

ProfiTRAIN

European Roadmap

Guidelines for Stakeholders

Edited by Helmut Kronika
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Imprint

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PROFI-TRAIN: Professionalisation of Trainers for Work Based Basic Skills

<https://www.profi-train.de>

European Strategic Partnership Project for Vocational Education and Training

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Preliminary note

This European Roadmap was completed during the period of the ongoing corona crisis, which is facing us all with new challenges - not only in the present situation but also with a view to the future.

The product was thus created at a time of which we cannot yet say what new reality it will lead to.

However, we assume that our results and recommendations can be transferred to a new time with possibly changed conditions.

With best regards from the ProfiTRAIN-partnership

20th April 2020

In a nutshell

Due to the demographic development and the increasing requirements resulting from digitalisation and globalisation, companies are increasingly being forced to use their endogenous potential and to further qualify their employees - also their less qualified employees.

Until now, low-skilled workers have rarely been the focus of operational personnel and organisational development. This is gradually changing in European countries, but there is a lack of concepts and suitably qualified trainers to carry out work-based basic skills trainings in a promising way that enables employees to secure and expand their employability.

Work-based basic skills training is a prerequisite. Adult educators and program managers are entering new territory with such training and need professional support.

The ProfiTRAIN projectpartnership has developed a modern training concept in several European countries in order to professionalise trainers and programme managers in such a way that they can plan and carry out work-based basic skills courses in companies that are tailored to the needs of the company.

The ProfiTRAIN professionalisation concept was developed to enable trainers and programme managers to implement in-company continuing training programmes that are useful for companies and employees, that offer added value and enable employees to engage in lifelong learning.

**NOW THE PROFITRAIN
PROFESSIONALIZATION CONCEPT NEEDS
ROADS FROM PROJECT TO PRACTICE!**



1) Introduction

Who is this European Roadmap for?

High quality Work-based basic skills trainings need professionalized trainers!

With ProfiTrain you will find everything you may need to professionalize trainers!

This **European Roadmap – Guidelines for Stakeholders** is one of the outputs delivered in the framework of the 3-year (2017-2020) Erasmus+ project **ProfiTRAIN - Professionalisation of Trainers for Work-Based Basic Skills** (www.profi-train.de), coordinated by bbb Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung, (Research Institute, Germany) in cooperation with operative partners from five European countries: BEST (training provider, Austria), ERUDICIO (NGO, Czech Republic), Ergani Centre (support of women/vulnerable groups, Greece), Ministry for Education and Employment Malta, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning as associated partner.

The **ProfiTRAIN European Roadmap is addressed to stakeholders** on a broad level, since the subject - professionalisation of trainers for work-based basic skills - is a fairly new and as yet not well established field, i.e.:

- workplace basic skills programme responsables, programme designers
- (associations of) employers, trade unions
- continuing education and training institutions, basic skills professionals, as well as their umbrella organisations, networks and bodies
- workplace basic skills funding authorities
- political decision makers (local, regional, national and European level).

The Roadmap serves to present the main ideas of the ProfiTRAIN professionalisation concept, core results of the main ProfiTRAIN outputs (Manual for self study, training modules) and shall highlight concrete experience and findings the project partners (and their networks) have made during extensive testing phases in the project.

We generally assume that **stakeholders and decision makers** originally having committed themselves to and having been responsible for establishing workplace basic skills training in companies are – at the same time and as a further step - interested in concrete, efficient and successfully sustainable professionalisation of trainers, teachers and course leaders for the planning, implementation and evaluation of workplace basic skills education and training.

Institutions and organisations whose core tasks include the professionalisation of adult education staff and of staff in vocational and in-company continuing education and training show a specific interest in respective professionalisation. These organisations include, in particular, relevant umbrella organisations in adult education and in vocational and work education, e.g. (in Germany) the umbrella organisations of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the Chamber of Trade and Industry, who are responsible for the professionalisation of trainers, and the networks in which trainers and consultants have organised themselves.

Moreover, for long-term and sustainable establishment of professionalisation concepts for workplace basic skills trainers, **relevant chairs in adult education and in work and business education** must be convinced. Universities represent the field in which professionalization concepts can be permanently and sustainably anchored, as funding is not dependent on responsible agencies that provide financial resources through projects or programmes for a limited period only.

In fact, respective funding periods are still often too short to allow for funded projects developing into long-term successful business areas. Instead, **professionalized workplace basic skills concepts should be part of viable long-term structures, in order to achieve beneficial sustainability.**

Therefore, via this European Roadmap, we would, first and foremost like to address stakeholders who, beyond short-term project funding, can facilitate sustainable implementation of workplace basic skills training and professionalization of trainers.

Concrete suggestions from the ProfiTrain project intend to provide fundamental support in this respect.

2) Why do we need Work-based basic skills and why do we need professional trainers?

All over Europe, participation rates of low-qualified and/or low-skilled employees in in-service training are far below average. At the same time, their risk of unemployment is high. Companies play a particularly important role when it comes to lifelong learning provision to so-called "low-skilled" target groups and reaching groups usually showing low vocational qualification levels, which – in return – is a key factor for overall competitiveness.

In most companies of ProfiTRAIN partner countries, as well as in the trade union political area, the group of low-skilled workers, who can experience an increase in competence through the provision of work place basic skills training by professional trainers, and thus an increase in employability and security, is still not in the focus of relevant debate. This is a striking fact, since the neglect, as well as the lack of respective investment into the actual needs of this target group, leads to negative consequences at various levels, which are not acceptable from both an economic as well as a social perspective.

Theses:

Work-based basic skills and high quality work-based basic skills trainings contributes to a variety of current challenges facing companies and employees.



- **Workplace requirements and the demands on employees are changing rapidly** due to automatization, digitalization, globalization, resulting in problems regarding quality assurance, competitiveness due to lowering productivity etc. The need for occupational lifelong learning affects all groups of workers, but its demands mostly impact those who do not have the solid foundations of vocational training or study; that is, the so-called low-skilled or low-paid workplace holders.
- The **demographic change and the need for skilled workers** in connection with the problem that exogenous markets have largely been swept away is increasingly forcing companies to invest in their endogenous potential. In almost all European countries, the **demographic development** is comparable, in terms of fewer and fewer employees being replaced by more and more pensioners. On the labour markets, it is becoming apparent - and is already and particularly evident in some sectors as care - that the demand for qualified

specialists can no longer be met by recruiting local specialists and that there are strict limits to recruitment in third countries outside the EU.

For this reason, it seems urgently necessary to consider endogenous potentials within companies and to invest (much) more substantially in the professional qualification of unqualified or low-qualified employees. Since it is known from empirical research that low-skilled workers favour learning in the process of work and do not consider learning in further education institutions to be suitable for them, workplace basic skills training is *the* tool of choice.

Experience to date has shown the striking effectiveness of workplace basic skills training in terms of job security and job satisfaction, as well as in terms of competence gains and respective personal perception.

- **Workplace basic skills training can make a central contribution to meeting the need of vocational lifelong learning** (i.e. learning at, for and with the workplace). Respective findings show that the experience of successful learning within a manageable timeframe can be a central step towards making learning perceived as an *enrichment* and (personal) gain in competence for the so-called “low-skilled”, as well as increase their willingness and intrinsic motivation to continue learning. The main reason for this is that this kind of learning is not experienced as a fulfillment of a lifelong adaptation need, but much more as a personal enrichment. – We think that professional trainers in workplace basic skills settings should be able to build on this and should be equipped to make use of this very potential by providing respective educational services.
- The **rationale for professionalising trainers** for appropriate planning, development and evaluation of workplace basic skills training provided for low-qualified workers is, as its core element, based on the **striking need to provide sustainable access to learning and competence development for these groups of workers**.
- The **income of low-skilled workers** working in the low-wage sector is at a level which does not allow them to expect adequate old-age provision even when they are fully employed. Working in the low-wage sector more and more leads to poverty in old age, and thus to dependency on substantial social benefits and transfer payments at old age, which is a considerable issue for society in general.
- **Employment in the low-wage sector** is closely linked to the risk of frequent unemployment. European labour markets have developed in such a way that the entry of low-skilled workers into unemployment usually means entry into long-term unemployment (development documented in EUROSTAT and national employment service statistics). Respective costs of re-integration into the

labour market are constantly and correspondingly increasing, as unemployment not only leads to a gradual loss of professional skills and competences, but also significantly increases risks of physical and, above all, mental illness.

- **Employment interruptions in the work biography of low-qualified** very often bring about that minimum years of official employment (and respective payments into the system) are not achieved. This, however, is a condition for receiving full pension at old age.
- **The lack of investment into vocational qualification and basic skills training of low-qualified groups leads to further increase in social inequality.** As long as low-skilled workers are not in the focus of company personnel and organisational development and as long as financial resources are more likely to be reserved for skilled and highly skilled staff, labour market - and consequently social - inequality will increase.
- For unions: It is in the representation (of interest) of the low-skilled that a "double misunderstanding" becomes apparent: **Low-skilled workers very often do not perceive trade unions as representing their needs and interest.** This tends to be in line with the historical development of trade unionism in most European countries, as often the main focus was on skilled workers and their particular working conditions and pay. - By substantially supporting workplace basic skills activities, trade unions do face a great opportunity to better reach, convince and actively involve this very target and client group.

On a general and strategic level, providing efficient conceptual solutions for work-based basic skills training offers is crucial, in order to meet respective challenges, concrete professionalization of trainers being a major component of this.

Respective professionalization implies being prepared and able to make offers tailored to actual needs of learners at their workplace, respecting perspectives of all parties involved, i.e. responding to concrete work situations and challenges and involving the workplace as an overall opportunity for learning.

Professional action in this field needs systemic knowledge and consultancy/guidance skills in contact with company representatives and employees, is characterized by high flexibility and must be measured by the development of competent workflows of the participants.

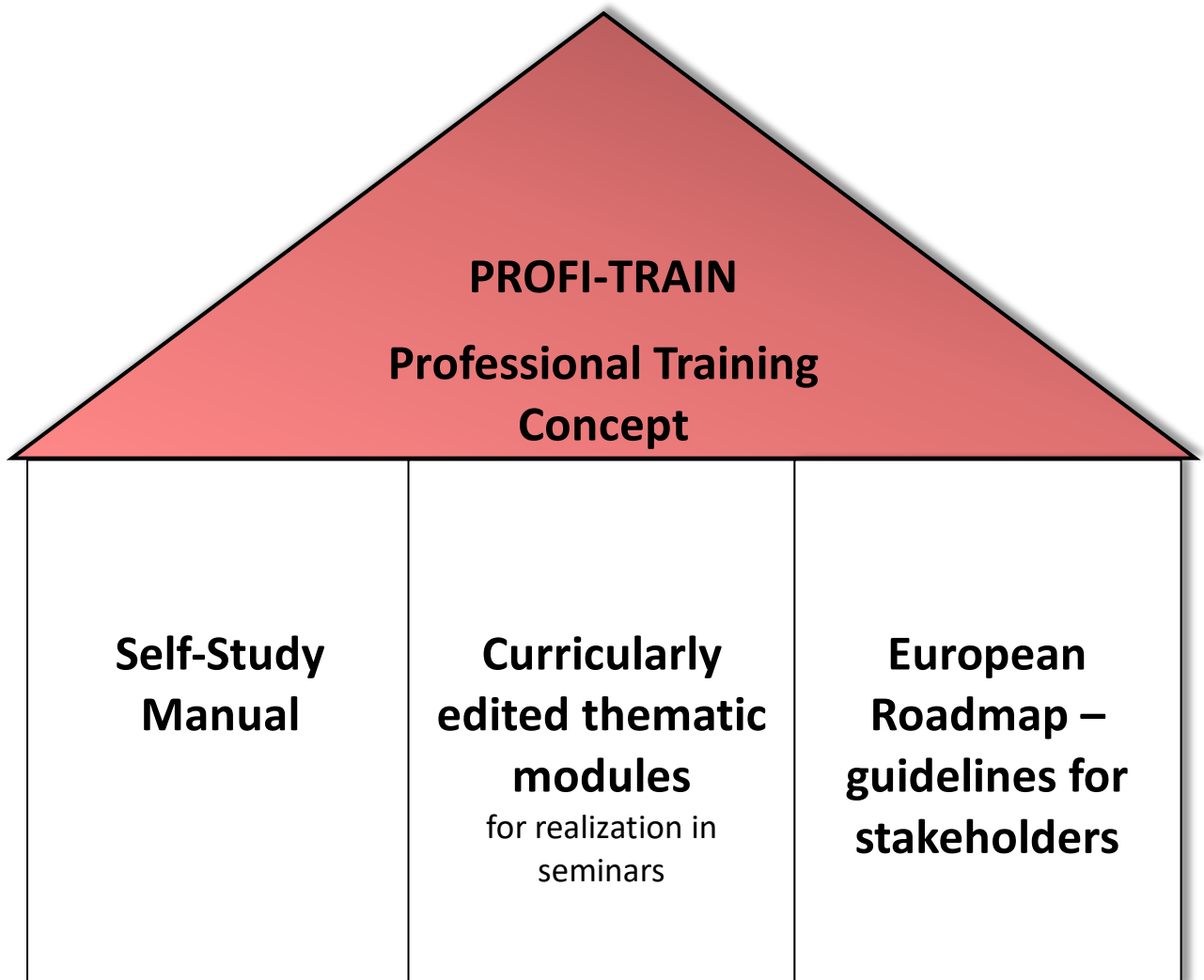
From trainers, it requires competences going clearly beyond the pedagogical, didactic-methodical competences of conventionally institutional course planning and designing.

PROFI-TRAIN has developed a flexible and innovative training concept, whose modular basis makes it suitable for adjustments for more and also for less experienced teachers, trainers, coaches, counsellors, project managers and pedagogic staff. The professional training concept has been thoroughly tested in all six partner countries, in order to lay grounds for sustainable implementation on a broad scale European level.

In the following, the outputs based on our ProfiTRAIN concept shall be presented, highlighting their specific characteristics and innovativeness from different perspectives.

3) ProfiTRAIN: What are the results? What are the products? What is innovative about it?

Altogether, ProfiTRAIN partners have developed three main products/intellectual outputs (with this European Roadmap in addition). Our publications consist of different parts, deal with currently relevant thematic challenges and are built on various project activities:



Source: ProfiTRAIN House of Professionalisation 2017

THE PROFITRAIN MANUAL FOR SELF-STUDY

How to initiate successful workplace basic skills training? How to increase competence to make suitable offers to reach employees in companies?

This publication is mainly addressed to teachers, trainers, coaches, counsellors, project managers and pedagogic staff interested in their own further qualification for respective provision of educational services. Not only does the Self Study Manual inform by highlighting best practices already existing in different European countries, it also –in a practical and concrete way- guides its readers through the actual process of designing, planning, implementing and evaluating work place basic skills training projects within companies.

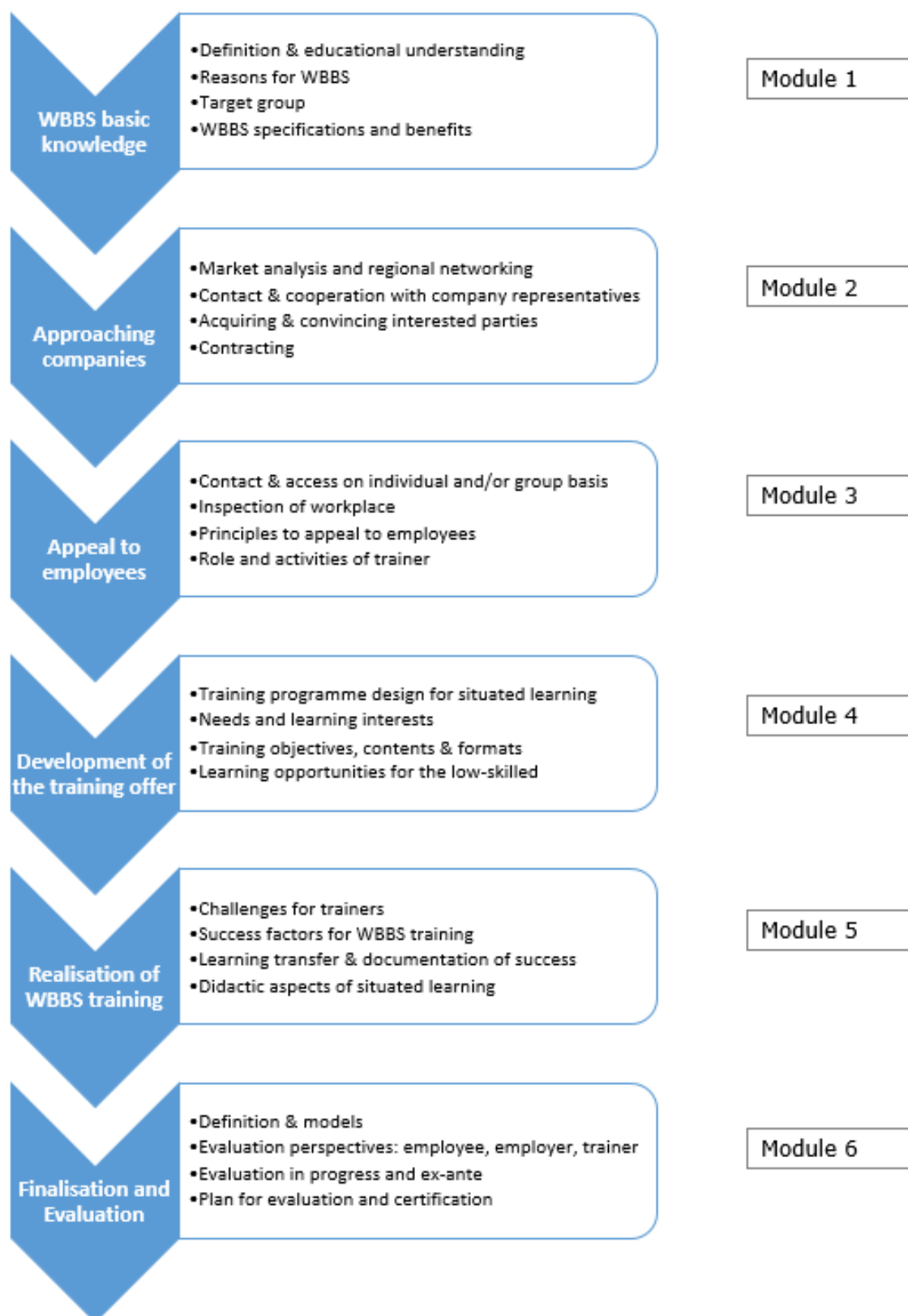
The underlying concept respects main elements of professional identity and reality of trainers and is characterized by regarding the trainer as *the* expert working with employees in concrete work environments, assuring a transfer of gained knowledge into concrete work situations and work processes. By this, the trainer relies on roles and functions going beyond his/her pedagogic activities, i.e. on activities of door-opening, identification of actual needs and managing processes.

Correspondingly, the Manual is structured into six modules dealing with components we regard as essential for successful work based basic skills provision:

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There are several **innovative elements** in the Self-Study-Manual. One is its approach to follow (and let the reader follow) “ideal” phases within the process of a work-based basic skills training project (see next page). In addition, more emphasis is placed on the professional identity of WBBS trainers. Our approach is also innovative in that it outlines the challenges of the actions of each respective actor in the process phases in functions like Door Opener, Requirement Analysis, Training Implementation and Process Monitoring.

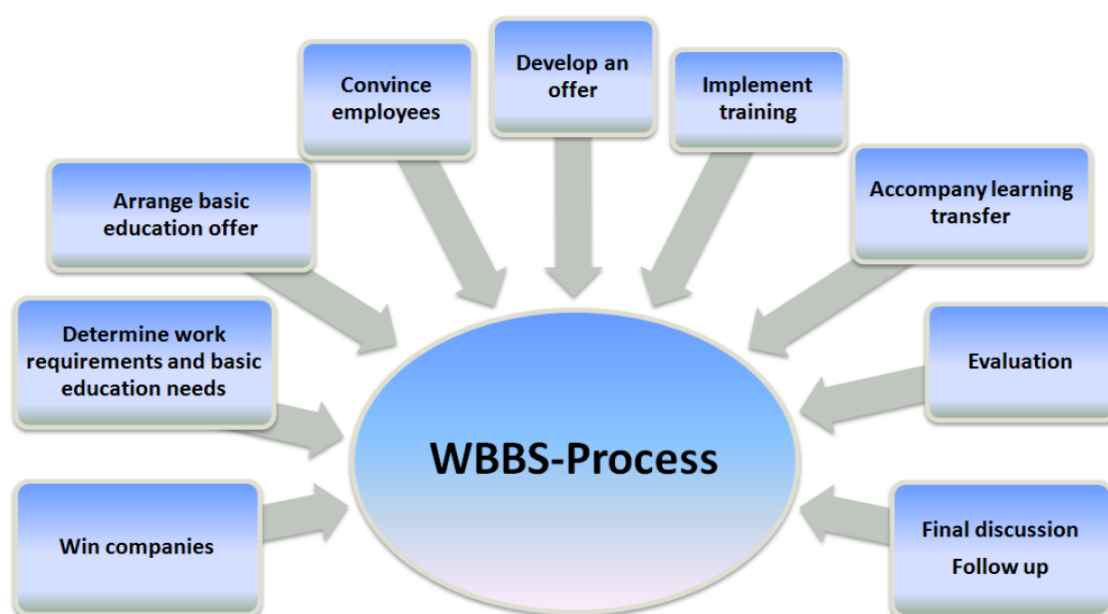


GUIDE FOR TRAINING OF THE TRAINERS

How to Acquire Competencies for Work-Based Basic Skills Training in Face-to-Face Seminars?

In this publication, the ProfiTRAIN partnership presents concrete curricular modules for the planning and realisation of presence seminars, closely connected to the contents of the Self-Study Manual.

The Guide presents training models addressing trainers who show different levels of experience and competence and comprises practical suggestions for providers of the seminars, consisting of three-day programmes each. For each module (going hand in hand with the six chapters of the Self-Study-Manual), the following elements of respective seminars are outlined: aims, objectives, target group and competence description, didactic requirements, content structure, tips for facilitators, as well as concrete tools and methods. In accordance with the specific work-place basic skills (WBBS) process-orientation underlying the Self-Study Manual (shown in the graphics above), the training guide –in its modular structure- practically exemplifies this very process in a very concrete way.



The Profi-Train Partners are well aware that professionalization is a lifelong process which begins when one enters professional environment and proceed in circles through experiential learning during the entire career path of adult educator. That is why the design of the training program curriculum consist of three parts: in the first part adult educators gain an insight into the professional dilemmas, in the second part they ponder and thus gain individual insights, be it about personal career processes or about new needs for professional development, and in the last part the spontaneous need emerge to design a personal program, which will enable adult educator to make progress in professional development.

PROFITRAIN PILOT PROJECTS (IO3)

How to contextualise and implement the ProfiTRAIN concept in different countries

In order to test the results developed in the framework of the ProfiTRAIN Self-study-Manual and curricular modules of the Training Guide, all project partners contextualised different pilot formats on a national basis and conducted respective projects. For these, relevant actors (internal and external trainers, project and pedagogic staff, national experts and stakeholders) were actively involved, in order to prepare for required adaptations of the final publications of IO1 and IO2.



Respective findings, concrete elements of benefits and added value achieved are documented in pilot reports, including overall assessment and expert evaluation for each ProfiTRAIN partner country - **published in a short report** – and shall now, of course, serve as a main source of conclusions and “Roadmap Messages” for various stakeholders on a broader European scale, i.e. the audience of this very publication.

4) Professionalised trainers for work-based basic skills: Who benefits from it? What is the added value?

Pilot projects for validation were organised and implemented in all partner countries during the period of autumn/winter 2019/2020, i.e. upon availability of final draft language versions of the main ProfiTRAIN pedagogic outputs. Pilot formats slightly varied, but all projects included careful planning, selection of specific contents (in particular of the Manual modules), communication and information prior to actual pilot training events, the active involvement of more and less experienced (workplace basic skills) trainers, pedagogic and project staff throughout the process, as well as the participation of various stakeholders and national experts in each case.

Obviously, there were different starting points in the project partner countries, with workplace basic skills programmes being established and implemented on a broader scale in Germany, Austria, Malta and Switzerland, whereas related concepts are, to some extent, found to be still new and in a more “pioneer” state in Greece, Slovenia and the Czech Republic.

Especially in their particular process-orientation and consideration of realistic learning conditions and work situations, however, ProfiTRAIN approaches and outputs do provide for substantial innovation as well as new implementation and benefit potential in all our countries, and also beyond.

In this connection, common pilot findings can be concluded and highlighted from extensive feedback collected and respective evaluation reports presented by each partner:



**MAKING PROFIT TRANSPARENT:
FOCUS ON BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES AND COMPANIES**

It has been one of the common agreements in all our pilot settings:

With the situation of companies facing current challenges all over Europe, managers being confronted with rising market competition and constraints of time and financial resources, while at the same time employees are faced with performance pressure related to efficient skills delivery, training and education providers do need to find newly efficient solutions of how to actually reach learners at the workplace (especially low-qualified individuals) and thereby adequately convince responsible superiors and decision makers for sustainable impact.

After all, WBBS training is always connected to considerable investment of resources (time, money). Return on investment shall therefore always be made clear, on different levels.

Project (and pilot) participants in all partner countries have repeatedly pointed out the importance and relevance of some of the main theses followed in the ProfiTRAIN modules, particularly in terms of demonstrable aims, objectives and measurable benefits to the parties involved:

- WBBS training shall lead to concrete improvement in work action of concrete surroundings. It shall therefore be directed at real requirements and connect to specific needs identified by and in cooperation with the company and employees themselves.

It shall therefore not be determined by pedagogic assumptions and solution models of trainers being in fact too "distant" from the actual workplace context and surroundings, but – very much on the contrary - be planned, implemented and evaluated alongside work processes.

- Respective benefits, for *both*, companies *and* employees, shall therefore be identified, made transparent and become visible from the very beginning, as well as focused on throughout the process of each WBBS process and project.
- For **employees**, these **benefits**, inter alia, conclude the following elements:
 - development and improvement of professional profile, career prospects, job security and, in general, employability
 - development of basic skills (technical level)
 - development of personal skills (self-awareness, self-assurance, self-confidence, autonomy)
 - development of team skills (social and interactive skills)
 - development of learning skills (empowerment for self-determined approaches, increase in own initiative, motivation to learn)
 - development of entrepreneurial aptitude (identification with job and company, increased sense of responsibility for job environment and company)
- Correspondingly, the following **benefits for companies/employers** shall be emphasized:
 - improved skills resources among their staff
 - improved overall professional capacity (e.g. within teams, towards customers)
 - improved team spirit (leading to better performance)
 - improved productivity (more engagement, better processes, fewer errors and problems)
 - improved identification with the company (better overall motivation and participation)
 - improved (reduced) rates of staff turnover (leading to better economic results)

MAIN CHALLENGES TO BE MET BY WBBS TRAINERS

As pointed out - and in the light of key aspects highlighted above-, the role of basic skills trainers requires strikingly more than being a merely pedagogic knowledge provider. In fact, workplace basic skills trainers need to be able to identify and capture concrete needs and workplace situations of companies and low qualified learners, need to understand the language and thinking of employers, as well as of employees.

Not surprisingly, trainers involved in ProfiTRAIN pilot test (especially less experienced ones) did find respective elements of the project outputs, i.e. contents related to these demands (e.g. modules 2 and 3 of the Manual, which are on approaching and adequately addressing employers and employees) particularly relevant, but also new and challenging.



Coming from “conventional” education and training environments, in which working at the learners’ workplace is still not common, many basic skills trainers (as a common situation in all partner countries) feel insecure about making respective aims, objectives and benefits transparent, both in terms of communication and the actual pedagogic performance (training implementation and respective evaluation). – A considerable amount of pilot participants have therefore expressed their particular need of information provided by our ProfiTRAIN products, but also their need of further practice and instruction, in order to gain helpful experience when dealing with companies and low qualified employees not being in the conventional role of classroom learners. Most trainers realized and expressed their new understanding of professional identity, having to change from being a traditional adult educator to performing a more complex, almost multiple role of being trainer/coach/consultant/mediator/analyst at the same time.

As a consequence, the need of common effort and cooperation among various professionals dealing with and organising for workplace basic skills training projects, has been pointed out as one of our main pilot test results in all partner countries involved:

The need of common effort

In almost all cases, the professional variety of participants in the pilot project activities was found to be of particular interest and beneficial impact. In Austria as well as Germany, for example, actors from different perspectives were included throughout the project’s validation processes: basic skills trainers showing more and less practical experience in workplace basic skills training, project designers/planning experts, company mediators (i.e. „Betriebskontakter“, a specific role and function implemented in labour market oriented basic trainings in Austria, which has proven to be very successful), labour market experts (representatives of funding authorities), project managers.

Bringing together different expertise and setting up WBBS projects by employing such multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches – of course also by involving company representatives and employees themselves throughout the process - has shown to be an efficient solution of several challenges described above.

As a consequence and lesson learned, **common effort** of such kind shall serve to provide answers and solutions to some of the main challenges described above, as it will



- make aims, objectives and benefits of parties involved more transparent, visible and measurable
- make trainers better aware of the actual characteristics of a new professional profile necessary to adapt to as workplace basic skills trainers with multiple challenges beyond being a pedagogic expert
- make stakeholders (e.g. trade unions) and funding authorities more aware of project operational and beneficial aspects of modern WBBS training projects, in order to better understand reasons for investment and share common understanding of the actual return on this investment

5) From project to every day: Key theses, success indicators and recommendations



As a conclusion of all ProfiTRAIN project activities and results, we want to summarize the following key factors:

Professionalisation of workplace basic skills trainers is successful and sustainable, if/as soon as

- we can reach target groups among **employees** who are usually hard-to-reach and have so far not actively participated in work-based basic skills training projects
- **trainers** know how to work with open, process-oriented and often even company-specific concepts
- **trainers** do not stick to fixed curricula, standard textbooks or conventional, existing materials

- **trainers** know how to design teaching/learning situations that are concretely related to specific situations of everyday work
- **trainers** have developed a strong sense of professional identity because insights into one's own professional dynamics sensitise trainers to the issues which employees experience in their work environment
- in this context and as a consequence, so-called low qualified **employees** experience learning as useful, something personally successful and can, by this, overcome hitherto individually perceived barriers of participation in learning
- **companies** perceive measurable increase in competitiveness, which goes hand in hand with measurable increase in qualification and sustainable employability of their staff
- **companies** perceive work-based basic skills as an important strategic component of securing their business and keeping their workforce up to date
- **training organisations** can sustain and/or enlarge their offers and programmes
- **training organisations** can better reach companies by increased quality planning and implementation of respective services

In order to achieve these and further success indicators, the following essential elements should be established on a European level:

- Offers of professionalisation of adult educators in work-based basic skills for employees and for working with companies must become part of relevant courses of study at **universities, private colleges** and **train-the-trainer institutions**
- Professionalisation of adult educators for work-based basic skills training in companies must be integrated into the **continuing education programmes** of adult education institutions, i.e. for full-time (employed) staff as well as for course instructors on a fee basis
- In every European country, professionalised trainers shall be regarded as strategically essential in the implementation of **labour market policy instruments** that aim to reach low-qualified workers
- In order to advance the professionalization process of WBBS, **quality criteria** for WBBS should be identified and developed in a next step. This could be initiated by further projects or by a specialist group of the European Commission.

Respective initiatives have been formulated and initiated by the **EBSN Executive Committee** (meeting in February 2020) and, by this, go hand in hand with the main mission and concept of ProfiTRAIN, as outlined in this European Roadmap.