



DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISOR TRAINING AND EXCHANGE

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>>> WORKSHOP 3
>>> May 18-19, 2006, North Karelia, Finland
>>> REPORT

debate

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1. WHAT IS DEBATE? – introduction to the Project

DEBATE – Development of the European Business Advisor Training and Exchange – is an international operation (project) being implemented under INTERREG IIC programme (North zone). It is a joint initiative of 16 partner institutions in Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Italy, Greece and Finland, representing public and public-equivalent business advisory agencies and higher level educational institutions.

The overall objective of DEBATE is to improve the level and quality of business advisory in Europe and, consequently, to support the success of entrepreneurs, SME's in particular, as the backbone of any region in Europe.

The today's economy and society is characterised by internationalisation, manifesting itself in rapid, constant changes and uncertainty. At the same time, internationalisation is identified as a key factor of the success of tomorrow's businesses. However, business advisors and the advisory system are not fully equipped to support small and medium-sized enterprises to enter international markets and to make use of the opportunities that emerge from cross-border activities. This deficit is reflected negatively on the regional economies.

Business advisors lack both qualifications to assist their clients with international business affairs like exports and imports or professional networking, and also the tools and methods to facilitate the learning of their clients in international contexts and networks. The "DEBATErs" share these problems. Together they want to develop and exchange tools and approaches of business advisory to promote successful entrepreneurship and flourishing businesses in their regions, not only in the framework of the Operation but beyond.

The objective of the operation DEBATE is to build a support structure for European business advisors, in order to provide them with resources and qualifications to assist their clients in the modern globalising economy and transforming society. Further objectives are to establish a professional profile, i.e. to identify the qualifications for a European Business Advisor, to create a more positive image for the profession and to develop a structure for in-service education and training as well as a model for an international exchange programme for business advisors.

The DEBATE project contributes to an increased quality of business advisory services in Europe. Based on a vast survey and several workshops, the Partners conduct a description of professional qualifications of a European Business Advisor, formulate criteria for the eventual certification of the profession "European Business Advisor" and enter into a dialogue with the appropriate authorities in order to establish systems of certification procedures.

Furthermore, an E-network of Business Advisory in Europe is developed including a database of methods, good practices, tools and techniques for business advisory. The European Network (Association) of Business Advisors is founded; regional working groups for the dialogue between business advisory, research and education are set up; and a model for an international exchange programme of business advisors is developed and tested. All these activities result in a strengthened intellectual and social capital of business advisors. Also, the quality of business advisory education and training is raised through the development of systematic and flexible training programmes.

The value-added of the Project lies with the powerful union of the educational sector and the field of business promotion, highlighting learning and know-how as tools of sustainable regional development. The Project will also bring the business advisory as a professional field to a new era, with the development of a more crystallised professional self-image and self-confidence, focused on qualifications of the advisors as facilitators of learning of entrepreneurs.

The DEBATE activities started in February 2005 and the Operation will be closed in December 2007. The total budget of the Operation is appr. 1,4 MEUR for 35 months and it is coordinated by North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.

The six international workshops, to be arranged approximately every half year, are a central element and the most important interregional forum of the Operation. Each workshop has a particular theme, interconnected with the contents and objectives of the Components (activity packages), which is focused on through appropriate working methods and types of activities.

In addition, the Workshops held in the participating countries would provide a valuable view on the local business environments of the participating countries. Accordingly, beside the goal-oriented action taken in the particular content-related fields of the Operation, two excursions at each Workshop have been scheduled for each Workshop, one concentrating on the local business support systems and the other focusing on the local circumstances of making business and getting to know the local entrepreneurs.

2. 3rd WORKSHOP – facts and figures



The 3rd DEBATE Workshop was organised on May 18-19, 2006 at Huhmari Holiday Centre (www.lomakeskushuhmari.com) in the municipality of Polvijärvi, approximately 30 kilometres from Joensuu, the regional capital of the region of North Karelia in eastern Finland.

The Workshop was hosted by the four DEBATE partners operating in the region of North Karelia: North Karelia's Enterprise Agency (Jobs and Society of North Karelia - regional coordinating institution), Joensuu Region Development Company JOSEK Ltd, Development Center of Central Karelia Ltd. KETI and North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (NKUAS), the Lead Partner of operation DEBATE.

Jobs & Society of North Karelia (www.uusyrityskeskus.fi/pohjois-karjala) as well as Josek Ltd. (www.josek.fi) and Keti Ltd. (www.keti.fi) are all business advisory organisations. All of them are also actively involved in the implementation of initiatives and projects in the field of regional development as well as promotion of entrepreneurship and creation of jobs.

While North Karelia's Enterprise Agency is, however, contributing mostly to the establishment of new enterprises and services for people with the intention of starting a business, Josek Ltd. and Keti Ltd. carry a wider operative responsibility for definition of the regional business policy, business counselling, business development and marketing of

their regions. Josek is operating in Joensuu sub-region and Ketu in the sub-region of Central Karelia surrounding the town of Kitee, approximately 70 kilometres south of Joensuu.

North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (NKUAS; www.ncp.fi) is the easternmost University of Applied Sciences in Finland and the European Union. The goal of the University is to produce a high quality and efficient response to the demands of modern working life.

This is accomplished not only through the means of education (for both young students and adults) but also extensive operations in the field of Research & Development and Regional Development. It 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. NKUAS itself is deploying its research and development activities in key areas of regional expertise, such as stone industry, food industry, forestry, timber industry, plastic and metal industries, health, information technology, travel industry, rural development, culture and education.

NKUAS offers bachelor level higher education in seven fields of study in 22 degree programmes. In addition, a post-graduate polytechnic degree in Knowledge Management is offered. The total number of students is 4 000 and that of staff members 400.

The practical arrangements and preparations of the Workshop on spot were coordinated by the staff of the abovementioned organisations, with **Mr. Heikki Pietarinen**, Business Adviser and Regional Coordinator of North Karelia, as the leader of the working group. Other members of the working group were **Ms. Johanna Eschner**, Business Adviser from Ketu Ltd. as well as **Mr. Pauli Tahvanainen**, Business Adviser, and **Mr. Pekka Nuutinen**, Director of Business Advisory, both from Josek Ltd.

The working group was assisted by the staff of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences: **Ms. Ulla Asikainen**, Degree Programme Manager, **Ms. Merja Mononen**, Lecturer, and **Ms. Nina Holopainen**, Head Coordinator of operation DEBATE, all from the Degree Programme of Rural Industries.

A remarkable and indispensable input was also provided by **Ms. Agnieszka Jasinska**, a Polish university student and practical trainee of NKUAS, looking after a major share of the practicalities and technicalities prior to and during the Workshop.

The delegates were accommodated directly at the holiday centre, according to their personal request for the type of accommodation (villas or flats). Approximately 50 participants from almost all the Partner institutions joined the Workshop (**APPENDIX 1**), resulting in a multidisciplinary team of experts representing the fields of business advisory and education.

The Workshop was the third major milestone of the Operation and reflected the contemporary status of the Operation, equally with the two earlier workshops. The 1st Workshop in May 2005 in Latvia concentrated primarily on the construction of the preliminary draft of the "Professional Profile", i.e. the description of the key fields of expertise and competence of a European Business Advisor. The 2nd Workshop in October 2005 in Italy focused on the international networking between the BA's, i.e. outlining and crystallising the contents and structure of the E-network (portal) and framework for the Association of the European Business Advisers as well as the guidelines for the work of the Regional Working Groups, bringing together representatives of business advisory, education/training and research in the partner regions.

The major inputs during the 3rd Workshop were invested in the development of the educational structure for business advisory, to manifest itself in the elaboration of in-service training products and other educational offers for Business Advisers in DEBATE countries, supported with adequate tutoring systems.

During the two-day Workshop several sessions with lively discussions and interactive methods were organised. The sessions and discussions related to the development of the educational structure were organised and coordinated by Ms. Ulla Asikainen and Ms. Merja Mononen (NKUAS). They were assisted by a large number of colleagues from the international Comp 5 team who took over responsibilities as leaders of and rapporteurs during the various group work sessions

In order to follow up the process and progress of the Operation and raise the awareness of the participants on the roles and fields of responsibility of their background institutions and themselves, a session concentrating on the up-date of the status of the Operation under Components 3 and 4 was also organised. The parallel sessions were led by **Ms. Kaspars Skalbergs**, Latvia, the substitute for **Ms. Daina Kanaska**, the Coordinator of Component 3, and **Mr. Kostas Paraskevopoulos**, Greece, the substitute for **Ms. Kostas Giotopoulos**, the Coordinator of Component 5.

In addition to the sessions described above, a half-a-day excursion in the region of Joensuu was organised, in order to get acquainted with the local business support systems and the business environment of the local entrepreneurs, the two themes connected to each DEBATE Workshop. The arrangements of the excursions were appointed to the North Karelian hosts, with the responsibility of establishing the contacts with the local actors and agents.

While the sessions related to the Components described above and the excursion were clearly investments in the raise of interest in and advancement of the consciousness of the participants on the particular themes and theme-related objectives of the Workshop, the *Official Project Meeting* (meeting of the *Steering Group*) as well as the opening session facilitated the understanding of of the participants about the background, overall administrative structure and operational framework of the Operation.

The opening session, apart from being a forum for refreshing the memory of delegates about practicalities, was also a significant forum for the continuation of team-building activities. The six working groups composed of participants “joined NASA on an expedition to the moon” and the capacity of the groups to work as a team, to use appropriate strategies of decision-making and to make priorities and mediate between interests – all necessary qualifications in the process of curriculum development obviously - were tested...Please see the session flow as **APPENDIX 2**.

Apart from the programme shared by all the participants, a *meeting of the Team of the Regional Coordinators* concentrating on the “hot topics” and up-to-date issues of administration and financial and contractual management preceded the Workshop on the day before the Workshop, on May 17, 2006. The meeting has been reported independently.

Please see **APPENDIX 3** for more details on the overall agenda of the Workshop.

3. NORTH KARELIA & JOENSUU REGION



Pohjois-Karjalan maakunta Region of North Karelia



The North Karelian way of life is a combination of life amongst an abundant, pristine nature, life near the border region between east and west, and life amongst the open and safe society of Finland. North Karelia provides attractive facilities for living, studying, working and entrepreneurship.

Combining resources, know-how and modern technology

The key, underlying causes behind the success of North Karelia is that the region's enterprises create today's jobs, the development of technology and innovations create tomorrow's jobs and training and education are creating jobs for the day after tomorrow.

During the past few years, North Karelia has experienced a period of very positive economic development. Parallel to this, an extremely fast structural change from an agricultural society towards a modern information based society has taken place. The

Region	FI133
Province	Eastern Finland
Historical province	Karelia
Area	17,782 km ²
Population	
- Total (2002)	169,722
- Density	9.5/km ²
Regional bird	Cuckoo
Regional fish	Lake salmon
Regional flora	Prickly rose

strength of North Karelia`s industrial sector derives from three diverse directions: forestry, plastics and metals, and stone industries.

The success of many international top companies and several innovative small and medium-sized enterprises has been based on our local multi-sectoral training and research system. The Joensuu Science Park and our centre of expertise programmes support this positive development. These enterprises have benefited from the availability of the latest technology, a skilled labour force and the region`s abundant natural resources.

North Karelia lives off the forest. This sector is the most important provider of export income in the region. A rich combination of forest resources, forest industries and forestry know-how in the region has led to the unofficial recognition that North Karelia is the "Region of Forests in Europe". The fact that The European Forest Institute, the Research Centre of the Finnish Forest Research Institute and the high-tech workshop of wood product technology, Puugia, are located in Joensuu, the region`s capital, attests to this unofficial recognition.

The plastics and metal industry is the most important growth sector in North Karelia. This sector`s increased demand for employees and premises has been stronger in North Karelia than in other parts of Finland. Training and education and a local centre of expertise programme have strongly supported the growth of this sector`s enterprises.

North Karelia has a traditional stone sector, which along with new forms of production and research have been developed into successful business activities. North Karelian produced ovens and fireplaces, and the region`s soap stone in general, are world famous.

North Karelia is also renown for its training and educational institutes. Students of the University of Joensuu, North Karelia University of Applied Sciences and other educational institutions which offer degree programmes account for more than 10 % of the region`s population. Co-operation between these educational institutes and local enterprises has created many new innovative products.

[Source: www.pohjoiskarjala.fi]

Joensuu – Karelian beat and vitality

The capital of North Karelia is Joensuu. The contemporary university town was established in 1848 by the Czar Nikolai I of Russia and it has flourished in the estuary of a notable waterway. It is a vital city with a growing and relatively young population. Of the total population of 58,000 almost 20,000 are pupils and students. Joensuu is located next to the Russian border and about 400 km North-East from the capital of the country.

Currently, the most important business areas include plastic and metal industry, wood and forestry sector, information and communication technology as well as expertise related to the border region and cross-border collaboration. Joensuu Regional Development company JOSEK Ltd in collaboration with other stakeholders foster the development of business activities in the area. Joensuu is also the forestry capital of Europe with a stronghold in research, inclusive the European Forest Institute and Joensuu Science Park. The population within the economic region of Joensuu totals up to 115,000.

Besides the university, science and business scene, Joensuu is also a city where a number of recent Finnish films have been made, where you can find the Karelian folk (the

most talkative ones in Finland) and where the summer rock festival (Ilosaarirock) is sold out every year months before the event. When going out of the city centre you can find silence, peace and nature like nowhere else in Europe.

Joensuu believes in regional and international cooperation as one of the motors for the development. This cooperation is materialised in numerous projects in different areas of expertise, within various networks and between different players. One of the strengths of Joensuu is the excellent and lively collaboration between the different stakeholders in the city.

[Source: www.joensuu.fi]

4. STILL ON THE RIGHT TRACK? Exchanging news and planning ahead under Components 3 and 4

In order to follow up the process and progress of the Operation and raise the awareness of the participants on the roles and fields of responsibility of their background institutions and themselves, two parallel sessions concentrating on the up-date of the status of the Operation under other Components apart from Comp 5 was organised, with DEBATErs from all the participating regions invited.

4.1 Component 3 - a quest for a more clarified picture of business advisory

In the session focusing on Component 3 the status of the pre-survey and main survey in DEBATE regions was first investigated. Pre-survey seeks to examine the quantitative as well as qualitative aspects of business advisory in the partner countries while in the main survey the expectations of the various stakeholder groups of business advisers (Business Advisers not directly involved in the project and clients, i.e. entrepreneurs, authorities, financiers) are being explored, and their (self-)image of Business Advisers detected, through the evaluation of the Professional Profile developed by DEBATErs earlier.

Four countries (Estonia, Hungary, Italy and Finland) could already declare the completion of the pre-survey. For the regions still in the process of conducting the pre-survey (Greece, Sweden and Latvia) a new, ultimate, deadline for reports, May 31, 2006, was set.

As for the main survey the guidelines of the conduct of the survey on business advisory in the partner countries were repeated and the deadline of August 31, 2006 for the reports was agreed on. The instructions and the respective forms (questionnaires) would be available on Allu under Comp 3 folder. It was agreed that the questionnaires were subject to minor country-specific modifications but the staff of NKUAS, the coordinator of the survey, should be notified in advance.

The main survey is still being processed in all DEBATE countries. After the receipt of the national reports, two Finnish students of the Degree Programme of Business and Economics of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, **Mr. Pasi Kuivalainen** and **Ms. Päivi Korppi-Tommola** working on their Final Theses, would compile an international survey report in September/October 2006.

During the session the process of certification of the profession of “(European) Business Adviser” in the partner countries was touched upon. As a preliminary piece of “home work”

for the Workshop 4 in Hungary in October 2006 the partners were requested to make investigations on the existence of and do benchmarking on any similar certification processes and the framework of the criteria of certification in their home countries.

The session was led by **Mr. Kaspars Skalbergs** from Technology Development Forum, Latvia, the “substitute” for the official Component Coordinator, **Ms. Daina Kanaska**, from Regional Adult Educational Centre of Jelgava, Latvia. Mr. Skalbergs was assisted by Mr. **Arto Lankinen** (coordinator of pre-survey) and **Mr. Tenho Kohonen** (coordinator of main survey) as well as Ms. Nina Holopainen, the DEBATE Head Coordinator, all staff members of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.

[As an extension of the Component 3 session, Mr. Lankinen and Mr. Kuivalainen as well as Ms. Korppi-Tommola briefly introduced the preliminary results of the pre- and main survey at the outset of the session on Component 5; please see page 14. Moreover, the issue of certification was brought up in the discussions about the educational structure; please see p. 19].

4.2 Component 4 – Connecting BA’s even beyond the Operation

The session on Component 4 was led by **Mr. Kostas Paraskevopoulos**, NEA, Greece, the substitute for **Mr. Kostas Giotopoulos**, the official Coordinator of Component 4, representing the same partner institution.

Component 4 is one of the main components of the DEBATE project. The title of the component is “*Establishment of a structure of information and knowledge resources for the European business advisory*”. The main focus on the component is to collect, organize and structure as well make available and transparent the various forms of relevant knowledge and information to support the work of Business Advisors in Europe (scientific knowledge, tacit/collegial knowledge, methods, tools and techniques) in order to contribute to the quality of the business advisory.

The main objectives of the Workshop 3 were: 1. to discuss means of intensifying the work and cooperation of the Regional Working Groups; 2. to present the services that will be delivered by the portal in order to discuss whether they can facilitate the users (from the BA’s point of view); 3. to discuss the first draft proposal for the foundation of the Association; 4. to discuss about the proposal for the Pilot Exchange Program structure and forms. Respectively, current state of the art for the Component 4 was presented and finally a specific time plan for the next months agreed on.

Portal/E-Network

At the beginning of the session there was a presentation of the portal services that will be delivered to the users. There was a discussion whether the services meet the Business Advisors need and generally the Debate project aims, it was agreed that the design made based on the decisions taken in the previous meeting in Genova is satisfactory in the terms aforementioned. Also there was a discussion about the users that will have access to the portal and that these users will be in the following categories:

- 1) Business Advisors
- 2) Business Companies
- 3) Educational Organizations
- 4) Public Organizations (municipalities, prefectures)

Also a web questionnaire was presented in order to finalize the content of the Portal or E-Network, and it was mentioned that every Region should at least fill 10 questionnaires so at the end of June the Content will be finalized and specific guidelines will be delivered in order to gather the required material (content).

Regional Working Groups

The session for the regional working groups was mainly focused on presenting the objectives of the RWGs, to discuss about the actions needed in order to implement the objectives of the RWGs, what actions should be taken in order to achieve better communication of the RWGs, and how the goals of the RWGs will be achieved.

At the beginning of the session a presentation identified all the aforementioned issues. The need for better communication of the RWGs was clarified and discussed, and also the need for guidance from the Regional and Component Coordinators in order to intensify the work of RWGs.

A new way of RWGs reporting to Allu was proposed and accepted in order to make the work of RWGs more transparent and to help the inter- and intra- communication and cooperation of the Regional Working Groups. The proposed way of reporting to Allu and also a guide of how this is going to be done will be attached in a individual document.

A discussion was made in two groups:

The first group discussed about the objectives of RWGs and they agreed that the objectives should be:

- 1) The objectives of RWGs = The objectives of DEBATE
- 2) To organize the field of business advisory
- 3) Establish common standards for the field of business advisory
- 4) Curricula

Also it was mentioned that the mission of RWGs is to do tasks, delegate the messages of DEBATE to the members of the RWGs, set priorities to the tasks but in order to achieve these objectives they need guidance by the Component and Regional coordinators with clear instructions of what should be done and when.

The second group discussed about how the job/work of the RWGs will be intensified. The results of this conversation was that the RWGs need real leadership either from the Component or the Regional coordinator, also that the RWGs need a participatory working method, and that they should keep minutes that will become good practices for the rest

RWGs and that will help the cooperation and communication. In this direction help will be provided by the new way of RWGs reporting to Allu, and finally that the RWGs should keep in mind the individual aspects of each region considering the DEBATE project and business advisory in general.

Finally it was clearly stated that there is a need of continuous communication (a key concept as it was agreed) of the RWGs which will be achieved through discussions in Allu that will be moderated by the Regional and Component coordinators.

The advised procedure for RWG is available as **APPENDIX 4**.

Pilot Exchange Program

The session for the Pilot Exchange Program started with a presentation regarding the process of the Exchange Program and the forms that will be needed (both Application forms and Reporting forms). The process of the Pilot Exchange Program and the Forms that will be needed were discussed. The proposal (**APPENDIX 5**) was made available by **Ms. Liisa Timonen**, Lecturer of NKUAS and coordinator of the pilot exchange programme.

It was discussed and agreed that the Proposed Forms fulfill the requirements of the Program, and these forms were finalized. As for the process of the exchange program, it was agreed that the idea is very good, although it was mentioned that the duration of the exchange program should be long enough in order to have better results, also that the exchange should be made between organizations of the same kind, and that local educational organizations must observe the Exchange program since they have previous experience in exchange programs. Finally the role of the receiving institute should be to be facilitative for the support of the learning. Also it was mentioned that maybe the proposed date of August 15 for the initiation of the application forms to be gathered maybe is a little early.

Association

The session for the Association started with a brief introduction of NEA's proposed draft for the foundation of the Association (**APPENDIX 6**), unfortunately due to the strict time only discussions considering the work that must be done were made and it was agreed that the RWGs will discuss according to the proposed draft about:

- 1) Where will the venue of the association will be?
- 2) Whether the proposed association structure meets the needs of BA, and debate?
- 3) Comment about the objectives of the association as described and make further proposals.

In conclusion in Joensuu Workshop it was agreed that there is a need of continuous communication as we proceed, also that the RWGs should intensify their work and cooperate each other to facilitate their tasks. Specific tasks that must be assigned from the component and regional coordinators.

5. KNOW-HOW AS A GUARANTEE OF QUALITY OF BUSINESS ADVISORY - drafting the educational structure of the professionals

The central theme of the 3rd workshop was education and training, i.e. Component 5 of the project. *The main objective of the workshop was, thus, to construct a **framework for the training programmes and other educational offers**, taking advantage of the previous outcomes of the DEBATE project (BA Professional Profile, Personal Learning Plans and surveys) and the expertise of the participants.*

5.1 Lead-in: preliminary results of the survey

As a “warming-up”, presentations about the preliminary results of the pre- and main survey were given.

Mr. Arto Lankinen, Lecturer of NKUAS and the coordinator of the pre-survey, briefly discussed the key conclusions made from the results of the pre-survey investigating the quantitative and qualitative aspects of business advisory in the DEBATE countries (**APPENDIX 7**).

Mr. Pasi Kuivalainen, a NKUAS student working on his Final Paper under the supervision by Mr. Tenho Kohonen, Lecture of NKUAS, summarised the results of first part of the main survey conducted in Finland, with Business Advisers as the target group (**APPENDIX 8**).

5.2 How did we make it – working methods

The work undertaken in the field of curriculum development itself was a complex process which had been divided into several phases, led by a group of leaders.

The participants had prepared themselves by completing a separate home work (**APPENDIX 9a**) which was reflected at the beginning of the seminar (PHASE 1). The home work had been prepared by the representatives of NKUAS and delivered through ALLU. The overall objective of the home work was to:

1. Clarify and make transparent the **interrelatedness** of the
 - a) Professional Profile (qualification circle;
 - b) Personal Learning Plan interviews and
 - c) Results of the survey, conducted under Comp 3.
2. Exploit these inputs in the elaboration of the contents and tutoring/counselling system of the educational/training programmes to be developed.

The most part of the working time was to devoted to elaborate the frame of the training programmes in international and regional (national) home groups (PHASES 2-4). The cooperating working method was used in a very interactive way during these working

sessions. The participants had been divided beforehand into six international and seven mainly national (regional) groups.

A moderator had been nominated for each group as follows: International teams: **Ms. Erika Kalmarne Hollosi, Mr Pavlos Dimitratos, Mr Anthony Okugume, Ms. Merja Mononen, Ms. Anneli Kana, Mr. Jesse Varis.**

The moderators in the national groups were: **Ms. Erika Kalmarne Hollosi, Mr. Pavlos Dimitratos, Mr Anthony Okugume, Ms. Merja Mononen, Ms. Anneli Kana, Mr. Zigmars Reklaitis and Ms. Ulla Asikainen.** The moderators were given special instructions before the working sessions. The schedule of the session was following:

Thursday, May 18

PHASE 1 (60 minutes)

In the first step the results of the home work were presented in the international groups. The business advisors were sharing their education experiences, educational experts presented examples of the training opportunities and programmes which their organization is providing for business advisors. The representatives of Regional Working Groups (RWG) summarized the results from the pre- or main survey. The moderators were guiding the discussions and wrote down the notes.

PHASE 2 (60 minutes)

During the next phase the information and ideas achieved from international group was reflected in national groups (Finland: 3 groups, Hungary, Estonia, Sweden, Latvija, Greece and Italy in one group) and the participants prepared themselves for the third phase. The copy of Professional Profile of E.B.A was delivered to members of the groups to be used as a basement for the discussions. In the profile the skills of the E.B.A. are divided into three categories: 1. Business know-how and environment skills (Personal skills of the European Business Advisor = E.B.A.) 2. Communication and intercultural skills (Client understanding skills of the E.B.A.) 3 Tools of business management (Systems skills of the E.B.A.)

The moderator encouraged the members of the group to bring up new views and development points for the contents and topics to be integrated into the national training programmes. The participants could discuss mainly in their mother language and it was easier for them to reflect their own feelings and share their thoughts.

PHASE 3 (90 minutes)

The training program was developed further during the third phase in the six international groups. Each group was instructed to address one theme of the professional profile (**APPENDIX 9b**): 1. Business know-how and environment skills: Personal skills of the E.B.A.; 2. Communication and intercultural skills: Client understanding skills of the E.B.A.; 3. Tools of business management: Systems skills of the E.B.A.). There were two parallel teams per each theme.

The discussion, which was led by a nominated international moderator, was elaborated by the following questions (**APPENDIX 9c**):

1. Central issues of contents under this theme:
2. Issues of know-how: E.B.A. knows, understands: differences, structures, connections, background..:
3. Issues of skills: E.B.A. is able to perform/implement:
4. Ideas for tutoring/counselling of the studies:
5. My own point of views...

The answers and ideas were collected and summarized in one form. In the end of the day all the groups gathered together for a short reflection round.

Friday, May 19 (90 minutes)

PHASE 4

In the final session training programme development continued in the regional home groups. The participants shared the knowledge and ideas they had got from the international part from PHASE 3. The summarizing forms from PHASE 3 were copied to each group to be utilized in the process. The tasks for the session were:

- Discuss core contents of the training programmes and elaborated competences of the E.B.A. according to summaries accomplished in each international group
- Prepare a short summary for the rest of the group with possible bottlenecks, new partners to be involved etc.
- Agree on the next concrete step or action(s) to be taken when leaving from Finland to own region

5.2 Key results and how to proceed on?

The outcomes from the workshop have been summarized in **APPENDIX 9d**. The table is a sum up from all six international group works from PHASE 3. In the final paragraph "*My own point of views*" there are also some notes and ideas picked from different flip charts produced during the working sessions. The point was not to lose any brilliant ideas produced during international as well as national sessions!

The participants found the working methods as well the atmosphere during the seminar quite comfortable and constructive. The members of NKUAS were appreciated for planning the working methods interactive and variable. DEBATERs enjoyed especially working in international as well as national/regional groups.

The next challenge is to start a development process of the training programmes in each region or country. Every region promised to make at least one concrete action when getting home from Finland. It was agreed that Ms. Ulla Asikainen would complete the next milestones on ALLU structure ("To Do's List") and will deliver the summary of the results by June 15, 2006.

There are; however some common things that have be thought over when planning the training program. The objective is not to have differences in training programmes but differences in educational processes and some views must to be taken into consideration.

In the following we would like to express some guidelines to be used in the planning process. The list will be a tool for the DEBATE colleagues and it will also summarise the results of the seminar in an even more concrete and practical manner.

1. Target group of the training programmes

You have to decide who your target group is. In the workshop there were a lot of discussions and even few disagreements what kind of background education the students should have. The target group will define the core contents of your training program. You have to consider if your target group are:

1. University students who specialize during the studies to be a business advisor and/or
2. University graduated students who have same years working experience and/or
3. Vocational educated person with (long) experience from working life e.g. entrepreneur.

2. How do you build up the EBA – training program? Which is your main method and structure/philosophy of the training?

It was stated very strongly and clearly in the summarizing papers that the understanding of the client and co-operation with the client is essential skill for the E.B.A. Also comprehensive teaching and problem solving methods were very often mentioned. In many comments there was emphasized that training should not be based on traditional economic subjects, not on theory. On the other hand the summary reveals that previous courses in (traditional?) education should be accepted as a part of EBA-training.

3. Which teaching methods and educational arrangements will support all the expectations and requirements mentioned in the summary?

1. Does the training consist from different courses and when you have gathered enough credits you will get EBA-diploma?
and/or
2. Do you use comprehensive ways of training e.g. problem solving method, problem based learning, learning by doing, active learning etc.
and/or
3. Do you build up the training by theme, e.g.
Entrepreneur and adviser - theme
Customer - theme
Enterprise - theme
Business environmernt - theme

The participants gave also some ideas for tutoring/counselling of the studies. They stated that training arrangements should support learning from others especially from those who will act as mentors in the training. We have to specify how we use the mentoring system, who is mentoring whom and in which phase of the training? The mentors could be other advisors (senior ones), some entrepreneurs and teachers as well.

4. Educational arrangements and level of the training program?

The length of the training period shall vary according to the target group. It turned out that in some countries the training is considered to be on the basic education level. On the other hand there are some regions/countries where the education will be developed for the persons with university diploma and a few years working experience.

Evidently a lot of customization is needed in every situation. How much and how you will arrange it? Can the diploma be given on the grounds of long and successful working experience? How will you suit the substance training with practical training? How much practice is needed and what kind of practice? Is experience as an entrepreneur an essential prerequisite as mentioned?

The length of contact study period (in many cases 2 days was mentioned as a maximum length) is depending on which teaching methods you will utilize and how big part of the studies can be arranged by virtual learning environment. The possibility to use virtual teaching facilities was often mentioned in the results of the groups.

It came up very clearly that we have to be able to guarantee the quality of the training modules and update the training so that all the knowledge requirements are met also in the specialization level. There will be some critical questions like with whom we have to work on collaboration with to meet the quality expectations!

Finally we will present one model from the summary, which was described in one of the papers but also partly in the other papers.

E.B.A: should have practical experience combined with theory:

1. General knowledge

- > practical training

- > Project presentation => Younger adviser

2. Specialization

- > practical experience (3 years)

- > Main project presentation => Older adviser

3. Every another year a proof about continuous learning by way of a portfolio combined with meeting of advisers and exchange of knowledge.

5. Hints for the qualifications of the EBA

The draft of the Professional Profile was accomplished at the 1st Workshop in Jelgava and the summary presented by Mr. Heikki Pietarinen at the 2nd Workshop in Genoa. The Pre-surveys will be completed soon the main surveys by the end of August 2006. In addition some ideas for the qualifications can be drawn from PLP –summaries as well. At the

Joensuu Workshop came up also some development points to the professional profile. In many papers business environment management in many aspects as financial, market (demand) and network aspects was mentioned. The skills needed by E.B.A. which were especially pointed out were problem solving and customer understanding. It is most interesting and essential to see how these issues will come up in the national level from all the other sources of information mentioned above.

6. Certification system – who and how?

One of issues that came up very strongly during the sessions and can be seen from the summaries, was the question of certification of E.B.A –diploma. Who will be responsible for that process in the future! This is something that must be considered seriously later on in the next meeting in Hungary.

The national and international status will give brand-label to diploma. You might start building the E.B:A–diploma brand from the planning phase and organization of the training programmes.

6. EXCURSIONS – interface with the North Karelian business environment

The predestined themes of the DEBATE workshop excursions mentioned above, the local business support systems and the local circumstances of making business, took the participants of the Workshop on a half-a-day bus tour to Joensuu, the capital of North Karelia, and its surroundings, on the 2nd day of the Workshop.

Joensuu Science Park – expertise and co-operation cross the borders

The first place to visit was Joensuu Science Park Ltd. Joensuu Science Park Ltd. is a versatile technology center offering a wide range of services related to business development, development of expertise and know-how as well as business premises.

The activities of Joensuu Science Park include searching for business ideas based on high level of expertise and their processing to products, transfer of technology and know-how as well as development of co-operation between different actors. The objective of Joensuu Science Park is to contribute to the creation of new jobs and successful enterprises in the Science Park and in North Karelia. This objective can be achieved through utilisation of the high level expertise available in the Science Park.

The activities in Joensuu Science Park aim at generating enterprises and jobs presenting high level of expertise in the Joensuu area and also in a wider scope in the whole region of North Karelia. The Science Park works in close co-operation with the University of Joensuu, the North Karelia Polytechnic, research institutions and the business world.

The Science Park offers expertise and co-operation networks and processes innovative industrial and business ideas to profitable business activities in co-operation with the customer.

An active and encouraging atmosphere plays an essential role in supporting development of enterprises. The Science Park and its infrastructure provide an excellent and modern

work environment. All this together with the contact network and international co-operation of the Science Park offer a good basis for growth of your enterprise.

[Source: www.joensuuntiedepuisto.fi]

Mantsinen Group Ltd. - efficient and diverse solutions to customers' logistical and material handling needs

The second destination during the excursion was Mantsinen Group Ltd., an international company operating on the branch of logistics in Joensuu.

The fundamental business concept of the Mantsinen Group is to make bulk material handling more efficient, faster and more secure than ever. The concept includes development of efficient logistics solutions to different customer's operating environments, utilizing of totally new kind of innovative solutions in material handling machines, a development of worldwide partnership network as well as a close and long lasting co-operation with our customers.

Mantsinen Group offers manufacturing of material handling machines, logistics lay-out planning services and contracting services to different operating environments in wood handling terminals, harbours and industry.

The underlying principle is to provide added value for the customer by means of lower material warehousing and handling costs and more efficient machine and personnel resources.

The Group offers customers logistics planning and consulting services, manufacture of loading and material handling machinery in their different operating environments, contract work for the varying needs of terminals, port facilities and industry as well as operations in Russia, Estonia and Latvia. Operations in these countries involve loading and unloading timber, fertilizer, and bulk cargo in ports and terminals.

Customers are Finnish and foreign companies in the areas of industry, shipping and dockside operations to whom the Group offers a complete range of material handling services which have been tested and proven in the field.

Responsibilities are divided among the Mantsinen companies as follows: Mantsinen Oy ensures the best equipment and Mantsinen Group Ltd. Oy assumes responsibility for material handling operations in Finland, arranges maintenance, repairs and rentals. AS Mantsinen Estonia, SIA Mantsinen Latvia and OOO Mantsinen Russia take care of material handling operations in dockside areas and terminals.

The presentation of the company was given by **Mr. Ari Hakkarainen**, the Managing Director of Mantsinen Ltd.

[Source: www.mantsinen.com]

Saarila Tourism Farm – genuine Karelian hospitality

The excursion ended on Saarila Tourist Farm where also the farewell dinner of the Workshop, a rich Karelian buffet, was eventually enjoyed.

The Farm is owned by **Mr. Eero and Ms. Seija Kakkonen**. It is located in the municipality of Polvijärvi, in a rural environment characterised by tranquillity and beauty of the eastern Finnish nature. Saarila offers a variety of services such as accommodation, catering, family celebrations (weddings, birthdays etc.), meetings and seminars, family holidays, company parties etc.

Saarila also hosts all kinds of farm animals and pets for the children to make acquaintance with. In summer the Farm has a kiosk.

[Source: www.saarila.com]

7. OFFICIAL PROJECT MEETING – meeting of the Steering Group

In accordance with the administrative structure of the Operation DEBATE, the Official Project Meeting to be organised with each biannual Workshop would have the status of the Steering Group.

The objective of Official Project Meetings would be

1. To facilitate the transparency of the administration (financial and contractual management) of the Operation
2. To contribute to the perceptions of the shared ownership of the Project by the individual participants
3. To inform on the work accomplished and confirm the decisions proposed by the Team of Regional Coordinators, responsible for the preparation of the agendas and items on the agenda of the Steering Group

The third Official Project Meeting was led by **Mr. Tuomo Tahvanainen**, Project Manager of Kainuun Etu Ltd. and Regional Coordinator of DEBATE in Kainuu, who was appointed the Chairperson of the meeting.

The agenda covered the confirmation of the financial, contractual as well as operational status of the Operation and the formal decision on the dates of the 4th Workshop to be held in the town of Mosonmagyaróvár, Hungary, was made. The memorandum of the meeting is attached to this report as **APPENDIX 10**.

8. HOW ARE WE DOING? – self-evaluation and feedback on the Workshop

8.1 *The continuation of the self-evaluation*

The evaluation activities related to the Operation DEBATE would cover both the evaluation of the *products* and that of the *process*. The products would be eventually assessed by external experts while the process would be analysed and reflected on by the participants of the Operation themselves, through the means of self-evaluation.

The process of self-evaluation, launched in Jelgava in May 2005, was continued at Genoa Workshop and again at the Workshop in North Karelia, in a session prepared by the team of the University of West-Hungary, the Partner in charge of the overall coordination of the evaluation process.

In the session an interactive method “GIVE” was used, with 8 reflective questions posed on flipcharts and an opportunity for the participants of the Workshop to walk freely around in the room and put on answers, comments, reactions, ideas etc. around the questions on the flipchart. The questions dealt with personal impressions and perceptions, born out of the personal experiences in the project so far. The comments would later be summarised and analysed and conclusions on the eventual need for improvements in the management or leadership strategies of the Operation would be made by the Team of Regional and Component Coordinators.

Similar processes are being implemented within the Regional Working Groups in the regions.

The summary of the results of the 3rd round of the self-evaluation process performed in Genoa are attached to this report as **APPENDIX 11**. The key messages were, however, clear:

Time management is always a problem, but with raising interest during the workshops, hopefully more time is devoted to the project objectives. On the other hand personal contributions are evaluated to be more effective and active than in the former self-evaluations.

The support of Lead Partner, RWG Coordinators and Component Coordinators was appreciated by the participants, although it was pointed out that all the DEBATErs can count on each other in case of need for help.

With more occasions for discussions, tasks and responsibilities are getting clearer for all. Some elements of Component 3 and Component 4 were, however, mentioned not to be evident. Tasks and responsibilities should be well-defined in order to prevent uncertainties in the future.

Similar to former evaluation rounds, international communication was evaluated to be active and inspiring *during* the workshops, although more communication is needed *between* the workshops. The Discussion Forums on Allu should again be emphasized. International cooperation was described as perfect for exchanging ideas, opinions and experiences as well to learn other cultures. It contributes to common understanding – as an element of European Value Added. The definition of European Value Added is, however, still missing for many participants, making it difficult to exchange ideas concerning it.

8.2 Feedback on the Workshop

While the self-evaluation session described above concentrated on the investigation of the general perceptions and impressions by the participants on the Operation as a whole, feedback on the Workshop itself was collected through a standard questionnaire which was filled in individually by each delegate at the very end of the Workshop.

The questionnaire dealt with the “general impressions” (e.g. the experiences and perceptions vis-à-vis expectations), sessions and excursions (the content-related part of the Workshop) and practical arrangements (structure of programme, premises, accommodation, meals, material, transportation).

The expectations for the Workshop were twofold: those DEBATERs who already had taken part in the Workshop(s) before were looking forward to concrete and perceivable results while the expressions of colleagues without former experience were more vague and general and the casual communication and exchange of experiences was looked up. It is, thus, to be considered that the more experience is gained, the more demanding the participants become and the higher the expectations.

On the other hand, in order to meet the growing expectations the colleagues participating in the workshops should more or less remain the same. The change of the regional delegations seriously jeopardises the continuity of the process and should be avoided.

At the current Workshop the expectations were, however, met to a high degree. The average rating of 4,31 (on scale of 1-5) is a remarkable result and a undeniable piece of evidence of success, considering the demanding nature of the theme and ambitious goals of the Workshop. Most of the respondents of the feedback questionnaire expressed their content with the results which they found evidence of progress made and goals achieved or at least of *possibility* of reaching the goals eventually. The Workshop did, thus, increase the confidence of DEBATERs about the success of the overall project.

The key word to characterise the Workshop could be “balanced”. Firstly, structure and rhythm of the programme was appreciated, allowing efficient and concentrated work but also time to “digest” and socialise with colleagues.

Secondly, the composition of the groups was found constructive with representatives not only from different countries but also from the domains of both business advisory and education, allowing international and “inter-professional” discussions. The reflections on the results of the international groups in the national working groups in between were also valued as ideas and plans developed through the international communication for the action to be taken “at home” could be directly generated and agreed on.

Thirdly, the balance of the inputs by and work load of different partner institutions and regions were found agreeable and satisfactory. Also the general content with the inputs and contributions by one’s own institution was evident and suggests that the delegates found the Workshop meaningful and rewarding at the institutional and even at the personal level.

The scope and quality of information on the Workshop in advance was evaluated at least as adequate. The pre-work (home work) was very much appreciated as such as it clearly helped to orientate to the themes of the Workshop but there were, however, somewhat contradictory opinions about the clarity of the instructions and guidelines. As for the future Workshops more attention should, thus, be paid to the formulation of the assignment(s)

but the pre-work should not be neglected under any circumstances as it apparently adds to the perception of the meaningfulness of the workshop in the first place.

There was an unquestioned consensus about the list of priorities about the sessions or activities. Almost all the respondents mentioned the sessions which dealt with Components 3, 4 and especially 5, i.e. the subject-related sessions which underlines the shift of the focus from casual “networking” of previous meetings to more serious and goal-oriented approach of the current workshop. The unfortunate fact that the difficulties with the coordination and management of Component 3 continue, resulting in confusing and unstructured discussions during the respective session, was also reflected on the questionnaires.

In addition to the separate sessions focusing on individual components (which obviously are important for the follow-up of the work and progress), there seems to be a need to “remind” the participants of the overall framework of the project and its objectives and the interrelatedness of those, in order to build up a coherent picture of the rationale and value of the project.

Also the excursion was valued and it was found an integral and significant element of the programme, providing a forum for interregional and international comparisons and benchmarking of ways of making business and business advisory systems.

The quality of practical arrangements was assessed relatively high. Most of the delegates were satisfied or even very satisfied with the level of meals, materials, premises and facilities, transportation as well as accommodation. The fact that all the participants stayed overnight at the same place was perceived as a contribution to the success of the social activities. Some minor deficiencies (such as lack of internet access) were, however, reported and feedback will be given to Huhmari Holiday Centre respectively.

The results are drawn up on **APPENDIX 12** in more detail.

9. DEBATERS IN SPOTLIGHT– results of the publicity measures of the Workshop

During the Workshop a press conference was organised (please see the press release: **APPENDIX 13** – available in Finnish exclusively). The press conference was hosted by Mr. Heikki Pietarinen, Business Adviser of Jobs & Society of North Karelia, Ms. Ulla Asikainen, Degree Programme of Rural Industries of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Ms. Johanna Eschner, Business, Adviser from Ketil Ltd., and Ms. Nina Holopainen, DEBATE Head Coordinator.

Ms. Erika Kalmarné Hollósi from the University of West-Hungary and Mr. Kostas Paraskevopoulos from NEA, Greece, represented the international guests.

The press conference resulted in an article on the regional newspaper Karjalainen (please see **APPENDIX 14**).

APPENDICES

1. List of participants
2. "Flow" of the opening session
3. Agenda of the Workshop
4. Summary of the RWG procedure
5. Proposal for the Pilot Exchange Programme
6. Draft for the foundation of the BA Association (by NEA)
7. Summary of the pre-survey results
8. Summary of the 1st part of the main survey results (with BAs as the target group)
9. a. Description of the pre-work (home work), b. Professional Profile, c. Discussion template (form), d. Results of the group work on education
10. Minutes of the 3rd Official Project Meeting
11. Results of the 3rd round of self-evaluation
12. Summary of the Workshop feedback
13. Press release
14. Article on newspaper Karjalainen