

Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci
Pilot projects

Perspectives for Promoting Professional Development of Trainers: Towards a European Space for Learning and Innovations

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Introduction

This document is an integrative report on the work that links together the concluding work packages of the European cooperation project “*A framework for professional development of trainers*” (TTplus). The tasks of these work packages were originally formulated in the following way:

Policies and measures for implementing professional development framework: This work package will focus on developing policies and measures for implementing the Framework for Continuing Professional Development at European and Member State Level. The aim is not to develop a single set of policies but rather a flexible blueprint which, whilst recognising diversity in social and economic systems, will allow the promotion of common goals and aims.

Development of roadmap for future policy development and enactment: This work package aims to provide a summary of research on content and the work on policy. The roadmap is intended as a guide for future policy development in the field of the training the trainers. It will also identify gaps in present provision including areas for further research and development.

Valorisation: The aim of this work package is to promote the valorisation of the project both in terms of transferability and sustainability.

During the work the TTplus concluded that the impact of current policies on the training contexts (and on the professional situation trainer) varies considerably. Therefore, it was difficult to make generalised scenarios. The policy analyses have brought into picture tensions, conceptual gaps and conflicts of interest regarding the role of ‘training’ and ‘trainers’. At the same time the policy analyses have brought into picture common concerns of training-related actors regarding the combined effect of current policies. Furthermore, the analysis of European Qualification Frameworks (for Higher Education and for Lifelong Learning) bring into picture several unsettled issues.

Therefore, it was necessary to link these work packages closely to the findings and to the conceptual rethinking of the project. The inputs from the empirical studies and of policy analyses required the project to revise its view on the common *framework*. Instead of defining a European Qualification Standard (for trainers across Europe) the project brought forward the idea of a *European Learning Area* (for trainers in diverse training contexts). Consequently, the TTplus project developed a set of common principles and related consultation document for supporting context-specific developmental measures.

Consequently the concept of *roadmap* had to be reviewed to take into account the diverse needs and interests that have been expressed in the case studies and the different role at national or European policies may play in the respective training contexts. Thus, there was a need to differentiate the picture, how new developmental initiatives can be linked to current policies, emerging change agendas and platforms for policy development (including the shaping of National Qualification Frameworks).

The work package dedicated for *valorisation* was initially designed to give feedback on the TTplus framework, on the roadmap and on the conclusions regarding the policies to support the implementation of the framework. However, the focus group meetings and individual expert interviews had a more cross-fertilising role in the project development.

This report tries to give an integrative picture of the conclusions of the TTplus project by a) presenting a European overview on the professional situation of trainers (section 1), b) characterising the role of current policies at national and European levels (section 2), c) introducing a commitment-based approach to support the professional development of trainers (taking into account their different organisational affiliations) (section 3) and d) outlines the role of new initiatives and discusses the prospects to support them with new European projects (section 4).

1. The background analyses

1.1 The diversity of trainers' profiles in Europe

The cases analysed by TTplus project were selected without a claim for presenting nationally representative samples or for covering a sectoral or domain-specific variety at the European level. Yet, on the basis of different country-specific samples it is possible to construct a European group picture of different training contexts and of the professional profiles of trainers.

On the basis of the case studies of the TTplus project it is possible to highlight four main types of trainers. The four main types are characterised by different professional backgrounds, terms of employment, relations to their target groups and by different prospects for professional development:

- a) **Trainers in work organisations** have an occupational background, are directly employed by the organisations to support work-related learning of apprentices and staff members. Their prospects for professional development are linked to the learning needs in their occupational field and to the need for training coordinators, designers and managers.
- b) Specialised **trainers within organisational development** have background in organisational studies or in management consultancy. They are employed as external service providers. They are used as mediators and coaches who support staff members in targeted OD-processes or in the context of quality assurance.
- c) Specialised **trainers with focus on ICT and new media**. They have a specific technological know-how or user-expertise in ICT, new media and their role in working life. They are employed as external service providers for organisations and/or as facilitators of staff members. Their prospects for professional development are related to accumulation of ICT-, media- and training-related experience (and to constant update of their know-how).
- d) **Independent trainers with a diverse background** and with a specific interest in supporting learning processes. They are employed as external service providers and by different client organisations to support the learning processes of diverse target groups. Their prospects for professional development are related to their ability to identify learners' potentials and ways to overcome learning barriers.

It is worthwhile to note that in some of the country-specific samples one of the main types was dominant whilst other samples presented a mixture of several types. Equally, in some of the national languages the concept 'trainer' refers to one of the main types whilst in other languages the concept may be more inclusive. However, the empirical studies also provided insights into *redistribution of training functions, overlapping responsibilities* and *new roles for training-oriented specialists*.

1.2. Redistribution of training functions and implications for career prospects

One of the major observations in the empirical studies was that most organisations are making more use of external training-related services (even if they continue to develop their own training infrastructures). Equally, training in and for enterprises is using a broader range of work-related, course-based and web-based learning arrangements. The implications of such changes for the professional development of trainers can be characterised in the following way:

- **Changes in the role of the training staff in companies:** The in-company trainers and training managers are no longer exclusively in charge of the training activities. Instead, they are increasingly involved as active counterparts of cooperation-based training and learning arrangements.
- **Changes in the use of learning arrangements:** Trainers are no longer exclusively seen as persons who are organising *training events* and delivering training contents. Instead, trainers are increasingly needed to support, supervise and assess self-organised learning processes (either *individualised* or *group-based learning*).
- **Changes in the use of e-resources as support for learning:** Trainers are not only using *domain-specific web products* and services as *external contents to be included in their training* (e.g. Cisco Academies). In addition to this trainers are becoming capable to use *search facilities, web-communities, Open Educational Resources* and *Open Educational Contents* as sources for learning.
- **Changes in the use of experience-based learning:** Trainers are not exclusively used as providers of fixed courses or as brokers of external services. Trainers are increasingly needed to supervise practice- and experience-based learning in new or changing learning contexts. Equally, trainers are increasingly needed to validate, assess and certify prior experience-based learning.

Although the above mentioned tendencies cannot all be characterised as mainstream developments, traces of such changes could be identified in different country-specific samples. Therefore, the trainers' professional profiles are also overshadowed by changing role models, responsibilities and in cooperation prospects (between in-company trainers and external service providers). The diversity of trainers' professional profiles and the overlaps and working interfaces are illustrated in the Figure 1.

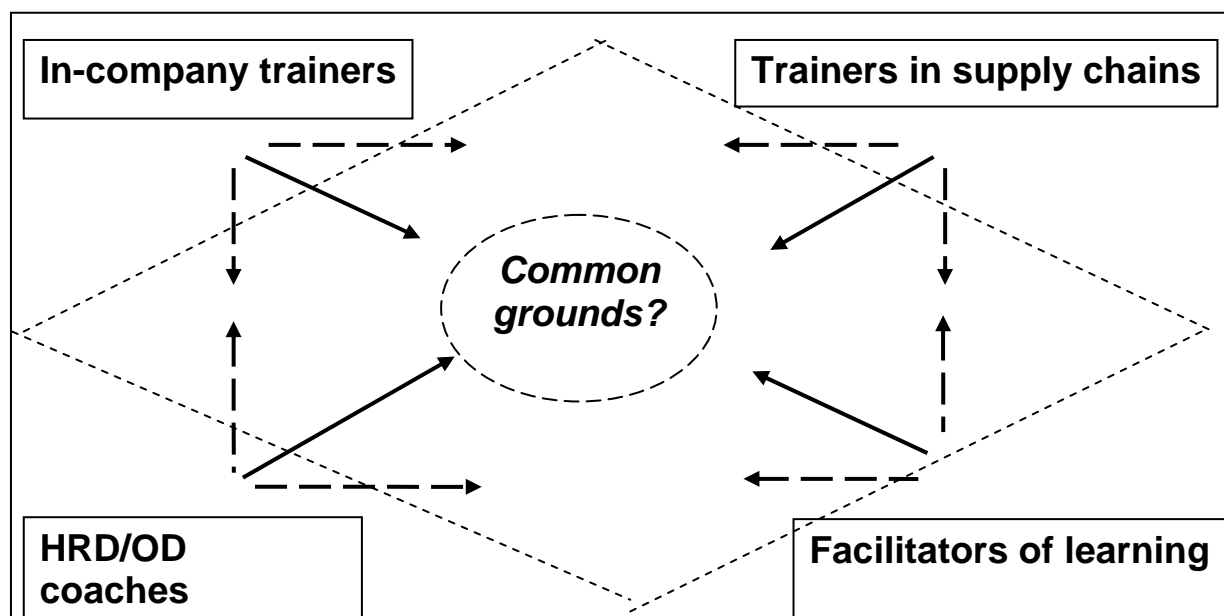


Figure 1: Diversity of trainers' profiles in Europe

1.3. Towards an interest-based approach to the development of trainers

The analyses of the present training cultures in Europe bring into picture different professional profiles. During the work of the TTplus project the partners were often confronted with the fact that the trainers' professional profiles do not necessarily follow homogeneous national or domain-specific patterns. Instead, the European training cultures are characterised by *co-existence of* and *cooperation between* different profiles.

Concerning the issue 'professional development of trainers' the picture varies even more:

Firstly, it is necessary to take into account, whether the country- and domain-specific training culture is characterised by in-company training or by externalisation of training functions. As consequence, the companies themselves take responsibility of the quality of trainers or position themselves as client organisations. Then, the external training providers have the responsibility of the quality of their training and trainers.

Secondly, the training cultures vary considerably regarding the merit value of formal qualifications vs. the appreciation of training-related experience and practical know-how. In some countries the issues 'training of trainers' and 'professional development of trainers' were closely related to parallel developments in teacher education. In these contexts there was a concern, how to establish a parity of esteem between teachers and trainers (in the light of different career models and qualification frameworks). In most countries acquisition of formal qualifications (by the trainers) was not seen as the key instrument for promoting their professional development. Instead, the needs for professional development were seen in the management *and* facilitation of complex and customised learning processes (including self-organised learning, group processes and web-supported learning).

Thirdly, the training contexts are dependent on several driving forces that have an influence on the strategic solutions on training. In some countries training in companies is being developed as a part of the public education and training system (e.g. the German dual system of apprenticeship). However, the role of external training services is increasing as support for the traditional model. As a contrast, many countries were reported of more incremental developments in training (both concerning the role of public frameworks and the role of training markets). In such countries the role of sectoral or regional factors had more importance on the actual development of training provisions.

Fourthly, the interests of trainers regarding their own professional development vary considerably. In some cases trainers emphasise the need to shape a career model that outlines progression steps from trainer's position to managerial positions. In some cases trainers emphasise the need to update and upgrade their domain-specific technical and pedagogical know-how. In some cases trainers expressed the need to make progress in linking web-supported learning and the use of web services into their training activities. In some cases the main interests on professional development were related to the facilitation and supporting self-organised learning process (and taking into account diverse learners as target groups).

On the basis of the analyses of the TTplus project it is not possible to propose clear mainstream models that could be used all over Europe. However, it has been possible to identify different categories of 'trainers' and to identify strategic options for their professional development. Yet, whenever new initiatives have been launched to support the development of trainers, they are successful inasmuch they meet specific needs and respond to the interests of the trainers they seek to reach. However, this is not enough. Trainers' possibilities to participate in such measures are dependent on the interests of their own organisations and of the client organisations.

2. The analyses of current policies at national and European level

2. 1. Diversity of training policies in Europe

One of the main tasks of the TTplus project was to analyse the national or country-specific policies that have an impact on the professional development of trainers. In this context it is worthwhile to note that the policy landscapes in the participating countries were very different and that the partners focused on different policy instruments in their analyses. For further European policy development it is worthwhile to consider the role of the following instruments:

- 1) **Mandatory trainers' certificates that outline the minimum standards of trainers:** The role of the mandatory certificates was discussed mainly with reference to the German and Portuguese cases. In both countries there is a debate on the renewal of such certificates (AEVO, CAP). The respondents in these countries emphasise the need for such basic qualification for trainers. Yet, it appears that in both countries the certificate and the related courses tend to consolidate traditional teaching-training patterns and give limited support for innovative developments in the training culture.
- 2) **Qualification models that open vocational progression routes for trainers:** In some countries there are policy initiatives to strengthen vocational progression routes to higher qualifications and to improve the status of trainers vis-a-vis teachers. In this context the German pilot projects for introducing intermediate qualifications for trainers (with work process -oriented curricula) are being implemented as new system features. However, for the parity of esteem it is necessary to clarify the issue of higher (BA level) qualifications.
- 3) **Career models that link on-the job training to continuing professional development:** In some countries the discussion on the professional development of training is closely linked to the recruitment and further training of teachers. In particular in the UK and in the Netherlands the recruitment of vocational teachers has recently been linked to a short in-service training and to an institutional commitment to provide opportunities for continuing professional development.
- 4) **Quality systems and quality registers as instruments for improving the transparency of training:** In some countries the public authorities have tried to overcome the lack of transparency in the training provisions by introducing overarching quality systems. The training providers who want to be eligible for publicly funded training schemes have to implement quality assurance measures and sign into national quality registers. However, as was reported by some partners, these registers tend to portray as 'quality' the current training provisions and the acquired formal qualifications of trainers. Furthermore, the impact on transparency is reduced by several parallel registers.

2. 2. The role of the EU policies

In the light of the above presented diversity of policies it was one of the key tasks of the TTplus project to provide an analysis on the articulation between national and European policies (including the role of the European and National Qualification Frameworks).

The starting point for these analyses was the fact that one of the key priorities for the follow-up of the EU Lisbon Summit 2000 was the improvement of the quality of "Teachers and trainers". The point of interest for the TTplus was to clarify, in what way the **parallel framework process** for *Higher Education systems* (Bologna process) and for *Lifelong Learning policies* (Copenhagen process) contribute to a balanced and transparent policy development with implications for teachers' and trainers' professional standing.

The analyses of the parallel processes (the Bologna process and the Copenhagen process) have led to the conclusion that the developmental agendas for teachers and trainers have been drifting apart.

- Teacher education has been clearly linked to the Bologna process and to the development of the European Higher Education Area. As a contrast, the schemes for training of trainers are positioned outside the Higher Education frameworks (and only few upgrading schemes are proposed as progression routes to higher qualifications).
- The Copenhagen process does not promote debates, how to review the disparity of esteem between teachers and trainers and how to enhance the recognition of trainers. Instead, the Copenhagen process has produced meta-frameworks for interpreting the current vocational qualifications in terms of 'learning outcomes' and reference levels.
- In addition, the Copenhagen process has been overshadowed by several conceptual contradictions (e.g. on the interpretation of 'competence-orientation') that several critical issues have been handed over to the subsequent levels (i.e. to the making of national and sectoral qualification frameworks).

One of the key findings of the TTplus project has been the discovery of a zone of unsettled issues that have emerged in the debates on the EQF and will have an impact on the making of the national (and sectoral) qualification frameworks. In particular, the debates on the concept 'competence' appear to be unsettled although this concept is critical for trans-cultural understanding and for common developmental approaches. In a similar way the analysis pointed out that such unsettled issues also have overshadowed the work (and the follow-up) of the TTplus project.

2.3. Critical issues regarding the role of policies

The policy analyses of the TTplus project draw attention to some *cross-cultural* issues regarding the role of policies vis-à-vis professional development of trainers:

1. Issue: Training as a domain of its own or as an interface area

In many cases current policies tend to treat training competences as a separate domain of expertise. However, the empirical studies demonstrate that training-related expertise is often linked to interfaces between domain-specific knowledge, work process knowledge and pedagogic know-how on promoting context-specific learning processes. Therefore, an *overly training-centred approach* may draw attention from the interface character of trainers' professional competences.

2. Issue: Training competences as exclusive know-how or as bridging expertise

In many cases current policies tend to treat 'training competences' as the exclusive competences of established and recognised 'trainers'. However, the empirical studies demonstrate that training activities are often based on cooperation between trainers and other training-related actors. Therefore, an *overly trainer-centred approach* may draw attention from the distribution of training functions and of collaborative training/learning activities.

3. Issue: Trainers' certificates as minimum requirements or as milestones in continuing professional development

In many cases current policies require some formal qualifications or certificates as entry qualifications for occupying a post of 'trainer'. However, the empirical studies of the TTplus project bring forward several contradictions regarding the use of such certificates. Equally, the empirical studies bring forward other arrangements for involving both certified trainers and other actors in training activities. Therefore, an *overly qualification-centred approach* may put an overemphasis on entry qualifications and marginalise the role of promoting training-related competences via continuing professional development.

4. Issue: Quality development via external control *or* via internal learning activities

In many cases the policies introduce databases and registers for monitoring the training competences of organisations and their staff members. The empirical studies have brought into picture several other patterns for promoting quality of training and work-related learning with the help of peer learning and related knowledge sharing. Therefore, an *overly control-centred approach* may lead to an overemphasis on monitoring the documentary evidence and leave to margin the role of shared learning for quality development.

5. Issue: Ownership of training-related expertise by external authorities *or* by the actors and organisations involved

In many cases the policies tend to highlight the role of external authorities as owners of supreme training-related expertise (and as competent bodies to recognise trainers' qualifications and competences). The empirical studies bring forward the need to take into account the context-specific requirements for learning, facilitation and related feedback. Therefore, an *overly centralised approach* may lead to the marginalisation of the needs of organisations in which training competences are being developed and utilised.

3. The contribution of the TTplus project

3.1. The proposals of the TTplus project

The TTplus project had to consider other options than qualification frameworks in order to find a common ground for promoting professional development of trainers. In this respect it is striking that the Copenhagen process is lacking the kind of inter-institutional or inter-professional cooperation and is built in into the Bologna process via Europe-wide inter-university cooperation. For wider European understanding of the work of trainers and training specialists it would be essential to create a European space for learning and professional development.

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 other training specialists) on the professional development of trainers.
- b) **A set of basic commitments** that link individual trainers, teams, employers and trade unions, intermediary agencies 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 (*community-based approach*), on the negotiations between service providers and users or training (*market-oriented approach*) and on the role of public policies (*system-oriented 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*.

3.2. Feedback emerging from the internal consultation process

The expert meetings or interviews that were organised by the TTplus partners to get feedback for the development of the common approach drew attention to some difficulties in using the documents and to missing elements that need further attention:

- 1) The documents do not make a distinction between different system-driven, market-oriented or professionalisation-oriented measures to promote professional development of trainers. In the expert meetings it was easier to approach the documents if they were considered as starting points for possible initiatives to be launched by trainers' own associations and networks. It was more difficult to discuss the documents in the light of specific training-related policy processes that are closely observed by training experts.
- 2) The documents do not make demarcation lines between formal and non-formal learning opportunities as support for the professional development of trainers. From this perspective the documents were perceived as helpful in training contexts in which there is lack of flexible pedagogic and professional support for trainers and for training specialists. It was more difficult to see the role of the documents as support for existing curricula or schemes for professional development.
- 3) The documents do not develop a specific approach to trainers' competences (neither in terms of domain-specific competence nor in terms of cross-cutting competences). This has been justified by the attempt to avoid debates system- and culture-specific concepts at this stage of the developmental work. However, the expert meetings and interviews have raised the necessity to develop an approach to 'competence families' or 'competence clusters' and their role in the professional development of trainers.

3.3. From documents (and feedback) to further developmental steps

The TTplus framework has been shaped as a part of a project that has produced empirical findings and examples of innovative practice. Some of the examples have been used as illustrations on the commitments of trainers, groups of trainers and their organisations. Further examples have been used to highlight the role of intermediate bodies, social partners and government bodies. As the document stands now, they can be interpreted as a gallery of separate statements and examples.

However, for further developmental activities the framework outlines an architecture that have raises questions on the interaction between trainers, other stakeholders and their organisations. By analysing the matching (or mismatching) commitments it is possible to create more elaborate pictures on the training contexts and on the support for trainers. This is vital for the following developmental challenges:

- i) One of the key problems in European educational cooperation is the limited use of workplace learning as a context for trans-national mobility. This is often related to the lack of partnership-based cooperation and insufficiently networked support services. The TTplus framework provides schemata for analysing the commitment of different parties and for identifying potential gaps in cooperation.
- ii) One of the key problems in promoting the development of trainers is related to system- and institution-driven educational planning. The TTplus framework provides an alternative approach for mapping the trainers' interests regarding the competence domains and use of their learning before advising preferable learning pathways or qualification goals. This makes it possible to consider alternative learning pathways and learning arrangements from the users' perspective.
- iii) One of the key problems in supporting trainers' professional development is the fragmentation of related web resources. The TTplus framework provides a starting point for improving transparency and connectivity between different web resources (at the national level and across Europe).

4. The way(s) forward

4.1. Perspectives for policy learning in Europe

The policy context in which the TTplus project has worked has been overshadowed by the European framework processes in education and training. In particular this is the case for the policy development that is related to the priority theme ‘promoting the qualifications and competences of teachers and trainers’. The current policy climate tends to put regulative measures and intergovernmental agreements to the centre.

In the context of the Lisbon follow-up the European policy processes have tried to develop patterns of policy monitoring and policy reviewing that are characterised as “open method of coordination”. One of the key areas for educational policy monitoring has been the promoting of the qualifications and competences of teachers and trainers. In this context several working groups and focus groups have been developing policy instruments and models for peer learning.

From the perspective of the TTplus project there are certain critical issues that need to be addressed in order to develop open methods of coordination for the priority area “teachers and trainers”:

- Current policy monitoring focuses mainly on teachers professional development (and makes assumption that trainers can be treated in a similar way). However, as teachers are working primarily as individual professionals, trainers are typically working in organisational settings and in working interfaces. In vocational education and training it is necessary to consider the cooperation of teachers and trainers.
- The discussion on the professional standing of teachers emphasises the role of academic degrees and the development of teachers as a graduate profession. The discussion on trainers’ professional development is often limited to the issue of minimum standards and mandatory certificates. From the perspective of parity of esteem it is necessary to consider the status gaps between teachers and trainers.
- For policies to promote continuing professional development of teachers it is relatively easy to provide general indicators that refer to mainstream models and general trends. For policies to promote continuing professional development it is essential to take into account different groups of trainers with different developmental challenges. Therefore, the role of supporting policies needs to be related to the starting points, to the areas of work and to the interests of key actors.

4.2. Perspectives for follow-up initiatives

The work of the TTplus project has put the professional working and learning context of trainers (in the widest sense of the word) to the centre. The role of ‘training the trainers’ (or other support measures) is discussed as means to promote trainers’ own efforts to enhance their competences (in the areas of learning they themselves are interested in). However, in order to make progress there is a need to find support from the peers, from the organisational decision-makers and from wider societal environment.

In the light of the above the transfer-promoting measures of the TTplus partners pave the way for a differentiated follow-up strategy. In decentralised pilot projects with European peer support (e.g. the Structural Fund projects) it is possible to use the TTplus

framework as a basis for participative follow-up initiatives. These can put different emphasis on the following aspects:

- The contribution of trainers to regional development (taking into account the role of regions in a national, European and global context and the cooperation and competition between twinning regions);
- The role of trainers in the modernisation of sectoral competences (taking into account knowledge-based and practice-based innovations);
- The role of trainers as learners and facilitators in new learning interfaces (including Web 2.0 environments and networks);
- The role of trainers as potential users and supervisors of new modes for validation and recognition of learning (including e-portfolios and accreditation models).