

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS ADVISOR TRAINING AND EXCHANGE

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

>>> WORKSHOP 2
>>> Oct. 24-25, 2005, Genoa, Italy
>>> 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 Polytechnic, 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. 1ST WORKSHOP – facts and figures

The 2nd DEBATE Workshop was organised on October 24-25, 2005 in Genoa, the capital of the region of Liguria on the Mediterranean.

The Workshop was hosted by the Italian DEBATE partner, Lag Appennino Genovese. Lag is a public equivalent body composed by 23 public and private partners such as Province of Genoa (Nuts III), Chamber of Commerce, SME Associations (agricultural, handicraft, tourism and commerce and public transport companies). The principal objective of the Lag is the promotion of the territory, by trying to merge investments in the zone of their own competence, in order to favour the development of small enterprises.

The main fields of activity of Lag Appennino Genovese include:

1. *Local development*: setting up and management of programs for local development, assistance to public and private organisations for the evaluation of projects and initiatives for the development of rural areas
2. *Development of rural tourism*: as development of quality in the different components of our territory (accommodation structures, small retailers, promotion of food resources)
3. *Improvement of services and quality of life* and the development of new technologies in the rural fields

The practical arrangements and preparations of the Workshop on spot were coordinated by the staff of Lag Appennino Genovese, **Ms. Veronica Raiola**, a co-worker, and **Ms. Annalisa Cevasco**, the Co-director. A major contribution was also provided by **Ms. Marisa Bacigalupo**, the President of the Association, the leader and hostess of all the excursions.

The Workshop was organised in the premises and with the help of the technical support of the staff of Lag Appennino Genovese (Punto Immagine, Via Roma, 11/4, Genoa). The delegates were accommodated in various hotels, all in the vicinity of the venue of the Workshop. Approximately 50 participants from 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 second major milestone of the Operation. From the 1st Workshop and 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 focus shifted to *networking* between the BA’s, being promoted and facilitated under Component 4. One of the major outcomes anticipated from the Operation, the E-Network was preliminarily designed and the Association of the European Business Advisors prepared.

In addition, guidelines for the work of the Regional Working Groups bringing together representatives of business advisory, education/training and research in the partner regions, were outlined and crystallised.

During the two-day Workshop several sessions with lively discussions and interactive methods were organised. The sessions and discussions related to the E-Network, Association and Regional Working Groups were organised and coordinated by **Mr. Kostas Giotopoulos**, IT manager and Comp 4 Coordinator, and **Mr. Bill Vassiliadis**, IT Consultant, both from Development Enterprise of Achaia Prefecture (NEA), Greece.

In order to follow up the process and progress of the Operation and facilitate 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 other Components (apart from Comp 4) was organised. The parallel sessions were led by **Ms. Daina Kanaska**, Latvia, and **Ms. Ulla Asikainen**, Finland, the Coordinators of Components 3 and 5.

In addition to the sessions described above, two excursions in the City of Genoa were 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 Italian hosts, with the responsibility of establishing the contacts with the local actors and agents.

While the sessions related to the E-Network and Association and the excursions were clearly investments in the raise of interest 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 the background, overall administrative structure and operational framework of the Operation of the participants.

The opening session, apart from being a forum for refreshing the memory of delegates about practicalities, was also a significant forum for the launch of team-building activities. The “colour groups” composed of participants followed the footsteps of famous European artists who once visited the City of Genoa and came up with paintings illuminating themes to be processed during the Workshop and expectations the group members had on the Workshop (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, October 23, 2005. The meeting has been reported independently.

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

3. LIGURIA AND GENOA – vigorous junctions of past and today

Region of Liguria is a narrow strip of land, enclosed between the sea and the Alps and the Apennines mountains, it is a winding arched extension from Ventimiglia to La Spezia and is one of the smallest regions in Italy. Its surface area is of 5 431 km².



It is limited in size, but not in the variety of its

vegetation and wildlife which is amongst the most diversified and interesting in Italy. The coast-line, which is geographically divided between the Western Riviera and the Eastern Riviera at the sides of important centre of Genoa, from the scenic point of view is characterized by an alternating series of magnificent high coast-lines and flat, sandy coast-lines, whilst in the interior the steep hills meet up with the Apennines peaks.

Administratively Liguria is subdivided into four provinces (Imperia, Savona, Genoa and La Spezia), and into 235 towns and communes. Genoa is the most important city of the whole region and here live about 600.000 inhabitants.

Historically, Liguria knew the presence of man in very remote times. The roots of the city of Genoa are very old and still unknown. The history of Genoa began in the year 250 AC, when Cartaginesi invaded it from the sea because the friendship between Genoa and Rome. Just the Romani, two years later, took to Genoa about 8.000 workers to reconstruct the city, to enlarge the port and to build a town wall to defend the country against the enemy. The Middle Ages was a very important period for the city: Genoa became one of the most important trade and economic. Important navigators, such as Colombo, were born just in Genoa.

Between the XI century (when the Genoese ships played a major role in the first crusade) and the XV century Genoa experienced an extraordinary political and commercial ascent (mainly spice trades with the Orient) and it was the most powerful maritime republic in the Mediterranean from the XII to the XIV century.

In this period Genoa was a real financial power in Europe (the first bank was born in Genoa: Banco di San Giorgio). However the main time of magnificence for the city was between 1500 and 1700, when Genoa, rich and important city, embellished it self with wonderful buildings and works of art of immense value.

In 1900, the two world wars affected hardly the city that lose the main mercantile character to go to an industrial development.

Even if it only occupies 1.18 % (5416.13 km²) of the national territory, Liguria plays a significant role in the Italian economy. Over the past decades the Industrial reconversion process (from heavy industry to the high technology and business services sector) and its tourist-commercial trend, have highlighted the strategic importance of its landscape, environmental and social elements, factors of attraction for investment and the localisation of new businesses, and consequently of impetus for the regional economy.

Its geographical position - between France, Northern and Central Italy and the Liguria Sea and its relative ease of access have transformed Liguria into a region of transit for goods and passengers along European and Mediterranean traffic routes.

Ligurian cuisine is typically Mediterranean: olive oil, vegetables and aromatic herbs flavour the simple and genuine dishes providing a healthy, balanced diet. These are accompanied by a wide range of wines that are produced from grapes grown on the sunny local hillsides.

"Pesto" is the typical basil sauce and something more than a gastronomic speciality: it is a symbol of Liguria and an "ambassador" for Ligurian cuisine abroad. In the hinterland, where there is an abundance of chestnut trees, mushrooms have pride of place in the kitchen: whether they are cooked "alla Genovese" (with potatoes, garlic and oil) or fried in breadcrumbs, it is well worth going for a mushroom-picking trip in the right season or going to a local restaurant to taste them. In the territory close to the border with Piedmont, you can also find truffles growing.

One region, one system, a multitude of facets

Few European regions as small as Liguria present such rich variety: variety of landscape spanning the sea and the mountain; variety of culture and history, from pre-historical remains to medieval town centres, from sixteenth century palaces to modern management centres; variety of people passing through the region and setting, contributing to change and growth...past and present; variety of production activities, from the port system to heavy industry, from advanced electronics to traditional crafts, from scientific research to technology design.

This multi-faceted Liguria has nevertheless managed to develop a coherent system in which the industrial fabric, infrastructure, finance and tourism are integrated under the intelligent management of the public administration.

This makes it easy for investment-oriented international enterprises to find the bearings easily and quickly in the search for business sites, alliances with local entrepreneurs, facilitations and financing and qualified personnel.

With one of the highest levels of education in Italy, Liguria offers a pool of human resource of commensurate value to enterprises at the cutting edge of business and technology. Valorising intelligence and professional competency has always been a necessary feature of this region, which has limited human resources. Excellent professional competencies and key opportunities to collaborate in the private business are guaranteed today by the university system, European research centres at the cutting edge of the medical, bio-engineering, robotics, telecommunications and neural network sectors, plus the Italian Institute of Particle Physics and the Centre for Advanced Biotechnologies.

Liguria's traditional vocation for international business, the legacy of a history of seafaring and international contact, is being carried forward by a broad base of foreign companies and equity in the Region. Liguria now has one of the highest level of internalisation in Italy,

with foreign-owned companies in industry alone (representing a total of 16 countries) plus dozens of others in trade and services. The reasons for investing in Liguria must be convincing if leading global companies like Kodak (with a research and technical assistance centre in the Porto Antico area), Saint Gobain (with two production facilities in Altare near Savona and in Cogoleto near Genoa), Carnival Cruises (the new owner of Costa Crociere), Villeroy and Boch, Marconi, Daimler Chrysler (two production facilities in Liguria), Exxon, Shell, the Port of Singapore and many others have chosen Liguria as the location for new business activities. Almost all these Companies have settled in the Region over the last fifteen years and others are beginning to arrive.

General info on Genoa



A commercial port, genteel seaside resort, fine 16th century palaces in a town proud of its history and legend which was the native place of Christopher Columbus. Provincial capital of the Liguria region, Genoa is located at the farthest inmost part of the Gulf of Genoa, along the foothills of the Appennines, with a coastal extension of about 35 km. It has a population of 676,000 inhabitants, and is the main commercial port of Italy.

It is an active centre for traffic and industry (shipbuilding,

steel works, metal-mechanics industry, deposits and refineries of mineral oils, cement makers, food, wood and paper industries).

The oldest part of the urban centre, a distinctive maze of crowded and narrow streets leading to the old port, form a striking contrast with the modern part, spread out on the nearby hills.

The extremely rapid topographical development of the last ten years has established one continuous spread of habitation from the coast eastward to Nervi and to the west beyond Sampierdarena, to include the industrial centres of Cornigliano and Sestri Ponente.

Since 1962 Genoa has had an airport serving the European continent, which was built on a wide landscaped area obtained by reclaiming a stretch of sea facing Sestri Ponente.

4. STILL ON THE RIGHT TRACK? Exchanging news and planning ahead under Components 3 and 5

In order to follow up the process and progress of the Operation and facilitate 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 4 was organised, with DEBATERs from all the participating regions invited.

As an introduction and contribution to the parallel sessions **Mr. Heikki Pietarinen** (Business Adviser, Jobs and Society of North Karelia, Finland) presented the summary of the results of the work accomplished at the 1st Workshop in Jelgava, Latvia in May 2005: the first draft of the Professional Profile of a European Business Adviser, elaborated into a more structured form by Mr. Pietarinen since Jelgava (**APPENDIX 4**).

The session focusing on Component 3 concentrated on the clarification of the guidelines of the conduct of the survey on business advisory in the partner countries. The session was led by the Component Coordinator **Ms. Daina Kanaska**, a Business Adviser from Regional Adult Educational Centre of Jelgava, Latvia, and the memo is available as **APPENDIX 5**.

Ms. Ulla Asikainen, Degree Programme Manager of Rural Industries at North Karelia Polytechnic, Finland, and the Coordinator of Component 5, led an interactive workshop on the three key elements of the Component, i.e. the Personal Learning Plan (PLP), tutoring system and Curriculum development (**APPENDIX 6**).

5. BUILDING A BRIDGE BEYOND THE PROJECT - drafting the E-Network, BA Association and Regional Working Groups

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 of the Component is to collect, organise and structure as well as 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 business advisory.

One of the main objectives of the Genova Workshop was to discuss the basic goals of Component 4, to identify the current status of the development progress and proceed with a specific time plan for the next months.

Due to several issues, like the large number of participants, the lack of space and the time pressure the organisers of the session for the Component 4 had to reorganise the structure and the means of the session.

The main issues that were discussed during Component 4 were the following:

- 1) E-network (portal)
- 2) Association
- 3) Regional Working Groups

4) International Exchange Programme

The session was led by **Mr. Bill Vassiliadis**, IT consultant, and **Mr. Kostas Giotopoulos**, Coordinator of Component 4 and IT manager, of NEA, Greece. The focus of the report below will be the themes of the E-Network, Regional Working Groups and the Association.

An introduction to the topics given at the beginning of the session is available as **APPENDIX 7**.

E-Network

The design and development of the E-Network, i.e. the Business Advisor Portal, is an integral part of Component 4 of the operation DEBATE. One of the main objectives of the Genoa Workshop was to discuss the basic goals and functionalities of such a solution. For this purpose, a whole session of about 2 hours was devoted in presentations and group work for the portal.

The session took place on the afternoon of Monday, Oct. 24, 2005. The discussion was coordinated by Ms. Bill Vassiliadis who is responsible for designing the portal.

NEA, as the partner responsible for Component 4 and for the design/development of the portal had the following goals during the meeting:

- § To present a high level (conceptual) design of the portal
- § To get feedback on this design
- § To achieve an initial consensus about user expectations from the portal
- § To get new ideas for services, procedures and the content of the portal

In order to achieve these goals, a presentation was made by Mr. Vassiliadis entitled "Business Advisor Portal: Services and Technology". The main points presented included:

- "What is a portal?": A definition of what a portal is and how this concept is used in Debate. This section of the presentation was necessary in order for the participants to acquire a common understanding of portal functionalities and technologies.
- "What can it do?": In light of the discussion that took place in the previous section, the main functionalities of the portal were presented. High level and core services and key features were proposed for consideration.
- "What does it contain?": This section included one of the most important point of the discussion, the content of the portal. A thematic library was proposed and the participants were asked to consider which type of content should be made available on-line.
- "How we will build/support it?": This section briefly described the technology behind the portal and proposed some ideas for supporting the portal. The main consideration was who is responsible for uploading the content and what are the procedures for doing this (and at the same time preserving the quality of service and information provided by the portal).
- Finally, some examples of other portals were presented as best practise examples.

The goal of the presentation was to inform the participants on how the Business Advisor Portal will function so as to gain a common understanding. Furthermore, to present some

initial ideas and questions in order to start a discussion that would provide feedback, new questions, objections or new ideas.

Before the end of the presentation the participants were asked to fill-in questionnaires (**APPENDIX 8**) that would provide feedback on three subjects:

1. Portal content (which type of content is considered more useful for inclusion in the portal)
2. Portal Services (which services are considered more useful for inclusion in the portal)
3. Member Services (should there be a membership for using portal services and if yes what kind of membership? How should we attract new members to the portal?)

About 20 questionnaires were gathered and are being processed by NEA.

After the end of the presentation, the participants formed 7 discussion groups with the sole purpose to propose new ideas on content, services and procedures. This session had a duration of about 45 minutes. Answers were gathered by NEA and an initial evaluation was presented the next day (presentation entitled "Business Advisor Portal: Some Feedback").

The main points/questions discussed by the working group participants were the following:

- Too many content categories were included in the questionnaire, most of them are considered important. Is it possible to include them all in the Business Advisor Portal having in mind the limitations in resources or should the portal be focused? This question is extremely important for Component 4 since it affects the strategy of the portal development. The questionnaire should provide an initial classification of important/not important content (albeit all content is important) but further narrowing is needed. This does not only have to do with resources and support procedure complexity but strategy as well. Focusing on specific content may provide the competitive advantage for the portal against other solutions already available on-line. Specialising is a key factor to the success of many similar endeavours; On the other hand, the provision of a broad content would provide significantly lesser added value to potential user. For example, providing information for EU funding calls is important for Business Advisors but it is provided by too many on-line services already.
- Another subject discussed was whether the content should be of local, regional or European interest. Again, a viable solution would be to focus more to European-wide information without neglecting important local or regional information.
- Another discussion focused on the users of the Portal. According to the DEBATE TA, the portal will be used by Business Advisors, who will be the primary users. Since the possibility of including educational material to the portal was discussed, educators are also considered a target group (although a secondary one).
- The procedure of uploading (providing) the content was also mentioned. Who will upload the content and how. Content will be uploaded by the partners of the project (initially). Possibly, one partner per country will be responsible for quality procedures.

- How will we preserve the portal after project end? This is a difficult question in all EU funded projects. Viability after project end can be achieved if new users are attracted and this will happen if the portal provides an added value (see content).

The main suggestion/idea provided during the discussion was the following: The content provided by the portal should be focused in order to ensure competitiveness. The exact type of the content will be decided after the full questionnaire survey is complete and discussions between partners approve the final results.

For NEA, the coordinator of Component 4, the following actions are anticipated:

- § Gather requirements about content and services
- § Design the Portal
- § Develop the mechanisms for managing the content
- § Hosts the portal (discuss copyright issues)

Each partner will be then responsible for enriching the portal with information. Before the end of the second presentation, a timetable of “work to do” was provided:

When	What	By whom
24/02/2006	Report of the discussions for the portal on the RWGs*	RWGs
31/03/2006	Finalisation of the content and the services that will be provided through the portal	B. Vassiliadis, K. Giotopoulos
Workshop in Finland	Assign categories to persons for sending content	B. Vassiliadis, K. Giotopoulos, RWGCs
30/06/2006	First draft of the portal	B. Vassiliadis, K. Giotopoulos

*Regional Working Groups should provide a report on the following subjects:

- § Select the three most important categories of information that the portal should focus on (ref. the questionnaire - ALLU)
- § Describe in detail additional services for the portal
- § Should we focus on European-relevant information, on local/regional or both?
- § How to attract members (membership added value, benefits)?

The comprehensive presentation is attached to this report as **APPENDIX 9**.

Association of European Business Advisers

The specific session was organised in the following topics:

- § Objectives
- § Members
- § Activities – Characteristics – Legal Identity
- § Process
- § Time plan
- § Group Discussion
 - § Objectives
 - § Members and Money
 - § Legal Identity, process, activities etc.
- § Feedback from the groups

Before splitting into the three groups the component coordinator provided a presentation for the objectives of the association and the rest of the topics that followed in order to give initial input to the teams to discuss between them and start thinking.

The overall information can be found in the attachment (**APPENDIX 10**).

The most important aspect is the result of the work in teams where all teams worked on a specific subject and then they had time to comment or add the other teams work.

Objectives

Results of first team:

- § To support the BAs
- § Internationalisation of the BAs
- § Raise skills, knowledge and attitude of BAs
- § Professional Profile and image of the Bas
- § To deal with innovative activities of the BA sector
- § Increase the self confidence of the BA, the creativity and the passion for the work.

After the presentation of the aforementioned issues by the group rapporteur, the other teams added or commented the following:

- § To gain acceptance among governments
- § Try to use the results of research of BA
- § Optimise the use of resources
- § Increase the competitiveness of EU, China is here.
- § To increase business among European SMEs
- § Some issues that are mentioned might be a mission impossible. Stay on the ground.

More or less a common understanding was reached at least for the basic objectives of the association. What is clear is that all these will be clarified in the articles of the association.

Members and Money

The first team discussed that the members of the association should be individual BAs or organisations related to BA. With respect the money issue the discussion was about fees (scalable fees according to the participant), try to find funds (EU, provision of services from registration, training courses, mobile advisors, interactive advisors etc.)

The other teams initiated a strong controversial issue whether the trainers of BAs should participate in the association. The discussion was not finished and it will continue. They also discussed for agencies or universities that could be members of the association. A comment was also added for the organisations that could be members of the association that only national associations could take part in it.

With respect to the money issue another idea is to get funds from certifying the BAs and organising conferences and seminars. Furthermore the idea of finding sponsors was also discussed and some other services beside the ones aforementioned like “innocamps”, “dating service” etc.

Legal Identity

The Legal Identity issue was confronted by the third team. There were two proposals suggested by the specific team. The first proposal suggests a European Association and all members register directly to it. The other proposal suggests also the establishment of National Associations. The main difference between the two proposals is the fact that in the second there is a two layer structure where in each country there is a National Association for BA and all interested people become members in their national organisation. The second layer is the networking of the national associations into the European Association.

The comments for all other teams suggested that the first proposal is more likely to succeed in the establishment of our objectives.

The other topic that the specific group discussed was the activities of the association and the character of it.

The main suggestions were:

1. To solve politic questions of BA
2. Administration, how we can deal with this issue.
3. Funding
4. Collect the best practices from Europe
5. The European Association should be the owner of the portal and of the content.
6. To manage contacts between BAs and third parties
7. Have right to certify European Business Advisors.

The other teams commented the proposals of the specific team and they added some ideas. A first idea was to enhance the concept of solving the politic questions of BA and try to do some lobbying and give input to the European Commission. Another important issue is the communication and the public relations of the association towards third parties. They all agreed that this should be a very important aspect of the association.

Finally one team introduced the idea of provisioning of services to the members of the association like training, organising events related to the BA etc. Last but not least most of

the attendants said that the certification procedure for the BA should be a very high priority for the association.

Regional Working Groups (RWGs)

The session of the regional working groups was mainly focused on identifying the objectives of the RWGs, to discuss about the members of each RWG, to discuss about the actions needed in order to implement the objectives of the RWGs and to specify a time plan for the next activities of the RWGs.

At the beginning of the session a presentation identified all the aforementioned issues and some problems were clarified at the presentation of the current state of the art of the work progress of the RWGs. After the presentation by the component coordinator each regional working group leader shared with all of us about the current status of the work progress. There was a clear position by all leaders and an important indication that the work progress is in very good level, since that all RWGs are settled and already have some initial results that can be found in Allu.

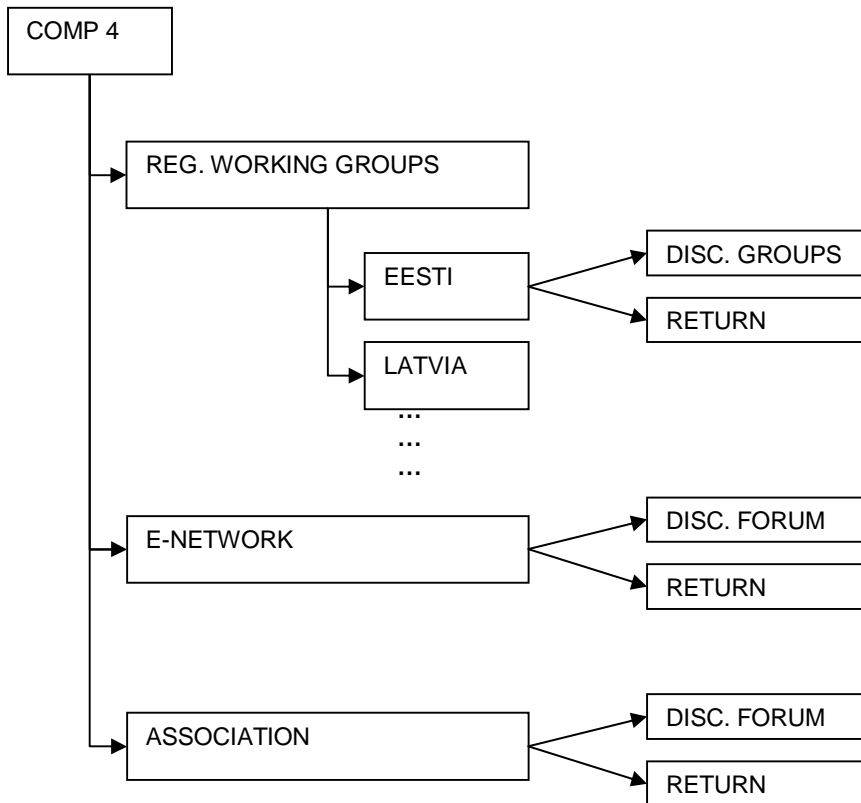
There was also a common agreement that by the end of the specific year we need to strengthen the work that we are doing in the RWGs, since that this will solve several problems that are not clearly related with the objectives of the operation of the RWGs, but it is a very good instrument and a mean to achieve immediate results from the impact of our project. The discussion of all important subjects in the RWGs will solve several issues related to several aspects of the DEBATE project.

By the end of the specific year all RWGs will report the results of the work progress and it seems that all of them have results and members that are not project partners will provide significant input to the DEBATE project.

The goal of the specific session was to inform the participants about the work progress of all RWGs and to prepare a plan until the next meeting. The support material is attached to this report as **APPENDIX 11**.

A timetable for the completion of the outcomes of the Component 4 was outlined and agreed on (**APPENDIX 12**).

The very last issue for discussion was the communication on Allu system. We all agreed that Allu has to be the only mean for our communication and especially for Component 4 the structure of the portal will be like the following structure:



6. EXCURSIONS – interface with the Ligurian 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 around the city of Genoa.

During Excursion 1 on Monday, October 24, 2005 the DEBATERs were invited to the seat of the Chamber of Commerce. The organisations represented during the two-hour session included *Ligurian Centre of Productivity*, *Chamber of Commerce of Genoa*, *University of Genoa (Division of Transport, Urban and Regional Economics and Geography of the Department of Economics and Quantitative Methods)*, *ELM Association* and *Regione Liguria*.

Excursion 2 on Tuesday, October 25, 2005 provided a forum for interaction with key persons of Entrepreneurs' Association of Genoa. During another two-hour session for example ideas were exchanged on the promotion of business relations between the DEBATE partner countries and the region of Liguria.

More detailed information on the host organisations and their contact information as well as a summary of the contents of the discussions, all compiled by Ms. Veronica Raiola (Lag Appennino Genovese), are provided on **APPENDICES 13 and 14**.

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 second Official Project Meeting was led by Ms. Marisa Bacigalupo, the President of Lag Appennino Genovese, the Italian DEBATE partner, who was appointed the Chairperson of the meeting. Ms. Bacigalupo was assisted by Ms. Angela Rollando, the Co-director of Lag Appennino Genovese, who translated for Ms. Bacigalupo.

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 3rd Workshop to be held in North Karelia, Finland, was made. The memorandum of the meeting is attached to this report as **APPENDIX 15**.

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, 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, and led by another team of Hungarian colleagues of Kisalföld Foundation of Enterprise Promotion.

In the session an interactive method “GIVE” was used, with 9 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 would be launched within the Regional Working Groups in the regions.

The summary of the results of the 2nd round of the self-evaluation process performed in Genoa are attached to this report as **APPENDIX 16**. The key messages were, however, clear:

By the 2nd Workshop, with experience of the total of seven months of project activities, the overall framework of the Project is perceived as more comprehensible and concrete and there is obviously a more personal sense of responsibility for the success of the Project. The most significant personal benefits identified still included networking as well as exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge with international colleagues. It was also anticipated that in the process of intercultural learning, a more structured network of specialists working in more a goal-oriented manner would emerge as a concrete manifestation of genuine European value-added, a hot topic in any project carried out with the financial support of the European Community

It was, however, pointed out that the ambitious nature of the Project has revealed itself only by now and the delegates reminded one another of the fact that the Project is, after all, about supporting the clients, entrepreneurs, and facilitation of business making.

Despite the apparent raise of level of awareness, understanding and even motivation among the participants, the results of self-evaluation clearly proved that the investment of time and commitment to the Project in the first place in between the Workshops is still lacking to a certain extent. This is likely a question of both personal time management and partly inefficient conduct of project management. They are both factors which should be paid attention to in the future.

On the basis of the comments given the most important sources of support for the personal work are Regional and Component coordinators as well as Allu platform (intranet). Therefore the stimulation and activation of the work of the Coordinators and the organisation of the work on Allu are essential development targets through which the "information flood" mentioned on the self-evaluation charts can be dealt with.

By the results of the self-evaluation session it became evident that the conduct of the self-evaluation among the last sessions of the Workshops was somewhat misleading for the participants who, to some extent, "falsely" focused on the Workshop itself, instead the overall process so far. The comments included claims for less tight schedules and more discussions, which were more or less anticipated viewpoints.

There was, however, a remark related to the Workshop itself, which, however, does have a wider impact on the overall process, too. The unsatisfactory degree of orientation to the Workshop creating puzzlement and even feelings of frustration clearly impedes efficient work and slows down the process during the Workshop. This implies a stronger input by the Regional and Component Coordinators, preparing the delegations for the Workshop.

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 had been expressed clearly: the participants were looking forward to the clarification of the status of the Operation and the different Components and the tasks and duties expected of them personally and their background institutions. Compared to the anticipations expressed on the feedback forms of Jelgava Workshop five months earlier, the interest had obviously shifted from casual “networking” and “establishment of contacts” to more serious and goal-oriented work on concrete themes and products.

As a result, despite the obvious satisfaction with the programme, some of the delegates even articulated a certain level of disturbance or disappointment as they felt that not all the Components were duly and deeply enough processed. One must, however, remember the structure of the Workshop outlined as early as on the project application: on each Workshop exclusively one of the activity-intensive Components, 3, 4 or 5, (e.g. Comp 4 in the case of Genoa) would be focused on and two parallel sessions with a time limit would serve as an efficient up-date and follow-up of the remaining Components (e.g. Comp 3 and 5 in Genoa).

Majority of the delegates reported that they had received adequate information on the Workshop. Equally many, however, felt that the preparations by all the involved parties, not only the Component and session leaders, but also the individual participants were not sufficient but they all should prepare themselves for the event more properly and intensively. Suggestions for improvements included more activity on the side of the Regional Coordinators as mediators of information on the Workshop, more interaction on the themes of the Workshop within the Regional Working Groups beforehand as well as more communication from the Component Coordinators and session leaders, in charge of the arrangements of the subject-related sessions.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities of individual participants was anticipated to build on a stronger feeling of collective responsibility for the success of the event and, as a result, decline in feelings of frustration and confusion. The less acquainted a participant is with the project, the more vital is the efficient flow of information and briefing on the objectives and approaches of the Project by the Regional Coordinators.

On the feedback questionnaires it was, however, clearly suggested that the changes in the composition of delegations brings certain discontinuity along, resulting in the emergence of an “inner” and “outer” circle of DEBATErs, with the former group assuming the responsibilities in a serious manner and the latter group the role of “tourists”, without a genuine commitment to the objectives of the operation. This should surely not be the case as all the participants are expected to make a major input in the work.

In the future the Component Coordinators and all the session leaders should pay more attention to the means of facilitation of orientation and preparing for their sessions in advance. On one hand the material to be processed in the course of the sessions should be available on Allu platform well on time and on the other hand, the pre-assignment(s), i.e. “home work”, either individual or those for regional delegations, related to the themes of the sessions should be virtually obligatory for the incoming delegates.

Thanks to the efficient management and abundant material by the session leaders, the main sessions of the Workshop related to Component 4 (E-network and Association, in particular) were widely appreciated, even critical questions on the feasibility of the plans and timetables were raised among the participants.

An interesting feature of the feedback was the high appreciation of the second excursion to the headquarters of the local entrepreneurs’ association. The possibility to discuss and

investigate business contacts on behalf of the clients, i.e. the entrepreneurs of the DEBATE regions, was mentioned frequently and a request for dedicating more time for similar activities was referred to on several forms. One must, however, bear in mind the original objectives of the Operation which do not have so much to do with direct and day-to-day needs of entrepreneurs (even if the promotion of the competitiveness of SME's is the ultimate, longer-term objective) but with building up the competences and qualifications of BA's themselves. Thus, considering the time and budgetary limits affecting the Workshops, it should rather be the original objectives to be taken into account when setting priorities.

No major sources for dissatisfaction were mentioned under "practical arrangements". The intense timetable typical of any similar "project milestone" was referred to again but with the accumulation of experience it was not a key issue any more.

The generosity and hospitality of the Italian hosts, the staff of Lag Appennino Genovese, was frequently mentioned and appreciated – *grazie!*

The results are drawn up on **APPENDIX 17** in more detail.

9. DEBATE GOES FAMOUS – results of the publicity measures of the Workshop

During the Workshop a press conference was organised (please see an abstract: **APPENDIX 18**). The press conference was hosted by Ms. Marisa Bacigalupo, President of Lag Appennino Genovese, **Mr. Maurizio Maresca**, President of the "*Centre International d'Etudes de bioethique*" and adviser of the European Commission as well as Ms. Nina Holopainen, the Head Coordinator of operation DEBATE. Representatives from all the DEBATE regions were also present.

The press conference resulted in articles on four regional newspapers: ANSA, RivieraLevante.com, Il Secolo XIX and Corriere Mercantile. All the articles were published on October 24, 2005 (please see **APPENDIX 19**).

APPENDICES

1. List of participants
2. "Flow" of the opening session
3. Agenda of the Workshop
4. Results of Jelgava Workshop: Professional Profile (2nd draft)
5. Memorandum of the Component 3 session
6. Memorandum of the Component 5 session
7. Introduction to topics under Component 4
8. E-Network questionnaire
9. Presentation on E-Network
10. Presentation on BA association
11. Presentation on Regional Working Groups
12. Timetable of Component 4
13. Info sheet on excursions
14. Summary of discussions during excursions
15. Memorandum of the 2nd Official Project Meeting
16. Results of the 2nd round of self-evaluation
17. Summary of feedback on the Workshop
18. Abstract of the press conference
19. Articles
20. Photo gallery