

HELP Training Needs Analysis – Final Report

Background

The HELP Training Needs Analysis (TNA) was designed, tested and implemented between May and August 2009. Its purpose is to inform the HELP project of potential areas of skills training development and to structure the dialogue between HELP HEIs and partners from the business sector. The TNA is a four page questionnaire translated into the languages of the four HELP countries and implemented during July and August 2009.

In each HELP country a sample of around 50 businesses was selected for interview and completion of the TNA. Sampling methods varied according to circumstances but included the selection of businesses from databases and those companies with which the HELP HEIs had existing contacts. The method of implementing the TNA included contact by e-mail, telephone, post and personal interview.

The range of sectors covered by the survey was broad and determined by each HEI. This included predominantly agriculture and food production businesses but also industrial, processing, logistics, retail and services. The predominance of agriculture and food reflects the comparative advantage of this sector across the HELP region.

Review

A main problem with the TNA was its implementation during the summer season when agricultural-related businesses were preoccupied with harvests, and staffing in other sectors was much reduced due to holidays. Furthermore, there was some reluctance on the part of some companies to participate in the survey. Nevertheless, in total about 200 surveys were completed.

In all survey areas there was positive interest in the HELP project, its objectives and the planned activities. However, a willingness to participate in the project was less established though the reason for this apparent contradiction is not clear. This may relate in part to different values placed on training by the individual businesses surveyed.

Businesses use a number of channels to recruit workers but personal recommendation continues to be popular. This appears to be due to the fact that employers feel more assured of obtaining the type of worker required through this means. Experience and qualifications are both considered when making appointments although how these are applied by level of employment varied.

It seems that where training is taking place it is being offered in-house and generally by larger businesses. Larger businesses have the resources and staff numbers to establish HR departments. For micro businesses this was not cost-effective due to limited resources and the low numbers employed. In small and medium-size enterprises the picture is more mixed and the possibility of the HELP project cooperating with this sector needs to be explored further at the Stakeholder Meeting.

Typically, training is being used to improve the application of technology in the workplace. This type of training is fundamental in trying to increase business efficiency by enabling the workforce to utilise technology more effectively. Additionally, this type of training is business-specific and varies according to the technology and production processes of individual businesses. There is other evidence from the survey that where training is provided it is mostly made available to middle to senior levels of the business.

Stakeholder Meeting

The type of training which may be developed by the HELP project needs to be explored further at the coming Stakeholder Meetings. Other areas for discussion include the value of training to business and the willingness to invest in its provision. Reliable information on these issues is essential to determine how the second and third years of the project will progress.

The Stakeholder Meeting needs also to identify those businesses with which to develop a deeper cooperation in the preparation and delivery of HELP training. Such working partnerships are central to the success of the HELP project. Through these partnerships, individual HELPs will be able to determine the type of training required, the level at which it should be pitched and the means of delivery. Further, HELP HEIs will be able to test, evaluate and refine their training experience with these businesses. **Think partnership!**