

Skills for long term unemployeD – SKY

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ANALYSIS OF BEST PRACTICES Work Package 2



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When your training is too hard to digest and gives your learners heartburn, a bite-sized approach is an adept solution.

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I. INTRODUCTION - WHY THE BEST PRACTICES COLLECTION

The particularity of SKY Project is the “**magnifying glass**” approach to the complex issue of the possible support to **Long Term Unemployed** (LTU) adults in Europe. The magnifying glass is used by the project for underlining the **resources** that this particular “fragile” target group detains, instead of pointing out the skills gap or the low education.

Some experts already suggested the switch of perspective, from the use of the term “unskilled labor”, meant to divide workers in “powerful” or “not powerful” on the labor market, to the use of “low-wage labor” instead. The significant switch is from the focus on the “lack of skills” to the perspective of the set of skills that each person has accumulated through formal and informal job experiences and training. SKY project promotes this vision by two strategic “bottom-up” proposals, linked by the general intent of **reinforcing and promoting the “culture” of the “micro-trainings”** to which “**micro-certifications**” are strictly connected:

- Valorization of the “micro-trainings” as tools meant to highlight the potentiality of the LTU adults to be part of a lifelong learning process (“micro-learning”) and acquire valuable skills – at the same time, the micro-trainings delivered in informal contexts promote the vision of “skills” and “competences” and can be recognized and transformed in real job access engines through formal and informal “micro-certifications”
- Valorization of tools, strategies, and programs able to discover and recover the existing competences and skills in each LTU person benefitting from the specialized work insertion services delivered by public and private institutions

The pathway proposed by the SKY project leads to the creation of a new frame for micro-trainings dedicated to LTU adults. Therefore, the Collection of the Best Practices that the partners from Belgium, France, Spain, Poland and Italy have in terms of micro-trainings (or similar initiatives) is a necessary starting point. The Best practices express the existing know-how of the partners and focus mainly on non-institutional initiatives/tools/methodologies/programs meant to favor the LTUs’ access to the job market, the maintenance of an already existing job place and/or the reactivation of their interest towards learning and training opportunities.

The partners’ Best Practices reached 21 experiences, collected through the “grid for the collection of best practices” provided by the partner SCF in collaboration with CEC, in which were also included the Guidelines for the choice of the most suitable examples, in line with the SKY’s objectives.

The need to make a preliminary collection of the partners' activities in this specific field of the small-scale trainings and certifications was also motivated by:

- The need to share among partners already existing initiatives that highlight one specific partner's organizational characteristics and its professional approach to a common phenomenon represented by the LTU
- The intent to build the SKY micro-training frame and tool on the existing know-how of the partners
- The need to find small scale trainings as similar as possible to the definition and requirements of what "micro-trainings" are intended into the SKY Project:

"A micro-training course is intended to provide a beneficiary with a short training program whose learning outcomes allow the formal validation, at the end of each learning stage, of either the subsets that make up a skill or a skill leading to partial employability.

The duration of a micro-training course is a minimum of 1 hour 30 minutes and a maximum of 24 hours.

The content of a micro-training program is based on multimodal teaching resources (practical training in a workshop, exercises in a classroom, e-learning, video demonstrations, etc.) aimed at mastering a professional ability or skill necessary for a part-time job or an associative activity.

Micro-training courses are also intended to serve as a springboard for beneficiaries who wish to continue the pathway of the qualification courses."

II. STATUS QUO OF THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS REGARDING THE MICRO-TRAININGS

1 The collection methodology

In order to compare, analyze and exploit the results collected through the Best Practices, it is useful to insert the Guidelines provided to the partners in the introductory part of the BP format (see [Grid for Best Practices Collection](#)).

The criteria to be taken into consideration were elaborated through a brainstorming process during an online meeting of a mixed group of experts from Scuola Centrale Formazione and the lead partner CEC, with the support of the external expert involved into the project. Consequently, all partners received the draft of the Best Practice collection with the Guidelines included, and the final version took into consideration their comments and suggestions.

The Guidelines are synthesized into 5 points listed for the selection of the Best Practices (BPs). The 5 aspects were not compulsory to be met into the same BP described, but they describe an “ideal” micro-training. Summarizing them, the main guiding aspects for the selection process are:

1. The use (or not) of an initial skills/competences **assessment** of the LTU adult
2. Identification of the **training needs** in order to access a **specific job** (competences or parts of competences required)
3. Use of **innovative certification systems/tools** of the micro-trainings and connected Quality assurance methods
4. Micro-trainings based on the **competences gap** identified after the **initial assessment**, linked to the access to a specific job or to the reactivation of the person’s desire to restart the learning process
5. Highlight the **Transferability conditions** of the training presented – an added value of being part of a transnational partnership (pre-conditions and evidence of sustainability)

As stated into the format, the model was accompanied by the document the external expert has already prepared regarding **the definition of the Micro-trainings** as intended by the SKY project (taking into consideration also the aspects emerged from the debate among the partners during the Kick-off meeting). This set of indications was meant to orient the partners into the choice of the training experiences, as all of them have wide experience into the training programs for disadvantaged adults.

2 Aspects common to all BPs

The 21 Best Practices collected reflect not only the partners' experience in accompanying LTU persons and other fragile groups towards the job market, but also the socio-economic context of their activities, their excellence in the sector and some general trends regarding the situation of the LTUs in Europe.

Methodology of the Analysis

The approach in analyzing the 21 Best Practices collected was based mainly on two methodologies:

1. Realization of a **Table of Synthesis** following relevant categories emerged from the collection form
2. Realization of an online **Focus Group** with the mixed Italian Local Working Group – experts from SCF, from its two associated VET centers (OPIMM and FOMAL) and experts from the local network for job inclusion [*Insieme per il lavoro*](#)

The Table of synthesis of BP allow us to:

- offer a quick interpretation of the wide amount of information collected through the 21 forms filled-in
- sort the information and start a first comparison of the variety of training experiences

Before having a closer look at the similarities and differences that emerged from the training Best Practices collected, we consider it necessary to highlight some general elements that characterize them:

⇒ **The Duration** of the Micro-Trainings presented

During the project kick-off meeting, the partners guided by the external expert, had a debate regarding the ideal duration of a “micro-training”. They agreed on fixing the minimum duration around 1h30, and the maximum around 24 hours, as reported also into the Definition of the micro-trainings SKY projects adopts.

There are three BPs of small duration – 7,5h/9h/10h, numerous BPs of a duration around the maximum requested extent (24h), and some others that have a longer duration (38h/50h/60h). The relevant aspect is that all the trainings with a higher duration compared to the 24h recommended have a modular structure that allows the division in smaller “micro-trainings” if necessary.

Indeed, the choice of some partners was to choose already a module or a set of training modules from a wider training proposal and highlight their potential to become a “micro-training” with added value for the trainee.

Note: The European Guidelines included into the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) for Italy (part of the Next generation EU Fund), into the GOL Program (Guarantee for the Employability of Workers), suggest micro-trainings – called “short pathways” for the professional upskilling – of 40h/ 70h or 100h. The trainings, part of a Permanent Learning approach, must be based on the National Inventory of Professional Qualifications, not include online asynchronous lessons, and release a “Capacity and Knowledge Certification”. The same duration is suggested for the short trainings on the upskilling of digital, linguistic and security competences.

⇒ The Sectors

To better understand the sectors represented by the micro-training BPs collected, it is relevant to recall some specific characteristics of the organizations from the SKY partnership. Five of the six partners work directly with operational partners/associates and they filled-in the BP form (contributing with 4-5 BPs/ partner). The five partners: MIREC, SCF, Trinijove Foundation, AGFE and BARKA are private or represent the public institutions at the local level, but they are linked by the mission of delivering support for the implementation of work inclusion policies and actions on the territory they act on.

MIREC (Mission Régionale pour l’Insertion et l’Emploi à Charleroi) and Trinijove Foundation (Barcelona) are specialized in “job market intermediation”, Barka Foundation (Poland) values the social enterprise job creation, AGFE (Association de gestion des fonds européens, Cergy) coordinates the implementation of the ESF line “Inclusion” on the territory of Val d’Oise, while Scuola Centrale Formazione (Italy) acts through its two associated VET centers (OPIMM and FOMAL, Bologna) members of a wide local network, *Insieme per il lavoro*, dedicated to the matching on the job market between the enterprises’ needs and the profile of the (long term) unemployed adults.

Another common element for the five partners is the focus on the fragile public, with a wide range of diversity. Besides, all five partners accompany their job inclusion policies with concrete actions oriented towards the job insertion: orientation of the LTU, planning of the training pathways, delivery of training and micro-training courses, accompaniment into the enterprise.

The Sectors that emerged from the Best Practices reflect some relevant aspects:

- The strong link between each partner delivering the (micro) trainings with its local territory
 - In terms of being a reference point for the work insertion services dedicated to LTU
 - In terms of acting inside the local economic environment, recognized by the public services and by the enterprises as partners into the complex process of job matching through orientation, training and job coaching
- Some trends in 5 European countries regarding the “low wage” job market:
 - Predominance of the BPs from the Tertiary Sector – 5 BPs (AGFE, MIREC, BARKA)
 - Agriculture and Food Processing Sector represented with 4 BPs (MIREC, BARKA, Trinijove)
 - IT Sector represented with 2 BPs (Trinijove, AGFE)
 - Industry Sector represented with 2 BPs (AGFE, FOMAL/SCF)
 - Healthcare – 2 BPs (AGFE)
 - Into the category “Other Sectors” we find: Services – 2 BPs (Professional cleaning – BARKA, Administrative Assistant – OIMM/SCF), Green – 1 BP (Recycling electronic devices – Trinijove) and 3 BPs dedicated to Transversal Skills (Active job search – OPIMM/SCF, Soft Skills for empowerment – Trinijove and Volunteering skills – MIREC)

⇒ **The Target Public**

Also linked to the partner’s profile as organizations with specific missions, the target groups mentioned are:

- Long Term Unemployed Persons – **all partners**
- Fragile Unemployed Persons with “low qualifications”
- Professionals working with fragile unemployed adults
- Women victims of gender violence
- Persons with disabilities
- Persons deprived of liberty (inmates or former prison inmates)
- Youngster coming from dropout low skilled
- People from homelessness (high exclusion)
- Migrants/refugees (almost all partners)

⇒ The Aim

As directly connected with the two categories above, the aims of the micro-trainings described are partly common to all partners:

- Access to the job market – **all partners**
- Reactivation for job search/Self-motivation – AGFE, MIREC, Trinijove, SCF
- Answer to the needs of a sector in crisis – AGFE
- Maintain a current job (permanent training) – MIREC
- Reskilling - SCF

⇒ The Partnership Approach

Even if not all the micro-trainings presented are delivered into a partnership context, all partners have included at least one example of BP implemented in collaboration with other local private or public institutions. The Reports of the Local Working Groups already organized by each partner prove a high level of networking for all partners and confirm the fact that each of them is an actor on its own territory, part of a wider system for active job inclusion of disadvantaged persons.

⇒ The Assessment process (initial and final evaluation)

All partners mentioned the presence of the Assessment as part of the Orientation process build around each LTU person they take in charge, made up also of Training proposals and Accompaniment into the enterprises, at the job place.

There is a wide variety of methodologies and tools mentioned in the BPs, both when the micro-training is delivered for professional competences or for transversal skills. They have in common the practical approach to the LTUs, in line with their need to be in a learning environment different from the traditional school context dominated by “points”. Therefore, we list here some of them, mentioning that all partners use a mixed set combining them:

⇒ Practical Evaluation Methodologies:

- MCQ/ Acting in real situation/ Self-evaluation/ Brainstorming/ Collective or individual reflection + Feedback from the tutor/ Group presentation/ Individual Project presentation

⇒ Practical Evaluation Tools:

- Games
- Practical exercises/ Time laps for each step
- Oral test/ Written test/ Digital test (platform)
- Individual interview

⇒ Training methodologies

They are all adapted to the needs of the LTU and to the formula of a “micro-training”, therefore the **practical methodological approaches and tools** are predominant, adapted to the profile of the target groups – avoiding too much theoretical parts, dividing the training into smaller parts where the participants have active roles, sometimes using also digital tools. Some examples here:

Practical exercises/exercises based on concrete cases + theory/ Interactive exchanges among participants/ Workshops/ Role play/ Individual and collective analysis of the tasks performed/ Immersion in visual reality/ Case analysis/ Work in real situations/ Video demonstrations, PPT presentations/ Internship/ Training on the job/ Simulation of work environment (even with the use of the PC)/ Interactive animation/ Lecture/ Use of digital platform/ Descriptive procedure for each step to be performed/ Division in small groups/ Home tasks and individual interview to verify them/ Use of certified cultural mediators to facilitate the communication

⇒ The Transferability conditions

All partners paid attention to the reflection regarding the “transferability (pre)conditions” for the BPs presented. Based on the arguments sustaining the transferability, the BPs can be divided into:

1. BPs from Sectors that constantly request manpower in Europe

Some partners underline the possibility to use the (micro)training modules all over Europe, as they can be **easily replicable** due to their link to **sectors that constantly request manpower**: customer services (waiter), gardening, cleaning, healthcare. In Italy, for example, these are sectors with high availability of jobs, but with low interest among the LTU (for example the latest Course for Waiters that *Insieme per il lavoro* organized based on the request of the territory could not find the participants).

In the case of the Healthcare sector, the BP presented by AGFE linked to the professional profile of the Family care assistant, the competences might also be proposed to informal caregivers who also need professional competences in order to deliver quality assistance.

In Spain, for example, the access to healthcare training it is only allowed for formal education and several specific hours, because it is a professional certification.

2. BPs regarding Green Jobs

Other BPs refer to **green jobs** that are very requested in this moment of climate and economic crisis (AGFE – ARS, Trinijove, SCF-Fomal), therefore they should create interest in being transferred in other contexts and in enhancing the requested competences.

3. BPs regarding Transversal Skills

Digital competences, Soft Skills for Active job search, Linguistic and Security competences have become pre-requested “compulsory” competences for accessing numerous jobs. The modules proposed can have a common standardized structure valid in different (national) contexts, and some parts that are adapted according to the context (Trinijove, for example, states that enterprises ask for this pre-condition).

4. BPs explicitly reporting Sustainability Evidence

The trainings proposed usually give real access to specific jobs and/or empower the beneficiaries.

3 Similarities and differences between the BPs

This section is dedicated to a more detailed analysis of the similarities and differences that emerged from the BPs collected, guided by

- the categories highlighted into the Synthesis Table and discussed during the online Focus Group organized by the Italian team
- the 5 criteria included into the Guidelines in the introductory part of the BPs Collection Form

The BPs were grouped into **thematic “families”** considered relevant for the development of the future steps into SKY Project, mainly useful for the creation of new micro-trainings based on a Guided Pattern the partnership will elaborate.

<p>MICRO-TRAININGS FOR A SPECIFIC JOB</p> <p>*Competences than can be spent immediately on the job market, and that probably answer specific requests from the job market</p>	<p>MICRO-TRAININGS FOR TRANSVERSAL SKILLS</p> <p>*Digital, Security, Active Job Search – transversal but at the same time “universally” needed in accessing numerous jobs</p>
<p>MICRO-TRAININGS PART OF A WIDER TRAINING PATHWAY</p>	<p>USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS</p>

<p>*Confirm the possibility of splitting pathways into micro-trainings and the fact that for accessing some jobs it is enough to “learn” part of a professional profile, without going through all the modules</p> <p>*Not all BPs have this characteristic</p>	<p>*Three BPs mention the use them – in particular Trinijove - use of the Platform (Accenture) that allows a higher standardization of the contents and of the competence evaluation</p>
<p>POTENTIAL TO BE SPLIT INTO PROFESSIONAL ABILITIES (see Aim of SKY project)</p> <p>*Training modules with clear structure leading to the acquirement of a specific competence</p>	<p>QUALITY ASSURANCE</p> <p>*Some partners have QA systems, others do not mention them</p>
<p>CERTIFICATION ISSUED</p> <p>*Partners that release Certifications of the micro-training based on existing Professional Standards</p> <p>*Digital Certification – OPEN BADGES (MIREC – Volunteering)</p> <p>*BPs without specific Certification</p>	<p>CONTINUITY OF THE PRIVATE OR PUBLIC FUNDING</p> <p>*It is a relevant aspect for the SKY project as the partners have to choose 3 professional fields/3 jobs for which to create micro-trainings – it is important to have the Courses for the jobs chosen even the next year, when the piloting phase is envisaged</p>

Elements to be highlighted:

- The BPs regarding specific jobs are predominant, compared to those referring to transversal skills; these last ones are in some cases compulsory to access concrete jobs
- Five BPs presented refer to “modules” that are part of a wider training pathway
- One BP (SCF- OPIMM Secretary Assistant) is linked to other micro-trainings that lead to an internship experience
- Only few BPs (Trinijove, SCF-Opimm and AGFE) include the use of digital tools/support
- Only one BP (MIREC – Volunteering) uses Digital Certification
- All partners presented micro-trainings that can be further described through “professional abilities and attitudes”

III. RELEVANT ASPECTS FOR THE NEXT STEPS OF THE SKY PROJECT

It is useful to recall here the aims of SKY Project declared in the Application Form:

- to reverse the methodological approach that is the basis of the teaching and training methods generally proposed to people furthest from employment.

- to *give skills* or *reveal skills* that the target group has without necessarily being aware of them, *to value and validate these skills* to enter the world of work or to continue in the classical world of training.

Considering these guiding indications, in this section we selected among the wide amount the information collected through the BPs a set of elements that can be used as basis for the following project steps – mainly for the construction and piloting of micro-trainings linked to specific jobs that each partner selects.

A. CONSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS to be taken into consideration

- **Micro-trainings as Partners’ Know-How for Real Job Inclusion**
 - **Relevant experience:** each partner of SKY proves relevant experience in the use of the micro-training pathways dedicated to LTU, represented into the BPs also by wider disadvantaged subgroups as: migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, with low educational background, etc.
 - **Partnership approach:** All partners have significant links and collaborations with the local economic environment – with a network of enterprises and other relevant stakeholders from the active job inclusion policies – see also the Local Working Groups Minutes of each partner – therefore they can count on the collaboration of other actors for a sustainable job inclusion process
 - **Adequate tool for LTU:** Micro-trainings are a suitable tool for the “micro-learning process” and (re)activation that can be adapted to different target groups, in particular for LTU because of their specific needs of small doses of information, of mixed pedagogical methodologies and tools (practical approach preferred), of non-formal and non-traditional evaluation
 - **Adequate tool for enterprises:** Micro-trainings are a suitable and quick answer to the fast changes into the job market, also inside the enterprises – answer both the needs of the LTUs and of the enterprises

- **Professional Abilities:** Each partner presented at least one BP dedicated to a specific sector and job, with a training structure that can be “split” further into specific “professional gestures and attitudes”
- **Transferability Potential**
 - All BPs collected have transferability potential into other contexts (see section dedicated above with different motivations) – for some training proposals the adaptability to a new context is quite obvious, for others there’s the need to investigate the local productive environment and the availability of manpower

B. ASPECTS TO BE EMPOWERED during the project:

- **The Assessment Process**
 - All partners use different and mixed forms of initial, middle, and final assessment tools, but from the BPs it does not emerge a very structured process
 - From the Focus Group organized by the Italian team emerges the difficulty of applying a structured and complex assessment system (Skills/Competence Balance Sheet) due to the profile of the target group – the LTU: it is usually difficult to (re)build with them the learning pathways and the job experiences as they don’t remember parts of them, they don’t have the Certificates or they don’t know how to recover them
- A question still open regards, therefore, the **types of Certifications** that the micro-trainings should issue, to make it easier for the LTU to receive and keep them linked to their CV (release both a paper and electronic one, as for eg. Open Badges?)
- **Quality Assurance**
 - For some BPs it is not so clear (or not mentioned)

Note:

An open reflection that remains at this point is: do the mentioned QA systems (AENOR-IQNET, LEAN Manufactory, etc.) support the process of Competences Certification?

- **The importance of the Soft Skills**

Even if the BPs Collection includes 2 examples of trainings dedicated to the LTUs soft skills, considering the specific frailties of this target group we consider that the preliminary (re)activation of these skills is indispensable for a sustainable future job insertion, as these persons are missing from the labor market since a long time.

This Analysis of the 21 Best Practices collected from the five operational partners of the SKY project can be entirely consulted on the [project's website](#)