

# United Kingdom Field Visits Report

September 2009



*Project Reference Number:*  
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## 1. Introduction.

The purpose of this document is to provide information on the field visits conducted on the framework of LILAMA Network's second Consortium Meeting that took place in Cambridge, United Kingdom between September 28<sup>th</sup> and October the First of 2009.

Under Work Package 2 of the project, Observatory of Best Practices, the organisation of Field Visits are scheduled allowing Network Partners to get to know first hand some of the available Good Practices at partner's regional level. Such Field Visits take place coincidentally with scheduled Consortium Meetings. The first of such took place as already mentioned on Cambridge, United Kingdom, on September 2009.

Field Visits were conducted by meetings and group discussions held with the managers of 6 Good Practices, identified by host partner Regional Language Network-East ([www.rln-east.com](http://www.rln-east.com)):

1. **Language & Culture for Business (LCB) Programme.**
2. **Language and Culture for International Trade (LCIT) Project.**
3. **BioCulture Project.**
4. **Business Language Champions (BLC)+.**
5. **BAA Stansted Languages Project.**
6. **Transqual Project.**

This document includes for each of such Good Practices background information on the experience, as well as main conclusions resulting from the meeting and discussion carried out all along the field visits.

It should also be noted that 3 of the experiences visited have been proposed by host partner as Good Practice, and will be consequently evaluated by all partners. If such Good Practices are validated as such, comprehensive information on them will be available at the Observatory of Best Practices on LILAMA website:

- LCB Programme.
- LCIT Project.
- BLC+.

## 2. Language & Culture for Business (LCB) Programme.

### 2.1. Basic information.

- **Date of field visit:** Tuesday, September 29th, 2009.
- **Venue of field visit:** University of Bedfordshire, Luton, East of England, UK.
- **LILAMA Network attendants:** representatives of Servicio Navarro de Empleo (Spain), Iniciativas Innovadoras (Spain), Regional Language Network-East (UK), Université Montesquieu (France), Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (Italy), Regione Basilicata (Italy) and Adult Education Authority of Göteborg (Sweden).
- **Kind of Good Practice:** Language Training.
- **Manager of the project contacted:** Rita Mascia, Business Development Manager at the University of Bedfordshire, [rita.mascia@luton.ac.uk](mailto:rita.mascia@luton.ac.uk).
- **Project website:** non available. University website: <http://www.beds.ac.uk/>
- **Status of the project:** On going.

### 2.2. Background information.

#### Objectives of the Programme

The LCB programme consists of a series of projects run from 1998 to 2009. Most of the projects have a life of 12-24 months. All projects were subject to tender protocols from the managing funding agencies, notably East of England Development Agency, GO-East, Learning and Skills Council and the EU Commission (European Social Fund, ESF).

Several approaches have been taken to the delivery of the programme, most of which have involved a consortium arrangement with universities and colleges. During a 2-year period in the middle of the programme the project became national in scope and ran in 4 other English regions. In one project, training was delivered by video-conferencing to 3 learning resource centres.

The main locations in the East of England in which training has been delivered are Bedford (Beds), Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk), Cambridge (Cambs), Chelmsford (Essex), Luton (Beds), Norwich (Norfolk), Peterborough (Cambs). Video-conferencing was run in the rural villages of Framlingham (Suffolk), Eye (Suffolk), Bungay (Suffolk) and the city of Norwich. In the early stages of the programme transnational activity was carried out involving partners in Germany (Kiel, Ahaus), Sweden (Malmö) & the Netherlands (Zaanstad).

The programme has been funded through a range of funding streams, most notably European Social Fund, Leonardo da Vinci and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The total budget for the programme (including all projects) is to date €8M plus €8M in match funding, contributed primarily from company & project staff time.

The programme is innovative from a number of perspectives. To name but a few: the use of in-house staff to develop training materials based on business needs identified by in-house business recruitment staff ensured that companies received tailored language training. The use of video-conferencing ensured that SMEs in rural communities could be reached. The allocation of some training to larger multinationals meant that their value chains could be accessed, thus providing a better sector approach. A combination of distance learning by internet (ATLAS) and monthly in-company training for those with larger numbers of staff undertaking training ensured the widespread impact of the programme. The collaboration with German partners in Ahaus provided the language input to e-commerce in its early stages of development. The combination of a business-student mix in the classroom brings a range of benefits to both types of learner. The concept of 'cascading' the content of the training was introduced at an early stage to counter the inability of SMEs to release larger numbers of staff for daytime training. This concept involved the development of training learners in how to pass on their knowledge.

A wide range of stakeholders were involved, in particular employer clusters (such as Silicon Fen, now Food East), UK Trade & Investment international trade advisors, Business Link advisors and several chambers of commerce, in particular those in Luton (Beds), St Albans (Herts), Ipswich (Suffolk) and Norwich (Norfolk). These provided a steady stream of company referrals to the programme. Current activity is focussed predominantly around the Luton-Bedford axis

### Scope of the training

The programme promotes a wider knowledge and use of all languages throughout the Union, although a key focus is on the traditionally-taught languages French, Spanish, German & Italian. Chinese is regularly taught on the programme. Culture awareness and 'taster' language training have been delivered in Dutch, Chinese & Arabic. The programme promotes lifelong learning and learner mobility through its video-conferencing, distance learning & transnational elements. It also seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of provisions and outcomes through the development of business-tailored language training materials and the Certificate in International Business Communication. This in turn ensures the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work.

The economic priority driving this is predominantly international trade and regional economic growth. The need for language & culture training is clearly highlighted in the RES Regional Economic Strategy's International Strategy and in other documentation (such as the East of England Languages Framework and the Olympics NRE Skills Plan).

The main organisations tasked with ensuring support for projects are the funding agencies. Some limited support is provided by RLN East, although the current project is focused predominantly around the Luton-Bedford axis, which has a lower proportion of companies enlisted on the UKTI Passport to Export and Gateway programmes.

The continued use of in-house recruitment staff ensures that business needs are responded to in terms of the languages offered, namely Chinese & Spanish. Languages requested by employers outside this remit are currently handled by other project funds such as Train to Gain and ESF. The pricing structure for SMEs has varied across the history of the programme, with the period 1998-2006 providing free language training to company staff on the basis that they contribute match finance in terms of staff time. Hence the courses in the earlier years were run during the working

day.

This had the disadvantage that a number of employers could not access the training. Therefore since 2007 the programme has delivered training in the 'twilight' slot favoured by most businesses. This enables company staff to do a 'day's work' before attending training outside the company, and ensures also the commitment of the learners to the training. The current cost to company staff varies according to the size of company, but is targeted at £175 per person for a period of 27 weeks of 3hrs' training. Of the 81 hrs, 54 are class-based, with a further optional 27hrs of 'surgery' input by the tutor.

### Impact of the programme

The impact of the programme has been regularly and thoroughly measured by a dedicated evaluator, and these evaluations are available in the public domain. A key component of the evaluations is the feedback from participating companies in terms of business performance, growth in market penetration and the development of a range of soft skills. An interim evaluation of the recent GCM project is provided on the LILAMA intranet.

Components for evaluation have included awareness of business culture, improvement in language skills, performance at work, protection of employment, impact on career prospects and response to the delivery of the courses.

The programme has supported a total of 3,000 staff from 1,600 companies. Of these, 2675 have been engaged in direct classroom learning and the remainder on the distance-learning component. The majority of learners were employed by SMEs in the East of England, with the exception of the 2000-2002 NLCB project which included SME staff from other English regions and the 2007 project for London.

A large proportion of learners were in middle or senior management positions, with many coming from small as opposed to medium-sized companies.

- In the 1998-2000 SALES Sales through Applied Language Skills project funded under ESF ADAPT a total of 1020 staff from 505 companies. Learners received 5-6hrs of training in once per week from 2-7 or 2-8pm.
- In the 2000 NLCB project funded under ESF staff from 730 companies received training.
- In the 2000 LeB Languages for E-Commerce project funded under ESF a total of 170 SME staff were trained.
- In the 2001-02 LeB2 project funded under ESF a total of 660 company staff received training.
- In the 2003-04 B4B Broadband for Business project funded under ESF with EEDA co-finance a total of 33 staff from 32 SMEs were trained through video-conferenced Virtual Learning Environment.
- In the 2007-09 GCM project 62 micro-businesses and 43 students were supported by the

2007-09 GCM project.

- The current 2009-10 project Learning in Partnership is in its recruitment phase.

Over the period of the programme a range of sectors were represented. These varied across projects, although the average sector representation is as follows: 18% of companies were in manufacturing, 16% services, 15% in ICT & communications, 12% in engineering, 6% construction, 4% electronics, 4% food & drink, 4% textiles and 3% chemicals.

In terms of company size, 26% of companies had a staff headcount of 1-10, 24% had a count of 21-50, 20% had 11-20 employees and 15% had 51-100 staff. 95% were SMEs and 5% non-SMEs.

### **Didactic Framework**

A huge range of competences was targeted by the various projects. Around 75% of learners were at beginner or near-beginner level.

This need to be broken down on a project-by-project basis, however on average progression was based on the OCR CBLC scales, where learners took 192hrs to progress from one level to the next. This was based on 2 sets of 24 weeks of 4hrs training.

The number of hours of training varied depending on the project delivered. The hours were reduced from 6hrs per afternoon session to 4hrs, as learners often went to their work early to get as much work done as possible and then often travelled up to 45mins to the training venue. Therefore by 8pm learners were unable to focus sufficiently on the training.

During the period 1998-1999 one member of LCB staff was tasked to conduct research into the most effective time structure and the impact on non-attendance at sessions. This research informed later changes to the delivery of the training. A further 2 years of research was conducted by a second member of staff during 2000-02 into learner autonomy and the ability of company staff to deal with problems within distance learning.

Although it was expected that learners would reinforce their classroom training with distance learning or other form of self-study, in reality this could not be assumed and material for the classroom needed to include an element of retrospection and revision. In the middle of the programme period online resource in German and Spanish were made available as remote learning material.

A rigorous system of quality assurance has been in place since the outset of the programme. This is a combination of thorough management control systems, efficient administration, and effective coordination across teams (admin, recruitment, development, teaching) and external assessment.

During the materials development phase, external proofreaders were contracted to verify the quality of the materials and whether they were fit-for-purpose. The development process was overseen by a dedicated manager. Revisions of materials were made as the projects generated feedback from participating companies.

ESF and Leonardo funding recommends the use of an evaluator. The programme has employed

an in-house evaluator and used external assessors to provide an independent view of its activity. Each project produced a detailed evaluation of approx 90 pages in length on average.

Shortly after its start the programme moved to a split-site system, operating from university offices in the city centre of Luton and a stately home owned by the university in the Herts countryside approx 5km from the city centre. Additional team meetings had to be held in order to ensure that communications were up-to-date and accurate. The use of a centralised project system drive and synchronisation software (Goldmine) enabled information to be updated on a consistent and regular basis.

Feedback from employers was generated from a variety of methods. These included formal survey, taking place at least twice during the lifetime of each project (at interim and final report stages) and verbal feedback via tutors and recruitment (account managers/directors) staff. This feedback is included in detail in the project evaluation reports.

Various methods of assessment have been used. In the early stages of the programme internal assessments were developed and delivered by project tutors under the oversight of an Academic Director of the languages department of the (then) University of Luton. In 2002 the OCR Oxford Cambridge RSA series of CBLC Certificate in Business Language Competence qualifications was adopted. This not only provided an external benchmark but also ensured that extra commitment of learners to the training (as they needed to pay for the cost of the examination). In 2004 the university developed its own internally accredited Certificate of Business Language Competence.

## Sustainability

The 'full' LCB' programme with its high targets, large staff headcount and level of public subsidy has not been possible in recent years. The region has already committed substantial funds to the programme, made even more difficult in the current economic climate.

However, the programme has responded to this environment by pursuing a more geographically focused delivery and innovative approach through the use of the business-student mix. This has enabled the university to draw down national funds without the recourse to ESF. This is a strong position to maintain.

Commercial activity is an option which the university has pursued, however its cost structure and the opening of the funding market to private training providers has put increased pressure on pricing for full commercial activity. As most funding streams emanating from EEDA or LSC entail an element of match funding, the employer as customer has become more specific about the amount of company finance it is willing to contribute to language training.

Given the current HEFCE funding mechanisms, the programme restricts itself to 'home territory' ie: the Luton-Bedford axis. The convenience of the M1-A1-A505 road network makes it easier for companies outside Bedfordshire to participate in the programme (especially considering recent road upgrades).

An extension of the current model to other counties through a consortium approach would be welcomed by employers and government. Collaboration has continued under the national Routes into Languages programme. The percentage of companies in the Passport to Export scheme

undertaking language & culture planning through the national Export Communications Review scheme could be used as a gauge of potential demand by county: Herts 36%, Cambs 17%, Suffolk 16%, Essex 12%, Beds 10% & Norfolk 9%. The recommendations of the Train to Gain LCIT report could be used to inform future project activity, as one of the key aims of this project was to try different approaches to the semi-commercialisation of language training and feed back on responses from companies, government, brokers & training providers.

### 2.3. Field Visit results

As part of the Field Visit, partners interview Rita Mascia, project coordinator at the University of Bedfordshire. During the interview, Miss Mascia made reference to UK government's concerns related to language training issues, as, although language training is promoted even at school level, findings show that students tend to drop this kind of training once graduated. Besides, languages studied are not does identified as key to promote UK economy and competitiveness.

In this framework, the LCB aroused, seeking to promote language and culture training among SMEs according to their needs when dealing with international markets. Being a long duration programme (started in 1998), Miss Mascia outlined some of the key aspects of the success of the LCB Programme:

- *Integrated marketing techniques were applied right from the beginning of the programme to the engagement of SMEs, using direct mail, personal contact, advertising and media relations.*

Focusing on client requirements, the University carried out a large promotion campaign to recruit participants, which included (apart from advertising in general and specific media - ex. trade magazines) from an extensive branding exercise of the project itself (including materials produced) to a franchising mechanism and linkages to other universities and colleges. To this end, a database of target enterprises was developed, which would be contacted not only by phone and mail on a regular basis, but also provided with info packs, latest news, etc. Recruitment of SMEs in key sectors was also essential to the success of the programme.

- *Development of own materials contributed not only to the branding of the programme as a product, but also contributed economically to the programme's sustainability, as materials were sold to providers of the courses.*

Development of such materials was a year-long and complex exercise, but it offered the advantage of been modifiable according to courses' needs.

- *Continuous curriculum development and collection of feedback by enterprises has ensured that language training courses and learning modules reflect business need, responding to changing demand (also according to logistic needs).*

Courses have ranged from intensive training, to web-based courses, culture sessions, team teaching, "Cascade Methodology" courses (training a worker in the enterprise to train its fellow colleagues – proved not to be very effective), etc.

The programme would anticipate and solve issues not even identified by enterprises. For example, experience showed that learners tended to skip Culture lessons. Being a key aspect

of business oriented language training, programme's managers decided to integrate in the same lesson both the linguistic and the cultural sides of the training to avoid absenteeism.

- *Academic staff delivered programmes to business delegates, with emphasis on pro-active retention of learners, including routine email and phone contact to address learning needs and motivation between classes. Coaching of providers was also key for the correct and successful development of the programme.*
- *Video conferencing used to reach SMEs in rural areas of Region (Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) proved to be very effective, although location of the training centre was key to foster attendance.*
- *Adoption of recognised language qualification was a difficult issue to tackle as it is generally linked to funding. However, as students wouldn't be interested in formal qualification, assessment and not a "qualification" scheme was generally applied.*
- *Other courses related to the programme but aimed at other public (ex. unemployed) or combining two different target groups have also been developed.*

It is the case of the *Global Communication for Micro-Businesses*, a year-long project assisting undergraduate students and micro-businesses to improve their business language skills, by drawing on its expertise in foreign language programmes and its work with businesses, and aiming to increase their international competitiveness. Experience showed that although SMEs' delegates may excel in business related issues and undergraduates in language related activities, they would cooperate and help each other. At the end of the course, both groups enjoyed and benefited from the experience.

### 3. Language and Culture for International Trade (LCIT) Project.

#### 3.1. Basic information.

- **Date of field visit:** Wednesday, September 30th, 2009.
- **Venue of field visit:** Association for Colleges on the Eastern Region (ACER), St. Ives, East of England, UK.
- **LILAMA Network attendants:** representatives of Servicio Navarro de Empleo (Spain), Iniciativas Innovadoras (Spain), Regional Language Network-East (UK), Université Montesquieu (France), Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (Italy), Regione Basilicata (Italy) and Adult Education Authority of Göteborg (Sweden).
- **Kind of Good Practice:** Language Training.
- **Manager/s of the project contacted:** Geoff Staplehorn, ACER: [geoff@acer.co.uk](mailto:geoff@acer.co.uk).
- **Project website:** <http://www.rln-east.com/lcit/>
- **Status of the project:** Closed.

#### 3.2. Background information.

The project had 2 key aims. First, to provide the region's businesses with language training. Secondly, to try out different approaches to applying government subsidies and open the market to the private training companies (as it had previously been dominated by the universities). This project was the first time that companies were required to pay for 50% of the cost of the training.

The Language and Culture for International Trade Project (LCIT) was a partnership project between RLN East and the Association for Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER). The project, funded by the Learning and Skills Council in the East of England (LSC), was badged as part of the responsive Train to Gain (TtG) offer and aimed to support the need of businesses in the East of England to develop the foreign language skills of their workforce to improve their ability to do business in an international market.

The project ran from September 2006 until the end of March 2008 and was set a number of challenging targets around engaging businesses, the number of courses to be run and the number of individual learners to undertake learning.

The project grew from a slow start and significantly over achieved against all the key targets such that:

- 226 learners on courses exceeding the target of 160 by 41%
- 108 companies engaged exceeding the target of 70 by 54%
- 39 courses run which exceeded the target of 36 by 15%

In the process the project established that there is a significant demand for a wide range of foreign

language training from businesses in the East of England, and that if this training is offered flexibly to meet the needs of the business and the individuals then employers are willing to contribute towards the cost of this training.

Additionally the project unearthed a wealth of language providers -many of whom are not registered on the UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) who are delivering language training to businesses - who, judging by their ability to respond rapidly and flexibly, cost effectively and to the overwhelming satisfaction of the businesses receiving the training, are a resource to be utilised in any future language training.

All potential training providers were instructed to devise individual courses to meet the specific requirements of the company within the time limitations and identify the relevant vocabulary and structures pertinent to the sector in which the company traded.

Employers were able to choose where and when the language training would take place. The timing of all training was arranged to conform to the work patterns of the learners, thus it took place at all times during the day, in the evening and even at weekends.

The subsidy offered (up to 50% of the hourly training rate, up to a maximum subsidy of £30 per hour) was sufficient to encourage companies to engage in language training.

The referral process worked well in the main and the RLN East i-hub database proved to be very effective in recording employer referrals and the diagnostic tool was equally effective in determining employers' needs. The successful conversion rate of referral to course take up as well as those that didn't, the coordinators had to spend more time than planned, chasing up positive and negative responses from companies but the established partnership worked very well.

The project application was made to the TtG flexible offer by ACER, with input & support from RLN East. ACER led and managed the project and was responsible for the delivery of language and intercultural training and RLN East for promotion, company recruitment and conducting the diagnosis of company training needs.

The pilot project included four elements:

1. the delivery of language and cultural training coordinated by ACER
2. the development by RLN East of diagnostic capacity through the training of EEI and TtG brokers
3. advice and guidance offered by ACER to build capacity in delivering training
4. marketing and promotion of training to stakeholders and businesses by RLN East.

The project was not designed to give large tranches of funding to training providers, which they could not access directly, but had the intention of being customer-driven and not provider-led.

Recommendations from the project are outlined below:

- If there is to be continuation funding for this type of activity, there needs to be a way of engaging the language schools and single tutor organisations as providers

- Any project looking to support the needs of businesses trading internationally and also organisations that come into contact with the considerable numbers of economic migrants in the area will need to build relationships with language providers able to meet this broad need
- If larger providers are to continue to be in the market to meet this demand they will need to develop their own links with individuals able to offer these languages
- Future project activity should continue to support smaller groups which by nature would lend themselves to the tailoring of training to the specific needs (especially vocabulary) of the employers engaged. Links should also be made to any sector-specific materials developed by external projects
- Projects should seek to identify the detail of providers' needs re delivery at an early stage. This identification should also give an indication of the readiness/interest level of the employer to enable prioritisation
- An early thorough explanation/induction to potential language providers into the project approach, procedures and reporting requirements will enable the providers to engage at an early stage with making the arrangements with employers
- Any future similar projects should include an assumed contribution to fees from employers
- As well as varying the level of subsidy according to group size, consideration should be given to varying the subsidy level according to employer size
- Substantial time needs to be allowed for building relationships and trust with newer broker groups. Many of these brokers are under pressure to deliver on TtG project targets, and therefore a 'case study' approach would need to be taken to highlight responses to employer needs
- Similar future projects should include flexible funding models to enable small and large group sizes to be supported
- Individual referrals were unable to be supported as the project could not even form a group of 2 compatible learners. These referrals were often from micro organisations. Future projects need to develop a response/offer appropriate to this group.

The project developed its offer as it progressed to promote the different options available to employers. The breadth of delivery formats included

- Long course provision at providers' premises
- Short course/intensive workshops at providers' premises
- Long course provision at employers' premises
- Short course/intensive provision at employers' premises

The above models were delivered to single and multi employer groups, and as all day, half day, lunchtime and evening sessions in an attempt to be as flexible as possible in meeting the

employers' needs. On many occasions course delivery dates and times were continually changed throughout the course to work with the needs of the individual learners as they had other business priorities/travel abroad etc.

Both long and short (intensive) courses were popular -approx 34% of courses run were 10 hours or less. Shorter courses were used more as introductory or brush up courses for either intermediate or complete beginners. The most obvious determinant of course length however was group size and therefore the maximum number of subsidised training available to each course required a minimum group size of 5 learners.

There were occasions when the language provider (on the invitation of the project) spent significant amounts of time (with consequent cost implications) trying to arrange course that came to nothing. Course fees per hour ranged from as little as £20 (where employers had existing informal arrangements with tutors agreed many years back) to as much as £98 per hour.

The project delivered courses in 12 different languages including Japanese, Polish, Chinese, Hungarian, Czech, Dutch, Portuguese and Russian. This was in addition to the 'traditional languages' French, Spanish, German & Italian, for which there was still ample demand. In addition the project had secured the involvement of tutors able to deliver Arabic, Turkish and Romanian for organisations who identified this need, but which failed to translate into courses.

The most popular languages (learner numbers in brackets) were French (19%), German (19%), Polish (16%), Spanish (13%), Chinese (10%) & Japanese (7%).

### 3.3. Field Visit results

Geoff Staplehorn from the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Regions (ACER), presented to partners the 18-months project LCIT, a project born as a testing initiative, by outlining the objectives established within the project and how they have been achieved.

- *The project aimed to open funding up to the wider provider community and thus create a broader, more flexible offer.*

Creating a database of providers was essential to the project, tackling vocational and adult training institutions, language schools and tutors. The project aimed at providing employers with the widest offer of trainers. In total, the 39 courses delivered involved 11 providers. The brokerage system was not foreseen at first, but proved to be most effective.

- *The project aimed to make available provision in languages other than the traditional languages to reflect employer needs.*

Courses delivered included 12 different languages, both those considered traditional and those identified as key, including Japanese, Polish, Chinese, Hungarian, Netherlands, Portuguese, Romanian, Arab, etc.

- *The project aimed to tailor language training to the specific – sector focussed needs of the employer.*

Brokers would recommend enterprises providers according to the enterprise needs and always observing OFSTED standards. Specific materials would also be developed (sector-

driven, market-driven, etc.).

- *The project aimed to determine when and where employers needed language training to take place and whether they preferred regular or intensive training.*

Different courses in length and intensity were offered to enterprises according to their needs (see Appendix 3 of the Evaluation Report).

- *The project aimed to determine whether employers would be prepared to contribute to the cost of language training.*

Although co-finance (up to 50%) was provided to enterprises in order to encourage them to take the courses, a fee would be established per hour according to each course characteristic. Pricing was flexible according to the business' size.

- *The project aimed to determine whether referrals from broker groups outside specialists RLN East would occur.*

Very little proof of referrals was collected regarding language training as relations were slowly built.

- *The project aimed to determine more clearly employer needs through the development of appropriate diagnostics and information.*

A previous diagnosis of the enterprises' needs would be carried out and core data uploaded to an online tool to develop an appropriate offer of training.

- *The project aimed to identify a model of funding flexible enough to ensure small group viability balanced against the ability /willingness of employers to pay.*

The average number of students would be of 5 persons, although groups could be up to 15 persons. When forming the groups, finance proved to be a deciding element. Nonetheless, targets were highly surpassed.

- *The project aimed to determine the appropriate number and overall responsibilities of in-house project staff to ensure achievement of project outputs.*

Marketing is key to this kind of project, as it is essential promoting the value of language training apart from the training itself.

- *The project aimed to determine the most appropriate & effective partnership arrangements which would combine input from brokers, providers and employers.*

No form of referral proved to be most effective.

Recommendations arising from this project would be incorporated to ESF document related to funding schemes.

## 4. BioCulture Project.

### 4.1. Basic information.

- **Date of field visit:** Monday, September 28th, 2009.
- **Venue of field visit:** Hengrave Hall, Suffolk, East of England, UK.
- **LILAMA Network attendants:** representatives of Servicio Navarro de Empleo (Spain), Iniciativas Innovadoras (Spain), Regional Language Network-East (UK), Université Montesquieu (France), Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (Italy).
- **Kind of Good Practice:** Language Training.
- **Manager of the project contacted:** David Owen (RLN-East, [Davidowen.uktradeinvest@eeda.org.uk](mailto:Davidowen.uktradeinvest@eeda.org.uk)), Alan Corbett (East of England Development Agency, [alancorbett@eeda.org.uk](mailto:alancorbett@eeda.org.uk)), and Anna Edenbrandt (Medicon Valley Alliance, [ae@mva.org](mailto:ae@mva.org)).
- **Project website:** non available. University website: <http://www.rln-east.com/bioculture/>
- **Status of the project:** To be finished on October 2009.

### 4.2. Background information.

This 2007-09 project is funded by the EU Leonardo Transfer of Innovation Fund. It is a joint approach by a consortium of employer cluster groups in partnership with a regional development agency and a language & culture training provider. It focuses on the development of language & culture skills for SMEs in the life science sector, namely biotechnology and medical technology.

The 4 clusters involved are the Silicon Fen (England), Medicon Valley (Sweden, Denmark) and the BioAlpine consortium (Italy-France), together with a scattered biotech community in Finland.

Although the scientific community is accustomed to operating in English, and generally speaking the level of English spoken is very high, SMEs believe that the ability to say a few words in the customer's language combined with a knowledge of their culture helps to build effective business relationships.

The project concept was based on the premise that SMEs from across the main European partner life science regions would face similar issues when confronted by language & culture barriers (and opportunities). This was confirmed through the results of both the surveys and testing. Having one partner tasked to develop these materials on behalf of all partners yet complemented by partner input was a major cost saving for the employer cluster groups involved.

The frequent exchange of project staff was testimony to the value of collaboration and engagement with SMEs from partner regions, and during transnational partnership meetings time was deliberately allocated to hold culture sessions.

The project **has surveyed 143 SMEs** from the life science sector from across the partner regions.

This was based on an agreed common survey template consisting of 20 closed questions and an agreed common audit results template to capture results at local level. These results were then combined by SEAMK in Finland and an overall summary table delivered.

The project surveyed SMEs from the life science sector from across the partner regions, broken down into 52 from England, 24 from Denmark, 21 from Sweden, 14 from Finland, 16 from Italy, 10 from France and 6 from Switzerland. The surveys were carried out through a mix of field visits, telephone and e-mail contact. The vast majority of companies were not currently actively engaged in language or culture training and, when cross-referenced against other questions, it was deduced that this was mainly due to lack of promoted offer and lack of knowledge of where to go to access the training. A high proportion (72%) of companies said that they were willing to take part in the workshops.

A total of **6 Culture reports** have also been developed, focused on Japan, China, USA, UK, Germany & India and tested using local SMEs in England, Denmark (& Sweden), Italy & Finland, with limited testing in France. A total of 160 employees from 95 companies have attended the testing. This far exceeded the target in the application form of 45 employees from 45 companies. An analysis of the test results was delivered by BIPCA in Italy.

81% of SME employees deemed the culture materials to be appropriate to their business need and 67% to their sector (leading to further revisions), 95% felt that they were readily understood, 94% that the amount of material presented was sufficient, 78% that the sessions were interactive. The partnership was this satisfied that the materials had 'done their job' effectively and that SMEs were happy with the subcontracted presenters and management of the testing. A short video was made of the testing in Denmark/Sweden by MVA and held on the Medicon Valley TV site.

Shortly prior to this BIPCA in Italy distributed a template feedback form for project staff to complete to provide a more thorough analysis of the experiences from the testing and to gather the informal qualitative feedback eg: from discussions post-workshops with companies. This aided in assessing the short-term impact of the materials. BIPCA graded test feedback for the culture materials across the partnership workshops on a scale A-C (A being the best), and results ranked Germany as the highest (with a 96% A score), followed by Japan (93% A), USA (90% A), UK (71% A) and China (63% A). Although the French culture report was ranked first at 100%, it was decided not to include this in the project results, as it was not sufficiently targeted to the life science sector (although SMEs found it highly valuable) as it maintained its original UKTI content.

The culture reports were also based on the premise that they were incomplete without partner adaptation, and this was successfully delivered. Each partner had a different skills set which they were able to bring to the table. In the case of BIPCA, this was knowledge of the needs of start-ups, in the case of MVA the needs of more mature biotechs & medtechs, and in the case of ERBI as mixture of both. SEAMK brought the academic rigour to the table, and EEDA governmental perspective.

Adaptation of the culture materials had to take place in several stages to truly reflect the life science sector. An English partner initially modified the existing reports (written by David Owen) through the addition of life science pertinent information, in particular on the macro-environment. This was then supplemented by further information provided by UKTI/EEDA contacts in offices in the target countries, in particular in Japan, China & India. Further modification took place by the addition of information from the culture test sessions, where both companies and speakers

provided relevant information and anecdote. The resulting report was then adapted by partner staff in the different clusters to reflect the different cultural perspectives (although this was mainly an issue for the BioAlpine cluster region). The latter phase included translation where appropriate.

**Japanese and Chinese** language training materials needs were the most in demand, as were culture materials focussed on Japan, China, USA, Germany, UK and India. Over 80% of SMEs on average across the partnership had not previously received training in these areas. This led to the development of Japanese and Chinese language materials as well as of English language training materials focused on the areas most demanded by Italian SMEs plus introductory materials of 1 unit of 3hrs each in German and French.

### 4.3. Field Visit results

The project was born following the needs of the medtech and biotech labs of East of England which encountered problems when communicating with Japanese clients and collaborators, which led to an specific workshop organised by ERBI (East of England Biotech Association, [www.erbi.co.uk](http://www.erbi.co.uk)) on Japanese Negotiation and Culture, with an attendance of 35 companies.

Following the success of such workshop, and the confirmation on the needs on language and culture training on Japanese and Chinese by local companies, and taking into consideration the success of a previous project managed by RLN-East, “Harvest”, also co-funded by Leonardo da Vinci programme, focusing on the Culture and Language needs of agri-food clusters, RLN-East decided that a Transfer of Innovation project might be of interest for transferring the methodology and approach followed on the Harvest project to the biotech sector. Thus, Bioculture project was born.

“Harvest” project rather focused on Language than in Culture and targeted, in England, the delivery of language training on English, Polish and French, replying to the needs of migrant workers active in the agri-food sector.

The development of the partnership of the project was facilitated by ERBI and by Silicon Fen, who purports a wide array of contacts with other EU biotech clusters. The identification of target languages where to focus upon was easy, as Chinese, Japanese and advanced English (for the Italian cluster) were the main priorities. As for the Culture Reports, a mix of emergent and developed states led to a balanced delivery of reports of interest for all involved clusters: Japan, China, USA, Germany, UK and India.

The project saw the development of life science sector-based language materials as follows: 8 units of 3hrs each of Japanese and Chinese for the life science sector at beginner level, equalling a total of 48hrs of training materials, plus 3 units of 3hrs worth of English language training materials focused on the areas most demanded by Italian SMEs (presentations, elevator pitch & telephoning). *Training materials are available at demand on CD.*

Japanese & Chinese language materials testing took place at 2 science parks – the Cambridge Science Park and the BioPark in Welwyn Garden City. These were the 2 main biotech locations in the region. Due to the number of companies wishing to take Japanese and the desire of the project team to keep test groups small, 2 sets of sessions were held for Japanese (one in each location)

and one (in Cambridge) for Chinese. The Chinese materials were then further tested in Chelmsford by the Essex Jiangsu centre. To ensure that all materials were tested, an additional group of higher-level Japanese materials (units 5-8) were tested separately by a biotech company in Cambridge.

A total of 6 Culture reports have been developed, focused on Japan, China, USA, UK, Germany & India. These were adapted from previous report data gathered by UKTI East of England, and in the case of Italy & Finland adapted according to partner region cultures. It was felt by MVA in Sweden that this adaptation was not necessary for Swedish & Danish cultures, who were similar to that of the UK. It should be noted that these reports were tested by a Japanese company in Cambridge, and by multinational companies and alliances such as GlaxoSmithKline.

The most popular reports were translated into French, Italian, Finnish & Bulgarian. With translations, a total of 16 reports were produced. Reports are available at the following website: [http://www.mva.org/content/us/initiatives/leonardo\\_bioculture/business\\_culture\\_support](http://www.mva.org/content/us/initiatives/leonardo_bioculture/business_culture_support).

A total of 17 culture test workshops were held across the partnership. 3 roadmaps were developed, with the MVA roadmap considered the highest quality.

Bioculture's Final Seminar will take place in Brussels's on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Information available on: [http://www.mva.org/content/us/initiatives/leonardo\\_bioculture/final\\_conference\\_in\\_brussels](http://www.mva.org/content/us/initiatives/leonardo_bioculture/final_conference_in_brussels). The further transference of the project to other EWU based employer's clusters is at present time being assessed by RLN-East.

## 5. Business Language Champions (BLC)+.

### 5.1. Basic information.

- **Date of field visit:** Tuesday, September 29th, 2009.
- **Venue of field visit:** Norfolk County Council, East of England, UK.
- **LILAMA Network attendants:** representatives of Servicio Navarro de Empleo (Spain), Iniciativas Innovadoras (Spain), Regional Language Network-East (UK), Université Montesquieu (France), Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (Italy), Regione Basilicata (Italy) and Adult Education Authority of Göteborg (Sweden).
- **Kind of Good Practice:** Language Policy.
- **Manager/s of the project contacted:** David Dukes (Norfolk County Council, [david.dukes@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:david.dukes@norfolk.gov.uk)), Michelle Brassell, (CILT, [michelle.brasselle@cilt.org.uk](mailto:michelle.brasselle@cilt.org.uk)) and Michael Bowen (QLS Automotive, [mikebowen@qls-automotive.com](mailto:mikebowen@qls-automotive.com)).
- **Project website:** [http://www.cilt.org.uk/workplace/business\\_language\\_champions.aspx](http://www.cilt.org.uk/workplace/business_language_champions.aspx)
- **Status of the project:** Ongoing.

### 5.2. Background information.

This is a national programme managed by CiLT the National Centre for Languages and delivered on a regional basis. In the East of England it is match-funded by Norfolk County Council, therefore a large proportion of the business-schools partnerships developed are based in Norfolk.

The principle of the project is to create a pipeline of language capability through the mainstream educational system. This is done by companies showing school students how languages are used in the world of work and how they can be of value to business growth.

During the year 2007-08 the East of England Business Language Champions Scheme was primarily run in Norfolk because Norfolk's track record on overseas trade is relatively poor in relation to national and regional performance. This means that fewer businesses export and of those that do, on average, they export to fewer countries and a lower proportion of their overall turnover.

Norfolk County Council have invested in the scheme as match funder a total of £37,000 to offer partnership grants for involvement to offset school and business costs. The fund also covers incidental costs such as prizes for students. CiLT contributes £77,000 to cover staff salary costs and the cost of developing the project website and brochure, available on [www.rln-east.com/blc](http://www.rln-east.com/blc).

The project is designed to help young people understand that the language skills they learn in school can give them a competitive edge in the job market. Among its wider aims is to increase schools' experience and capacity for engaging with local businesses and create an interest in entrepreneurship in students from an early age.

The project encourages companies to work with Year 12/13 (age 17-18) foreign language A level students. Running from November 2007 to Mar2011 the scheme aims to form 40 business-school partnerships accounting for a total of 80 business language ‘champions’.

Employers participating in the project work with schools on a variety of activities that demonstrate how languages are used in the world of work, in particular with reference to international trade. Activities varied enormously depending on the resource of the employers and the languages taught in the schools. They ranged from translating pages from a competitor’s or customer’s website, through design of packaging with language content and development of presentations about the use of languages, to telephone conference calls, design of presentations, small-scale internet research projects and participation in meetings with overseas visitors.

A key facet of the project was the talks given by businesses to students about their own experience of using their language skills and the benefits these have brought to their company. On occasion, partnerships opted to award prizes to students succeeding in project competitions. These have included book tokens, iPods, student designs incorporated into production runs, and a visit to Ford’s Cologne-Niehl Fiesta assembly plant in Germany.

The project is formally evaluated in Jan 2009 by an external evaluator appointed by CiLT for the BLC project across the UK.

Engagement with Heads and Heads of Languages has been established in all schools involved. There was buy-in at senior level, although most contact was with staff at Head of Dept or Deputy Head level. It was important to get buy-in at this level to ensure the sustainability of the programme and allow for the school to make the operational changes to cope with employers coming to school premises. This is especially the case with schools that are not designated as language specialist colleges.

The map below shows the distribution of employers and schools involved. Schools currently involved have also enquired whether there are more companies who would be willing to come on board, which demonstrates an eagerness to continue.



Generally speaking employers were engaged with students at A-level. However, it is important to note that whilst these partnerships included activities with years 12 and 13, most partnerships included other year groups, particularly year 9. This was to help increase the number of students taking languages at GCSE which would subsequently provide a platform for a larger group of A-level language students. We discovered that a common message given to students was that a career using languages was limited to teaching, interpreting & translating and similar professions.

The message that this project aimed to communicate was the languages are a tool in supporting mainstream careers, and this was effectively demonstrated as employers came from a variety of sectors, including engineering, food & drink, tourism, electronics, creative & media, energy, automotive & community services. The brochure included imagery of tools across all centre pages to support this key message.

As a key principle of the project was to support businesses to trade internationally, all participating companies were offered the £150 subsidy should they take up the UKTI Export Communications Review (ECR) scheme.

Through the EU-funded BioCulture project and the UKTI-funded culture workshops, a group of six 6<sup>th</sup> form students from attended the business culture workshops on Spain, Germany & Japan held in Cambridgeshire. This gave them the opportunity both to see how language skills and cultural awareness were crucial to doing business overseas and to hear how employers were coping with this. Students had the chance to mix with company staff and hear how these were handling their international communications. The workshops were informal round-table sessions, with a total of 21 companies participating.

As part of the project's support to new language teachers entering the education system, presentations have been given to approximately Cambridge University PGCE students.

### 5.3. Field Visit results

Main results of the meeting held with the Programme managers were the following:

- David Dukes from the Norfolk County Council provided some broad information on the county's economical development:
  - Population of 850.00 people.
  - Norfolk city is the capital of the county, divided into 7 districts.
  - Main economy sectors are agriculture (6% of employed population), agrifood (20% of employed population), financial services (insurance), energy (suppliers fro offshore oil and gas platforms), creative sector (TV production), Toursim (13% of employed population) and Formula 1 automotive sector.
  - An importan research hub for the Life sciences field, comprising the University of West-Anglia, The Institute of Food Research, Norwich City Hospital,...).
  - County's wages and educational results are 10% lower than the national average.
  - Under this context the need the region supports the opening up of the regional economy through the exports and internationalisation of knowledge and intangible goods, for which, even if English might be considered an staple language the knowlege of other languages and cultures is deemed as crucial.

- Michelle Brassel from CILT provided further insights on the approach of the BLC+ project:
  - BLC is aimed at enhancing the number of students of 17/18 years to enrol on the training of foreign language training by the means of showing the usefulness of such knowledge on the business sector. This initiative partially responds to a modification on the English national second education curricula, on 2002, when the training on a second language ceased to be compulsory on secondary education. This led to a decline on the number of students on this level on language training, from 76% in 2000 to 44% in 2008. Moreover, on a recent study conducted on English companies on the skills most demanded, the knowledge of foreign languages was just ticked off by 8% of companies consulted. These facts pressed CILT to act on the higher education students through the BLC Programme.
  - The objectives of the programme are threefold:
    1. To raise awareness among school students on the usefulness of foreign language learning.
    2. To support the training on language skills of schools students .
    3. To allow companies to assess the usefulness of language skills for their business through the involvement of schools students with language skills in practical exercises for the companies benefit.
  - Concerning the benefits of the programme, the following are pointed out, confirming the rippling effect of the programme's approach:
    - Schools students get to have an upgrade and more fulfilling experience on their language training, as they get to have a practical experience on the usefulness of their language skills training, which reports an above average increase of the grades on enrolled school students.
    - Evaluation on the programme has also shown that the impact of the programme exceeds the direct school students enrolled on the programme, as these children's experience also have a positive influence among their friends and siblings. Moreover it should be taken into consideration that due to the age group of enrolled school students, these experiences take place on key career deciding moment, which might led to school students to orient their further education and training to language learning demanding skills.
    - Language training teachers from involved schools also reported higher level of motivation when enrolled in the programme. Usually secondary education schools with no language training support. In fact from the 53 schools enrolled in East of England on the programme just 3 of them have a language specialization offer. For the rest of schools, involvement on the programme provides language teachers with the chance and means of getting involved in exciting and practical new pedagogical approaches on their language skills training.
    - Selected strategy is also quite progressive as not only high achievement schools are selected to participate in the programme, but also challenged school, with lower performance levels are specifically integrated on the programme, in order to enhance the enrolment of their students on the acquisition of language skills.
  - Some examples on the kind of activities carried out by companies and school student on the

framework of the programme are also described. Nonetheless, a tool kit with study cases of such initiatives is available at the following site: [http://www.rln-london.com/pdf/BLC\\_toolkitforweb.pdf](http://www.rln-london.com/pdf/BLC_toolkitforweb.pdf), which differentiates between 3 levels of potential actions to conduct on the programme depending on the time dedication that schools and companies can devote to the programme.

- Research exercises can be organised for the involvement of schools students taking into consideration the companies needs: for example a local company managing elderly homes and wishing to internationalize the business to Spain asked Spanish schools students to conduct a market study on such sector in Spain, that was presented to the company. Another example is the one referring to an agricultural equipment company willing to export its equipment to a Francophone African country. Likewise, French students conducted a research on which agricultural equipment were already available at such market and presented a French report with the results.
  - Some activities can also entail the mixing of language skills activities and expertise on other fields. For instance, a local company selling English soil to the Chinese market asked Chinese students to propose the complete design (contents, images and text) of the specific packaging aimed at the Chinese market. Another company, involved on the manufacturing of traffic signs, and willing to export such goods to the German market, involved students not only on the translation of the signs to German, but also on the study of the German regulation on such field, in order to confirm the specific contents of the signs, and invited them to propose new and innovative designs for the traffic sign stands. Finally, a company selling specific software for oil extraction companies integrated a team of students with Russian language skills and with environmental skills on the communications and videoconferences of the local company manager with their clients in Kazakhstan.
  - In some cases transnational contacts between schools and companies is encouraged. For instance to the next call of the North Sea Cross Border Cooperation Programme a project proposal will be submitted for the transfer and cooperation of a BLC scheme among schools and companies from UK, Netherlands, France and Belgium.
- Michael Bowen from QLS Automotive, a company dealing with quality engineering and support services aimed at the automotive sector, explained its own experience on the BLC Programme. QLS made a presentation on the importance on language skills in the globalised automotive sector from QLS perspective a multinational company operating all over the world which was attended by the schools students for several schools. Following this presentation students submitted to an on line website PowerPoint presentations on this topic, which were assessed by QLS staff on different offices all over the world (Shanghai, New Delhi, Michigan, Mexico, Belgium, Germany and UK). Winners of the competition (student, family and teacher) were awarded with visits to a London and a Cologne car assembly plants.
  - An enquiry is made regarding the transfer of the BLC approach to the language skills training aimed at Tertiary Education students. Michelle Brassell points out that no such scheme exists, but highlights the language Ambassador scheme, a “Routes into Languages” initiative (<http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk>), aiming at the raise awareness of school students on the benefits of language skills, through the delivery by highly motivated University students of inspirational presentations and advice to school students.

## 6. BAA Stansted Languages Project.

### 6.1. Basic information.

- **Date of field visit:** Tuesday, September 29th, 2009.
- **Venue of field visit:** Stansted Airport, Stansted, East of England, UK.
- **LILAMA Network attendants:** representatives of Servicio Navarro de Empleo (Spain), Iniciativas Innovadoras (Spain), Regional Language Network-East (UK), Université Montesquieu (France), Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (Italy), Regione Basilicata (Italy) and Adult Education Authority of Göteborg (Sweden).
- **Kind of Good Practice:** Language Training.
- **Manager/s of the project contacted:** Julia Gregory, BAA Stansted , Transport, Planning & Policy Manager
- **Project website:** non available. Airport website: <http://www.stanstedairport.com/>
- **Status of the project:** On going.

### 6.2. Background information.

This initiative was part of a small scoping project focussed on the language & culture needs of the region in terms of preparing for the 2012 Olympic Games “Olympics International Communications Mapping Report” available at the following website: [http://www.eescp.org.uk/doclib/NRE\\_Skills\\_Languages\\_report\\_\\_\\_March\\_2008\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.eescp.org.uk/doclib/NRE_Skills_Languages_report___March_2008__2_.pdf).

This report was funded by EEDA regional finance, with support from BAA and the organisation Urban Futures which runs the Stansted Academy. The activity took place throughout 2008, with the main surveys and observations conducted in the period Sep-Oct 2008.

Since the publication of the scoping report in March 2009, pilot language training in Italian, Polish & English has taken place, as have 2 culture workshops, one focussed on Malaysia and one focused on Pakistan (to coincide with the start of new routes with Air Asia and Air Pakistan).

The rationale behind the project was to improve the ability to recruit and manage a workforce at the airport that is able to operate in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment, and that can communicate effectively with customers, suppliers and other members of staff. The effective use of even a limited amount of a language can have a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

A large proportion of passengers passing through the airport do not have English as a first language and are sometimes seen to be having difficulties in communicating effectively, leading to frustration and confusion. Furthermore, while direct contact with staff is critical, there are a number of other ways in which Stansted “communicates” with its customers: announcements, signs and publicity.

The following employers were identified for support: BAA customer service, information & security staff (all labelled 'terminal operations' in this report), BAA security & customer services, Servisair, World Duty Free, Ponti's restaurants, Border & Control Agency (ie: immigration), National Express (the train & bus company) and Essex Police.

Once employers had been contacted and dates set for visits, the survey started in each instance with an opening discussion with the key contact or manager. This set the scene for the subsequent in-depth 1-1 interviews with selected staff and ensure the buy-in of employers at operational and supervisory level. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, and were followed by lengthy observations of up to 1 hour.

Although the number of staff interviewed was small compared to the overall working population within the airport, those selected were done so on the basis that they would provide an accurate view of communications with foreign passengers within the airport. A total of 53 interviews were held with staff across the airport.

World Duty Free (WDF) has almost 180 staff at the airport, and during the interview process data on current language ability is collected from all staff on p2 of the application form. Spoken English language ability is also assessed at the interview stage. WDF protocols were well established to deal with communication issues. Those members of staff displaying advanced language skills are designated as speakers of that language through the addition on their name badge of the flag of the primary country of that language. The level of English spoken by those we interviewed was high.

Ponti's restaurant employers 110 staff, most of who are from outside the UK. Of those staff of non-UK origin, Polish and Portuguese speakers constitute the majority, complemented by a wide range of other nationalities. The overwhelming need for language training was for improve English, and most of the staff we spoke to possessed very low levels of English.

BAA employ 800 staff in a security or information role. Key communication barriers occur when staff needs to ask permission of passengers to search their hand luggage. Common scenarios are passengers attempting to re-enter the arrivals corridor having forgotten their baggage at customs or baggage reclaim.

A total of 130 staff is employed by the police at the airport, of whom 90 are police officers. Communications with passengers can fall into 2 camps – first, general public support such as giving directions (train, bank, check-in desks are a favourite) and other forms of general support. Secondly, conflict situations, where restraint procedures or custody may be required. The majority of contact comes outbound landside, as numerous situations arise where passengers either need directional guidance or become agitated due to factors such as missed flight, missing people, missing baggage, lost property (including travel documents) problems at check-in, drunk & disorderly behaviour or theft.

With National Express, most communication difficulties come with passengers from Italy & Spain, with some from Poland. This was mirrored in the discussions with other airport employers. Communication barriers on the trains themselves are mainly overcome through the inclusion of language competence as part of the interview and job application process, leading to a multilingual workforce on the trains. Staff at the information & ticket point in the main terminal building commented on the usefulness of having basic language capability, although in some instances

staff thought that the system worked well, albeit with the help of body language.

Servisair has 80 front-of-house staff, of who up to 18 are overseas nationals. Communications in other languages take place with both customers and within the team. Most communication difficulties come with Italian, Polish & Turkish passengers. There is a good informal network of contacts with other staff in the airport (such as car hire & the restaurant), and staff can get hold of speakers of other languages via the telephone on an informal basis when more serious situations arise. Core dialogues are centred on pre-set legal security questions or the use of numbers. With the former, staff has a crib sheet of the top 3 phrases in English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish & Latvian. These are complex in nature and therefore remain written down.

Of those interviewed, in terms of mother tongue, 62% were English, 12% Portuguese (mainly at Pontî's), 10% were Polish (again at Pontî's) and 16% were other languages. The largest proportion of foreign languages spoken by staff were with Spanish (30%) & French (22%). A reasonable number also spoke German, Italian & Polish. Most had acquired these language skills at school, although a third had either acquired or reinforced them at work or through living in the country.

A wide range of languages were used at work, both with passengers and colleagues. 62% are able to use their mother tongue (except English) or foreign language to communicate with passengers, and 35% to communicate with other staff, both in their own establishment and in neighbouring units. These skills were used on a regular, if not daily, basis.

When confronted with a communications barrier, either because staff did not speak the passenger's language or the passenger did not speak English, 70% reverted to the use of body language and 65% called on support from a colleague. 31% simplified the English they were using, and 19% (almost entirely the police) used the services of an interpreter.

When asked about existing language skills they would like to improve, staff opted mainly for English (21%) and Spanish (12%). When asked about new language skills they wished to acquire, there was an even spread amongst Spanish (23%), Italian (23%) and Polish (21%). Main languages required for the operational efficiency of the airport would be Italian, Spanish, Polish and English. There was almost no call for long-term language training, rather a strong preference for short-term training in more than one language.

### 6.3. Field Visit results.

The following relevant information can be drawn for the meeting held with programme managers:

- It should be noted that the Stansted project stemmed from the Stansted Airport is a young airport with exponential growing rates that will go on all along the following years. Even though on its beginnings main passengers came from EU destinations in the last years the start of operations by Asian airlines has increased even more the need of language and culture skills of the airport services staff.
- Stansted likes to depict itself as an innovative airport, providing high quality services to its customers, using innovative approaches on the management of their services, which include the provision of language and intercultural skills by its workforce. This priority as well as some

problems encountered with some passengers stemming from the lack of knowledge of language skills either by the work force or the passengers or by clashing cultural differences urged BBA Stansted to get involved in the present project which started with a comprehensive audit on the language skills and needs of several key services of the airport, as described in the previous section. Problems derived from cultural misunderstandings were the most reported.

- The audit delivered a mapping of the language skills at each service, which allowed workers to get to know to which colleague to address passengers that did not know English and only spoke their own language. Likewise for certain customer related work staff the study of simple questions on different languages was encouraged in order to easily provide very simple indications on other languages.
- Since the delivery of the audit, language courses (in Italian, Polish & English) and culture workshops have been carried out, but remaining language skills needs demand a further investments on language and cultural skills training.
- It should be noted that this initiative also falls under the scope of the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for passenger transport, “Go Skills“ ([www.goskills.org](http://www.goskills.org)). Licensed by Government, its mission is to work with employers UK-wide to improve the skills that make a difference to the performance of the passenger transport sector. To ensure that cross-sector issues are represented and that all SSCs have access to key information and resources, contracts have been awarded to a number of SSCs to manage projects in these cross-sector areas on behalf of the network. GoSkills has been awarded the leadership of projects relating to Languages and Customer Service generic and crosscutting skills.

## 7. Transqual Project.

### 7.1. Basic information.

- **Date of field visit:** Tuesday, September 29th, 2009.
- **Venue of field visit:** The Learning Partnership Head Offices, Bedfordshire, East of England, UK.
- **LILAMA Network attendants:** representatives of Servicio Navarro de Empleo (Spain), Iniciativas Innovadoras (Spain), Regional Language Network-East (UK), Université Montesquieu (France), Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (Italy), Regione Basilicata (Italy) and Adult Education Authority of Göteborg (Sweden).
- **Kind of Good Practice:** Language Training
- **Manager/s of the project contacted:** Stephen Ferris is the Executive Director of the Learning Partnership; Kevin McIlhagga, Project Co-ordinator for the Learning Partnership; Mark Allison, EEDA's Project Manager for the migrant worker initiative
- **Project website:** <http://www.learningincommunities.co.uk/current-projects/transqual-english-language-training-programme-overview.cfm>
- **Status of the project:** Ongoing.

### 7.2. Background information.

This is a ESF funded project match-funded by EEDA, and responds to the needs of the region's employers for the upskilling of the English language competence of their migrant workers. The East of England has a large proportion of migrant workers compared to other English regions, and this is partly due to the strength of its agricultural sector and this sector's need for seasonal workers. The prominent country groups are Poland, Portugal & the Baltic states, although a range of other countries are represented.

The project aims both to remove barriers for migrants and others and to promote social cohesion and to provide English language training at a variety of levels but focusing on basic skills and getting learners to a stage where they can access mainstream learning opportunities.

Specifically the project aims to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce by reducing the numbers of workers without basic skills; increasing the number of workers qualified to level 2 and, where justified, to level 3 and level 4; reducing inequalities in the workforce; and developing managers and workers in small enterprises.

It provides opportunities for migrant workers to work as support teachers by encouraging and training those with teaching skills and experience to qualify as ESOL support teachers. It also develop modules to support English learning by embedding this in other subjects such as food hygiene, health & safety, or skills for business & enterprise, and others that address the sector skills' needs.

It identifies underemployed migrant workers to undertake management or technical training at level 3 within the workplace to enhance their longer-term employment prospects.

The project aims to train 640 staff, of which 430 have basic skills needs. Half of the targeted number shall be female.

TransQual language training takes referrals where advisors identify that participants would benefit from acquiring or improving their English language skills. The service offers a comprehensive service the core of which would be supplied in-house by partners.

It offers pre-ESOL language training for migrant workers who need to acquire basic language skills, beginners level pre-entry in speaking, listening, reading and writing. It also signposts into ESOL Level 2 for migrant workers employed in priority sectors of the regional economy – including construction, health & social care and agriculture, contextualised for the sector in which they work and linked to skills audits and key skills requirements identified by the appropriate sector business skills broker.

It also offers ESOL Level 3 and Level 4 training to staff or volunteers, giving special preference to those who come from or work with organisations that represent or serve migrant workers, as well as ESOL Level 3 for staff or volunteers supporting language training for migrant workers or BME groups in local communities offering access to a benchmark tutor language training qualification.

The project aims to recruit ESOL tutors who are bi-lingual and who can deliver pre-ESOL and ESOL programmes tailored to the needs of migrant workers and participants from BME communities.

Language training at pre-ESOL level addresses two main barriers: a complete lack of knowledge of the English language, typical of mature people who completed their education and did not learn English at school, and a previous inadequate introduction to the English language. Courses are shorter (3 hours x 12 weeks) and more work-focused than traditional ESOL qualifications, giving learners practical English skills in essential workplace matters, such as health & safety and customer service. The course lasts 12 weeks at 3hrs per week.

All participants on the level 3 adult literacy for ESOL course need to demonstrate an adequate level of English - at least to Level 2 or GCSE grades A-C. Participants with qualifications from other countries will have these qualifications converted to their UK equivalent through the NARIC database (this is a UK database which matches overseas qualifications to the UK equivalent) to confirm that they are qualified to enrol on the programme.

On this course those learners who are bi-lingual would be able to work effectively with Pre-ESOL learning who are just starting to learn English and who would benefit from using their first language to help them make meaningful references or comparisons from their own culture and so improve their understanding of the English language. The course will contain 7 units covering the use of English language including, English language skills and factors influencing English language training, theoretical frameworks, language and literacy, learning and development and learning support practice. The course lasts 30 weeks at 3hrs per week.

For the level 3 certificate in technical and managerial skills, participants to further develop their

language skills in the specific context of the working environment of the industry or sector in which they are working. The course contains 7 units covering management contextualised for either construction, healthy and social care or land-based industries. The units will include health and safety, first aid, team working, supervision, time keeping and communications.

### 7.3. Field Visit results.

Stephen Ferris, from The Learning Partnership introduced to partners the organization. The Learning Partnership (LP) was established in 2000 and its purpose is to promote provider collaboration in support of lifelong learning and to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration. As a 'central signpost' for both contacts and funding sources, the Partnership develops and submits proposals to funding agencies and coordinates approved projects, being its partners the ones delivering training and education to the community. The LP's main areas of work are:

- Training for unemployed – according to skills needed.
- Training for in-work workers to promote professional careers and business performance.

In this context, as Kevin McIlhagga explains, the Transequal project was developed in 2004, answering to the regional priority identified in the Regional Strategy of providing skilled migrant workers with access to information and English language training designed to help them overcome initial barriers and acquire basic and sufficient command of the language for communications at work and in the community.

During the meeting, the LP representatives outlined the following strategic points of this project, which aims at offering information, advice and guidance to migrant workers at regional level:

- The courses offered within the Transequal programme differs from traditional English courses for migrant as learners potentially have a high level of education and qualifications in their home country and have no difficulties with learning. Transequal courses are shorter (36 hours) and more work-focused, giving learners practical English skills in essential workplace matters.
- As there did not exist materials at beginner level, and neither did they cover the specific sectors identified, it was decided to develop specific materials within the project, both generic and sector-driven. The 900 files produced are available to providers and/or educational institutions.
- Courses could be completed with complementary training that would help migrants to acquire other professional training related to their field of work, leading to other qualifications (as part of the “Train to Gain” initiative).
- When finishing the training courses, students would be redirected to other educational institutions, encouraging them to continue their lifelong learning.
- At the beginning it was difficult for the project to take off as there was not a network of providers who would train at beginner level. Engaging native speakers with a good command of English was key and, therefore, the current network of providers involves

mainly bilingual staff.

Although most of providers were involved in ESOL training, the LP monitors continuously how it is delivered. Besides, all ESF funded projects are subjected to audits by the OFSTED, national Office for Standards in Education, in charge of education quality surveillance and assurance, monitoring the whole training process.

- One of the most important barriers to overcome was convincing enterprises and employers of the fact that workers would not leave after having improved their language command but, on the contrary, they will benefit from improved communication and productivity.

The LP representatives underlined the fact that, complementary to Transequal, another project seeking migrant workers' qualification conversion was being developed together with UK NARIC, National Agency responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications.