



“...Bridging the Gap project will transfer and adapt an innovative methodology of training and developing entrepreneurs...”



Project development

Based on the results of the Training Needs Analysis, which has been successfully completed, the six partners from UK, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain and the Netherland, have proceeded into the recruitment of learners and trainers and the finalization of the methodology which is used in the pilot training, currently under way.

Project management results

Training course manuals and comprehensive step by step guidelines have been developed by the UK partners to ensure the effective transferring of the innovative methodology and the good quality of implementation at different national settings.

Two meetings took place within this period. In Madrid, 21-23rd of May (2014), the second Consortium meeting was held aiming at the matching of theory and practice towards the innovative transfer of the Model to the real entrepreneurial world. The meeting was held on the

premises of Everis. The hospitality of the Spanish partner enhanced fruitful collaboration.

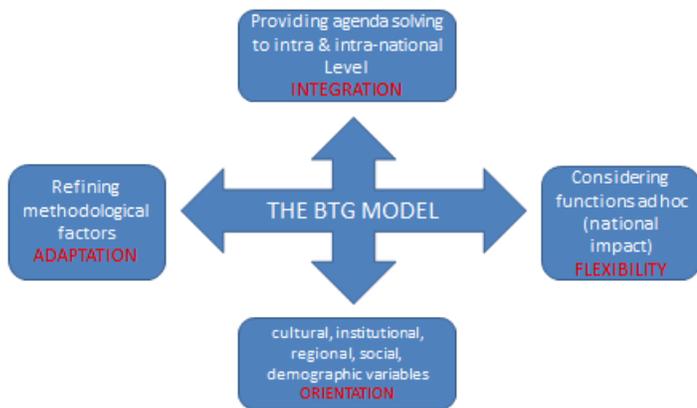


A virtual meeting was also held in July 18th for closer monitoring and refinement of the training strategy

to ensure consistency of the training paradigm among partners.

The State of the Art of entrepreneurship training and support – engaging Trainers and Learners

The Bridging the Gap Methodology is entrepreneur – centric, focusing more on the person to develop rather than the business idea. The Bridge Model offers a flexible framework to start and develop a business, as shown in the diagram.



The model consists of four stages – each termed a ‘journey’, (<http://www.bridgingtothefuture.co.uk/bridge-model/bridge-model.aspx>):

I HAVE AN IDEAI HAVE A NEW BUSINESS

I HAVE A NEW BUSINESS.....I HAVE A SUCCESSFULLY OPERATING BUSINESS

I HAVE A SUCCESSFULLY OPERATING BUSINESS.....I HAVE A GROWING BUSINESS

I HAVE A GROWING BUSINESS.....I HAVE A SUSTAINABLY STRONG BUSINESS

Each of the journeys has its own distinct learning outcomes and objectives that the beneficiaries will reach once they have gone through each of the steps. Insightful advice from active business people is offered throughout the process. The emphasis is on experiential learning, peer coaching and mentoring.

- **Experiential learning** is based on a four-stage cyclical theory in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Using the specific themes of the Bridge methodology, the activities and subsequent work that the entrepreneurs will produce, will be either directly related to their “real-life” business or in cases with a theoretical basis, the learning and content will be directly transferred onto a real life business, supporting proactive learning and enabling participants to learn from every experience encountered.
- **Peer coaching and mentoring** emphasizes the provision of assistance and encouragement to less experienced learners by more experienced individuals, with practical knowledge of starting and running a business, so as to help them develop their potential. Through group dynamics the impact is increased.

Recruitment of Trainers and Learners

Because coaches are essential to the success of the project, since they must have the necessary entrepreneurial experience as well as the right attitude, they were selected out of a wide variety of establishments: partners’ organizations, SMEs and

large corporations, universities, entrepreneurial associations.

In recruiting the entrepreneurs, their potential and not their idea was the primary criterion. Personality traits such as passion and enthusiasm, flexibility, confidence, a willingness to listen and learn, to share and to receive feedback were also taken into consideration. The assessment of participants' qualities, experiences, attitudes and skills is essential because it gives Trainers and Coaches the necessary information as to where entrepreneurs are at within their development in order to:

- a.) identify which Bridge is appropriate for the entrepreneur to cross,
- b.) find areas of personal development that the entrepreneur needs to focus on, and
- c.) provide support around motivation and confidence which need to be developed.

Towards that end, an IDEAS AUDIT and ENTREPRENEURIAL AUDIT were also performed in order to assess the validity of their business idea and whether they have the motivation to start and run their business or social enterprise as well as to provide personalized support and better match trainers with the differing learning needs of trainees.

Piloting and Testing of the Model

Pre-pilot meetings between partners, trainers and learners took place to discuss the training programme and to set training objectives. Pilot training has already started in in all partners' sites

and the progress of beneficiaries is recorded at regular intervals to supply the data necessary for the adjustment of the model to different national settings.

Dissemination plan and activities

Communication and coordination is according to plan as partners encourage interim communication through the exchange of reports, the development of course manuals and step by step guides to enable spreading of good practices and to facilitate the input of target groups through webinars.

Activities Planned

Preliminary conclusions from both the point of view of the trainers and the beneficiaries on the implementation of the Model into six countries will be the aim of the 3rd Consortium meeting on November 27th and 28th in Athens. These will offer invaluable input on the successes and challenges of model and will be incorporated into the final version of the methodology.

The Partners :

	<p>BTF is an incubator for social enterprises and SMEs. It offers all the necessary support to individuals or groups who wish to start a business or a social enterprise, or a community project. It delivers training to many different groups and has coached disadvantaged people extensively, in order to cut dependency and develop their aspirations and abilities so they may create/find employment.</p> 
	<p>MEH is an established VCS infrastructure organization, working in the field of social inclusion on Merseyside. It is a key stakeholder and influential support body in the VCS and has an excellent track record of delivering innovative and successful programmes through partnership, including projects supporting disadvantaged individuals into training and self-employment.</p> 
	<p>Academy of Entrepreneurship (AKEP) is a non-for-profit organization recognized Greek training structure. It acts in collaboration with the Federation of Hellenic Associations of Young Entrepreneurs aiming to contribute to the creation of a healthy business environment for the development of entrepreneurship in Greece and in Europe, as well as the proper conditions for entrepreneurship to support young entrepreneurs in their business goals and plans in the long run.</p> 
	<p>The Business Incubator-Gotse Delchev Entrepreneurship Promotion Centre (BI-GD) works towards encouraging local economic and human resources development. Its main objective is to support start-ups and SMEs within the Gotse Delchev region by providing them with high quality business services: information, consultancy, trainings and support in micro-financing.</p> 
 <p>attitude makes the difference</p>	<p>Everis is a multinational consulting company, focused on offering comprehensive business solutions to its clients, meeting all points of view in the value chain, from business strategy to system roll-out. It identifies start-ups, supports the entrepreneurs and accelerates their growth. As a part of its ongoing work, Everis is in contact with enterprises in every industry, and within the public sector.</p> 
	<p>Business Development Friesland (BDF) develops and executes projects focused on the growth of the SMEs, as well as the increase and sharing of knowledge. It participates in key start-up programs and has fostered a regional network to become a specialist on start-ups in the Province of Friesland. BDF supports the starting companies to establish their business and to help them maximize their growth over a maximum period of three years. This includes coaching, business training, guidance and a 'connecting-the-dots' networking role.</p> 

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