 partners, which were: Jobs and Society of North Karelia, Finland; KETI - Centre for Development and Information in Central Karelia, Finland; Joensuu Regional Development Company, JOSEK Ltd., Finland; Kainuun Etu – Kainuu Regional Development Company, Finland; Kajaani University Consortium, University of Oulu, Finland; Tallinn University of Technology/Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Estonia; Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece; Center of Local Development of Western Achaia (KTADA), Greece; Kisalföld Foundation for Enterprise Promotion, Hungary; University of West-Hungary Center of Agricultural Science Mosonmagyaróvár, Hungary; Lag Appennino Genovese, Italy; Jelgava Regional Adult Educational Centre, Latvia; Technology Development Foundation, Latvia; Development Enterprise of Achaia Prefecture (NEA), Greece and ALMI Business Partner Värmland AB, Sweden. All in all, the Debate project included seven (7) countries, nine (9) regions in Objective 1 and 2 areas, and 16 partner organisations.

The duration of the Debate project was three (3) years from February 11, 2005 until December 31, 2007. The overall budget was EUR 1 115 885, from which ERDF share was EUR 797 635 (71.5 % of the total).

The main milestones of the Debate project were the following:

Workshop 1, Latvia, Jelgava, May 2005

The aim of the Workshop 1 was to construct the 1st draft of the Professional Profile of a European Business Adviser by defining the core qualifications and competences of the professionals in the field.

Workshop 2, Italy, Genoa, October 2005

The purpose of the workshop was to design networking and the e-Network (portal) as well as plan the European Business Adviser Association, which would safeguard the cooperation of BAs beyond the project.

Workshop 3, Finland, Joensuu, May 2006

The Workshop 3 developed curriculum structures for the education and training of Business Advisers in Europe.

Workshop 4, Hungary, Mosonmagyaróvár, October 2006

The Workshop 4 established a structure for information and knowledge resources for the European business advisory.

Workshop 5, Sweden, Värmland, April 2007

This workshop designed the final framework of functions of the Association of European Business Advisers (AEBA) and worked for the improvement of the portal of EBAs. These tools and forums will offer a possibility for continuing interaction between Business Advisers and educators in Europe. Furthermore, development and exchange methodology were under the discussion.

Workshop 6, Greece, September 2007

During the Workshop 6 the partners evaluated the project.

Although each workshop concentrated on a specific issue, all six components were discussed in all workshops.

2.1 Project Administration and Roles of Partners

The Lead Partner, North Karelia University of Applied Sciences fulfilled the obligations arising from the subsidy contract and the approved application. The Lead Partner appointed Ms. Nina Holopainen, M.Soc.Sc. to be the project manager (Head Coordinator). She accepted the operational responsibility for the implementation of the overall operation and that of a financial manager and implemented the Operation according to the descriptions of individual project components, approved by the Steering Committee. She was in the duty to draw up and present regular progress reports comprising activity reports and audited financial reports to the joint technical secretariat of the CIP "INTERREG IIIC North Zone". She was also obliged to take care

of final reporting as defined in the subsidy contract and to request payments from the paying authority of the CIP “INTERREG IIIIC North Zone”. In addition she received payments from the paying authority and transferred respective shares to the partners. The project manager verified appropriated spending of the subsidy, carried out the Operation’s overall accounting and communicated with the bodies implementing the CIP “INTERREG IIIIC North Zone”. The Lead Partner produced all documents required for the audit, provided necessary information and gave access to its business premises. The Lead Partner provided the independent assessors carrying out the INTERREG IIIIC mid-term and ex-post evaluation with any document or information necessary for the evaluation.

All Debate partners accepted the following duties and obligations: They all respectively appointed a Project Leader (Institutional Contact Person and/or Regional Coordinator) for the parts of the Operation for which they were responsible for and gave the project leader the authority to represent the partner in the Operation. Each partner implemented the part of the Operation for which it was responsible in due time according to the descriptions of individual components approved by the Steering Committee. All partners supported the Lead Partner in drawing up progress and financial reports and the final report by providing the required data in accordance with the timetable of internal reporting jointly agreed on. Every partner produced and delivered all information necessary for payment requests and notified the Lead Partner immediately of any event that could lead to a temporary or final discontinuation or any other deviation of the Operation. Every partner produced the documents required for the audit, provided necessary information and, for audit purposes, gave access to its business premises and complied with EU and national legislation.

As already mentioned, the Debate project was financed by Interreg IIIIC, the statutes and regulations of which were strictly followed. The administrative structure of the Debate project included official project meetings by the steering group, as well as interaction and meetings of regional coordinators, who constituted the coordinating team. Altogether there were six (6) official project meetings and eight (8) coordinators’ meetings during the project. The secretarial duties and accounting were partly done by the administration of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences.

The Debate project consisted of five components: (1) coordination and administration, (2) dissemination and evaluation, (3) professional profile, (4) networking and (5) education. In order to manage all five components, each partner nominated an institutional contact person. In each of the participating region a regional coordinator was also appointed. Subsequently, the contacts between the regional coordinators and the institutional contact persons were established and an appropriate model for cooperation designed in Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Finland. Moreover, the system of day-to-day financial and cost management was established. It comprised e.g. the division of tasks and responsibilities between staff members, contacts with the auditors, costs recording and documentation, and filing and archiving. A specific timetable with exact deadlines was designed to assist in time management of the Project.

2.2 Project Consortium

The Debate project was represented by six (6) Finnish partner organisations, of which one acted as the Lead Partner of the whole Project. The Lead Partner, **North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, NKUAS** (previously North Karelia Polytechnic, NCP) was founded in 1992. It is a municipal enterprise owned by the City of Joensuu. Currently there are 7 study fields, 22 bachelor-level degree programmes, three (3) master-level degree programmes, about 4000 students and 400 lecturers and other staff. The main campus is situated in Joensuu. The NKUAS is mainly funded by the Ministry of Education.

As per the Polytechnic Act and Decree, North Karelia University of Applied Sciences is involved in regional development. In promoting the surrounding region, it operates in an active, pro-client and result-oriented way. North Karelia belongs to the Objective 1 areas of the programme period 2000-2006 of the European Union. NKUAS has been one of the main actors in implementing projects of the European Structural Funds in North Karelia. It has participated in a number of joint projects with the University of Joensuu and Joensuu Science Park Ltd. In addition, it has had international cooperation projects with other European countries and the Russian Federation.

An important aim of international cooperation of NKUAS is to promote and advance regional development. Furthermore, through international cooperation NKUAS also develops the quality of its education and expertise. International cooperation activates student and staff mobility, strengthens language, communication and professional competences of students and staff and provides an international aspect to curriculum development.

The second Finnish partner, **Jobs and Society of North Karelia** is specialised in advising and consultation in order to establish new companies and develop businesses. The agency was founded in 1995. The members of the association are successful growth companies. In 2004 the agency reached the position of a principal entrepreneurship activator in North Karelia region. It provides comprehensive business services for people who are planning to start their own business. The agency has offices in four locations, which are the towns of Kitee, Outokumpu and Nurmes and the city of Joensuu. The main adviser office is located in Joensuu, close to the state-owned North Karelia Employment and Economic Development Centre (T&E Centre), which also supplies business services such as entrepreneurial and financial services, e.g. grants and business loans.

The agency works in close cooperation with North Karelian municipalities and regional development companies, the business, countryside and labour departments of T&E Centre, Finnvera plc, employment offices and several other central parties promoting entrepreneurship. The agency is a member of Finland's Jobs and Society Network, which includes thirty other enterprise centres. Business wind-ups have been fairly common in Finland in previous years and over half of the established companies have closed down their business before their third year of operation. With the help of the nationwide network, business wind-ups have diminished.

The third Debate partner representing Finland was **Joensuu Regional Development Company Ltd, Josek**. Josek is responsible for regional business policy and development,

business counselling, as well as for the marketing of the region. It has 13 experts specialised in the development of selected business sectors and companies. Its turnover in 2003 was over MEUR 3. The office of Josek is located in Joensuu Science Park. Josek offers business consulting relating to company start-up, company growth and investments. Josek promotes business development, e.g. by planning development programmes, funding projects, giving expert advice and support, and by helping companies in international marketing. There are various special projects in Josek. These include e.g. the transfer of SMEs, SME clinic, wood energy and international cooperation. Josek mainly operates in Joensuu region, where there are 115 000 inhabitants and over 5000 enterprises. Furthermore, Joensuu region is an active studying area.

Development Centre of Central Karelia, KETI Ltd was the fourth Finnish partner of the Debate consortium. KETI Ltd. works in the region of four municipalities, which have approximately 20 000 inhabitants and over 900 enterprises. In the region there are strong and successful metal and construction industries and efficient wood processing network. The region provides an ideal operative environment for tourism as well as a beautiful and peaceful place to live and work.

KETI has over 300 clients per year, to whom it offers various services such as development of business ideas and operations, company establishment procedures and counselling, planning and managing investment and development projects. Moreover, KETI creates cooperation channels, searches for business partners and clients, organises training and theme events, assists in company business transfers, as well as supplies information on the market situation, investment possibilities and vacant factory buildings and office spaces in the region.

The fifth Finnish partner, **Kainuu Regional Development Company, Kainuun Etu** was founded in 2000. Kainuun Etu is a regional development company owned by the municipalities of Kainuu. It serves all companies in Kainuu by high quality experts who can further derive know-how from their extensive national and international networks. Kainuun Etu has long experience in cooperating internationally and receiving funding from the European Commission programs.

Kainuu is a region which has had financial difficulties due to the peripheral location and other problems typical of sparsely populated areas. Kainuun Etu works to promote regional development. It is owned by all municipalities of Kainuu. The main duties of Kainuun Etu include collecting statistics, implementing the chosen development strategy, supporting the region with implementing its own development strategy, monitoring the development needs of the enterprises by a joint development strategy and expert services as well as by developing international networks.

Kajaani University Consortium, KajUC also participated in the Debate project. KajUC started its activity in 2004 when similar university consortiums were established around Finland as initiated by the Ministry of Education. KajUC has a special administrative system and it brings together the universities of Joensuu, Kuopio, Jyväskylä and Lapland. KajUC includes all the university units of Kainuu. The mission of Kajaani University Consortium is to improve the knowledge level, well-being, competitiveness and university culture in the area by means of research, education and development. The units and departments functioning in Kainuu mutually support each other in their

co-operative activities as well as work in cooperation with Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. KajUC also co-operates with the neighbouring universities. Cooperation enhances and strengthens the knowledge and resources of the University Consortium, thus responding to the challenge related to learning and innovation.

The Debate project had two Greek partners. **Athens University of Economics and Business/ Research Centre (AUEB/RC)**, was represented by its **Laboratory of Strategy and Entrepreneurship**. The University provides high-level education at undergraduate and graduate levels in business, economics and statistics and has a proven record of high-quality research. The University offers extensive consultancy projects for firms and state policy makers.

AUEB is a centre of excellence devoted to the promotion of academic, applied and policy research in the fields of strategy and entrepreneurship. It focuses on strategy formulation and implementation, business transformation and strategic change, the impact of business conditions and regulations on competitiveness, strategic leadership, entrepreneurship and business development. All of the above areas are examined in both local and international contexts. AUEB has undertaken more than 20 research and consultancy projects during the last 6-7 years in strategy, management and international business, involving large and small firms. Projects often include collaboration with European and US partners, such as universities, firms and policy-makers.

The other Greek partner in the project was the **Development Enterprise of Achaia Prefecture, NEA**. NEA's aim is to design, promote and implement development initiatives and investments, to develop the competitiveness of the SMEs, to improve the labour market and to reinforce the occupations in the prefecture. NEA's programmes and activities aiming at the development of tourism entail e.g. information networks of tourist services, investment plans of tourism, alternative and new ways of tourism, and the development of touristic products of Achaia prefecture.

NEA also takes care of the programme management for environmental protection. The environment programme of NEA argues for the development and protection of mountainous areas. It develops geographical information systems and environmental studies. In addition NEA organises events for the protection of the environment and develops mountain paths. NEA is participating in several projects related to the sustainable development of regional and multifunctional intensive land use in Europe.

NEA aims at reinforcing transnational and interregional cooperation and development of the information society and technologies. NEA supports Achaia Prefecture by offering technical and scientific support, organising conferences, participating in exhibitions, developing studies, designing, and implementing investment studies and development activities. One of NEA's tasks is also to promote Achaia Prefecture. NEA supports SMEs by elaborating studies for market sectors and by giving financial support to private enterprises. It organises promotional and educational seminars and exhibitions. Additionally NEA provides consulting activities, information for financial support and networking activities for investors. It also publishes investment guides.

NEA promotes employment by offering information networking for the provision of the social and economic characteristics of the prefecture, recording of the active human

resources, scouting of the market trends and of the financial sectors. Comparative and statistical analysis of the local data towards the national and the European will be researched. Strategic Plans of NEA includes reinforcement of human resource and continuous fight against unemployment.

In the Project, Hungary was represented by two partners. The first of these, the **University of West Hungary, Centre of Agricultural Science Mosonmagyaróvár** offers full-time, correspondence and complementary courses in agricultural engineering majoring in food quality assurance and agricultural business studies. Specialisation areas include English and German business languages, EU management, regional and rural development, business skills, economic informatics, organisation of business ventures and financing of enterprises. The training of full-time courses extends to ten semesters. The graduates are awarded MSc degrees in agricultural engineering. There is also Ph.D. School for the biological, technological, ecological, feeding and economic aspects of animal production and the Ph.D. School for the precision crop production methods.

The research of the Institute of Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences include the organisation of regional and sub-regional consultative activity, the planning and analysis of the sustainable development, the elaboration of agricultural models as well as the regional aspects of the coordination and information systems of agro-business product chains. The institute also analyses the role of financial institutions and affairs, primarily in the management of business ventures. The European Union Educational Centre works within the Institute and researches e.g. Hungary's accession to the EU.

Kisalföld Foundation for Enterprise Promotion, KVA, the second Hungarian partner, has been serving small and medium-sized enterprises for almost ten years. It is building the infrastructure to help the operations of enterprises and gives them the information they require in economics, law and other fields. The foundation promotes SMEs to get in touch and to create business cooperation with partners in the European Union.

KVA's mission is to promote and motivate the establishment and expansion of SMEs. Furthermore, it develops the professional and management-related knowledge-base of actors of the local economy, and adjusts it to the demands of the actual environment. Kisalföld develops education resources in order to use them on behalf of development of SMEs as well as to promote the application of high technology in business and enterprise.

The objective of consulting activity is to give legal, economic and professional advice for small and medium-sized enterprises and to prepare them for facing the requirements of the European economic and legal environment. The Foundation organises computing, business and language education for governments, civil organisations and SMEs. The educational aim is to support the actors of the local economy. Courses improve productivity and communication ability with local and foreign partners. Kisalföld is one of Hungary's more than 230 accredited European Computer Driving License Test and Education Centres. Kisalföld's services include project management, office services, IT consulting and conference services.

One of the main activities of the Foundation is the micro-crediting for micro and small enterprises. Usually the enterprises that turn to micro-credits are the ones whose economic position is weak and for whom the credit systems of commercial banks are not available.

The first of the two Latvian partners participating in the Debate project was **Jelgava Regional Adult Educational Centre**. Jelgava's services contain consultation, development of business plans, foundation of entrepreneurships and mentoring programmes. Jelgava is a branch of a public organisation. Its main activities are business support, career development, training, projects and education. Business support is both consultative and research-based. Education and training include language education, career tests, IT technology, metal work and other types of professional education. Jelgava has been an active consultant, leader and partner in many projects.

The other Latvian partner, **Technology Development Foundation**, TDF is a public organisation with a mission to facilitate the development and implementation of high-tech innovations. It generates potential for further sustainability of Latvia by developing value-added production.

The Swedish partner of the Debate consortium, **ALMI Business Partner Värmland AB** promotes the development of competitive small and medium-sized businesses and stimulates new businesses having the overall aim of creating growth and renewal in the Swedish economy. ALMI funds loans for about MSEK 3,500 a year. It has about 12,000 loan customers and it works in close collaboration with banks. ALMI's loan products are Innovation Loan, Business Loan, Growth Loan, Project Loan and Guarantees. It has been noticed that in Sweden 94% of companies have less than 10 employees, six out of every ten professionals are in companies with fewer than 200 employees and four out of every five professionals work in services.

The Estonian partner in the Debate project was **Tallinn University of Technology**. It is the biggest university in Estonia, established as an engineering college in 1918. It acquired its university status in 1936. The student body approximates 11 000. The staff amounts to 1600, half of whom are academic, among this 107 professors. The university has eight (8) faculties, including Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Language Centre, Sports Centre. In the Debate project Tallinn University of Technology was represented by its **Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences**.

The Italian partner of Debate was **The Local Action Group (LAG) Appennino Genovese**. LAG Appennino Genovese is an agency of local development. LAG is a public equivalent body composed by 23 public and private partners such as the Province of Genoa (Nuts III), Chamber of Commerce and SME Associations consisting of agricultural, handicraft, tourism and commerce and public transport companies. The principal objective of LAG is the promotion of the territory by trying to merge investments in the zone of their own competence, in order to favour the development of small enterprise local development. It sets up and manages programs for local development, and assists public and private organisations in the evaluation of projects and initiatives for the development of rural areas. The development of rural tourism means the development of quality in the different components of the territory, such as accommodation structures, small retailers, promotion of food resources as well as improvement of services and quality of life and the development of new technologies in the rural areas.

3 THE PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISERS (EBA)

The term or title of “Business Adviser” was not explicitly defined at the outset of the Debate project. However, during the Project the key competences and qualifications of a European Business Adviser (EBA) were discussed, defined and determined. The aim of Component 3 was to develop a more positive image of the BA profession and to strengthen the professional status of EBAs. The European project consortium, therefore, worked together to make the EBA profession more visible, recognised and acknowledged in each of the participating regions and countries, as well as around Europe. It was assumed that when EBAs are acknowledged at the national and European levels, it will positively contribute the trustful interaction of various stakeholder groups, such as clients, authorities and the general public and thus, also serve the interest of the European policies of regional development.

In each region lecturers and other representatives of educational institutions had meetings and discussions with local business advisers elaborating the professional profile of BAs for curriculum development. The regional working groups (RWGs) provided a forum for cooperation and communication between business advisory, education and research. These groups worked actively and their work is still continuing in several regions even the Debate operation has already ended. The workshops provided an arena for exchange and development of business advisory methods, with a special focus on internationalisation of SMEs.

The process of developing and elaborating the professional profile of EBAs included the above mentioned discussions, but also two surveys: pre-survey and main survey. The purpose of the surveys was to facilitate and support the work undertaken in Components 3 – 5. The results of the surveys, thus, were to be used to elaborate the professional profile as well as to design the curricular contents of inservice training. It was also anticipated that the surveys could function as a medium for advance marketing and promotion of the Debate products, in particular the eNetwork. Next, the pre-survey and main survey are discussed in more detail.

3.1 Surveys

One implement used in the development of the EBAs’ professional profile was a pre-survey, which was conducted in spring 2006 by Finnish students of business economics at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences. The survey examined the image of and expectations towards business advisers among various stakeholder groups, e.g. clients/entrepreneurs and authorities. On the other hand, it also collected feedback on the professional profile and concepts, which had been regionally or nationally outlined and defined earlier. The pre-survey was desk research, which examined both quantitative and qualitative aspects of business advisory in Europe. The pre-survey helped to estimate the number of BAs, their background organisations and titles and to have a general view on the work profiles and tasks of BAs.

The results of the pre-survey were analysed and interpreted in the light of the objectives of the Debate project. The results of the survey and feedback from BAs, authorities and other stakeholder groups were reported, disseminated and communicated in the regions.

The purpose of the main survey was to further specify the professional profile of EBAs which had been created after the pre-survey. Another objective was to investigate if there are any national features and practices which need to be taken into account when defining the professional profile or designing EBA education in each of the countries involved. The main survey was conducted in each partner country separately but following a shared framework. It was also agreed that some of the collaboratively defined concepts were used in the questionnaires. The terms related to the European Business Advisers' profile. The following list includes some commonly agreed terms and concepts:

Business advice or training means independent provision of advice and assistance in issues regarding start-up and development of business and facilitation of the development as well as identification and research of a problem/-s and/or different possibilities, recommending an appropriate action and assistance in realising these suggestions.

Business adviser is a person who is able to give advice on several activities of a business.

Status of business advisers

Taking into account the differences in BA identification among partner countries the following three EBA statuses were provided, as in Figure 3:

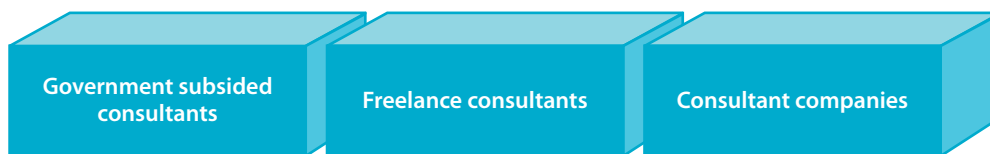


Figure 2. Status of business advisers

Government subsidized consultant works in an organisation and partly as a freelance consultant producing advisory and expert services. These consultants are financed partly or wholly by governmental subsidies.

Freelance consultant is an independent business adviser or an expert of particular industry.

Consultant company is an institution of independent private business advisers providing advisory, training or project management.

The general abilities and generic competences of BAs were investigated through the following set of questions:

1. What are the general tools in business advisory?
2. What do we mean by business ethics and values and how to support/ implement them?
3. How to run business management/development in a comprehensive way?
4. How to manage with business development process, i.e. problem analyzing and solving?
5. In what kind of a business environment are the businesses operating?

It was anticipated that the EBAs should have solid business know-how, which demands good education and both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The main competence areas of the EBA were considered to include economics, entrepreneurship, legislation, taxation, marketing, sales, accounting, investments, financing and pricing. The EBA was expected to be able to manage risks and to have knowledge of the developments of business, globalisation and technology. At the beginning of the survey it was assumed that the EBA

1. understands how to elicit/analyse the customers' backgrounds, their psychological capability and needs,
2. knows problem-solving methods,
3. knows where to find information about financing and markets,
4. knows how to do financial statements,
5. knows the authorities of the area/region and their responsibilities,
6. knows how to build networks and how to work in a network/team, and
7. knows the regional development plans and business development trends of the region.

The skills of the EBA were grouped into three categories:

1. EBA's personal skills: The basic skills of the EBA rest upon good theoretical background and work experience. The professional profile also requires high ethics from the adviser. Having personal balance and interest in continual professional development leads to successful professional practice.
2. Client skills: Client management skills are vital for the EBA. To help SMEs is to understand entrepreneurship. Changes caused by multiculturalism are a great challenge. When the EBA is not familiar with foreign cultures and languages, problems in communication will most probably appear at verbal, non-verbal and emotional level. That is why specific training for EBAs is essential.
3. System skills: These skills are necessary at the agency level. The goal is to provide high quality business services and to manage processes, developing tools and best practices. The need for networking between colleagues is obvious.

At the outset the participants also had some ideas about the requirements pertaining to the tutoring/counselling ability of EBAs. The interdependency of business advisers was acknowledged. It was expected that the EBA should be able to learn from her/his peers and colleagues, support other advisers and accept support from others, mentor older and younger advisers and use experienced entrepreneurs as coaches. Furthermore, the group counselling ability was assumed to include the preparedness to teach and counsel small groups in a holistic way, to use virtual environments and to evaluate needs in order to personalise the training for the specific needs of an individual or a group. In sum, the EBA was considered to be a credible and customer-oriented person working with high level of professional ethics.

This part of the report discusses some of the important results of the surveys and conclusions made by the Latvian partner. Additionally, the results derived from the surveys among business advisers and those among stakeholders are compared. The surveys were made in six of the seven participating countries. The target groups for the surveys were business advisers working either in public organisations or as private consultants, and their customers.

All countries conducted the surveys among advisers and stakeholders to identify the most necessary competences for business advisers and to develop them further into a professional profile. The numbers of respondents varied quite a lot between the countries and the comparative data is not available from all countries, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of respondents (i.e. business advisers and stakeholders) in the member countries

Country	Number of advisers	Number of stakeholders
Estonia	Na	20
Finland	83	147
Greece	61	61
Hungary	28	27
Italy	15	10
Latvia	17	10
Sweden	127	Na

The age of the respondents varied slightly between the countries. The oldest respondents (over 60 years of age) were from Sweden and Finland, while in Latvia almost half of the respondents were less than 30 years of age. The majority of the respondents had a degree of higher education.

The surveys combined information from two sources, i.e. business advisers' self-evaluations on important areas of their work and stakeholders', i.e. customers', expectations pertaining to business advisers and their know-how. When considering business advisers' knowledge, both the advisers and the stakeholders considered general knowledge of business to be the most important factor. Also finance was considered an important part of business advisers' knowledge by both groups. The other common factors were business planning, emphasized more by the advisers, and business legislations, respectively more emphasized by stakeholders.

Competition and business networks were mentioned by both groups as important knowledge elements. Also distribution channels and changes in the national economy were pointed out as important factors. Changes in social relationships were considered an important part of knowledge by the business advisers, but it was not seen as one of the most important factors by the stakeholders.

Table 2. Personal competence - Similar answers between countries

Business advisers' self-evaluations	Customers' requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer orientation - Negotiation skills - Learning new things - Performance skills - Flexibility - Motivating/encouraging - Language skills - Cross-cultural competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer orientation - Realizing the role of a BA - Critical analysing

Table 2 shows that both groups saw customer orientation as the most important personal competence. Otherwise, the views of the two groups differed quite a lot. For example, the business advisers considered negotiation and learning skills very important, while the stakeholders focused more on the role of a business adviser and critical analysis. The results relating to the personal competences should be taken seriously, because they can have a strong influence on the whole advising process.

When considering the important factors influencing business advisers' self-image both the advisers and the stakeholders found the knowledge of business environment and business know-how to be the most important.

Table 3. Factors influencing self-image - Similar answers between countries

Business advisers' self-evaluations	Customers' requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business know-how - Knowledge of business environment - Skill to use different tools of BA - Knowledge in business - Skills of ethical behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business know-how - Knowledge of business environment

A slightly surprising result was that the business advisers themselves saw experience in business as very important, but the stakeholders did not emphasize this aspect as much. Also the skill to use different business advisory tools was more important to the business advisers than to their customers.

3.2 Business Advisers' Professional Profile

This chapter discusses the professional profile for European business advisers, which was designed on the basis of the survey results. The competence model, as part of the professional profile, has been made by the Latvian partner, TDF. The purpose of the competence model was to help in establishing training programmes and developing continuing education for BAs. The framework profile presents the knowledge, skills and behaviours that define today's business adviser. The model sets out a standard for the EBA profession, no matter whether the individual EBAs work in large or medium-sized consultancies, among niche players, in internal consulting departments, networked groups of consultants or as sole practitioners. The competence model can also be used as a benchmarking tool for clients as well as for academic bodies and training providers.

The competence models in the business advisory sector contain a combination of change management and technical skills – the relative mix and weight of which varies according to the discipline and organisational culture. Typically, a business adviser is engaged in providing business start-up, development and change management solutions to his/her client. In these tasks s/he demonstrates technical and business knowledge; business understanding and change management skills. His/her job entails ownership, management and delivery of solutions to clients as well as project delivery and risk management. The business adviser has excellent interpersonal skills and ability to transfer skills to others. S/he applies creative and analytical thinking and adheres to the professional code of conduct and ethical guidelines. The complexity of the professional profile of EBAs is illustrated below in Figure 3.

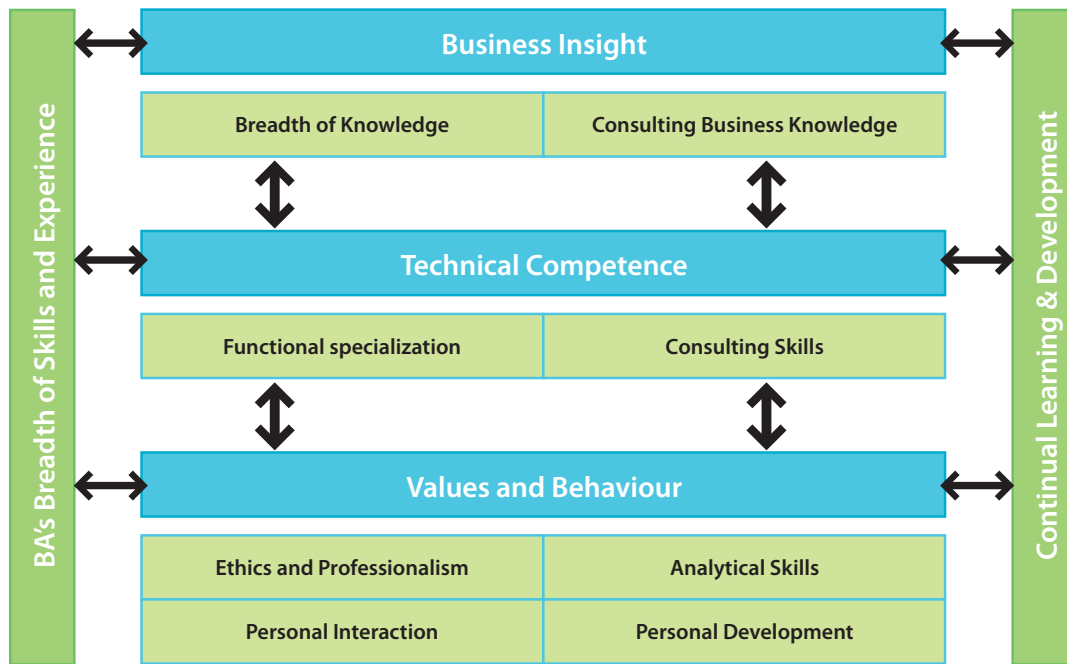


Figure 3. Competence Model (International Council of Management Consulting Institutes 2006)

The competence of the EBA includes the management of client processes. It is not a question of having a set of separate skills. The professional profile of the EBAs is a context and combination of skills which will promote the success of his/her clients. In practice this means that the EBA has competences to analyse and understand the business environment. S/he knows the region, marketing channels, trends, and the current competitive situation and networking opportunities. The EBA understands global social, political and technological changes. In addition s/he knows business policies of the European Union, but also the national and local policies of trade and industry. Furthermore, s/he has skills to monitor, update, analyse and learn.

The EBA understands the psychology of entrepreneurship and s/he has critical ability to analyse and evaluate the business as well as to encourage and motivate the entrepreneur. When assisting the entrepreneur the competent EBA is able to outline a business plan from the customer's basic idea or support the customer in doing it her/himself. S/he supports (coaches) the customer in planning and decision making by asking the right questions and by using different approaches and methods (pedagogical skills, dialogue skills). S/he is able to perform financial analyses and make the client accept long-term (sustainable) thinking. The EBA keeps the confidentiality of the business. S/he is able to prioritise and select items and topics. The EBA cooperates with people from different cultural backgrounds, uses IT and IT-related tools and has excellent time management skills.

All this demands human resource management, leadership and communication skills. The EBA should be a strategic and result-oriented person, who has adopted the role of the adviser. S/he is a good negotiator and s/he can create networks. The intercultural skills are also demanded in the work of the EBA. This means the ability to communicate in foreign languages and awareness of cultural factors present in multicultural contexts.

The **consultancy role** of the EBA requires the following knowledge, skills and behaviours: analytical and pro-active thinking, the ability to deal with complexity and to take responsibility, and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, the principal consulting skills and technical knowledge are required for effective performance. The EBA also understands the purpose, role and impact of professional integrity and works in accordance with the professional code of conduct and ethical guidelines for the best interests of his/her client. It is also essential that the EBA understands the importance of his/her personal growth and continuing professional development.

The EBA is also aware of the consultancy market, its structure and historical development. S/he knows the current market for management consultancy, including issues such as competition, types of consultancy interventions, and relevant legislative, economic, social and political factors, different types of consultancy (e.g. internal, external, public sector), and how their products, service and markets may differ.

To be able to meet the above requirements, the EBA should undertake self assessment to determine his/her current abilities and development needs and then develop and implement a personal action plan for learning and self-development. It is also necessary to request and review feedback to improve the performance and development activities.

In relation to the **consultancy cycle**, the EBA should understand the diversity of consultancy interventions and approaches and the typical inputs and deliverables for each stage of the cycle. S/he should be aware of the principles and stages of a model for managing the consultancy cycles, as well as the types of problems, risks and issues which may arise at each stage. The EBA understands the importance of scoping interventions effectively and agreeing on clear contracts with clients. S/he knows that interventions need to have a clear, planned structure. In order to succeed in all this, the EBA should select an appropriate style of consultancy intervention and manage client expectation of the intervention.

To succeed in his/her **client relationships**, the EBA should understand the principles of consultation and negotiation and be able to use various methods of engaging his/her client. S/he should be able to estimate what quantitative and qualitative information is essential to his/her role and responsibilities. The importance of professionalism, ethics and confidentiality are crucial to the EBA's customer relationships. The means of establishing credibility with clients and the ability to research the clients' needs effectively are, therefore, the key components of the EBA's client skills.

Another important contributor to the EBA's competence is effective **communication**, which necessitates the knowledge of the principles and processes of effective communication and their impact on productive working relationships with clients, team members, colleagues and managers. In order to communicate successfully the EBA should apply listening and questioning techniques to understand issues and problems, recognise different forms of verbal and non-verbal behaviour and their appropriate uses. S/he should also be able to plan and run meetings effectively.

The EBAs are also often engaged with **project management and delivery** and should therefore have the holistic understanding of the importance of planning and managing a project and the impact of poor project planning and management on consultancy

projects. The effective project management and delivery includes the following components: a project plan, budgeting of time and resources and quality assurance. The EBA should also understand his/her personal role in effective project delivery and be able to use both upward management and client management techniques. In practice, the EBA could apply his/her personal time management techniques within the project context; establish an effective infrastructure to ensure project delivery and to identify potential and actual risks that may jeopardise the project completion.

The EBA's professional profile also includes **structured knowledge, research and analysis**. The EBA should be an expert in identifying the client issue, applying a structured approach and selecting appropriate analytical tools and techniques to meet this need. At work, the EBA should apply the methods of identifying, validating, filtering and sourcing the knowledge and information which is needed to take decisions in different contexts. It is also important to assume confidentiality when dealing with sensitive information. The EBA should know the available resources and research networks well. The first step is to identify the client need and then to apply a range of simple, recognised data gathering, problem-solving and analytical tools and techniques to achieve agreed outcomes. At last, the EBA should be able to draw conclusions on the basis of the information that is collected and analysed either quantitatively or qualitatively.

In the Project, the EBAs' professional profile was discussed and defined from various perspectives. The competence model presented in Figure 4 was further developed into task-based description of the key requirements. The competence model was also complemented by a more detailed list of core competences, which is presented in Appendix 2.

3.3 Certification of BA/EBA Qualification

According to the survey among business advisors, most of the respondents were interested in continuing education. The EBA competence model was used to develop contents of training programmes. The development of EBA professional profile and educational products also led to the discussion of certification and certification procedure. For outlining the certification procedure the main criteria for BAs were first listed.

The main criteria for consultants to be awarded the title of a business adviser included the following:

- has approximately three years experience as a business adviser;
- is experienced in all elements of the consulting life cycle;
- can take full ownership for the delivery of a project or a major work stream;
- has experience in managing others; and
- whose contribution is highly valued by clients.

The prospects for the eventual certification of the BA's profession were investigated in the Debate countries. However, the certification process of BA's professional profile is a very complex and multidimensional issue. This is due to the lack of harmonised

national systems of business advisory within the EU. That is why the future development remains in hands of partner organisations, regional working groups and the AEBA Association.

4 EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISERS

The Component 5 of the Debate project included the development of an educational structure for business advisory. This component was launched in May 2005 and coordinated by North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Polytechnic at that time). The aim was to improve the quality of business advisory through the establishment of a systematic and flexible structure for the training and education of business advisers, which could be acknowledged by the participating regions and countries. Another important objective was to harmonise the quality and standards of EBA education and/or training in Europe. Furthermore, the Project wanted to encourage and advance the adoption of the principle of life-long learning among business advisers and to generate a dialogue between business advisory, education and policy makers.

At the outset of the Project both basic and continuing education of business advisers was either non-existent, of low quality or fragmented in the participating countries. There were no European-wide standards or criteria for the training and education. Furthermore, the sectors of business advisory and education did not interact, which had led to non-satisfactory and inefficient supply of education and training.

The Component 5 included three main processes, which were the design of personal learning plans (i.e. a PLP process), the development of curricula and the promotion of open, distance and virtual learning. In this chapter, the focus is on the personal learning plans (PLPs), which formed the foundation for further development of educational structures. Personal learning plans were developed slightly differently in the participating countries and therefore the PLP process in here discussed region by region or country by country.

4.1 Personal Learning Plans (PLPs)

In North Karelia, Finland totally 13 business advisers were interviewed during November and December 2005. The advisers were working for three (3) different business adviser organisations in North Karelia. The organisations were all partners of the Debate project. The interviews were carried out by three (3) tutor lecturers, who all represented North Karelia University of Applied Sciences.

All the interviewees were working as business advisers, but in various sectors, e.g. services (tourism), industry (plastic, metal) or rural business. Their customers comprised starting, expanding and wind-up enterprises. The advisers had a university or college-level degree in business, technology, agriculture, science, humanities or in the service sector. According to their self-evaluation, their personal and professional skills and knowledge were mostly good. The advisers expressed a need for more training in time management, language skills and intercultural communication. In terms of professional skills, they wanted to improve their knowledge in taxation, marketing and international business processes. In the system skills (i.e. methods), the advisers evaluated themselves to be mostly at a good level. Some of the interviewees commented that there was a need to improve their ability to do and interpret financial statements. A few advisers emphasised the importance of the ability to utilise databases and analyse the personal characteristics and social contacts of the entrepreneurs. They

also discussed wide working experience, strong self-confidence and their capability to handle entities. Most of the interviewees were very satisfied with their work and duties as business advisers. Sometimes there seemed to be too much work and the advisers felt themselves very stressed, some even on the edge of burn out.

The feedback the advisers had received from their customers and superiors had been very positive and constructive. However, some of advisers were frustrated with the number of different development projects and the quality of advice which differed between different advisory organisations.

The expectations for the incoming training and educational modules were quite high. The training should be as concrete as possible and it should present the best practices of the field. Furthermore, the trainers/ educators should be highly qualified and they should come from the private sector and have extensive practical experience. The training periods should not be prolonged over two days per each time. The advisers should play a key role in the planning process of the training products. The following themes of the training were pointed out: network building, international communication, language skills, cultural know-how, research and analysing tools, international business processes, economical analyses, updating one's own know-how and skills in the specific advisory branch (e.g. plastic, wood, and tourism), client understanding and developing advisory skills and knowledge.

The differences in the educational and working backgrounds between the advisers and lecturers made the interviews very fruitful and instructive, at least from the lecturers' perspective. The advisers seemed to be experts of their own work and the tutor lecturers learnt a lot about their daily work and background organisations, as well as about their personalities.

Kainuun Etu was developing the educational structure together with its local partners **in Kainuu, Finland**. They held a number of meetings and discussions about a common, sustainable approach. It was decided that the training should include 10 modules of which eight (8) would be based on contact teaching and the remaining two relate to exchange and seminars open to businesses and the wider public. The modules dealing with issues such as small businesses and internationalisation, administrative aspects of export, intercultural awareness, language and cultural awareness, environmental issues, and the EU were to be developed in cooperation with educational institutions of the Debate partners, as well as through regular seminars at the local level.

The target groups for training were determined to be business students and graduated students who plan to become entrepreneurs or consultants. Some parts of the training were designed to be open to a wider public. The duration of the programme was planned to be 18 months. Educators in the course could include lecturers with general business knowledge, as well as specialists and experts of country-specific internationalisation issues, e-business, EU environment policy and EU quality policy. In addition, there should be coaches who would be capable of guiding student exchange and ensuring good contacts to companies.

The representatives of **Latvia** started to build the educational structure of BAs by conducting PLP interviews. This they did through the cooperation with their partners

in RWG – Latvian BA association. The database of business advisory companies in Latvia, including about 70 companies, was developed.

The main duties of business advisers in Latvia are business and individual consultation, which entails business start-up, partner search, optimisation of business, innovations, EU projects, auditing of enterprises and organising of seminars. Educational background of BAs in Latvia varied from accountants and economists to engineers and includes Bachelor, M.Sc. and Dr.Sc. degrees. The dominating way of skills development is self-study. BAs wanted to study languages, IT, development of creativity, and learn about good practices. About their expectations for the future, the leading idea was to start one's own business not only in advising business. The PLP process went smoothly.

In Hungary three organisations were asked to join to the process of PLP development. They included a well-known accountancy and auditing company (Molnár és Bányai), the Foundation for Enterprise Promotion and Agrár Európa Ltd., which is in charge of agricultural projects. Altogether eight business advisers were interviewed. The working duties varied according to the organisations. In the accountancy and auditing company the main duties of the advisers comprised book-keeping, auditing and controlling. At the Foundation for Enterprise Promotion the advisers had to deal with tasks such as project management, business advisory and applications. In the agricultural sector the tasks of a BA were project management, contact building and testing.

Most of the Hungarian advisers had a college or university degree, or studies at a technical college. They had also taken part in various courses. Their language skills were mainly at the intermediate level. The commonly spoken foreign languages were English and German. Almost all of the interviewed advisers wanted to improve their language skills. According to the interviews, the most important strengths of the advisers were creativity, reliability, flexibility, ability to work in teams or alone, good ability to get in contact with people, ability to work hard and strong interpersonal skills. The advisers were mostly satisfied with their skills, knowledge and competences, and if there were any shortcomings, they wanted to improve in those areas.

Almost all advisers wanted to develop their business skills with the help of books, courses, and Internet research. It was considered necessary to have up-to-date news of the business environment. It was also pointed out that measures should be taken by the state to establish a better environment for SMEs. In case of developing professional ethics training was mentioned most often. If the advisers wanted to develop their client skills, they should have a chance to take part in different training programmes, e.g. language courses. According to the Hungarian survey, the improvement of system skills was seen to be the responsibility of institutions, which should open the door for institutional trainings, make common programmes and supply their workers with the required tools. The advisers wanted to participate in international projects more. There was interest to cooperate with foreign partners and to learn about the life and habits of other countries. Some advisers aimed at starting their own projects.

The interview process was successful: the advisers were very helpful, open-minded and cooperative. It was concluded that the advisers had understood the necessity of the project and therefore it was in their interest to answer the questions as well as they could to promote their own professional development. It was suggested that in the

future it would be necessary to create a questionnaire which would be easier to use and to make questions less ambiguous.

In Italy the PLP process included 11 participants. Business advisers were considered to be a heterogeneous group consisting of university researchers, trainers, freelancers of different categories, e.g. engineers, architects, agronomists and corporate advisers. The aim of the Regional Working Group in Italy was to define the profile and competences of the business adviser. After a long discussion the group elaborated the first definition: First, an EBA should be a Strategic Intermediary or a bridge between client and European opportunities. The stability of this professional figure depends on building and networking, on-the-job training and the production of books, drafts, etc. Secondly a BA should be a System's Integrator or an adviser that helps the enterprises in the internationalisations process, and gives inputs to reach the final objective and to make the system as effective as possible.

The competences of a Business Adviser may be both psycho-sociological and economic. The Italian PLP design distinguished two levels of business advisers: junior and senior advisers. The junior business adviser could be a young graduate, specialised in specific competences. The main requisite of the junior business adviser is suitable training. The senior business adviser, on the other hand, is a person with concrete experience, able to generate business opportunities, and with a good networking capacity. The principal requisite of the senior business adviser is the network. In Italy there are different persons working as business advisers, but there is no clear definition of the BA profile. Therefore the group suggested working in this direction. Besides, the group wanted to increase the demand of Business Advisers among SMEs.

There were 10 people who compiled the PLP interviews in Italy. They belonged to various categories. However, they were all working as independent freelancers. All the participants were not classified as business adviser, but two were superiors and one worked as a tutor teacher. The main fields of the 10 participants were technology and financing consultancy, management consulting, design work, environmental building reclamation, course management and research.

All the participants had graduated and many had continued their studies in specialised master programmes. The working experience varied, but mostly it related to professional consulting and international trade. There were three architects, and their working experience belonged to planning and design. The tutor teacher dealt with didactic activities and research in European projects. Some of the advisers had international experience, above all in the field of the European planning or international projects.

As far as the personal skills and knowledge were concerned, the competences of BAs were based on the specific work, such as methodologies in planning, biomedical and biotech technologies, town planning, agricultural policy, territory analysis and European projects. The strengths of the participants included competences of integration, sustainable development of the territory, team work, good capacity for synthesis, network of professional competences, good technical and scientific background, networking and deep experience in coordination of a team.

The values that were most commonly mentioned at the work of BAs comprised independence and autonomy, availability, flexibility and clarity. The participants were mostly interested in topics such as socioeconomic aspects of the training programme, creation of joint ventures between European and developing countries, regional development and multifunctionality of the agricultural enterprises.

The personal know-how and development needs were divided in three parts. Generally, business know-how was considered to be the most important competence of a business adviser (40%), which was followed by the knowledge of business environment (25%), the professional ethics (20%) and personal balance (15%). In the second part of the PLP, the participants saw entrepreneurship (45%) as more important than the human resource management and communication skills (30%) or intercultural skills (25%). In the third part of the PLP, the most important system skills related to process management (45%), followed by tools (30%) and work community (25%).

The business advisers' expectations towards their superior and tutor teacher included the following aspects: improving competences in "business know how" and "process management", using simple concepts with practical case, being available for dialogue and comparison and having an overall view of the European system.

The participants of the first Regional Working Group were very interested in this new professional profile of a business adviser and in the new opportunities that the European system can offer. The participants came from different worlds of work, but they all had something to contribute to the competences and the skills of a BA. It was concluded that the most important competences of the business adviser are business know-how and knowledge of the business environment. The BA should also possess personal skills such as client understanding skills and system skills. All the participants were interested in being involved in the Debate project and in the educational structure, which was to be developed. However, it was suggested that the questionnaires need to be more simple and with defined answers.

In **Estonia** a total of seven (7) business advisers were interviewed during March and April 2006. Interviewees were working for four different business advisory organisations, of which three were public (Tallinn City Enterprise Board, Archimedes Foundation and Technology and Innovation Centre of TUT) and one private organisation (Ansiko Services Ltd). The advisers' duties varied quite a lot from creating business/marketing plans and consulting to fund-raising advice, partner search, co-ordinating different business development projects, technology audits, founding new spin-off companies, etc. All the advisers had a university level degree. Usually it was a bachelor-level degree, but two advisers were studying towards a master-level degree. Besides that all of them had certificates from different training courses, e.g. international business.

About personal and professional skills the advisers mentioned the knowledge of funding, legal affairs and trade sector, entrepreneurship and accounting. The advisers considered themselves to be good team-workers and trainers. The other strengths included such characteristics as being social, correct, experienced and diligent. The knowledge of Baltic ICT market was also mentioned as strength.

On the field of personal know-how and development, the interviewees expressed their need for training about the changes in business legislation. They also wanted to have informative seminars about business environment in other countries, intercultural communication and team-work. They also wished that the training would introduce new methods and techniques of counselling; analysis of different economic branches in different countries and trends of entrepreneurship. They also mentioned that they need to develop their time management and self management skills. The most relevant issues for interviewees were business know-how, knowledge of business environment, especially at the international level, and human resource management and communication.

The interviews succeeded well in Estonia. They each lasted for about one hour. Three of the advisers gave the answers in a written form by e-mail, which was followed by a phone call where the answers were clarified and discussed. There had been some misunderstanding with question 7. Some advisers gave their answers on a scale “relevant”, “extremely relevant”, “not relevant” while the others described their duties. In Estonia, the superior and tutor teacher system was not developed and thus, their role was not commented on. That is also the reason why the interviews were carried out by advisers themselves.

In Greece, four (4) interviews were conducted with business advisers (BAs) that worked for consulting companies. All four BAs were involved in the consulting services of Greek SMEs and were based in Athens. Additionally there were some interviews with SMEs to acquire the client perspective and achieve triangulation.

Three BAs were managing directors in their companies. Two of them were men. One male BA has a Ph.D. in Business Administration from Manchester Business School and had taught in the Athens University of Economics and Business. As far as the other male BA is concerned, he had earned his first degree in physics, and a Master and Ph.D. in electrical engineering. The female BA had completed a MBA.

All BAs agreed with the statement “learning never stops”. They felt that every BA has to enrich his/her knowledge, which they themselves pursued through attending seminars. The female BA also expressed her interest to complete her Ph.D. that she had started some years ago. All BAs were worried about the future of consulting and that of the consulting sector in Greece. The fact that European projects are nowadays much more competitive than five-six years ago implies that the rules of the game are now more difficult. They thought that quite a few consulting companies will close down in the near future. Thus, in an attempt to rescue their companies, they try to differentiate the products and offerings that they supply to their clients.

First, the business advisers were contacted by phone. Then they were informed about the survey and asked to share their experiences and opinions. They were also told about the plan to arrange a meeting in order to discuss the topic in detail. Before the meeting, questionnaires were sent out. All three meetings were really insightful. The advisers were willing to share their experiences and answer the questions. It was experienced that both sides believed that it was an interesting learning experience. Ideally it would have been better to organise an open discussion on the topic, where all BAs could have expressed their opinions and ideas simultaneously – something like a round-table conversation. Brainstorming might have also been a suitable method in this context.

As all the interviewed consultants admitted, being a consultant demands a number of skills and characteristics. One of the essential skills and characteristics of a consultant is the ability to see the “big picture” of the client’s problem and to diagnose the needs, to search for new customers and to assess situations quickly. Also it is necessary to have the ability to negotiate mutual expectations with clients and of course to have the knowledge on how to do research so as to get to an effective solution for the client.

For the development of the above skills, a consultant must have studied economics or engineering in a good university and also hopefully continued his studies to a MBA or M.Sc. or even acquired a Ph.D. The postgraduate studies are necessary because they help the consultant to acquire a systematic way of thinking.

One of the most important traits of consultants is to be self confident and self reliant. Moreover, it is very crucial for everyone who wants to follow the profession of consultant to like to work long hours and to deal well with potential chaos. Also, an essential characteristic is to be a risk-taker, to be able to make decisions and to have the ability to lead while also being an excellent communicator.

An area where would-be consultants typically need to gain experience is basic business issues. If he does not have business experience, it can be challenging to jump into consulting without the appropriate training. As all the interviewed consultants said, formal education does not always translate directly into skills. In addition to any formal education or training the consultant has received, s/he should also have a vast array of life experiences to draw from. Although consulting demands a number of skills and traits, the adviser does not have to have all of those elements at the outset. Rather s/he has to review the list of his skills and interests and find out what s/he needs to learn.

The success and the prestige of a consultant can be built only by his satisfied and loyal customers. Getting to know the clients and their needs is the vital step for a consultant to establish a productive working relationship. A consultant must understand more about his client’s organisation and what s/he is expected to do. Moreover, the consultant also needs to know how to recognise all the stakeholders and the real decision makers within an organisation, and how to build teams that can function quickly and effectively. Also, the consultant must dedicate much of his/her time to the clients and be ready to do concessions regarding time, costing etc., so as to build a climate of trust between him/herself and his/her client. Both the consultant and the client expect from each other the appropriate level of respect, and thus, a good communication between them will be settled.

Like all other professionals, consultants have to follow written and unwritten rules of professional conduct and ethics so as to maintain their place in the market. In Greece, a federation called SESMA sets the Code of Professional Ethics (C.P.E.) and the Standards of Professional Conduct (S.P.C.) and expects its members to follow the. The rules complement those that are imposed by the law to the member firms of SESMA in their relations with potential clients, clients and their colleagues.

In addition to the written rules, there exist tacit but powerful rules among the consulting firms. Of course the consultants are not obliged to follow these rules, but the experience has shown that whoever did not conform to them experiences a short-term professional

success. The most basic principle for all consultants is to serve the client until the final delivery of the undertaken project. That means that the consultant owes to fulfill its promises to his client and try hard to solve the problem that his client experiences and not care just for the initial gain of the project. As all interviewed consultants stated, the basic factor for an affective cooperation with the client is the dedication of the consultant to the problems of his client. It was also mentioned that some consulting firms do not undertake any projects of a similar subject with the competing companies to their present client so as to show their devotion to their clients. To sum up, the consultant must respect his client and offer services that add value.

During the seminars organised in Greece, there was vivid discussion and mixed reaction among companies over the quality of consulting services and the need for standards in consulting profession. The consultants concluded that there are needs for standards, but they should be international, non-technical, process-based and generic enough to adapt to various types of projects, services and organisations.

4.2 Educational Structure for Business Advisory

The main objective of the seminar organised in Joensuu on 18 – 19 May 2006 was to construct a framework for the training programmes utilising previous outcomes of the Debate project, i.e. the BA Professional Profile, PLPs, surveys, and integrate them with the expertise of the participants. The participants had prepared themselves and their homework was reflected upon at the beginning of the seminar (Phase 1). In addition the frame of the training programme was elaborated in international and regional (national) home groups (Phases 2 – 4).

The following educational structure is made by the Hungarian partner and presented here as one example of the regional educational products of the Debate project.

Training programme for the european business advisers

Required professional profile

Business Advisers are people who already have practical experience in business establishment, project management and other issues such as problem solving in business. They are expected to be highly motivated in developing their knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the changing national and international economic/business environment.

Objectives of the programme

To offer business advisory professionals complementary experiences within the frame of a course where they can refresh and/or broaden their knowledge considering the growing number of EU member-states and the globalising markets worldwide. The appropriate method is to create a programme based on the needs of the BAs gained from the PLP interviews and surveys. Those measures resulted the following list of competences:

- business planning, general knowledge of business and finance;
- changes and development of the business environment (national, international), competition analysis; and
- personal skills (customer orientation, negotiation techniques and how to learn new things).

The planned extend of the programme will be one week and it does not allow a comprehensive and thorough analysis of all the topics. Hence one of the main targets is to raise interest and explore special fields that are to be elaborated in more detail later and provided for participants after finishing the one-week-course e.g. through the internet.

Target group

Business Advisers with

- a college or university degree
- a few years of practical experience

Methods of the training

Lectures, case studies, workshop, study-trip, consultation, e-learning

Structure of the training

An intensive one-week course will be offered to the target group. The length is 28 hours and the training will be divided into six different modules, which are

1. **Tax harmonisations and accountancy practises in the EU; 4 hours**
The module aims at presenting the historical development, the legal background, the main accountancy systems and the process of tax harmonisation. BAs participating in the module can get to know the basics and also acquire detailed knowledge. They are also assisted in finding the proper sources of information. Precondition for attending the module is at least a bachelor degree in economics or corresponding business studies.
2. **Local and global markets, competitive market, regional economy; 4 hours**
The module presents the basic principles of the regional policy of the EU and deals with the available financial sources both for the region and for the enterprise. It also discusses the measures and applied implements within the frame of regional policy. Further, this module also helps to find appropriate information sources.
3. **International communication; 4 hours**
The aim of the module is to become acquainted with the basic communication skills and methods required in networking and correspondence. The module discusses
 - meeting and cooperation with foreign cultures,
 - preparation, deal, transaction, successful arrangement
 - establishing long-term business connections.
4. **Forms/types of enterprises and firms in the EU; 4 hours**
This module helps the BAs to get an inside view of the main components, conditions and regulations of how to establish and start, incorporate, operate, modify, finish (liquidate) enterprises.
5. **Project management; 4 hours**
The BAs often have to assist local SMEs in launching and implementing a business project. The module includes information gathering, planning the process of project realisation, efficient management techniques and different risk management methods.

6. Business experience exchange in Austria; 8 hours

The program provides the Hungarian BAs with the possibility to exchange experiences and best practices with Austrian BAs during a study trip. Besides the establishment of professional-personal connections/long-term cooperation, the main target of the module is to get acquainted with the practical aspects of the theories discussed during the classroom trainings.

Student tutoring/counselling

Counselling is provided as an option for BAs. It includes access to the services of the University of West Hungary, e-mail contacts with the tutors, further consultations if needed, etc.

Evaluation of the studies

Participating BAs fill out a detailed questionnaire concerning the related topics during the course. A few months after the course, students are required to give feedback on the usefulness of the knowledge they have gained.

The above educational structure is an example of a very intensive EBA training programme. The Project also contributed to the development of extensive programmes, which are available from the partner institutions. The Debate project revealed educational needs at both national and European levels. The emphases of BA education can become European or international only after business advisers have the necessary professional knowledge and skills at the local levels. The Project clearly showed that international and intercultural education and language training should be an important element of EBA training. The development of EBA programmes and courses is a challenge to educational institutions but it can also provide them with excellent opportunities in the future.

5 INTERNATIONAL PILOT EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The international pilot exchange programme in the Debate project was designed to support the development of the business advisers' expertise. The gap between the levels of business advisers' international competence as it was estimated to be then and as it should be in the future was identified during the planning process of the Project both within the regional planning group and within the joint INTERREG III C seminar in Brussels in 2004. This in turn guided the project planning in such a way that strong emphasis was put on supporting the development of the expertise and on outlining the educational processes. Making a plan for a training programme for EBAs in the partner countries was one of those inputs and the other was to build and test the pilot exchange programme related to the forthcoming training programme.

The objective of the pilot exchange programme was to offer the participants a supported and guided learning experience that would promote the development of the professional expertise, the focus being on strengthening international competence through work placements in business adviser organisations located in partner countries. Moreover, the exchange also aimed at providing the participants a possibility to gain some cross-cultural experiences. On the organisational level, the aim of piloting was to build up, test and modify a usable model of the exchange programme for the European business adviser studies planned within the project and provided by the educational organisations later on.

The pilot exchange programme was coordinated by North Karelia University of Applied Sciences. The implementation of the programme was planned during autumn 2005 and spring 2006. The main objective of the first phase was to outline and agree on the practical arrangements (i.e. agreements of the placements, housing, timing and contacts), support of the learning process and documentation. The documentation included formulating an application form, frames of feedback and reflective discussions and guidelines for reporting. The programme was launched for the first time in September 2006. The first exchanges were implemented during spring 2007. The second phase of the pilot exchange programme was launched in May 2007 and the exchanges were implemented during summer 2007. Altogether 12 business advisers from Finland, Estonia and Latvia participated in the programme as exchange advisers (see Table 4). They were hosted by some Finnish, Greek, Hungarian, Italian and Swedish business adviser organisations. The exchange periods lasted from one week to two weeks depending on each of the advisers' personal learning needs, interests and timetables.

Table 4. Implementation of the training programme

Country of origin	Destination	Number of exchange advisers
Finland	Italy, Greece, Hungary	3
Estonia	Finland	1
Latvia	Hungary, Sweden	8
Total		12

The model of the business adviser exchange programme was based on the principle of guided experiential learning, where an individual gains knowledge and understanding through a real life experience, here through a work placement, and reflects upon his/her experiences with a mentor. The reflection of the learning process with the mentor helps the learner in the adaptation process, where s/he applies the learning outcomes into practice and thus develops his/her expertise.

Acknowledging the importance of reflection and mentoring in experiential learning, a lot of emphasis was put on how to define the mentoring and tutoring processes as supportive elements of the whole learning process (see Figure 4). The aim was to build the system in such a way that the exchange adviser gets guided and systematic support during all the phases of the process to enhance learning as much as possible.

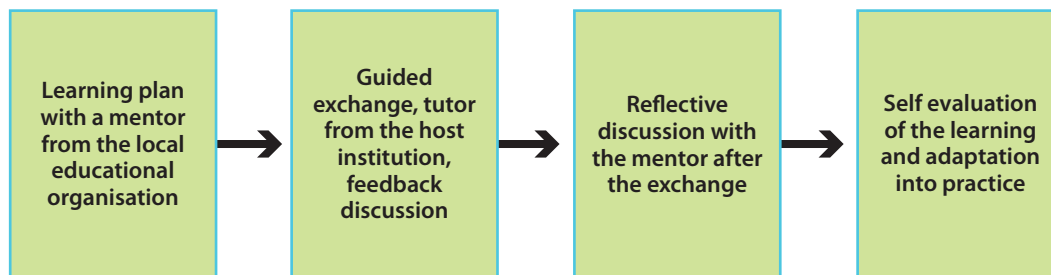


Figure 4. Mentoring and tutoring process within the international pilot exchange programme

The mentors were business lecturers from the local educational organisations participating in the pilot exchange programme. The mentor guided the whole process starting from the personal learning plan well before the exchange, supporting the business adviser's individual learning needs and going all the way to reflective discussions after the exchange supporting the final self-evaluation and adaptation into practice. The tutor in turn was responsible for the support and guidance during the exchange as well as for the practical arrangements related to the content of the programme and hosting. The tutors were representatives of business adviser organisations, who participated in the pilot exchange programme. The tutor also conducted the feedback discussion in the end of the exchange period together with the exchange adviser.

All the business advisers who participated in the pilot exchange programme were pleased with the experience. When they reported the experiences and described the learning, the advisers emphasised two main themes: development of the substance knowledge and gaining cultural experiences. The development of the substance knowledge was achieved through exploring different ways to organise business advising, to accomplish the advising process with the client and through observing different operational environments. The learning process worked in two directions: both the exchange adviser and the host organisation were learning from each other when sharing their views and good practices during the work placement.

Besides substance knowledge, cultural experiences were seen as an important part of the pilot exchange programme. The visits to the local enterprises, meeting local people, enjoying the food culture and having some holiday-like moments complemented the experience. However, the cultural part was also seen to support the development of the substance knowledge stated in the adviser's personal learning plan.

The advisers also reported on the positive impact of the exchange on their language skills. The levels of language skills among the advisers varied a lot before the exchange. Some were already very fluent and advanced language users, while some others were just beginners trying to see how to manage in a multilingual environment. Keeping in mind the short period of the exchange, it was not realistic to expect great leaps in language competence, but rather some increase in the participants' motivation to learn foreign languages in the future, and that was actually the result the beginners reported. For advanced language users the exchange period offered an opportunity to refresh professional vocabulary.

It was concluded that the administration of the pilot exchange programme itself needed updating and reworking. Although the draft seemed to be useful in the forthcoming training programmes, the details as well as the forms and guidelines for discussions still need to be modified. Also the relationships and roles of the different actors should be made clearer and better defined to make the process as smooth and effective as possible. Moreover, the number of the exchange advisers was less than planned, and the ways to motivate the advisers for exchange have to be carefully considered.

The draft was put to use within the European Business advisers' Studies during 2007 – 2008 at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences. There ten students completed their learning assignments related to the personal development of the international competence. However, the variety of assignments was wider than work placements and it seems that with in-service students more flexibility and options are needed.

The educational basis of the exchange programme was on experiential learning, where the student dives into the processes and gains experiences. Also the reflection played an important role in enhancing the learning and making it more visible and tangible. The objective was to advance the internationalisation of one's own working environment with the help of work-related visits or projects.

Altogether the pilot exchange programme was quite successful. The participants were satisfied with the experiences and considered that similar ways of learning could be useful for the business adviser organisations later on. For the educational organisations, the programme gave a possibility to develop and test a model of learning and to strengthen the connections between education, learning and working life. It gave a good starting point for further development of the experiential, work-related learning processes in adult and in-service education.

6 DISSEMINATION AND EVALUATION

The Component 2 of the Debate project dealt with the dissemination of and evaluation of both the process and products of the Project. The Coordinating Team had eight meetings, where financial and contractual management as well as dissemination and evaluation were discussed. The overall dissemination and marketing plan was processed and visual layout, website (www.debanet.info) and materials (powerpoint, handout, brochure) for the Operation were designed and distributed among Business Advisers (BAs) and stakeholders. Press conferences and informational events were organised. Institutional, regional and international newsletters were designed and distributed. Guided self-evaluation took place in all workshops and in coordinators' team meeting. Altogether, four self-evaluation rounds were implemented.

6.1 Cooperation, Communication and Dissemination

One of the key elements and pursued aims of the Project was to build trust between different regional actors and between regions by developing opportunities and forums for communication and cooperation. The Regional Working Groups (RWGs) acted as forums for the interaction and dialogue of business advisory, research and education at the regional level. In the RWGs the best practices, methods and tools for BAs were presented, discussed and analysed. The RWGs worked actively and their work will continue in several regions after the Operation. Increasing the trust and mutual cooperation between business advisers and educational institutes was considered to be challenging. During the Debate project some progress was made but this issue still needs to be addressed in the future. The Project was attractive for regional actors. For example, in Italy the regional working group with 12 consultants worked very actively. In Hungary regional cooperation was successful and Hungarian partners were very precise in all tasks and completed their duties always in time. In Sweden regional cooperation was more challenging than in other regions and they did not succeed in setting up a regional working group.

The Project's steering group was very active and the partners were represented in all meetings. Interregional collaboration between partners especially during the workshops was also excellent. Between the workshops there was probably too little communication and it became harder to motivate the partners to do their share of work. Having workshops in every six months was important for discussing the current situation and for going through the tasks that need to be completed during the following periods. Working in groups seemed to motivate and inspire partners to complete their activities. Workshops gathered people and issues together and were important for organising the work and evaluating the achieved results. Participation in the interregional events and the exchange of experiences, and also study tours during the workshops were among the most motivating factors for the project staff.

The major forums for the face-to-face interaction of partners were the six international workshops held in Latvia, Italy, Finland, Hungary, Sweden and Greece, as well as the meetings of the RWGs. In addition, interaction between regions and participants was promoted through aforementioned pilot exchanges and a virtual platform tailored for the Operation where individuals and international teams developing various topics

were able to exchange information and experiences. Interregional cooperation also enabled the best use of human resources. Without the exchange of knowledge and best practices it would not have been possible to create products this unique and innovative. For example, training programmes gained added value from the discussions and development work of international teams. Through open discussion in interregional forums, the importance of acknowledging cultural differences became evident in the development of new services and products. The consortium of the Debate project consisted of both very similar regions, but on the other hand very different ones. This brought new insights on how to approach the development of the European Business advisory at the European level. Continuous communication and exchange of information was important, e.g. most materials were available for all partner institutes that made the elaboration and modification of the BA training modules easier. The virtual platform (ALLU) guaranteed the continuous and fluent information exchange among the partners.

Interregional cooperation made it possible to exchange good practices, transfer knowledge, exchange experiences and build networks for future cooperation. During a three-year project partners and individuals got to know each others well and this gave great opportunities to broaden and deepen the cooperation even after the Operation. During the Project, partners formed a tight network which will certainly lead to many different activities and future cooperation both at the regional and interregional levels. Cooperation between the universities and the business advisers brought them closer to each others and helped in understanding each others' roles, duties and possibilities. There was a good mixture of theory and practice within the partner consortium both at regional and interregional levels. Universities and business advisory organisations were both able to interpret their own knowledge to each other for the best of the whole process. The selection of partners turned out to be a success, since there was a fruitful mixture of cultures and regions.

The dissemination and marketing activities were targeted at both immediate beneficiaries and stakeholder groups in the region as well as to wider audiences, including authorities and policy-makers. Dissemination tools included a project website, brochure and international newsletters. Also meetings, seminars and professional networks were harnessed for the promotion of the results and experiences of the Operation.

To ensure the dissemination of ideas and outcomes of the Project, Debate organised six international workshops, which were earlier presented in Chapter 2. During the six international workshops there were study visits arranged to local business advisory organisations or enterprises. The following visits took place in the six partner countries:

1. Latvia: Nordic Industrial Park, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and "Latvijas Keramika A" Ltd.
2. Italy: Chamber of Commerce and Entrepreneurs' Association of Genoa
3. Finland: Joensuu Science Park, Mantsinen Group Ltd and Saarila Tourism Farm
4. Hungary: Kárpáti Bakery Ltd., Verarbeiten Pausits Production, Servicing and Trading Ltd. and Hotel Orchidea
5. Sweden: Löfbergs Lila Arena, Inova and ALMI Värmland.
6. Greece: Scientific Park of Patras and a local traditional winery (Achaia Claus)

In addition to the workshops, there were eight (8) coordinating team meetings, six of which were arranged in connection with the international workshops. The meetings took place as follows: April 2005 Tallinn Estonia, May 2005 Jelgava Latvia, Oct 2005 Genoa Italy, May 2006 Polvijärvi Finland, Oct 2006 Movar Hungary, April 2007 Dömlé Sweden, Oct 2007 Patras Greece and Nov 2007 Brussels, Belgium.

6.2 Evaluation

The Debate project can be seen as successful not only because it achieved its main goals but also because it initiated ideas for further development and cooperation. The broad aim of the Project was to enhance entrepreneurship and SMEs in the regions by developing business advisory. The final workshop evaluated both the concrete outcomes and the processes and procedures of the Project.

On the administrative side the following challenges were observed. The reporting procedure was efficient inside the Operation but national audits and bureaucracy slowed the process down. Partners reported their activities every six months in institutional activity reports, regional coordinators in regional activity reports and component coordinators in component activity reports. Feedback was always given on both the activity and financial reports and corrections were made accordingly. Partners felt that structured coordination from the Lead Partner led to good results. For the Lead Partner the reports gave a lot of information but the reporting phase was always very busy.

Time management was seen as a problem by many partners, which probably had something to do either with the lack of commitment or the nature of project work. The division of tasks was not always clear due to complex structure and demanding objectives of the Operation. Changes of staff took place, although the partners remained the same during the Operation. Staff changes caused some delays and in some cases contributed to the lack of commitment, but mostly partners tried to catch up and do their work before the deadlines. The development of organisational and coordination skills should be mentioned as one of the achievements of the Project. In coordination and project management partners were able to learn from each other.

Basically the idea of having regional coordinators and component coordinators was good, but some partners felt that the organisational structure of the Operation was too heavy, since there were also institutional coordinators. However, the role of the regional and component coordinators was very crucial for the effective implementation of the respective tasks. Coordination at the regional level was difficult at the beginning because of the changes of the staff and responsible project managers. However, the organisational structure with regional and component coordinators functioned quite well in Debate. The coordinators were interested and therefore worked very hard. It was also concluded that it is better to have a project manager than a content expert leading the project.

There were also some development needs what comes to applied research. It was felt that the main survey should have been conducted right at the beginning, so that it could have been utilised earlier. Looking back it seems that it would have been a good idea to include some kind of a feasibility phase to the beginning.

The quality and level of work raised evidently after distributing the experiences of interregional workshops and study tours within the RWGs. The partners reported that the visits to organisations and enterprises in partner regions and opportunities to talk to entrepreneurs and BAs has helped them to improve their own activities.

The virtual platform provided a useful tool for organising work at the international level in a way which supported self-initiation. It was also a forum for informal interaction. The utilisation of the virtual platform was a good choice, although at the beginning the partners had considered it to be rather complicated. The structure and outline of Allu platform followed the component structure determined by the Programme. Having a platform for communication and a joint database of documents and materials gave added value to the project work. The platform was invaluable especially when staff changes took place in partner organisations. E-mails or phone calls were probably not used enough and this decreased communication.

Despite of the challenges the partners formed networks, exchanged experiences and good practices and in the end all felt that they have achieved good results through the Operation. The evaluation sessions in the final workshop showed that partners were happy with the results and also with the management of the Operation. During the three-year project partners learned to know each others very well and the cooperation got better the more people got to know each others. It was very challenging to get 16 partners from different countries and regions to work together towards common goals for three years. Therefore regular meetings and effective and continuous communication are very important in EU projects.

On important goal and a good practice identified during the Project was the structured forum for a dialogue between working life and educational institutions. Such forums can produce relevant and meaningful educational and training offers. In Debate, regional and national working groups consisting representatives of business advisory, research and education were also an efficient instrument for regional development, constituting an arena for a dialogue on the theory and practice of business promotion.

As a concrete project-specific output, Debate produced in-service training programmes and courses on business advisory. The educational offers with guidelines of student counselling and support were designed and evaluated in Finland, Greece, Estonia, Italy, Latvia and Hungary. The development process of the training programmes was very intensive and successful. The programmes were completed after further analysis of the surveys and feedback gained from different stakeholders and experts. In Finland two separate courses were elaborated. The role of RWGs was crucial at different phases of the course development. The tutoring and counselling practices and guidelines of the training were further developed parallel to the programmes. The products were cross-evaluated in the 6th International Workshop. The future of the programmes as a part of the national educational structures in the participating countries seems very promising and many cooperation activities will carry on after the Debate operation.

As to the impact of the Project on policy-making, the concept of “Enterprise Finland” was widely discussed during the Project in the regions of Kainuu and North Karelia. The objectives and outcomes of Debate were in line with regional development needs and expectations. In Hungary the topics of regional economics, regional policy and

regional planning were included in the educational module for BAs. There is a raised awareness of BAs on regional policy issues and their level of knowledge has increased.

The certification of the European Business Adviser qualification was not achieved during the Operation. However, the basis for the European guidelines and criteria for the certification of the EBA profession was set. Moreover, the Project defined the professional profile of EBAs with the identification of generic competences, basic professional competencies and specialist competences.

The European Association of Business Advisers was established in Patras, Greece in October 2007 and legally registered in Finland in March 2008. The purpose of the association is to maintain, support and develop professional skills, cooperation and networking of business advisers in the European economic area. In order to carry out the purpose the association may:

- a. maintain databases in relation to business advisers' work and education
- b. organise training, trips, meeting and seminars in this field
- c. practise research, information and publication activity
- d. administer, without trying to obtain profit, projects which will be beneficial in carrying out purposes of the association
- e. take initiatives for different authorities
- f. co-operate with other organisations associating in the same field

The effects of the Project on equal opportunities varied between the regions. In North Karelia equality was promoted by identifying the best practises relating to women's entrepreneurship. However, none of the organisations had any special practices for women entrepreneurs. As a new focus, the matters of multiculturalism were brought up, which appeared to be a very fruitful issue. For example, immigrant entrepreneurship was identified and discussed among the Debate partners. A new project called Multi-Image is now being planned.

In Hungary equal opportunities for women were considered when the participants and BAs were selected for the interviews. As a result, approximately half of the interviewed BAs were women. In Greece the effect of the Project on equal opportunities was positive as all SME business advisers, irrespective of their gender, had better chances to be informed and educated on aspects vital to their profession. The Estonian partner felt that it was useful to learn how other countries support women, immigrants or elderly. In Sweden equality was not an issue, because it has been generally acknowledged in the society for a long time.

Although the Project did not focus on sustainable development or environmental issues, the topics of sustainable entrepreneurship and development were discussed during the international workshops and events as well as in the Regional Working Groups (RGWs). The partners have also developed new project initiatives on sustainable development. In Kainuu region effects on sustainable development and environment were found to be positive. The regional training programme for BAs in Kainuu will include environmental issues as part of the training.

7 CONCLUSION

When reflecting back, it can be concluded that the Debate project served its purpose very well. The most important objectives defined in the project plan were met through European collaboration. The broader aim, the development of regions and entrepreneurship, was enhanced by strengthening national and international advisory networks through dialogue, collaboration, exchange and training.

During the Project, the key competences and qualifications of the European Business Adviser's profession were identified at the basic, professional and specialist levels. The profile was then tested and the expectations of the stakeholder groups (clients/entrepreneurs, authorities, etc.) investigated in a survey with regionally/nationally tailored concepts for research. In the pre-survey the quantitative and qualitative aspects of business advisory in Europe were examined as desk research. The report of the results was completed, distributed and analysed in regions. The professional profile, completed with the help of the results of the survey and feedback from BAs, authorities and other stakeholder groups, was disseminated and communicated in the regions, along with the results of the survey itself.

In each region lecturers and other representatives of the educational institutions had meetings and discussions with local business advisers elaborating the professional profile and training programmes. The personal learning plan model was completed. A framework of the training programme including the key contents and methods for tutoring system was made and evaluated. Hungary, Italy, Greece, Finland, Estonia and Latvia were able to finalise their programmes. The training programmes were assessed and improved vis-à-vis the final professional profile. Courses have now been promoted or implemented and will be part of the universities' course supply. In Finland also the policy-level discussions were entered and the representatives of the Lead Partner participated actively in the process of the development of the national educational structures for BAs in the future. The guidelines for the process of certification of the profession of a BA were discussed and built for each region to import and implement.

The system for the pilot exchange programme of BA's inclusive of an application kit was built and tested. It was suggested that the exchange programme should be integrated with the educational products and thus further developed by educational organisations. During the Project, 13 BAs participated in the pilot exchange programme and shared their experiences, ideas and ways of working with the host regions and institutions. The exchange programme succeeded very well. For example, the pilot exchange programme between Latvia and Sweden was a starting point for a network between these two countries.

The responsibility of updating the professional profiles and the further development of the training programmes will be assumed by the participating educational institutions, which will eventually implement the programmes through their regular financing instruments of adult education. The international business adviser exchange programme as part of the in-service training programmes will be realised in the future through the European mobility programmes, e.g. Leonardo da Vinci. The Association of Business Advisers in Europe, AEBA, which was established in Patras in October 2007, will take on the operations which deal with the maintenance, development and up-date of the

e-network and the virtual folder of best practices and tools as well as the continuation of the exchange and development of methodology. The Association will also assume responsibility for marketing and developing the portal and marketing the training products. The Association has an important role in guaranteeing the sustainability of the Debate results.

Other significant forums with regard to the continuation of the results are the regional working groups of business advisory, education and research, which will carry on with the agenda and working model implemented during the Operation. The RWGs will regularly interact with the regional decision and policy-making bodies. Despite the undeniably exemplary and unique results achieved in most of the Debate regions, there still exists a need to break the message through to the stakeholders beyond the immediate circle of beneficiaries and stakeholders (i.e. BAs participating in Debate), e.g. to policymakers, authorities and official bodies.

The Debate project helped to establish new interpersonal relationships and intra- and interregional networks. The project consortium will most probably continue in the next financing period and initiate new projects. Some applications for Interreg IVC programme have already been made. The collaboration between partners was very smooth and active and it has generated many new project ideas. However, future development and cooperation requires extra financing, which is now being sought after.

There are measures taken at the regional level in Kainuu and North Karelia, where the framework and structure for the EBA curriculum has been taken further. There is also a wish to finalise the training program to cover the whole Eastern and Northern Finland. North Karelian BAs are active members of the executive board of the Association. In Finland, the certification and professional profile of BAs will be continued as part of the nationwide service Enterprise Finland by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

The EBA training will continue in educational institutions. The certification process will continue at least in Sweden and in Finland probably in form of new projects. The regional working groups intend to continue their work at least in Finland, Hungary, Latvia and Italy. In Hungary a team has been set up to find financial support to cover the costs of the intensive EBA training course to be organised after the closure of the Operation.

The interregional network could be utilised for other purposes such as exchange of experiences and collection of information on topics not covered by the Debate project but interesting to certain partners. At least three promising follow-up projects are planned in which several Debate partners are involved. The planned operations are BATPAC - Business Adviser Training, Profiling and Accreditation, European Strategy for Supporting the Entrepreneurship Second Chance EU Policy - ESSENCE and Multicultural Advice and Support Services for Immigrant Entrepreneur - MULTI-IMAGE. Furthermore, several others projects are being planned.

International projects are good forums for encounters and learning. Languages, cultures and practices interact and produce social capital. This was also true with the Debate project. Individual knowledge and skills were shared and transformed into the knowledge and skills of groups, organisations and networks. Cultural, mental and geographical borders were crossed creating knowledge capital. In this way Debate was enhancing business advisory, entrepreneurship, and business education.

APPENDICES

- 1. PLP Interview Form**
- 2. EBA Core Competencies**
- 3. Summary of the Training Programmes**
- 4. Newsletters 1, 2, 3 and 4**

Personal Learning Plan, Interview Form (Modified from Dainis Locāns' classification)

The objectives the PLP-process are:

- 1) to identify the learning goals and needs of the adviser (profile) and make a plan to achieve them
- 2) to offer a trustful forum for analysis of one's professional development with constructive feedback discussion between adviser and superior
- 3) to increase the interaction and mutual trust between the adviser, superior and the trainer.

The interviews will be implemented once a year during the project and training period.

1. Participants	
Business adviser	
Superior	
Tutor teacher	
2. Basic information	
Working place and duties including estimates (%) between different tasks	
Education (basic, further, special courses)	
Working experience	
Hobbies (inc. activities in different associations and clubs)	
International experiences and language skills	
Other remarks	
3. Personal know-how analysis	
Special skills and knowledge	
My strenghts	
4. Feedback, period: 200___/200___	
Personal	Others
For working place	From working place (teams?)
For clients	From clients
For the superior(s)	From the superior(s)
5. My own input for (development) work (e.g. development projects etc.)	
Task	Input
6. I am especially interested to be involved in development duties 200___/200___	

7. Personal know-how and development needs				
Field of competence*	Measures	Timetable	Resources (incl. own input)	Relation to my duties
A. VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR: Personal development				
Analytical skills				
Ethics and Professionalism				
Personal Interaction				
B. BUSINESS INSIGHT Business know-how				
Business environment				
C. TECHNICAL COMPETENCE Functional specialization				
Management of tools				
Intercultural skills				

Date and signatures

Core competences

Major	Sub set	High level components	Core component of assessability - definition
Values and behaviours	Ethics and Professionalism	Values, ethics & professionalism	Adheres to code of conduct and ethical guidelines. Demonstrates professional integrity, consistency, transparency, accountability, responsibility and reliability.
	Analytical skills	Observations & analysis	Recommendations are supported by objective facts and research.
	Personal Interaction	Conceptualisation & problem solving	Employs structured approaches to generate ideas, evaluate and select options.
		Complexity, change & diversity	Understands complexity of operating environment and impact of selected course of actions on others.
		Communication & presentation	Uses a range of techniques and approaches to convey thoughts and ideas in a range of situations.
		Responsibility & accountability	Responsible for own actions, demonstrating resilience, drive and commitment to results.
		Influencing	Presents ideas convincingly to produce specific outcomes.
	Personal development	Focus and time management	Delivers timely solutions, balancing priorities and managing time effectively.
		Self development	Proven track record of self development and personal growth. Proven ability to learn from past assignments and apply knowledge.
	Technical competence	Functional specialization	Knowledge and skill
Consulting skills		Client focus	Scopes client requirements, presenting clear comprehensive proposals. Identifies and articulates project drivers, strategic fit and commercial benefits with client in respect of one or more individual projects. Understand client cultures, addresses client satisfaction; understand client motivation impacts.
		Project management	Manages client projects effectively- setting objectives, deadlines and budgets, using appropriate project management tools and methodologies and ensuring seamless withdrawal process.

Major	Sub set	High level components	Core component of assessability - definition
		Consultative process	Uses a range of techniques, including facilitation, to deliver solutions of mutual benefit.
		Knowledge	Captures, shares and applies knowledge in a structured way, relevant to the engagement needs.
		Partnering and networking	Leverages network effectively to engage expertise of others, developing others as appropriate.
		Tools and methodologies	Selects and uses an appropriate range of tools and methodologies.
		Risk and quality management	Defines quality standards, ensuring quality of delivery and client satisfaction. Defines risk criteria, identifying, mitigating and managing risks and outcomes.
Business Insight	Consulting Business Knowledge	Consultancy business knowledge	Understands the nature of the management consultancy market, competitors and capabilities.
		Commercial aspects of assignments	Demonstrates understanding of commercial aspects of project including scope, risk, terms and conditions and pricing.
	Breadth of knowledge	External awareness	Demonstrates understanding of political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors (PESTLE) impacting on area of work.
		Business knowledge	Understands business structures, processes, management and disciplines and impact on own area of work.
		Understanding the client	Has researched and understood client business operations and agenda.

Summary of the Training Programmes

A. TRAINING PROGRAMME											Finland	
	Hungary	Greece	Italy	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Kajaani	North-Karelia				
1. Target groups	BA, college/university + 2 years working experience	BA, junior, senior	BA, junior, senior	BA, junior, senior + graduated	Students of Engineering Working BAs	BA, Senior	Business students + outsiders	BA, senior, 3 years working experiences				
2. Lengths/ Scope	1 week/28 hours contact plus self studying	Add on the existing MBA/MSc-courses. 2 modules, 16 hours contact	Juniors 450 hours, 4 modules Seniors 60 hours, 2 modules Juniors have tutors to support training	160 hours 100 hours practice, 60 hours lecturing (compare to certification)	Three different levels, all 10 ECTS	At this moment it is jungle with wide variations of skills and knowledge of BA	35 ECTS, 10 modules, 18 months	30 ECTS, 800 hours, 1,5 years				
3. Key Themes	Different business models	International business		- Understanding business - Competence - Skills and knowledge	Basic skills and knowledge how to work in EU as Business Adv.=EBA - entrepreneurship in Estonia	International, intercultural education with gender issues	Multicultural web-sides, IT-technology, business skills and attitudes - context EU	International, intercultural education with ethical issues Skills and knowledge how to work as EBA				
4. Professional Profile	How to handle problems Establishing business	In evaluation		Professional profile was used	PLP, cases, workshops, lecturing, some tutoring and mentoring		No	Yes				
5. PLP (Personal Learning Plan)	Yes	-	-	Some kind	Yes		No	Yes				
6. Exchange Programme	Yes	-	Yes, for juniors		Yes		Yes, for some students	Yes				

7. Process	is going on	under the work	under the work	is going on	under the work/is going on?	under the work	is going on
B. EXTERNAL EVALUATION	Done	Two phases: a) academic and b) consults	a) tutor & lecturer b) students	Has been done by the Association of the Business Consults	Self evaluation		Has been done by the outside evaluator, as well as self evaluation.
1. Positive Feedback	- content - theory/practice - international co-operation	- 2 courses in MBA - evaluation	Examinations				- planning process - content is logical - teaching methods (problem based)
2. Challenges	- employees have to pay - more time for some topics, for example taxes	- more connection to working life - more time	Not external evaluation yet				- how to integrate companies - how to support students - too much taxation - should we use more lectures outside our own organisation (problem: finance)
C. SPECIAL ISSUES AND REMARKS		- future education - adult education - curriculum					
				More money needed to carry on, like within some project in EU			

Dear Reader

This is the first edition of the Newsletter of DEBATE project. DEBATE is an INTERREG IIIC project with the objective of the improvement of the level of business advisory as an instrument of regional development in Europe.

In the newsletter you will find some basic facts and figures of DEBATE project, and you may also read interesting and useful information on the Professional Profile of a European Business Advisor. The latest news and up-coming events will also be introduced along with the international partnership.

BACKGROUND – WHY?

Today's economy and society are characterised by internationalisation, rapid, constant changes and uncertainty. However, business advisers and the advisory system are not fully equipped to help small and medium-sized enterprises enter international markets and make use of opportunities that emerge from cross-border activities. This rebounds negatively on the regional economies. Business advisers lack both qualifications to assist their clients with international business affairs like exports and imports and also the tools and methods to help their clients learn about international contexts and networks. The partners involved in DEBATE share these problems. Together they want to develop and exchange tools to promote successful entrepreneurship and flourishing businesses in their regions.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of DEBATE is to build a support structure for European business Advisers in order to provide them with resources and qualifications to support their clients in the modern economy and society. Further objectives are to establish a professional profile for a European Business Adviser, to create a more positive image of this profession and to develop an educational structure and a model for an international exchange programme for business advisers.

DEBATERS ARE

- # Public or public-equivalent business advisory organizations
- # Higher-level educational institutions (universities and polytechnics)
- # Research institutions

With the coordination of the Lead Partner: North Karelia Polytechnic (Finland), 16 organisations in 8 regions in Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Italy, Greece and Finland

participate in the project (list of partners with contact information: see below).

MILESTONES

- # Workshop 1, Latvia, May 2005
- # Workshop 2, Italy, Oct. 2005
- # Workshop 3, Finland, May 2006
- # Workshop 4, Hungary, Oct. 2006
- # Workshop 5, Sweden, April 2007
- # Workshop 6, Greece, Sept. 2007



DURATION:

February 2005 – December 31, 2007

BUDGET:

EUR 1 115 885

Funding: ERDF share 71,5 % in average

INTERREG IIIC programme/North Zone

Theme of co-operation: SME Development and Entrepreneurship

Topic for co-operation: Objective 1 and 2 regions

PLEASE CONTACT...

Ms. Nina Holopainen (Head Coordinator, M. Sc.)

Telephone: +358 504327588

Fax: +358 132443399

Email: nina.holopainen@ncp.fi

www.debatenet.info

DEBATE IS...

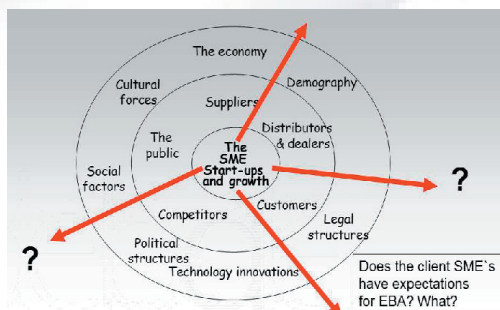
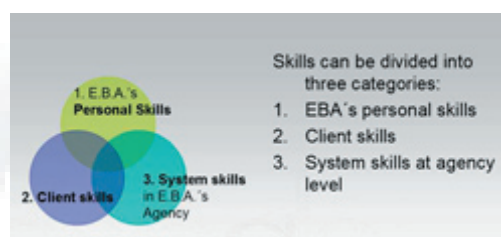
FOCUS

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF A EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISOR

INTRODUCTION

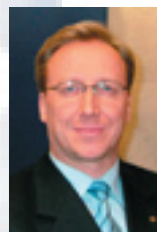
One of the main tasks of the DEBATE-project is to define a professional profile for a European Business Advisor. This work has been started during the first meeting in Jelgava, Latvia. During the first brain-storming workshop 6 different profiles have been created by the experts of the partner institutes. Mr Heikki Pietarinen from Jobs and Society North-Karelia analyzed these profiles and presented the first draft of the professional profile at the project meeting in Genoa, Italy. The conclusion of the Genoa workshop is that we need a professional profile in order to compare current knowledge that BAs have and how it should be developed further. This article describes the merged result.

work for creating the final professional profile continues during the next DEBATE-project meeting. Now we already have a ground to build the house of professional profile.



Finland:

THE ROLE OF THE BUSINESS ADVISOR



The regional competitiveness and the economic growth in Kainuu in Finland rely a great deal on the success of SMEs. Originally in Kainuu region there were specific development centres, for example a development centre for wood sector and another one for metal sector. In the beginning of 2000 there was a need for centraliza-

tion of business advisory to a one company and this was the starting point of the regional development company Kainuun Etu Oy.

My own sector is the Experience Production (tourism, culture, content industry) and Food sector. This sector has today a very important role in Kainuu regional development. In addition to the work described earlier, my own responsibilities also include steering of the working of the project managers of the development projects in the sector and helping the Team with their work with the companies. One of the most interesting roles in this work is to participate in international projects and communicating with regional partners around Europe, learning new ways of working and helping the companies to gain updated information from their own field.

Although I have been working myself in several SMEs, in the financing sector as a bank manager and financing manager, experienced several international projects as a coordinator, studied marketing and foreign trade, I still have a great need to learn more about internationalisation of SMEs and helping them to understand different cultures

EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISOR

Business advisor is a person who works with entrepreneurs or persons planning to be entrepreneurs. Their work includes business idea evaluation, budgeting, etc.

SKILLS THAT ARE NEEDED

The necessary skills of a business advisor were divided into three categories: personal skills, client skills and agency level system skills. Personal skills include good theoretical and practical skills of entrepreneurship, high ethics in the role of advisor, personal balance and development. Client skills include human management and understanding, psychology of entrepreneurship and cultural skills. Agency level system skills include tools; colleagues, process management and quality standards and systems. All of these categories were divided into subcategories, creating a list of large number of different skills that a business advisor must have.

CONCLUSION

The business advisor needs a large number and scale of skills in order to help the clients. The complexity of the whole competence of the business advisor becomes very clear. The

DEBATE IS...

FOCUS NOW

when dealing with foreign trade. To this work DEBATE project gives me a great help.

*Tuomo Tahvanainen, Development Manager
Experience Production & Food Industry
Kainuun Etu Oy
Lönnrotinkatu 1
FIN-87100 KAJAANI
Tel. +358 8 6178 116
Mobile +358 44 551 4585
Fax +358 8 6178 120
E-mail: tuomo.tahvanainen@kainuunetu.fi
www.kainuunetu.fi*

BUSINESS COUNSELLING SERVICES BECOME MORE EFFICIENT



J Josek Ltd in the Joensuu region looks after business counselling of Joensuu region in cooperation with other actors. The objective is to significantly raise the level and effectiveness of counselling.

More than one half of our organisation have experience from working as an entrepreneur. With our wide background of know-how and our diversified services we are able to serve people starting their business activities as well as to participate in the development activities. We are supported by a variety of actors from a business incubator to development services – according to the needs of the enterprises.

*Pekka Nuutinen,
Director, Business Counselling
Joensuu Regional Development Company JOSEK Ltd
Pekka.nuutinen@josek.fi
www.josek.fi*

BEING A BUSINESS ADVISER IS A DEMANDING TASK



I started my work as a Business Adviser in the Development Centre of Central Karelia Ltd (Keski-Karjalan Kehitysyhtiö Oy KETI) in the beginning of January 2005. I am in my mid thirties and I have a family of husband Sami, daughter Singa and little dog Kauno. My educational

background is MA degree in Social Sciences. After graduating from the University 11 years ago (so, the time really passes by quickly...) I have worked in a variety of positions in many different companies. If thinking my career as a Business Adviser the most beneficial experience must have been my years as an Office Manager taking care of administration of the international Finnish company but equally important is my customer service history and attitude.

In my current job, which I by the way like very much, my days are filled with meetings, phone calls and e-mails. I am advising both people who are just starting their businesses and those who want to somehow develop their existing activities. It is all about discussing, listening, doing some calculations, writing business plans, filling loan or other funding applications and from time to time just being there for people who just need you to support them – to put it shortly – finding the problems and solving them.

Being a Business Adviser is a demanding task, but at the same time it is extremely rewarding. Every day brings some new challenges together with a few surprises... and how boring would the life be without them!

*Ms. Johanna Eschner
Keski-Karjalan Kehitysyhtiö Oy KETI, Savikontie 6, 82500
Kitee, Finland
Tel: +358 13 411 400
Fax: +358 13 411 404
Mobile: +358 50 367 7401
E-mail: johanna.eschner@keti.fi
www.keti.fi*

EVERY DAY YOU LEARN SOMETHING



My career as a business advisor started little over a year ago. After working several years in software business and having seen its good and bad sides it was time to move on. Working as a project manager for North-Karelia vocational institute I learned about business advising and realized that this could be my career.

I am now 41 years old and have a family of two daughters, wife and two dogs. I have a MA degree in physics. My knowledge of business is gathered from my own experiences as entrepreneur, working as a chief executing officer and working as project manager. This gives me quite a solid background to be a business advisor. I have also some teaching experience from my university time. This is also a good skill to have in this job.

My average day includes meetings with clients, discussing and evaluating their business ideas, their entrepreneurship

DEBATE IS...

FOCUS NOW

skills, making all sorts of calculations etc. I may go to meet my client at their home or they visit our office. I might go to a vocational institution to speak about entrepreneurship. Variety of tasks is very wide.

Now after one year I must say that it has been very interesting job. Every day you learn something new and every single day is different.

Risto Ravattinen
Jobs & Society of North Karelia, Finland
Pohjois-Karjalan Uusyrityskeskus Ry
Business Advisor
0500 285 904
risto.ravattinen@uusyrityskeskus.fi

Italy:

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFILE OF BUSINESS ADVISOR:



This figure can be described, from an operative point of view, as that of "strategic intermediary" i.e. a broker who puts together the offer and demand, the opportunities with the needs. In this case, it is the person who facilitates the matching of specific EU initiatives, in support of

the economic development and individual entrepreneurs. About younger BAs ("Junior advisors") the following characteristics are important: degree in law and economy. Good knowledge of the EU laws and opportunities and internationalisation's matters.

With a strong background in applied industrial R&D project management, Luigi Miracoli started his consultant activity in 1990. In 2002 he founded Techfin Srl, a high tech service company operating in Genoa and Northern Italy. Techfin acts as business advisor to support hi-tech companies in developing strategies and projects for technology innovation, internationalisation and co-operation with University Labs and Research Centres. The company core activity is the planning and the financial budgeting of R&D projects, accessing to regional, national and European funds. Techfin portfolio counts more than 50 companies, mainly SME, in the fields of electronics and microelectronics, ICT, robotics, advanced material technology, biomedical engineering, environmental technologies.

L. Miracoli is a co-founder of Dixet Association (www.

dixet.it), gathering more than 120 companies of the Genoa high tech cluster, as well as Genova High Tech Spa (www.ghetspa.it), a start-up company promoting the ambitious "Leonardo- Technology Village" project.

Luigi Miracoli
Dr. Eng. Chemical Engineering (1980)
University of Genova (Italy)
M. Sc. Biomedical Engineering (1986)
Brown University - Providence, R.I. (USA)
Company :
Techfin Srl
Via 25 Aprile, 4/4
161232 Genoa (Italy)
tel. +39 010 2516672
fax +39 010 2462616
e-mail : miracoli@techfin.it

Hungary:

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFILE OF BUSINESS ADVISOR:



According to Mr. Vargyas the European Business Advisor should have a general idea of the legal system of the European Union. Have information about the way (cross-border) enterprises can be founded and about the way of their operation and its circumstances in various member countries.

Be aware of the different facilities for investment in the EU. Know the basic business characteristics of the EU countries. (e.g. which activity is popular, needed and profitable in which country)

Have information about available tenders and applications throughout the EU.

Needed skills: speaking foreign languages, knowledge of law and business (finances, management, macro and micro economy).

Study visits of other EU countries' business advisors would be very important so that EBAs have experiences of their own in business advisory of various countries.

Mr. Csaba Vargyas
Micro credit manager (Kisalföld Foundation for Enterprise Promotion)

Description of activity: management and administration of the micro credit program at the Foundation, micro credit consultancy, admission of applications of enterprises, visiting the site of development where the micro credit will be used,

DEBATE IS...

FOCUS NOW

admission of invoices, arrangement of credit transfer to the enterprises' bank account, follow-up, etc.

Estonia

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFILE OF BUSINESS ADVISOR:

The descriptions of skills of BAs can be real help for creating new programs/learning materials for education consultants, for certification of active consultants etc. Learning programs can be accessible via Internet.

On one hand it is very good to focus on the complexity of different skills: know-how is only a part of the whole competence, but on the other hand I think it is difficult to find one and the same person, who masters the whole complex of skills.

The Professional Profile of the EBA is of high value for consultants working or for start up consultants.

*Ms. Krista Kink
Business Consultant Tallinn City Enterprise Department*

WHAT'S NEW?

GOING ON & COMING UP ON DEBATE...

SURVEY

on the state and qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions of business advisory in the participating countries is being implemented by the DEBATE partners. The survey will also investigate the impressions and opinions of Business Advisors and their various stakeholder groups (clients, authorities etc.) on the Professional Profile presented elsewhere on this Newsletter. The preliminary results of the survey will be available in March 2006. Contacts: Mr. Arto Lankinen (arto.lankinen@ncp.fi) and Mr. Tenho Kohonen (tenho.kohonen@ncp.fi) at North Karelia Polytechnic, Finland.

WORKSHOP 3

with the theme of development of Business Adviser education will be organised in North Karelia, Finland in May 2006. The Workshop will be the launch of the curriculum development processes in the participating regions and countries. The results of the Survey (see above) will illuminate the central learning needs of BAs and direct the work. Contact: Mr. Heikki Pietarinen (heikki.pietarinen@uusyrityskeskus.fi), Regional Coordinator, at Jobs & Society of

North Karelia, Finland.



DEBATE IS...

FOCUS NOW

WHATS NEW

PARTNERS

NORTH KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES (FORMER NORTH KARELIA POLYTECHNIC, NCP)

NCP provides higher vocational education and further education for the needs of the regional and national industries, commerce and other working life. NCP provides bachelor level higher education in seven fields of study in 22 degree programmes. NCP has an integral role in regional development processes as an active member of different centre of excellence programmes, as well as a conductor of various important projects.

Contact information:
Ms. Nina Holopainen (Head Coordinator)
Tel. +358 - (0)50 432 7588
Fax +358 - (0)13 - 244 3399
nina.holopainen@ncp.fi
www.ncp.fi

JOBS & SOCIETY OF NORTH KARELIA

North Karelia's Enterprise Agency (Pohjois-Karjalan Uusyrityskeskus ry.) is the only comprehensive counselling service provider in the province for people who are planning to start a new business. North Karelia's Enterprise Agency belongs to Finland's Jobs and Society network, which comprises of thirty enterprise centres. The Objectives for Enterprise agency operation are to raise the standards of entrepreneurs' know-how and to avoid failures.

Contact information:
Mr. Heikki Pietarinen (Business Advisor)
Mobile +358 500 285 902
heikki.pietarinen@uusyrityskeskus.fi
www.uusyrityskeskus.fi/pohjois-karjala

KESKI-KARJALAN KEHITYSYHTIÖ OY KETI/ DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OF CENTRAL KARELIA LTD KETI

KETI, is helping local enterprises to start and to develop their activities by offering business counselling in the region of Central Karelia. Networking and co-operation with other local organisations is an important part of our operations. KETI also has an active role in the marketing of the region.

Contact information:
Ms. Johanna Eschner (business counsellor)
Tel: +358 13 411 400
Fax: +358 13 411 404
Mobile: +358 50 367 7401
johanna.eschner@keti.fi
www.keti.fi

JOENSUU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, JOSEK LTD.

Joensuu Regional Development Company, JOSEK Ltd carries the operative responsibility for definition of the regional business policy, for business counselling, business development and marketing of the region. The company's business idea is through development of cooperation to consolidate and diversify the business structure, to develop the region's competitiveness and to improve the operational facilities of the business life in an internationalising environment.

Contact information:
Pekka Nuutinen (Director, Business Counselling)
Tel. +358 400 679 554
Fax +358 13 263 7299
pekka.nuutinen@josek.fi
www.josek.fi

KAINUUN ETU OY – KAINUU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

The role of the company is to contribute to regional growth and to assist key sector companies to develop their business operations, competitiveness, growth and cooperative activities; to develop key clusters and realise the preconditions for their operation; to promote the development of the regional commercial structure.

Contact information:
Tuomo Tahvanainen (Development Manager)
Tel. +358 8 6178 116
Mobile +358 44 551 4585
Fax +358 8 6178 120
tuomo.tahvanainen@kainuunetu.fi
www.kainuunetu.fi

UNIVERSITY OF OULU

The University has experience in regional development research as well as business studies and research, extensive expertise in information processing sciences, e.g. the development of business learning environments.

Contact information:
Mr. Pekka Käyhkö (Senior Lecturer)
Tel. +358 - (0)8 - 632 4874 or +358 - (0)400 - 664 457
pekka.kayhko@oulu.fi

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (TUT)/ ESTONIA

TUT is one of the largest universities in Estonia, providing an interdisciplinary higher education and technological advancement. The University offers engineering and economics diploma, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes. TUT is an initiator in developing research-intensive enterprise environment.

DEBATE IS...

FOCUS NOW

WHATS NEW

PARTNERS



Contact information:

Ms. Anneli Kana (Project Manager, MA)
 Tel. +372 620 2666 or +372 528 8810
projekt@edu.ttu.ee

ATHENS UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) is the best business school in Greece involved in a wide range of teaching, research and consultancy activities. In the DEBATE project, AUEB is primarily involved in the student support (tutoring/counselling) system for business advisors.

Contact information:

Professor Spyros Lioukas
 Tel: + 30 210 8203 573
scl@aueb.gr

CENTER OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN GREECE

The centre has experience in SME support services, co-operation in vocational training and conduct of studies (research); an extensive regional network of co-operation with the regional authorities and government bodies contribute to the operation.

Contact information:

Mr. Konstantinos Antonakopoulos (Director)
 Tel. +30 - 26930-25300
ktada@otenet.gr

KISALFÖLD FOUNDATION FOR ENTERPRISE PROMOTION

Kisalföld Foundation for Enterprise Promotion (KVA) is an organisation founded for the support of development of micro, small and medium enterprises in Győr-Moson-Sopron County. KVA is a member of a nationwide network of Foundations for Enterprise Promotion.

Contact information:

Ms. Kata Székely (Project manager)
 Tel. +36 96 511-120
 Fax. +36 96 511-121
szkata@kva.hu
www.kva.hu

UNIVERSITY OF WEST-HUNGARY CENTRE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE MOSONMAGYARÓVÁR

The main fields of education are agricultural engineering, agricultural economics and food quality insurance on MSc and BSc level; doctoral degree programs offer the topics of economics of animal husbandry and new economic structures. Research projects cover a wide range of agriculture

DEBATE IS...

FOCUS NOW

WHATS NEW

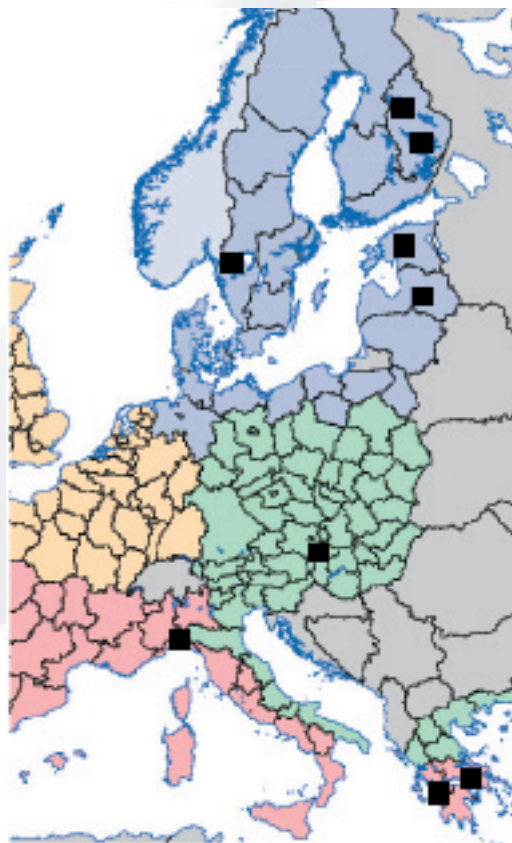
PARTNERS

and food industry.
 Contact information:
 Dr. Erika Hollósi Kalmárné
 Tel: +36 96 566643
 Fax: +36 96 566610
 hollosie@mtk.nyme.hu
 www.mtk.nyme.hu

LAG APPENNINO GENOVESE

Local Action Group (LAG) Appennino Genovese is an agency for local development that represents from a territorial point of view the hinterland and coastal area around the city of Genoa. The LAG works with other bodies (Province of Genoa, Chamber of Commerce, Private Associations) mainly in the promotion of the territory; its interventions supported local enterprises and territorial marketing, thus becoming an activator of socio-economic development.

Contact information:
 Mrs. Annalisa Cevasco (Co-Director GAL Appennino Genovese)
 Tel. +39 0108683242 – 248
 Mobile: 335 6772092
 Fax. +39 0108683249
 info@appenninogenovese.it; a.cevasco@appenninogenovese.it



JELGAVA REGIONAL ADULT EDUCATION-CENTRE

The centre has extensive experience in business advisory and support activities as well as adult educational programs of business management. The participation in local and international programmes and the existing regional network of co-operation contribute to the successful promotion of entrepreneurship.

Contact information:
 Ms. Daina Kanaska (Business Advisor)
 Tel. +371 30 82101 or +371 6483712
 daina@jelgava.lv

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

TDF is a public organisation with the mission to facilitate the development of high-tech innovation according to the national and EU programming documents, and to promote the implementation of innovations and development of high value added production, thereby generate potential for further economical sustainability of Latvia.

Contact information:
 Kaspars Skalbergs (Member of the Board)
 tel.+371-7211321
 fax: +371-7211322
 Mobile: +371-9455700
 kaspars.skalbergs@tdf.lv

DEVELOPMENT ENTERPRISE OF ACHAIA PREFECTURE

The enterprise has long-term experience in multiple fields of regional development like business development, employment/local labour market, support for regional government, tourism and environment.

Contact information:
 Mr. Kostas Giotopoulos (IT Manager)
 Tel. +302610317872
 kgiotop@nea.gr

ALMI BUSINESS PARTNER AB

ALMI's mission is to stimulate growth and development for small and medium-sized companies and innovators. ALMI offers financing and business development consultation. The combination of services enables ALMI to help during the different phases of a business – right from the initial concept through to becoming a profitable company.

Contact information:
 Ms. Karin Vangstad (Business Adviser)
 Tel. +46 54 149362 or +46 70 8149362
 karin.vangstad@almi.se

DEBATE IS...

FOCUS NOW

WHATS NEW

PARTNERS

Dear Reader,

Welcome to (re)join the DEBATERs – business advisers and educators working on Interreg IIIC project in a quest of a better quality of business advisory in Europe!

Another six months have passed since the release of the very first DEBATE Newsletter. That is where we introduced the elements of the “Professional Profile” of a European business adviser: a description of the desired key qualifications and competences of experts working in the field.

Since the 1st Newsletter a survey on the validity and applicability of the Professional Profile has been launched in the partner countries. The opinion of business advisers outside the DEBATE project as well as their clients, entrepreneurs above all, about the Profile will be asked. Through the survey also the expectations of the entrepreneurs and other stakeholders for Business Advisers will be investigated.

The finalised Professional Profile is a vital tool for DEBATERs in several ways. Firstly, it will lay the foundation for the development of the structure and contents of in-service education of business advisers. Curriculum development was launched recently at the 3rd DEBATE Workshop in North Karelia, Finland, in May.

Secondly, the Profile is a “mirror” for the DEBATERs themselves. It is a reflective tool for analysing their current competences and learning needs. The first round of the process of constructing “Personal Learning Plans” is a theme of this Newsletter.

Finally, the Profile will set the criteria for the profession of a business adviser and for the ultimate certification of the profession in the partner countries. Discussion will carry on at the 4th DEBATE Workshop in Hungary in October, along with the exchange of methods of business advisory.



But what is business advisory actually all about? The first part of the survey, the “pre-survey”, already illustrated a picture of business advisory, its quantitative and qualitative dimensions in the DEBATE countries. You can find a summary of the most interesting results on this Newsletter.

Since the 2nd Workshop in Genoa, Italy, in October 2006 the DEBATERs have also been busy with the design of the E-Network (portal) and establishment of the Association of European Business Advisers. More news on these key results and other future steps will be available on the Newsletter 3 in autumn – please keep us in your sight!

*Ms. Nina Holopainen
Head coordinator
nina.holopainen@ncp.fi*

WELCOME!

FOCUS

Survey on Business Advisory

During the winter 2005/2006 a survey has been implemented in seven member countries of DEBATE in order to find out the quantitative and qualitative dimension of business advisory in the partner countries. The objective of the survey was to find out the total number of business advisors, how their working time is distributed, what kind of employer they have, what is the share of males/females and what are their typical titles of occupation.

During the observation years 2003 and 2005 there were about 14112 business advisors working in five countries publicly or at public equivalently financed advising organizations.

The private service enterprises were the largest client group of business advisors using about 38% of labour input of business advisors, followed by start-up enterprises (24% share of advisors working time) (figure 1.). Results prove that business advisory

is a tool which was used in prevention of unemployment. By means of business advising political decision makers try to develop their societies toward the demands of the growing service sector of economy.

In four countries the most common occupation title of business advisors was either business advisor or advisor. In planning of business advisor's training program the

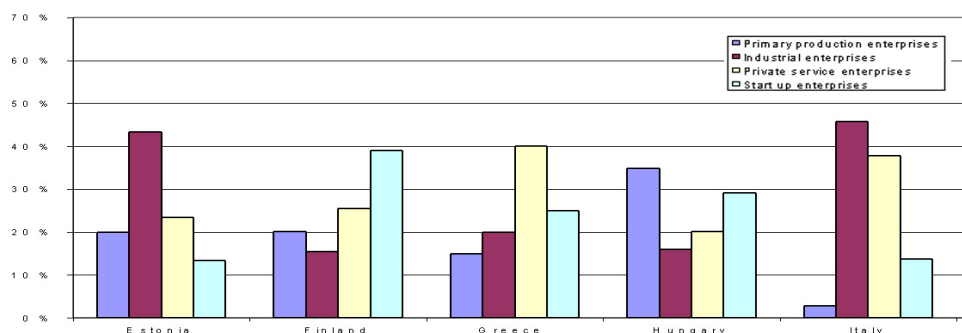
Table 1. The five most common occupation titles of business advisors

Estonia	Finland	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Latvia
Consultant	Business advisor	Business advisor/ developer	Advisor	Legal advisers	Business advisor
Business consultant	Economic advisor	Enterprise/ business consultant/advisor	Expert	Architects	Consultant of taxes
	Business agent	Organization consultant	External/ internal advisors	Agronomists	Agricultural consultant
	Company analyst		Advisory manager	Engineers	
	Development chief		Head advisor	Professional accountants	

needs of growing service sectors, different occupations of business advisors and other similarities of business advising systems shall be taken into consideration. The complete report of the results of Pre-Survey and Main-Survey shall be published during the autumn 2006 and will be available on the operation website at www.debatenet.info.

Mr. Arto Lankinen
Arto.lankinen@ncp.fi

Figure 1: Business advisors working time by activities



WELCOME!

FOCUS

Some remarks from Hungary



*Kata Székely
Kisalföld Foundation for
Enterprise Promotion, Hungary*

Implementing the pre-survey first we defined the target group easy to reach.

Kisalföld Foundation for Enterprise Promotion is a member of a country-wide network of Foundations for Enterprise Promotion. So the most suitable solution seemed to be using the network as the research population for the pre-survey.

The foundations have a common on-line informational system, to where I uploaded the questions concerning the survey. This way we could reach a part of the Hungarian Bas quite easily.

This method is being used when implementing the main-survey, too.

PERSONAL LEARNING PLAN (PLP) - a tool to identify the learning goals and needs of the business advisor

Learning is a basement of long-lasting effects of development processes in regional as well as individual level. To encourage and advance the adoption of the principle of life-long learning among business advisors (BA) involved in DEBATE –project we made personal interviews on their learning and educational needs.

BUSINESS ADVISORS highly educated and satisfied with their duties

According to the interviews the business advisors seem to be quite satisfied with the level of their knowledge and skills in different sectors of professional profile. Their background education is at very high level; some of them are even completing their doctoral thesis! The interviewees are working as advisors in a various branches of economy; e.g. services (tourism), industry (plastic, metal, wood), serving start-ups as well expanding and finishing enterprises.

Table 2. The key results of PLP –interviews (EBA: European Business Advisor)

Strengths of the EBA	Development needs of the EBA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project management/process management • taxation • management of risks • financing, legal background (acts, regulations) • motivation skills • negotiation skills • networking skills • team work • creativity • reliability • flexibility • social contacts • positive attitude • high education – strong educational background • work experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing skills • languages • intercultural communication • know-how to understand the clients • taxation • marketing • international business • business environment • entrepreneurship • IT-skills • good practices • business legislation • trends of entrepreneurship • time-management • business know-how

WELCOME!

FOCUS

The feedback they have got from their customers and superiors has been very positive and constructive. Almost all of the advisors think they have enough competence to manage their working duties at good level. In spite of that they expressed themselves to be highly interested to participate in the fore coming training modules to develop further their skills and knowledge as business advisors. Almost every one interviewed mentioned intercultural communication skills as point of personal development plan!

PLP -process, a way to increase interaction and mutual trust between the BA, superior and the trainer

In each region it wasn't possible to find a suitable representative of the educational institution to act as a tutor teacher in the PLP-process. BAs were satisfied with the PLP -interviews and were interested to join the next round at the end of the project in 2007!

For the tutoring teachers and other educational experts of DEABATE - project will be a great challenge to develop the PLP-interviews to increase real interaction and mutual trust between the advisors and the trainers. It is an essential step to guarantee the success of the development process of the training programmes in the future!



*Ms. Ulla Asikainen
Component 5 coordinator
Degree programme Director in Rural Industries
North Karelia University of Applied Sciences
ulla.asikainen@ncp.fi*

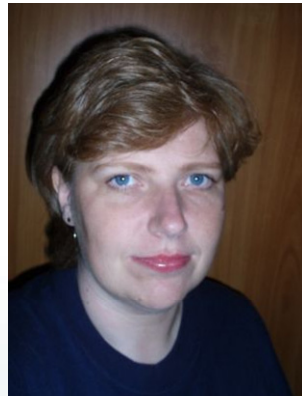
Some remarks of PLP survey from Estonia

In Estonia totally 7 business advisors were interviewed and interviewees are working for 4 different business advisory organisations. As the organisations, the advisors duties are quite variable too: business/marketing plan writing and consulting; fund-raising advise; partner search; co-ordinating different business development projects; technology audit; founding new spin-off companies etc. About personal and professional skills the advisors mentioned knowledge of funding information, legal acts and trade sector, entrepreneurship and accounting. Their strengths are: good team-worker; social; good trainer; correct, experienced. Also was as a strength mentioned knowledge of Baltic ICT market, which is a big advantage.

On the field of personal know-how and development the interviewees expressed their need for training about changes in business legislation; informative seminars about business environment in other countries; for training about intercommunication and team-work; for training new methods and techniques of counselling; analysis of different economic branches in different countries and trends of entrepreneurship; needs to develop time-management and self-management. The most relevant issue for

WELCOME!

FOCUS



interviewees were to know business know-how, business environment (specially on **international level**) and human management and communication.

As in Estonia, the superior and tutor teacher system is not developed, we could not pointed out the role of them. That's the reason of self-management of interviewees - carried out by advisors themselves.

*Anneli Kana, Project manager
Tallinn University of Technology
Regional coordinator of Estonia
anneli@staff.ttu.ee*

LATEST NEWS

COMING UP AND GOING ON:

**Seminar in Finland
(Huhmari Holiday Centre)
18-19. May 2006.**

DEBATERs made good progress in developing of an educational structure for business advisory!

The main objective of the seminar in Finland, North Karelia, was to construct a framework for the training programmes utilising previous outcomes of the DEBATE project (BA Professional Profile, PLPs, surveys) and the expertise of the participants. The participants had prepared themselves very well to the theme by



completing a separate home work which was reflected in the beginning of the seminar. In addition the frame of the training programme was elaborated during very intensive international and regional (national) phases during two days seminar.

The main results of the seminar gave really interesting and valuable points of development which should be considered during the elaboration of the training programmes in the next phases of DEBATE-project. Here are some concrete examples concerning general issues of the training as well as the know-how and the skills of the BA summarized in the groups:

How to organize the training programmes:

- We have to find out some new innovative methods to motivate BAs to participate in the training!

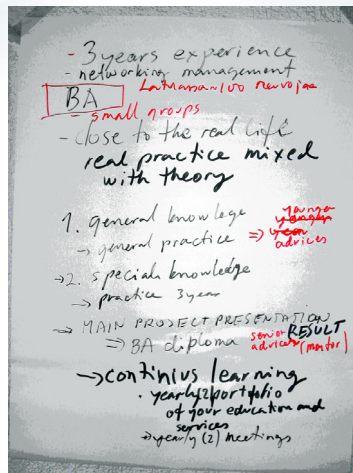


WELCOME!

FOCUS

LATEST NEWS

- We have to define our target group – existing BAs or potential BAs as well!
- We should benchmark existing programmes in each country or even region.
- The programmes should be extensive with practical training period.
- The studies should not be longer than 2 days per month with some e-learning materials.
- We have to be able to guarantee the certification system of the programmes when needed.
- The tutor will give tools but doesn't dig for the participants – walks with but doesn't give a ride.



- Mentoring could be used as a tool of teaching.
- The participants should be able to study according to their personal learning plan (PLP).

What is the critical knowledge and know-how of the BA?

- The BA understands how to elicit/find out customer's background, psychological capability and needs according to planned business.
- The BA has to know problem solving methods.
- The BA is able to find information about

- financing and market to perform analysis.
 - The BA can build up a network and work in the network/team.
 - The BA is familiar with the regional development plans and business development trends in the region.
- Which are the essential skills the BA?

- BA can make business plan or support the customer to complete it herself.
- BA will support (coach) the customer in making plans and decisions by asking right questions and using different approaches, methods (pedagogical skills, debating skills).
- BA is able to perform financial analysis to make priorities.
- BA is reliable.
- BA can co-operate with people from different cultural background.

The ideas and topics listed above will be used as a "raw material" in our next phase in the development process of the training modules. It will be a challenging task to elaborate the first versions of the programmes by the next project meeting. Hopefully the really good and constructive spirit we had in North Karelia while working together will continue and we shall have a successful and inspiring seminar in Hungary in the end of October 2006.

*Ms. Ulla Asikainen,
Degree programme Director in Rural Industries
North Karelia University of Applied Sciences*

*Ms. Merja Mononen., Lecturer
North Karelia University of Applied Sciences*

COMING UP:

**Workshop 4 in Hungary
(Mosonmagyaróvár)
26-27. October 2006**

Welcome!!!



WELCOME!

FOCUS

LATEST NEWS

Dear Reader,

The debate around DEBATE goes on – welcome to (re)join the discussion!

DEBATE is an Interreg IIIC operation with the objective of the raise of quality of business advisory in Europe, a joint initiative and challenge of business advisers and educators. Since the release of the latest International Newsletter in June 2006 various stimulating but also puzzling topics have been introduced to the agenda and addressed.

The survey on the validity and applicability of the Professional Profile, the description of the key competences of a Business Adviser, has been finalised and publicised. The opinion of business advisers outside the DEBATE project as well as their clients, entrepreneurs above all, about the Profile was asked. Also the expectations of the entrepreneurs and other stakeholders of Business Advisers were investigated.

The results of the survey are now being carefully analysed in the DEBATE regions. For example, ideas for the further development of the curricula for the (in-service) training of Business Advisers are being tracked. The first drafts of the curricula have already been presented and discussed. You can find intriguing examples also on this Newsletter!

The Professional Profile will be further developed based on the results of the survey. It will eventually lay down the criteria for the profession of a “European Business Adviser”. The process of the ultimate certification of the profession in the partner countries has already been launched.

The professionals will self-evidently need a forum for their dialogues in the future, too, beyond the Operation. The DEBATERs have already set the date for a historical event: the establishment of the European Association of Business Advisers in April 2007 and the elaboration of a portal (E-Network) as a tool of the Association is proceeding with full speed.



But what is actually the essence or “core” of the daily work of a Business Adviser? And are there differences between the partner countries? During the 4th International Workshop in Mosonmagyaróvár, Hungary, in October 2006 the exchange of methods and practices of business advisory was initiated.

The inspiring comparison of everyday tools is continuing in the context of the pilot exchange programme. During a study visit to a selected business advisory organisation in another partner country the Business Adviser will reflect on her or his own work. The outgoing Business Adviser is supported by a personal tutoring teacher (trainer) who helps in the analysis and structuring of the inherent learning process.

Follow us up – stories from the exchanges will be told in the next issue of the International Newsletter in spring 2007!

*Nina Holopainen
DEBATE Head Coordinator
nina.holopainen@pkamk.fi*

WELCOME!

FOCUS

Tailor -made training for Business Advisors- international and national approaches!

The development work in elaborating the training programmes for BAs continued in Hungary workshop. Each representative of the educational institutions was asked to complete the first draft of the training module which was introduced and cross-evaluated in the international groups in the seminar. While formulating the drafts of the programmes, the representatives were asked to find answers for the critical questions of the training like:

- Why is this programme elaborated?
- For whom is the programme aimed at?
- What kind of competences (knowledge, skills, and attitude) the programme will provide for the students?
- What kind of teaching methods will be used?
- How will you guide the student and his/her learning process?
- Who will evaluate and by which method?

After constructive and encouraging discussions we can state that the demand for such training is obvious because there is no homogeneous structure for BAs' education in Europe. The main target groups for the training will be the "junior" as well as the "senior" BAs with heterogeneous educational backgrounds. Efficient tool will be a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) of the BA to formulate the training according to the needs of the participant! The educational institutions will develop a separate programmes as well as special modules integrated in the MBA/MSc context.

The contents of the programmes will reflect special features of the national BA-system, the results of the professional profile of the BA as well as the results of the surveys. The

main focus will be on promoting innovative way of thinking, international perspective, relationship management, legislation and economical issues. All the participants emphasized the importance of the combination of theory and practice, e.g. case-studies and problem-based learning methods. Virtual learning was recommended to be used only in some parts of the training, but the programmes should be realized as a part-time studies.



The role of the BAs and experienced entrepreneurs as mentors was appreciated as a tool of guiding the student. The supervisor of the BA should participate actively in the PLP –interviews during the studies. Every group emphasized that the studies must be evaluated with marks based on the assignments.

As a summary of the discussions we can conclude that there are some international similarities as well as national differences which have to be considered in the next phases of the development work of the training programmes. The great challenge will be to develop a high quality, customer-oriented educational module for BAs in each partner region or country of DEBATE – project, because the basic educational structure and demands (e.g. certification system of the BAs/programmes) for such products varies a lot in each country. DEBATE – project offers an excellent forum to elaborate training together, not only in the international context, but also in co operation with the BAs and the representatives of the educational institutions.

*Ms. Ulla Asikainen
Component 5 coordinator
Degree programme Director in Rural Industries
North Karelia University of Applied Sciences*

WELCOME!

FOCUS

THE GREEK CONCEPT of the educational module

The objective of the educational module is to construct an educational unit (course) that will aim at preparing and developing the skills needed by SME BAs to convey to their clients (SMEs). The educational content should serve to educate/inform BAs on their knowledge 'gaps' (based on the national survey results); and, to build a better collaboration with their customers (SMEs). The audience should consist of all prospective BAs and current BAs under request. The total duration of the course should not exceed 20 hours. It would better be incorporated in the context of the programme of an MBA/MSc course.

The education content should involve teaching notes related to each country's content and needs; slides linked to teaching notes; and, a bulk package of related reading materials (articles, national or European reports,



• **Discussing the content of the educational modules** (from left to right): Ms. Karolina Szabó (HUN), Ms. Mariann Petres (HUN), Ms. Kirsi Heikkinen (FIN), Ms. Eva Goutzamani (GRE) and Ms. Irimi Kafousia (GRE)

etc). Possible themes in the educational content can include strategy; attaining a competitive advantage; competing in the global arena; entrepreneurship; and, managing the relationship with the client.

Eva Goutzamani
egoutz@aueb.gr

TRAINING FOR BUSINESS ADVISORS - A TWO-STEP FROM NORTH KARELIA, FINLAND!

The work in elaborating the training programme for business advisors (BAs) in North Karelia, Finland has been very intensive and inspiring. We have a team consisting of BAs from our region (Ms. Eija Lampio, Mr. Mika Hyttinen, Mr. Raimo Töllli) and teachers of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Ms. Liisa Westman, Ms. Merja Mononen, Ms. Ulla Asikainen). The team has developed the programme together and introduced the first draft of it in Hungary workshop.

Why training for BAs in Finland?

In Finland there is a demand for the training for BAs simply because at the moment the educational structure for BAs is fragile and heterogeneous. The training programme will be further education for the students having basic education and working experience.

For whom is the training aimed at?

In the first place the module called "junior" training will be aimed at the participants with university/university of applied sciences (or equal) degree and at least one year "suitable" working experience. The second module, called "senior" training will be offered to the participants having "Junior" training with working experience as a BA OR higher vocational education (college level) and 5 years (minimum) working experience as a BA.

WELCOME!

FOCUS

What kind of skills and knowledge will the training provide?

The main objectives of the programme will be to "coach" the BA to analyse and develop customer's business and to "coach" the customer to meet the challenges of the changing business environment.

For whom is the training aimed at?

In the first place the module called "junior" training will be aimed at the participants with university/university of applied sciences (or equal) degree and at least one year "suitable" working experience. The second module, called "senior" training will be offered to the participants having "Junior" training with working experience as a BA OR higher vocational education (college level) and 5 years (minimum) working experience as a BA.

How will we train the BAs?

Each of the training modules will last for one year. We concluded to use contact lessons and guided distance learning in virtual learning environment. It's very important to arrange the training as part-time studies, because the main target group will be the BAs in the working life. We'll utilize the experts of the different branches of the economy in addition of the teachers of universities of applied sciences as well as academic universities. The key factor is to combine the theory and practice in a customer-oriented way to meet the learning needs of the BAs.

What do we provide for the BAs?

The training will last approximately one year per module. The accurate contents of the programmes will be formulated later, but there will topics like entrepreneurship, from business plan to business operation, from business operation to action, economical analysis and development and exchange of ownership of the enterprise. There will some special modules in certain business branch with theme on market analysis and development. The business in Europe will introduced including an exchange period abroad.

How will be the participants guided during the studies?

The key element will be the PLP – process with a tutoring teacher together with the supervisor from the working place. The use of mentors (BAs or experienced entrepreneurs) will be a crucial part of the student supporting system.

How will the studies be evaluated?

We'll develop a evaluation system with scale from 0 (failed) to 5 (excellent). The evaluation is based on the assignments and case-studies the participants will complete during the programme. The participants themselves contribute to the evaluation by making self-evaluation in each module.

What did we learn?

The discussions we had with our international DEABATE –colleagues in Hungary seminar were constructive and encouraging. The two-step –model: A junior and a senior module was highly appreciated, but we got also some critical feedback. The main criticism we gained was on the length of the training. In the next phase we have consider in a very strict manner if we should combine the modules into one entity lasting for one year instead of two years.

The development work will carry on in an enthusiastic working atmosphere with the contribution of different experts. Our ambitious goal is to have a training programme for marketing during spring time 2007 and we will!

Ms. Merja Mononen
Lecturer
North Karelia University of Applied Sciences

Ms. Ulla Asikainen
Degree programme Director in Rural Industries
North Karelia University of Applied Sciences

WELCOME!

FOCUS

LATEST NEWS

4th International workshop on the topic "Establishment of a structure of information and knowledge resources for the European business advisory – development and exchange of innovative methodology of business advisory" has been organised between the 26-28th of October 2006 in Mosonmagyaróvár, Hungary at the premises of the University of West-Hungary.



• Workshop participants



• Workshop building

The main topics of the workshops focused on two project objectives: the establishment of the Association of Business Advisors and the e-portal as a virtual platform to support business advisors.

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISORS

As SMEs both in advanced market and in transition economies find it harder than larger businesses to find and use the information and the advice they need, it is widely recognized that business advisory, counseling and information services are the most effective means of assisting entrepreneurs in improving the competitiveness of small businesses.

The answer of the **DEBATE** operation is to establish an Association of European Business Advisors in order to reflect the needs of the Business Advisors in Europe and provide the appropriate tools that will match the needs of the European Small and Medium Enterprises. **DEBATE** operation is the "vaulting horse" for the European's Business Advisors Association.

The **Association of European Business Advisors -A.E.B.A** will be established as non-profit organization, the contribution of its members will finance the association and the headquarters will reside in Finland. Objectives of the association:

- Establish a European Network of Business Advisors
- Support the positive professional image and status of the European Business Advisor, adding to the mutual trust
- Provide tools, guidelines and methodologies to its members in order to enhance the quality of the provided services especially to SMEs
- Support the educational structure for business advisory in Europe
- Promote the exchange of know-how between the members of the Association

Members: Members of the association will be Business Advisors, Business Advisory Agencies, Educational Institutes public or private.

Anticipated Timetable: By the end of January '07, the association memorandum will be completed under the Finnish Law. By the end of April '07 the first conference of the association will take place in Karlstad Sweden during the 5th Workshop of the **DEBATE** operation.

Contact Information: www.debatenet.info
Irina Kafousia, ekafousia@nea.gr

WELCOME!

FOCUS

LATEST NEWS

E-NETWORK - BUSINESS ADVISOR PORTAL

Another concrete instrument for the European Business Advisors and key result of the **DEBATE** operation is the **Business Advisor Portal**.

The Business Advisor Portal is a signpost to resources about Business Advisory (a live knowledge repository), an effective community support tool and the instrument that will keep alive the vision and objectives of the **DEBATE** operation for a European Network of Business Advisors. The Business Advisor Portal aims to:

- Offer advice to SMEs and European Business Advisors
- Facilitate the exchange and development of best practices/knowledge between the European Business Advisors
- Become the framework for communication and cooperation between Business Advisors within Europe

- Facilitate the access to information on behalf of small and medium enterprises using new technologies like the World Wide Web
- Disseminate the results of the **DEBATE** operation

Functionalities:

- Forum
- Newsletter
- Yellow Pages
- Virtual Folder of Best Practices
- Mailing Lists
- Calendar
- Poll / Surveys
- Assessment Tools

Anticipated Timetable: By the end of the year the beta version of the portal will be available in public. By the end of July '07 the Business Advisor Portal will be finalized.

Contact Information: www.debatenet.info
Irina Kafousia, ekafousia@nea.gr
Kostas Paraskevopoulos, paraskev@nea.gr

"Regional Coordinator Tuomo Tahvanainen and Project Manager Anthony Okuogume from the regional DEBATE project in Kainuu, Finland, represented the whole interregional DEBATE project in the Interreg III C forum in Lille, France 15-16 November.



During the two days meeting, in which all together approx. 200 representatives from 90 European regions met to discuss the experiences and outcomes of Interreg III C projects and the basis for fundings in the up-coming INTERREG IVC, there was wide interest among participants of the challenging objectives of the DEBATE project. The subject to strengthen the role of European business advisors was found most important in guaranteeing high quality services to SMEs around Europe in the future."

Mr. Tuomo Tahvanainen
Regional coordinator
tuomo.tahvanainen@kainuunetu.fi

COMING UP

Workshop in Karlstad, Sweden
April 26-27, 2007 (Thursday-Friday)

Topic of the Workshop: **"Establishment of a structure of information and knowledge resources for the European business advisory" development and exchange of innovative methodology of business advisory with a special emphasis on the facilitation of the internationalisation of SMEs.** Karlstad is situated in the region of Värmland in Sweden, from 310 km from Stockholm, 240 km from Gothenburg and 210 km from Oslo. The region has about 273500 inhabitants. Karlstad has about 82700 inhabitants in 1200 square kilometres.



WELCOME!

FOCUS

LATEST NEWS

Dear Reader,

The debate around DEBATE goes on – welcome to (re)join the discussion!

DEBATE is an Interreg IIIC operation with the objective of raise of quality of business advisory in Europe, a joint initiative and challenge of business advisers and educators.



The final debate around DEBATE is about to start – welcome onboard again! With the contractual period of the Operation ending in December 2007, the DEBATErs are already approaching the “home straight”. This means there are more and more inspiring experiences and concrete results we would like to share with you through this Newsletter.

As a result of the 5th International DEBATE Workshop in April in the region of Värmland, Sweden, the final framework of functions of the Association of European Business Advisers (AEBA) was shaped. The DEBATErs are now getting ready for the formal ceremony of the establishment of the Association

which will take place in Greece in October.

The debate in Värmland also led to further adjustments and improvements on the upcoming portal (E-network) of European Business Advisers. The portal will be opened for audiences beyond the Operation and their feedback in autumn.

Both the Association and portal will be tools and forums for the continuation of the interaction between the Business Advisers and educators in Europe. We need, however, more colleagues and fresh energy to join – why don't you?

In Värmland the very first pioneers of the European Business Adviser Exchange Programme *ever* flashed up intriguing stories about their study visits to DEBATE organisations and colleagues in Greece, Italy, Finland...Let's not forget that the genuine (international) networking takes, after all, place between people. That is the most important DEBATE lesson learned so far!

Follow us up – another Newsletter with more detailed information about our achievements will still be released!

*Nina Holopainen
DEBATE Head Coordinator
nina.holopainen@pkamk.fi*

WELCOME!

Best Practices in Business Advisory

In general and as it is already known, Best Practice is a [management idea](#) which asserts that there is a [technique](#), method, process, activity, incentive or reward that is more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method, process, etc. The idea is that with proper processes, checks, and testing, a desired outcome can be delivered with fewer problems and unforeseen complications.

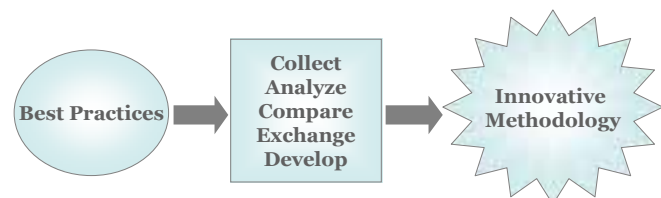
In Debate terms, Best practices can be defined as the most efficient (least amount of effort) and effective (best results) way of accomplishing advising, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time for large numbers of advisors and their clients.

A best practice exchange in business advisory is an effort to find and share [best practices](#) in this particular professional field. The exchange and development between regional partners is very helpful as provides the idea of networking.

In order to analyze, compare and be able to develop new best practices, the contribution of educational institutes (researchers) is essential. The combination of practice (business advisory) and theory (research) will result in development of innovative methodology. The combination of the knowledge background of Business Advisors and Researchers/Scientists will result in better comparison and analysis of the collected best practices and we will be able to define the reason behind success or failure and how we can take advantage of the knowledge produce to develop innovative methodologies, Best Practices.

Regarding the advisory methods that were presented during the last workshop in Swe-

den, there was obvious the need to focus NOT ONLY on the technical skills (taxation systems, imports – exports, intra-community and international transactions etc) and theoretical knowledge but also on intercultural communication skills. A good and efficient business advisor in international business environment needs knowledge and skills both in the substance of the business and intercultural competence, i.e. the skill to behave in a proper way in each situation and cultural context.



In intercultural communication the focus in the workshop was set on the intercultural competence and especially to the concept of participatory competence needed in interpersonal situations. Business advisors worked on the participatory competence and what is its meaning; evaluate their own skills; and collect the ideas, how to improve the competence they have.

Doing Business in different countries involves getting to know your international partners' cross-cultural ways of thinking and behaving. This means that one has to 'emphasize' with the others international ways of thinking.

It will be useful to continue the discussions during the Regional Working Groups in order adopt and to subsume the presented best practices to the particular local ways of working. The exchange and development of good practices will result in Innovative Methodology. The Debate tools could contribute in order to record this methodology and making it available to the public.

Irini Kafousia
 Development Enterprise of Achaia Prefecture
ekafousia@nea.gr

WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

ITALY

Luigi Miracoli, who has been involved in our Regional Working Group, is a senior consultant and the general manager of the consulting firm TECHFIN Srl. Mr. Miracoli has pointed out as "Best Practice" the initiative for "SMEs internationalisation" of the Technological District of the Intelligent Integrated Systems of Genoa (SIIT)

SIIT was established within the technological pole of Genoa (Italy) and it involves 15 large industrial companies, more than 70 SMEs, the University of Genoa and the National Council of Research (CNR).

The "SIIT - Internationalisation action" has been co-financed by the Liguria Region with a budget of 800.000 €; it started in February and the first phase will end in September 2007.

Activities of the project are: to favour initiatives and international exchanges with other European Technological Clusters, in particular referring to the SMEs needs; to support the demonstration of pilot projects abroad, in order to facilitate and accelerate the process of commercial penetration; to organize joint conferences and meetings with other European Clusters with the goal of establishing relations and partnerships; the interaction with "R&D Networks of Excellence" with the objective to provide an effective support to the SMEs for their research and development projects.



LATVIA

[Our activities – help to business consultants and entrepreneurs!](#)

In 2005 in Latvia there were more than 54 000 business consultants and entrepreneurs and about 99 % from them were SMEs. Most SMEs (about 40 %) are working on trade market. In 2005 in Zemgale region (central part of Latvia where Jelgava city is located) there were more than 3500 business consultants and entrepreneurs. We need more work to help our SMEs to develop.

One objective for Jelgava Regional Adult Education Centre is to develop a sustainable entrepreneurship system and labor market in

Jelgava city and Zemgale region.

The JRAEC is one of the best adult educational centers in our region. At the end of autumn 2006 JRAEC has started to work with entrepreneurs and business consultants. We have been organizing different meetings, trainings, consultations with entrepreneurs and business consultants. Most of business consultants and entrepreneurs are coming to us for short consultations about business plans and possibilities to get finances from different kinds of State and EU projects, and at the same time it is very important for them to get training about legislation or taxes, or how to start a business.

WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

HUNGARY

The Kisalföld Foundation for Enterprise Promotion was founded in 1992, in order to improve the operations of small and medium sized businesses through financing possibilities. During consulting the mediation of non-refundable support received increased attention. Several of our colleagues started working exclusively with European Union tendering advisory, to meet the needs of our partners.

Tendering advisory, business development

Our principle is that we only take part in projects that can be realized, both content wise and financially. During a personal consultation we examine the business and line of work of our clients before signing an agreement. By possessing the necessary information, we can suggest relevant tenders.

According to our business philosophy, tendering advisory is much more than just writing an application for a tender, since our service is only complete, if we cover the entire life cycle of a tender:

- monitoring call for tenders
- generating projects
- preparing tenders
- project following and - upon request - managing

Since we cover the entire tender life cycle, we take care to make sure that only terms that are both convincing and authentic are included, to make sure that the tender be successful and the results sustainable.

On the one hand our customers contact us if they have a project- or a development-idea and they can not finance it unassisted. Then



we look for a calling tender or we offer our micro-credit program (The rate is the current prime rate - 8% today).

On the other hand we monitor - mostly on the Internet - the new tenders day by day and when we find a new, propitious call, we send it to our clients. If they are interested, they contact us.

We work out the projects completely but we need the entrepreneur's help and cooperation too because it is their idea and enterprise. Usually we are in communication with our clients by phone and e-mail but first we have a personal interview.

After the preparing of the tenders we wait for the result and - if it is necessary - we manage the project through.

WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

GREECE:

Best Practice in Business Advisory – Western Greece Region
Centre of Entrepreneurial and Technological Development (CETD)

The CETD is a peripherally organised structure directed by the Ministry of Development.

Main goal: to inform and support the local enterprising community on the basis of their individual needs approach.

Aim: to implement, within the period 2003-2007, an action Plan funded by the Operational Program “Competitiveness” and consisted of 44 actions classified in six different fields. More specifically these 6 fields are briefly as follows:

- Provision information to local enterprises - reinforcement
- Competitiveness – Benchmarking
- Support of enterprises-tool methodology
- Personal contact between C.E.T.D – Enterprises (expert consultants)
- Role of mediator between enterprises – public & private sector funding sources
- International market (products promotions – presence of enterprise, exhibitions)

Contents

- Initiatives for the elimination of the obstacles for the entrance of new SM Enterprises in the National Trade
- Financial – structural template of exports to other countries (Albania-Bulgaria-China etc.)
- Financing projects for the promotion of products to Under-Development countries
- Legal advising for the enterprising activity in Balkans, Turkey
- Decretive template of investments

- Organizing enterprises in China (status, competition)
- Reference to the exhibition of entrepreneurial collaboration “Enterprise without borders”
- Activities of Greek enterprises of wear to South East Europe
- Resolution of food and drink market in foreign countries
- Archives for foreign trade – (First twenty countries of exports)
- Catalogue of Exports & Imports Enterprises
- Activities of (O.P.E.) (Organization for Exports Promotion)
- Rapprochement of the Chinese market (pros & cons)
- Perspectives of exports – comparative elements of other countries
- Information for the trade sector to different countries
- Statistics about Greek exports abroad
- Interrogations about the exports procedures
- Link with 4-efficiency company (www.4-e.gr) (4-exports) (tool for imports –exports, exports functions, organizational development ,marketing, exports policy.
- **Three levels:**
- Start Up (New Business)
- Small Business (SMEnterprises)
- Corporate (Intense activities enterprises, specialized services)

Panagiotis Christias
Development Enterprise of Achaia Prefecture
pchristias@nea.gr

WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

FINLAND

Best practice from North-Karelia: SME CLINIC AS AN ADVISOR'S TOOL

- Budget 225.000 € / year (c. 100 companies / year)
- Max. 5 consulting days / company
- Companies from all business sectors
- For the development of any "serious" company
- Can also be used for the preparation of a broader project for which the company plans to source separate funding
- Own register of selected consultants consisting of experts from 70 different fields
- JOSEK's and KETI's business advisor makes the final decision
- JOSEK completes a development agreement with the company and a consulting agreement with the consultant
- The Company is expected to fund c.40%
- JOSEK and KETI area companies

Track record:

- Implemented in nearly 300 companies
- Simple and swift tool for the development of specialist requirements
- Average assignment is c. €2,300
- Distribution of Assignments:
 - Market and business development 36.5%
 - Legal advice, ownership issues 23.1%
 - Strategy and business planning 15.8%
 - Product development 9.6%

- Process development 8.1%
- Planning for investment 6.9%

Results:

- Has stimulated development activity in companies
- Effective "feeder system" to a number of funding bodies (TE-Keskus, Tekes, Finnvera etc...)
- Development work has continued after the workshop
- The effect in two years' time according to business owners:
 - New workplaces: 200
 - Renewed workplaces 300
 - Fast and effective stimulant of development activity
 - Encourages continuing development
 - Stepping stone onto larger development projects

Acknowledgements:

SME CLINIC is mentioned as best practice by the following:

- European Union Benchmarking, Economic Strategy and Transfer (Eurbest)
- The Association of Finnish Regional Development Companies (Sekes)
- The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
- Finnish Business Service Systems, a work group of the Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry (KTM)

Pekka Nuutinen

*Director, Business Counselling
JOSEK LTD*

ESTONIA

Best practice – MENTORING CLUB in Tallinn

In 2003, City of Tallinn has initiated a project called "mentoring club" in order to increase sustainable development of young companies, to support the exchange of knowledge and experiences between experienced business people and less-experienced young companies, and to enhance cooperation and networking between small- and medium-sized companies. Since then four

programs have been carried out in Tallinn. Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings an un-experienced person together with a caring and experienced individual who offers guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee. A mentoring relationship is most often one-to-one, but, like in Tallinn, there exist also some group mentoring relationships, which entail one mentor with a group of mentees. Group mentoring among companies enables to share experiences and to learn from each other, to avoid the same, but offers also a good opportunity for networking and new

WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

contacts.

There are usually more than 50 companies (mostly in start-up phase) and 14 mentors participating in one project. During 8 months several meetings in form of workshops will be carried out, including discussions on specific topics and company presentations. Also networking sessions are one part of the program.

There are many positive effects of mentoring regarding development of businesses - mentoring programme encourages and motivates people, learning from experiences of others creates new knowledge, which will be implemented into the practice in order to focus more on business growth and development. Mentoring is a practical way to development human resources, to



Estonian Mentoring Club

spread the knowledge and to create competitive advantages.

*Jaanus Vaahesalu
Coordinator of mentoring programme
Tallinn City Enterprise Board*

SWEDEN

Method to make the journey from idea to business more successful

In order to succeed to make the idea a successful business we give support and help that will make the client's journey more efficient, fun and inspiring. Instead of having the client running around and getting on the wrong track we will help them to reach their aim by three important milestones: Network, organisation and trademark.

Idea: in order to develop the idea we give feedback and advise how to develop an idea.

Network: we support with a wide network containing people within different branches that is important if you want to develop as an entrepreneur.

Organisation: to build an efficient organisation for a good idea is a key for success and we know how to build this team.

Trademark: knowledge about packaging the idea into a selling trademark is very

important to get into the market and we will help our clients with that.

Business: when the client has succeeded to build a business on the milestones that we have worked with, the client is ready to enter the market and we will help with this.

ALMI Företagspartner Värmland

WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

GOING ON / COMING UP

News from Sweden

5th international workshop in Sweden

5th International workshop on the topic "Establishment of a structure of information and knowledge resources for European business advisory – development and exchange of innovative methodology of business advisory" has been organised on the 26-28th April 2007 in Dömle, Sweden, at the premises of ALMI Företagspartner Värmland. Especially certifica-



tion of European Business Advisors and the European Association of Business Advisors were up for discussion.

News from Italy

TRAINING for Business Advisors: the Italian approach...

In order to elaborate the Training Programme for BAs, it's important to understand how all the partner countries deal with this theme and the different approach of our Institutions (Region, University, private centres).

Our Training courses are financed by Region Liguria, either by means of European, Ministry of Labour or individual funds, which are handled by the Province of Genoa. The Training Centre could choose the type of courses on the basis of the programme instructions and priorities, indicated by the Region or the Provinces.

In the Region Liguria more than 100 accredited structures exist and in our Province, more or less 60 institutions.

A specific training course for Business Advisors doesn't exist in Italy, but some post-school leaving certificate and post-degree courses with similar themes have been performed, for example experts in handling of European funds, experts in

general marketing, etc. and all the participants gain access to the course, thanks to an aptitude test.

These courses have an average length of 500 hours with 20% practice and 150 hours of company internship. The presence of a tutor is obligatory.

The courses are divided into individual learning, work group and distance learning. In fact the utilisation of IT instruments is compulsory.

As regards the final certification, these types of courses don't lead to a professional qualification, but an internal commission of the Training Centre assesses the individual results of the participants, in order to issue the certificate.

There are two types of assessment: the first is carried out by the tutor and the teachers and the second by the students on the basis of their personal course appeal.

Besides at the end of the course two types of surveys are carried out: the first is maintained by the training institution, in order to assess the course efficacy on the labour market, and the second by the Provinces in order to have useful elements for the following planning.

GAL Appennino Genovese

WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

GOING ON

News from Latvia

What DEBATE brought and can still bring to us

Through the DEBATE project we got more information about trainings which our business consultants and entrepreneurs need. In the future we are planning to organize similar training programs that cover the main problems listed in the Summary of survey. The main purpose of the survey on the present state of Business advisory was to give important view to the needs and wishes of business consultants and entrepreneurs. The survey focuses on the followings:

- To identify business advisor profile and the competence model;
- To identify stakeholders and their expectations;

- To define business advisors professional profile.

We will use this material for future communication with our business consultants and entrepreneurs.

At our Regional Working Group meeting we discussed about training programs for business consultants and entrepreneurs too. As the first step, the training program could cover general topics and JRAEC will make the first step to initiate this educational program. The program is going to be a short training program, not more us 65 hours. We plan to start the training program this autumn.

Seeking about future possibilities – we are interested in DEBATE II, we are looking forward to make cooperation with new institutions and we plan to work more with business consultants and entrepreneurs.

Jelgava Regional Adult Education Centre

6th WORKSHOP Patras October 2007

NEA will organize the 6th workshop of the Debate operation which will take place in Greece, in the city of Patras in 4 – 5 October 2007. The main theme of the last workshop will be the evaluation of the project. In addition the last meeting of the coordinators team will take place in Patras in 3 October 2006.

Patras is the third biggest city of Greece and it is located on the north-west side of Peloponnese, about 220 km far from Athens. It is the capital of the Prefecture of Achaia; a vital trade and tourist hub for the whole country with old history and natural beauty.



WELCOME!

FOCUS

BEST PRACTICES

COMING UP

This publication highlights the most important functions and outcomes of the Debate project. Debate, the short for the Development of the European Business Adviser Training and Exchange Project, was implemented in 2005-2007 with the financial support from INTERREG IIIC North Zone and the Finnish Ministry of Interior. It was carried out by a consortium of nine (9) regions and 16 business advisory agencies and universities in Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Sweden and Finland. The project was coordinated by North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.

The main outcomes of the Project included

- the enhancement of networking and expertise of business advisors and educators,
- the development of entrepreneurship training,
- the establishment of the Association of European Business Advisers, AEBA.

Debate helped to establish new interpersonal relationships and intra- and interregional networks, which most certainly will continue cooperating in the future.

North Karelia University of Applied Sciences Publications
C: Reports, 35

ISBN 978-951-604-097-7
ISBN 978-951-604-096-0 (pdf)
ISSN 1797-3848
ISSN 1797-3856 (pdf)