

**Trainers, training scenarios, and a perspective
towards a European framework for *professional development of trainers* –
the contribution of the TTplus project**

**Pekka Kämäräinen (ITB, University of Bremen), Bernd Baumgartl & Eva Pomberger
(Navreme Wissensentwicklung GmbH)
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1. Background and context of the TTplus project

This paper draws upon the work of the European cooperation project “*A Framework for the Continuing Professional Development of Trainers*” (TTplus). The project is funded as a ‘reference material’ project within the European action programme Leonardo da Vinci. The TTplus has studied the training cultures and the professional situation of trainers in six European countries: Germany, Greece, Portugal, Romania, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (with focus on Wales). The main thrust of the project is to proceed via empirical analyses (case studies) and development-oriented analyses (scenarios of practice, use cases) to common conclusions concerning the professional development of trainers.

The background of the TTplus project is related to the following developments:

- After Lisbon Summit 2000 the European policies in education and training have shifted towards overarching framework processes (e.g. the Bologna process and the Copenhagen process). The key instruments for the framework processes are the European Qualification Frameworks (EQF) for higher education and for lifelong learning.
- Alongside the framework processes specific attention has been given on the promotion of teachers’ and trainers’ professional competences. At the level of European policies this has led to the formulation of common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications. These have been adopted as key elements of the Communication from the Commission to Council and the European Parliament (COM(2007)392).

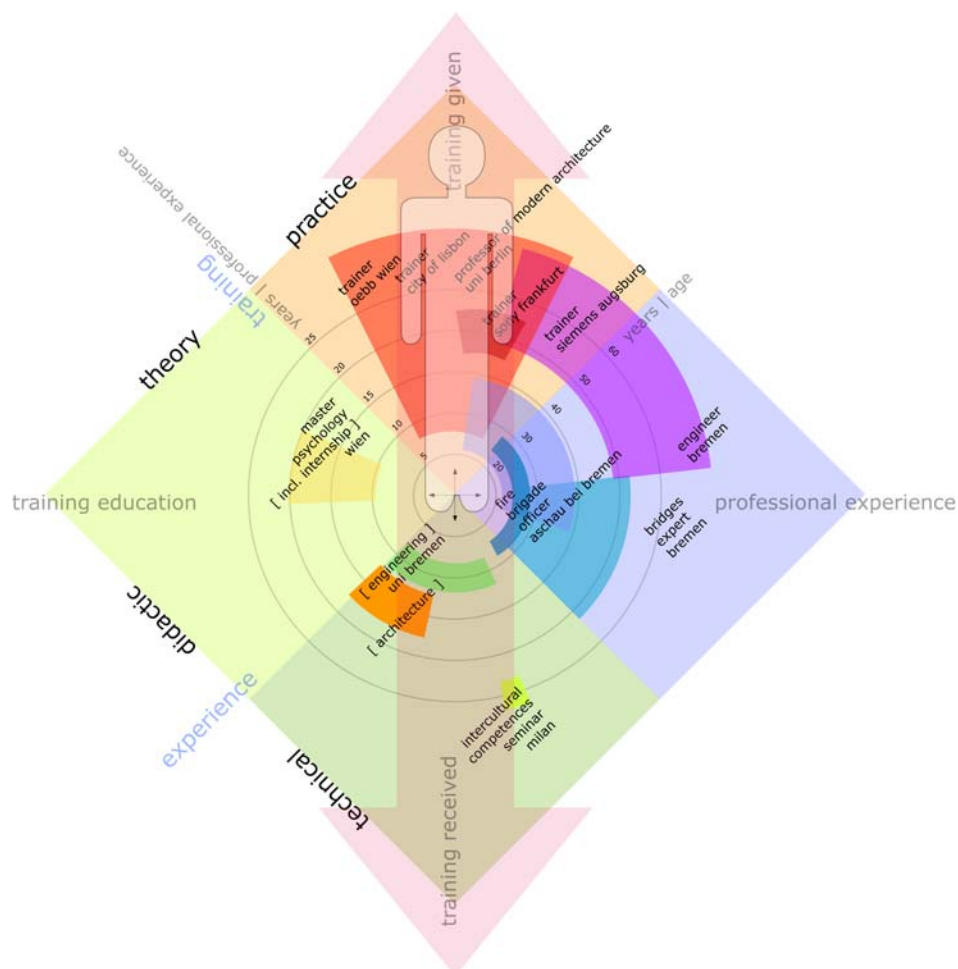
However, during these processes the originally more inclusive interest on teachers’ *and* trainers’ professional development has given way for more exclusive focus on *teachers*. Therefore, the European Commission has taken specific measures to give more visibility for studies and initiatives that focus on *trainers*. In this respect the picture of European knowledge development can be characterised in the following way:

- Cedefop has provided basic information on *vocational teacher education and training of trainers* in the founding phase of the TNet network (1995-1998) and alongside the subsequent TNet activities. This work has been based strongly on cooperation with vocational teacher education institutes and national training authorities.
- The more recent Commission initiatives (the Eurotrainer project and the LOT 2 project) have been launched to collect specific information on in-company trainers and on trainers working outside public educational establishments. However, the work of these projects was essentially based on country information that was delivered by intermediate experts. Yet, this has provided a basis for launching the Eurotrainer network.
- The TTplus project has been launched as a separate ‘reference material’ project to provide more specific information on the professional situation of trainers in six countries and to outline common measures to support the professional development of trainers. In this context the TTplus project has been designed as an independent research activity that seeks to address more directly its context of study: the working contexts of trainers and the measures to promote trainers’ professional development.

2. Starting points, critical issues and working hypotheses of the TTplus project

In the light of the above presented overview, the TTplus project has somewhat contradictory starting points:

- The project contributes to European knowledge development on the *professional situation of trainers*. Yet, the project does not take it for granted that its findings should be generalised as ‘national reports’ and as evidence on the mainstream developments regarding the development of ‘national’ training cultures.
- The project has committed itself to the development of a *common framework* that supports *professional development of trainers*. Yet, the project does not take it for granted that such a framework should be used in a similar way in different training cultures.
- The project maintains a focus on people, i.e. learners and trainers, and their specific individual backgrounds. Yet, the project does not take it for granted that despite the diversity of training settings, common characteristics, constraints and challenges can be found.

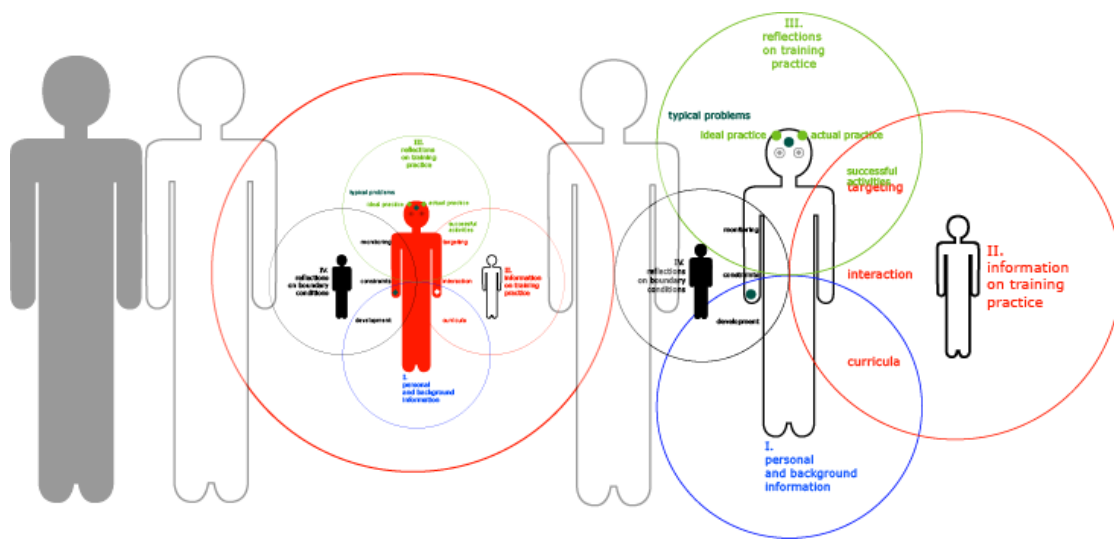


Visual 1: Depiction of competences and experiences of a trainer

The main tasks that the TTplus project has set for itself are the following:

- to analyse the *professional situation of trainers* **and** to use the results as a basis for *scenarios of practice*;
- to identify important *learning experiences* and example of *training practice* **and** to analyse them as *instances of innovation* regarding trainers’ professional development;
- to explore *national and European policies* **and** to specify what kind of *preconditions* they provide for the *professional development* of trainers;

- to outline a *common framework* to support *professional development on trainers* **and** to clarify how it can be used in *different training cultures*.



Visual 2: Embeddedness of training provision within training stakeholders and cultures

Regarding the scope of the studies and the specification of the target groups the TTplus project has had to settle the following critical issues:

- Who are considered as ‘trainers’ and who is expected to be responsible for their professional development?
- What kinds of training models and/or career promotion models have to be considered when drafting the common framework?
- What role can be considered for organised training arrangements, web-supported learning and for recognition of experience-based learning?
- What kind of involvement of trainers’ own associations, of other stakeholders or intermediary bodies and of government bodies can be expected?

The discussion on the key issues led to the joint working hypotheses (that are aggregated with a set of polarities:

- **1. Polarity:** The project needs to consider **both** *in-company trainers* **and** *external service providers*. Often the use of internal trainers and external training specialists is based on cooperation arrangements (that include other co-trainers). Distribution of training functions involves many actors with changing roles and responsibilities.
- **2. Polarity:** The project needs to consider **both** *formal training programmes* **and** *non-formal learning opportunities* as means to support the professional development of trainers. New training-related innovations bring forward new possibilities to combine formal learning arrangements and non-formal learning alongside work.
- **3. Polarity:** The project needs to consider **both** *facilitation of organised learning processes* **and** *validation of experience-based learning*. The development of networked web-applications and web-services provides new possibilities to bridge such gaps.
- **4. Polarity:** The project needs to consider **career development options of trainers** via *training-related progression routes* or via *other progression routes*. In this context the project has to consider also **the relative importance of formal qualification frameworks, organisational benchmarks and self-initiated quality initiatives of trainers**.

3. Common methodological choices and country-specific samples

The decisions regarding the selection of cases for the TTplus project had to be taken at a relatively early date and these decisions could not be supported by common methodological guidelines. Yet, some working agreements could be reached at an early stage (regarding the degrees of freedom in selecting the cases):

- 1) There was no reason to set such requirements that would make the samples representative regarding *national* training cultures or the evaluation of *national* training policies.
- 2) There was no reason to standardise the samples from the perspective of economic sectors or regarding the size of organisations involved.

Instead, the following arguments were brought forward to support relatively open research designs and country-specific choices regarding the samples of case studies:

- The project needed information on diverse training contexts and different preconditions for trainers' professional development.
- The project needed insights into different career paths and learning histories of trainers and training specialists.
- The need to learn from different modes of promoting '*training for trainers*' and from tendencies to outsource training functions.
- The need to learn from different uses of informal learning resources, knowledge sharing forums and on cross-organisational support for training and professional development.

Below, the country-specific samples are presented in a group picture that highlights the different features of the country-specific samples (see Box 1).

a. The samples that focus on in-company training

a1. Features of the German sample

The German sample consists of enterprises that provide training in the dual system of apprenticeship. The enterprises represent different industrial traditions (family enterprise, SME merged to a consortium, large enterprise that is part of multi-national concern). All companies provide training in electric occupations (used as an exemplary field).

a2. Features of the Greek sample

The Greek sample focuses on in-house training that is provided by the companies themselves or by their immediate cooperation partners. The branches that are included are food industry, IT services and shipping industry. The Greek sample does not focus on public VET frameworks or on the use of external (public or private) training provisions.

b. The samples that focus on external training providers

b1. Features of the UK (Welsh) sample

The UK (Welsh) sample focuses on the consequences of outsourcing of training and on the professional situation of independent training providers. The training contexts that are highlighted vary from community development initiatives to ICT-related training and to organisational training schemes within the health care sector.

b2. Features of the Portuguese sample

The Portuguese sample focuses on training centres that have originally been launched to support training in a regional contexts (and have their background in the public sectors) but have latterly become private training providers. One of the cases is a company that provides training services for German companies' production units in Portugal.

c. The samples that focus on different positioning in the training markets

c1. Features of the Dutch sample

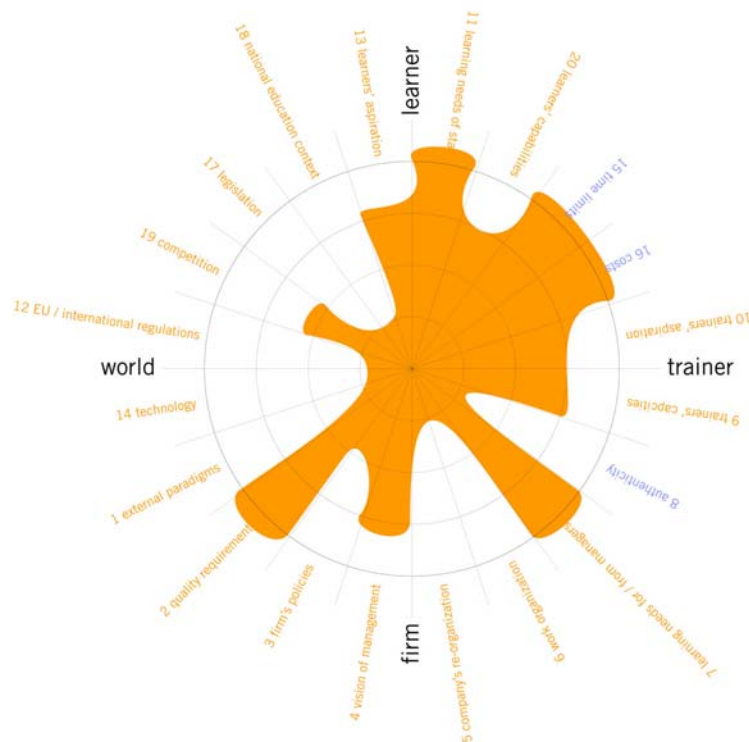
The Dutch sample is composed of diverse organisations that can take a different role in the training markets. The case of a central public authority provides an example of manifold possibilities to use internal trainers and external services. The case of ICT-service provider provided an example of training as minor part of the services. The case of ICT-related training company provided an example of specialisation on training as the service to be marketed.

c2. Features of the Romanian sample

The Romanian sample is composed of diverse organisations that have gone through different organisational transitions during the transformation to market economy. The case of the privatised cement factory brings into picture informal organisational changes regarding the in-company training culture. The case of the public training institute (service provider for public bodies) brings into picture the changing training culture in the public sector. The case of the insurance company brings into picture the impact of international companies and their training policies.

Box 1: The country-specific samples in a European group picture

By decomposing current practices, and reassembling instances of innovation, the project's focus has shifted from the role of individual trainer (e.g. from traditional masters to freelancing coaches) to diverse training opportunities (e.g. from network-organised teams to conventional factories), to sector-specific requirements and developments (e.g. between ICT-training and ship-building), to system-based restrictions and driving forces (e.g. between school-based instruction and recognition of informal learning settings), and back again to the manifold new competences and career paths of individual trainers (from academic formation to practice-based experiences). At some point, the question emerged what the (transnationally important) driving forces of innovation in training might be.



Visual 3: Driving forces for innovation in training

All this was framed by an investigation of a variety of stakeholders and their inherent interest, leading towards a policy framework, which is not based on supposed “EU standards”, but aiming at a series of commitments and motivation to further advance in the creation of innovative and tailor-made training and true realisation of lifelong learning and guidance, across all involved actors and institutions.

4. Drawing conclusions for future European cooperation

4.1. Policy scenarios and scenarios of practice emerging from the analyses

The work of the TTplus project has not been completed and some of the interim results have not been linked to each other. Also, the validating expert interviews or focus group meetings are currently taking place and the results are not available. However, case studies and their analysis was finalised, and substantial work on scenarios of training settings, was carried out. Moreover, several conclusive and policy-oriented documents are underway, or undergo final editing. Nevertheless, the following statements on policy scenarios and scenarios of practice are based on preliminary analyses.

The findings of the policy analyses of the TTplus project can be summarised as **three policy scenarios** on the possibilities to promote *professional development of trainers*:

- **System-oriented policy scenario:** Professional development of trainers needs to be promoted by public policies. Thus, the key instruments to be developed are *new certificates and qualifications* and related *training provisions* or *accreditation processes*.
- **Market-oriented policy scenario:** Professional development of trainers is strongly dependent of organisational choices concerning *in-company training* vs. *outsourcing*. Therefore, the key instruments to be developed are *organisational benchmarks* for analysing the *quality of internal training* vs. *quality of external services*.
- **Community-oriented policy scenario:** Professional development of trainers is primarily dependent on the trainers’ own commitment. Therefore, the instruments to be developed are guidelines for *community-based peer reviews* and *mutual certification* (e.g. under the auspices of trainers’ professional associations).

The scenarios have been presented as ideal types and as starting points for policy learning at European level. In this context it is worthwhile to note that the scenarios are not excluding each other. Yet, some scenarios have more relative weight in certain countries than in others.

The findings on the needs/preconditions for promoting trainers’ pedagogic competences can be summarised as **four scenarios of practice**:

- **Scenario on trainers’ position:** *Professional upgrading* of trainers has to be linked to the *distribution of training functions* and to similar (semi-professional) *support for the counterparts* of professional trainers.
- **Scenario on the use of learning arrangements:** Pedagogic planning of *vocational and organisational learning arrangements* has to be linked to pedagogic support for *decentralised (=work-based)* and *individualised learning* processes. Training of trainers needs to be based on similar pedagogic concepts.
- **Scenario on the use of e-resources:** Pedagogic capability to use *integrative web platforms* has to be linked to the capability to use *learner-adjusted web applications* and to enhance web-supported learning with *wider networked learning resources*.

- **Scenario on the assessment of learning:** Pedagogic use of *outcome-oriented assessment* has to be linked to *self-organised documentation of learning* and to possibilities to *reflect upon one's own learning progress*. Training of trainers needs to be based on similar pedagogic concepts.

4.2. Articulation with the European qualification frameworks

The TTplus project had the task to examine the articulation of 'training of trainers' or 'professional development of trainers' with the European Qualification Framework(s). In this respect some preliminary remarks can be made already at this stage of the project:

- **The Bologna process** has led to an input-based qualification framework for European Higher Education Area. **The analyses of the TTplus project** do not suggest a major role for such frameworks in the professional development of trainers. Yet, it is worthwhile to note that training models for advanced training specialists require articulation and mutual adjustment with respective degree programmes of universities.
- **The Copenhagen process** has provided an outcome-oriented European qualification framework for lifelong learning. The main framework is a meta-framework that relates competence areas and learning outcomes to aggregative levels of qualification. **The analyses of the TTplus project** do not suggest a major role for such frameworks either. Instead, the main concerns that were identified were related to the contextual integration of training and trainers' contribution.
- The European Commission document "**Common European principles for Teachers' competences and qualifications**" (latterly included into the Communication "Improving the Quality of Teacher Education") sought to develop a specific approach to support the professional development of teachers in the light of socio-cultural differences concerning teachers' professional status. The document outlined **four core principles** ('graduate profession', 'profession placed within a context of lifelong learning', 'mobile profession', 'profession based on partnerships'). Then, three **key competence areas** were given for teachers' development ('work with information, technology and knowledge', 'work with fellow human beings', 'work with and in society'). Finally, **ten recommendations** were outlined for policy-making at national or regional levels.
- **The developmental contribution of the TTplus project** can to some extent be related to the above mentioned document. However, there are major differences in the preconditions for professional development of trainers that require a different approach.
- **The analyses of the TTplus project suggest** that the starting points should be revised essentially. *The core principles* cannot be derived from the educationalist concept of professionalisation within educational establishments. Instead, the **core principles** should relate the trainers as intermediate actors to their immediate counterparts (learners and receiving organisations). *The competence areas* follow the logic of educational self-positioning. Instead, the **boundary conditions for trainers' professional development** should give insights into societal or organisational negotiation processes. *The recommendations* are generic and unspecific regarding the differences between education and training cultures. Instead, the strategic guidelines for implementation should take into account the different policy scenarios and the different balancing acts outlined in the scenarios of practice.

4.3. The emerging framework of the TTplus project

The TTplus project has been developing its approach with awareness that diverse training cultures and policy contexts provide different preconditions for the *professional development of trainers*. In this respect the key elements of the TTplus framework are the following ones:

- a) **A set of core principles** that highlight *common issues* (for in-company trainers, external service providers and mediating training specialists) on trainers' professional development.
- b) **A set of basic commitments** that link individual trainers, teams, employers & trade unions, other intermediary bodies and government bodies to *common developmental agendas*.
- c) **A set of optional implementation strategies** that take into account the different possibilities to rely on the role of trainers' professional associations ("the community approach"), on the negotiations between service providers and users or training ("the benchmarking approach") and on the role of public policies and related agreements ("the systemic approach").
- d) **A set of common proposals concerning accreditation/recognition of trainers' competences** that link the validation, assessment and recognition of trainers' experience-based learning and growth of competences to *training measures* and/or to *other support for professional development*.

The strategic steps in the implementation are different depending on the policy contexts and on the key actors' readiness to take initiative:

- **A community-based implementation** can be launched on the basis of trainers' joint interests to specify common quality criteria and mutual certification in the light of their own commitments.
- **A market-oriented implementation** has to be based on training providers' and user-organisations' mutual interest to specify common criteria and benchmarks for usability of training services.
- **A system-oriented implementation** has to be based on public authorities' and diverse stakeholders' interests to specify systemic terms of recognition (and related quality criteria) that link *trainers' professional development* to the main frameworks (but provide room for the necessary flexibility).

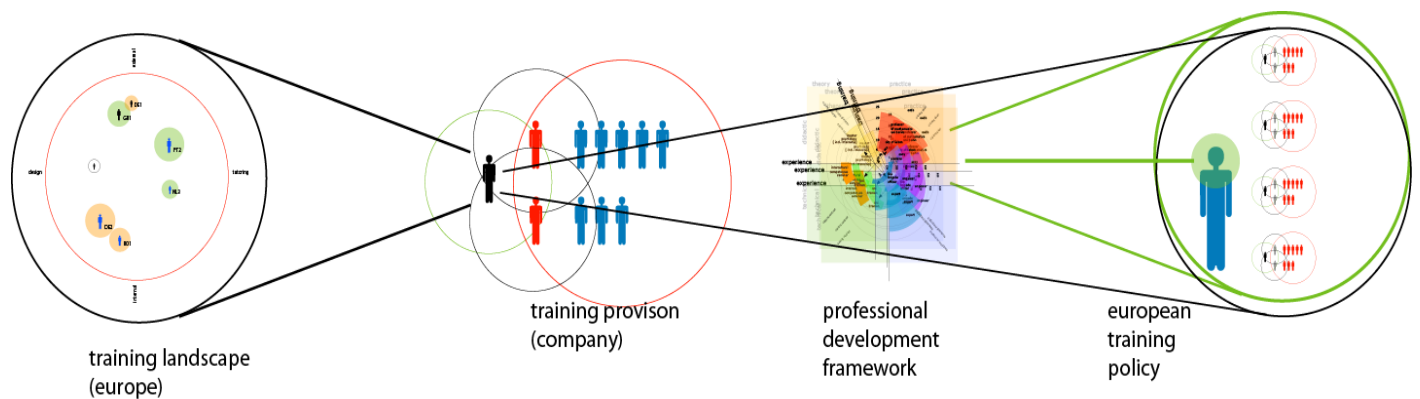
4.4. The innovative methodology of the TTplus project

It is worthwhile mentioning that these (preliminary) scenarios and policy documents are not based on linear thinking but require balancing between different counterparts and developmental poles. Moreover, it is a peculiar characteristic of the TT+ that it does not base its findings on a compilation or comparison of national situations, as most EU projects do.

In contrast, it focuses on practice in different operational settings of companies throughout Europe – and finds interesting “horizontal” and transnational similarities (e.g. case 2 in county A and case 3 in country D), whereas often the single cases in one given country diverge significantly. Compared to other projects, the respect of partners for each other's views, the analytical curiosity and flexible methodology has created a number of additional, not planned, outputs. This was also helped by an ongoing “accompanying evaluation” by one project partner.

As an example of supplementary output, when trying to make sense of practices and measures taken at company level, a professional in *visualisation* was invited to help create metaphors and images at the aggregate level. The discussion about and further development of visuals has greatly helped to clarify the message and policy-input of the theoretical considerations

and analysis. Some samples of visualisation can be also found in this paper, and enhance dissemination activity.



Visual 4: From company training practice to European training policy

In conclusion, the concentration of TT+ on the content of cases instead of the comparison of countries has sharpened the view of the partners on differences and commonalities of training practices across Europe – thus providing a conspicuous added value, and noticeable European dimensions, not least policy-relevant outputs which may serve as direct input to European policy-making. It might even be worth discussing if it is precisely the refusal of TT+ to work exclusively on country level which has helped to bring forth the remarkable European added value of TT+. This is indeed a surprising hypotheses, if put in relation to current practices of (only) national comparison which is the overwhelming decisive factor and unique criterion for project selection and project outputs in “European” research and development projects.

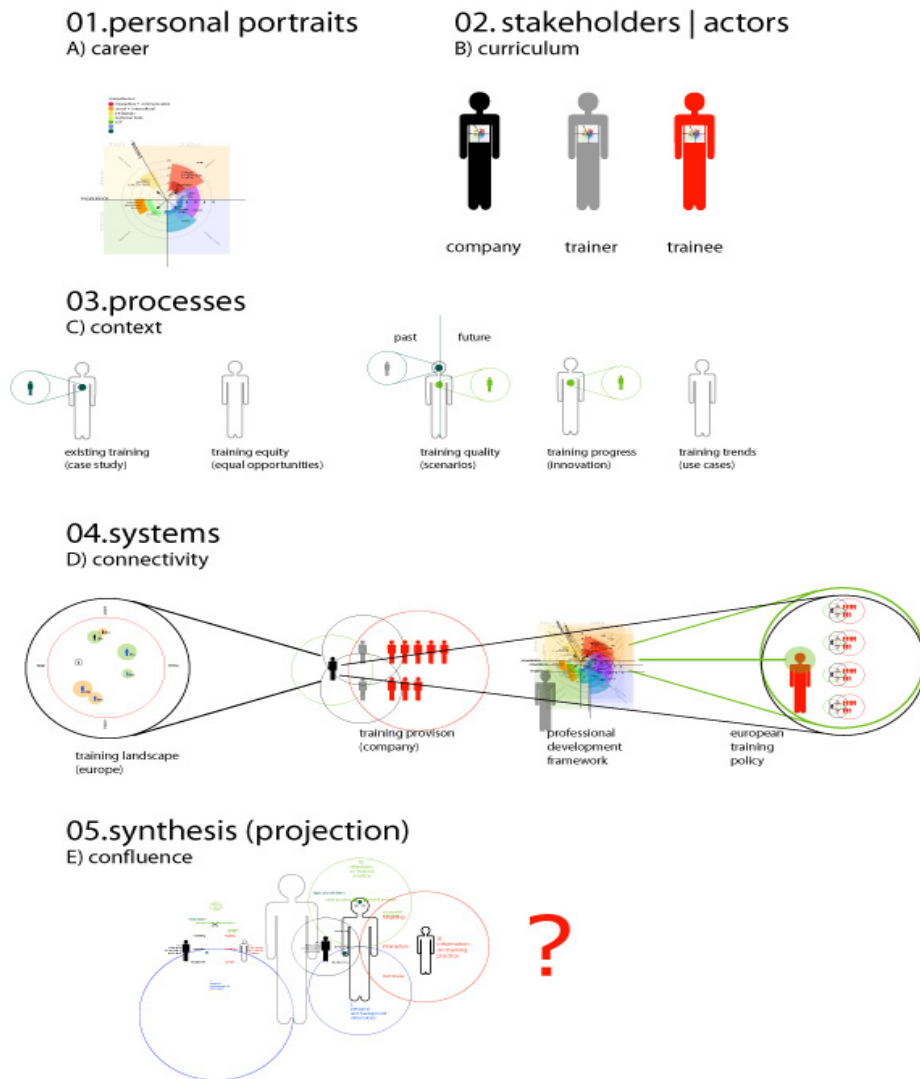
5. Concluding remarks

Regarding the starting points of the project it is appropriate to ask whether the TTplus project has managed to

- a) **study the professional situation of trainers** – instead of *confusing teachers and trainers* with each other;
- b) **analyse the cultural diversity** regarding *trainers’ development prospects* in different training cultures;
- c) **develop new modes of European cooperation** that provide *support for professional development of trainers*;
- d) **to develop a coherent research approach** that contributes to further *European knowledge development on trainers*?

Without going into details the approach of the TTplus project can be justified on the basis of the following arguments:

- a) The project has approached **training-related actors in** culturally specific (if not paradigmatic) **action contexts**.
- b) The project has provided **room for presenting different preconditions** for training and **multiple challenges** for trainers.
- c) The project has outlined common **core principles** and **boundary conditions** for **three strands of implementation**.
- d) The **research approach** can be made transparent as an *encounter* between earlier *sociological approaches* (‘contextual images’) and educational *scenario studies* (that transform ‘case studies’ into ‘use cases’ for the developmental work).



Visual 5: Five levels of actors and systems for professional development of trainers

In addition, the project has piloted an innovative method of trans-national and trans-disciplinary cooperation, which has led to operational proposals for actors and policy-makers at several levels, from in-company units up to the European Commission.

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