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**IT-Academy: e-Learning for SMEs**

*E-learning to upgrade skills in small and medium-sized enterprises*

LT/01/B/F/PP-137006

**Challenge**

Businesses often need help acquiring the basic knowledge and skills for using information technology (IT). In the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector especially, there is a need for IT-based learning material to overcome the time restrictions associated with conventional courses. This problem is even more acute in the new European Union member states, due to their fast-changing economies.

The IT-Academy: e-Learning for SMEs project integrates these courses and their new Internet technologies and web-based distance education methods as well as technological standards in the traditional VET system in the Baltic States. This project is therefore of great benefit to all SMEs and contributes to the quality of training in this sector.

The consortium consisted of the Kaunas Distance Education Centre at Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania) in cooperation with other education centres, businesses and consultancies in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden Scotland, and Switzerland.

**Aim**

The project aimed to develop a package of online individual courses and training material to help SMEs upgrade their qualifications in using new IT in business.

The project's main target groups were entrepreneurs, managers and supervisors of SMEs, individuals (those interested in starting a business, and/or personal development) and teachers wishing to introduce new courses and a new training method.

**Results**

Under the project, a package of six on-line courses was developed for employers and employees of SMEs. This package is available on the Internet and on CD-Rom. All six courses are available in different languages, with 11 versions in total. The modules are:

- . Information Literacy for SMEs.
- . Use of IT in Management of Human Resources.
- . IT in Management and Business Administration of SMEs.
- . Self-Marketing through IT.
- . Computer-based Project Management and IT Networks.

Users of the modules are invited to complete a quality-assurance questionnaire before and after studying each module; this ensures continuous feedback on the developed results.

Additional products include English-language video material (Video CD and VHS formats with titles in five languages) and the methodological guidebook (printed version in English and Lithuanian) 'Office ergonomics'. Furthermore, the consortium has developed a common platform and forum for SMEs to exchange ideas, information on areas of innovation and ways of accessing information via other SMEs by means of a 'Marketing area', as well as an SME database and the ability to do partner searches.

Most of the information materials – such as course dissemination leaflets, project leaflet and poster, and the project booklet – were developed in English and national languages. To study the courses and take part in the Marketing area, users must register with the website.

Representatives of the target group (potential end-users and relevant stakeholders at the national levels) participated in the

development phase, piloting the outcomes in all partner countries and in the evaluation phase. This participation made the outcomes more practical and resulted in a user-friendly environment and relevant subject matter in the training packages.

The use of new Internet technologies and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has made the product highly transferable to other training systems and programmes. The partnership has signed a commercialisation agreement for five years. The demand and interest in the course package are rapidly increasing. The English version of the course in particular has the potential for widespread distribution.

Extracted from: Leonardo da Vinci, Awards 2004