



Lifelong Learning Guides

- roles and training



Xploit Transversal 4 Action 2010-2013
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Coordinator July 2010 – *first approach...*

INTRO

In the Xploit project we aim to train and inspire what we once called *Xploit facilitators*, or even *exploitation facilitators*. The coordinator proposes to widen the perspective of this a little and to give this role another name, less Brussels-like and more interesting to the communities, also more directed towards the role in the community and not so much towards the role in Xploit.

We would there prefer to call this community resource *lifelong learning guides*, as they are guiding the community towards a systematic approach to lifelong learning and to becoming a learning community or city. We can just call them *guides* in Xploit. Guiding covers counselling, coordinating, organizing, leading the way to...

This small paper is about what kind of people might be appointed guides in the communities, what competences do they need to have, what are their main tasks and roles, how could they be financed – and, how are they expected to be trained throughout the Xploit project...

After discussions with the partners a final paper will be produced, covering the key principles of the lifelong learning guide role, and an initial training package will be developed.

The coordinator will try to apply the principle of simplicity to this project task.

This paper will not go into details with the guide roles, as this might vary between the different communities, but only suggest the most general principles.

WHY LIFELONG LEARNING GUIDES

We all know from experience that if a new initiative, a new structure or a new dimension is not backed-up by the proper resources, little will happen.

Both at institutional and community level it is a fact of life, and especially a fact of European life, that concrete persons must be appointed to maintain and further develop initiatives.

This is even more true when it comes about complicated processes as addressed in Xploit, in which many people and organisations are expected to participate. Even if large institutions, authorities and qualified people are involved, it does not mean that anything will happen in the community reality.

When a community aims to become a learning community and work systematically with lifelong learning, many people can be expected to be involved, also people with European, project or educational competences. But none of these individuals are actually employed to carry out learning community tasks. They are simply involved, collaborating with other community resources.

What is needed is a community resources directly appointed to and responsible for carrying out the many different tasks related to learning communities.

Such a resource is not only needed in Xploit, but also in the learning communities to be.

Appointing and training lifelong learning guides is the most sustainable and efficient way of ensuring that the communities progress, reach their aims and uphold continuity in the work.

WHAT IS A LIFELONG LEARNING GUIDE

A lifelong learning guide is a professional in the community who links a number of different structures together, not linked together automatically, to support the systematic awareness of, focus on and development of lifelong learning in a community striving to be a learning community.

This person, or these persons, link together policy and practice, European lifelong learning initiatives and local institutions, different kinds of organisations in the community and available resources. Thus this person is a qualified networker and person who knows lifelong learning and the needs of the citizens.

Besides being a networker, this person coordinates lifelong learning initiatives and activities, initiates new and relevant projects and brings together the resources needed, including local, national and European funding.

In the Xploit context this person links together learning needs in the community and available European lifelong learning resources, and she is in the position to bring together the needed groups of collaborators to support and carry out the identified projects and activities.

Let us list some of the most important tasks for a lifelong learning guide:

- **Networking between the policy level and institutions and groups of citizens working with lifelong learning**
- **Monitoring European lifelong learning policies and funding opportunities**
- **Identifying strong European lifelong learning resources, based on community needs and interests**
- **Facilitating community resources and stakeholders working with lifelong learning**
- **Identifying special needs among citizens in the community and making this knowledge available to the authorities and the educational stakeholders**
- **Building small networks of people with special skills useful to lifelong learning, like media people, people with cultural or language skills, people with empowerment skills**
- **Exchanging knowledge and experience with other lifelong learning “guides” in other communities, domestic and European**

In the Xploit context the guide would for instance be the key person and coordinator of the production of the Learning Community Profile.

WHO MIGHT BE A LIFELONG LEARNING GUIDE

Actually a community should be able to afford a full time lifelong learning guide, but in many cases the guide would be an employee in the city administration, in an educational institution or in an NGO.

The person could be contracted part time for carrying out the guide tasks.

A community with lower level ambitions might contract a person for half time work, while a more ambitious community might contract one or even two full time guides. The employment might be financed by the local government or by a consortium of organisations, all benefitting from the many new lifelong learning activities and the European funding.

In fact, the very key tasks of the guide(s) would soon lead to a situation in which this guide or these guides would produce much more value for the community that represented by their own salaries.

Lifelong learning guides should there be considered sound investments, also from an economic point of view.

It is, of course, very important that the lifelong learning guide is formally and legally contracted to carry out lifelong learning guidance in the community.

Of course many different people are involved in becoming a learning community, but it is not the primary concern of these people to carry out such tasks, it is a sideline occupation to them. They have lots of other tasks they need to attend to.

WHAT COMPETENCES DOES THE GUIDE NEED

A person who would like to become a lifelong learning guide in the community should possess some basic qualifications that cannot be developed through the Xploit or other kinds of guide training.

These requirements will certainly limit the number of people who might be considered for such a task.

Learning communities are different, and actually they should be, as people's needs are different, and lifelong learning is also different. Therefore the tasks and roles of lifelong learning guides will also be different, as will their requested competence profile.

Nevertheless it is possible to list a number of qualifications that such a person will need to possess to manage this work and to for instance be able to participate in the Xploit guide training:

- **A mature person with some life experience**
- **Strong values allowing the person to work with all kinds of people and their needs**
- **Networking skills and enjoying networking**
- **Strong general language competences, including English**
- **Experienced in using modern communication technology**
- **Knowledge about and a strong interest in learning about lifelong learning in general, including the European policies and initiatives**
- **Ability to communicate with and collaborate with all levels in the community**
- **A strong entrepreneurship spirit for taking new initiatives**
- **A strong interest in being a lifelong learner herself**

These skills could be considered *entry skills* for entering training or development processes leading to the requested guide competences. In other words:

Entre skills + training or development = lifelong learning guide competence profile.

The training or development might for instance be represented by the Xploit training offer, but can also be obtained elsewhere, of course.

The Xploit training package and training process is a crucial element in the final *Xploit good practice for learning communities*.

HOW WILL THE GUIDES BE TRAINED IN XPLOIT

In Xploit we expect to train and inspire 1 or 2 people from each of the 8 community partners, and the other project partners are also invited to send a person to join the training events.

The final number of participants is therefore expected to be between 10 and 20.

The training and inspiration will be based on the above described entry profile. For example it will not be realistic to give participants ICT competences during the training days.

The overall aims of the training activities are:

- To empower the participants to be able to guide the community towards a systematic approach to lifelong learning and help the community become a learning community
- To establish the group of participants as a special resources group in the Xploit project, through which they can share knowledge and experience and support each others' local work

The Xploit guide training approach is linked to a two-step training model, not only aiming to develop competences among the guides, but also to produce useful material for the projects' final output and for further training initiatives.

This means that the guides will be trained twice during the project, the first time in phase two prior to the first action phase, and second time in the time-out phase between the two major action phases.

Keywords for the first-step training

- Only for project guides
- Small preliminary material delivered by the project
- A lot of focus on empowering the guides to work in the community
- Guides participate in producing more material for the next training step, based on discussions of their needs
- Strong focus on establishing a good guide teamwork in Xploit

Keywords for the second-step training

- For project guides and specially invited guides from other communities (project exploitation, preparing the step 2 network project)
- A large material available, being planned and produced in the first step training
- Strong focus on contributions to the final project output
- Preparation of the guide group's role at the final project conference and in the second step network project

The didactic principles in the training activities could be outlined like this:

- **The participants will prepare themselves before the course, guided by the coordinator; background papers should be read before the course, not in the course**
- **The trainers will act as guides to empower the participants to act independently and in teams: the training guide will be to the participants what the community guide will be to the community**
- **The participants will be *producing* knowledge, not passively *receiving* knowledge**
- **The participants will work in small teams to allow the further qualification of their team skills**
- **The training activities will produce concrete results to the project, not just offer discussions**
- **The participants will be challenged by the training guides all along the process**

Now, what will be the content of the training and inspiration? What themes and topics will the training days work with?

It is important to understand that the thematic of the training will be a combination, a linking together, of two elements: 1) the needs and interests of the participants being important to the activities and to the adjustment of the topics, 2) the formal

need of the professional guide role to ensure a certain level of understanding and orientation.

In the weeks prior to the actual training event, the coordinator will invite the guides to a brief online dialogue on needs and interests. This will help the coordinator in planning the final line of topics and activities.

However it is indeed possible to list a number of subjects that the guides need to work with during the training. In the modern competence language of Europe, we are not interested in listed the number and names of the papers to read, but interested in the *learning outcomes*:

What must the guides be able to do as a result of this training?

So, what must the participants be able to do as a result of the training?

They must be able to

- **Act independently in the community, take new and relevant initiatives and help provide the need framework for the initiatives**
- **Identify learning needs among groups of citizens, with a strong focus on disadvantaged citizens, and formulate these needs in the community, as well as support actions to meet these needs**
- **Help implementing the community's lifelong learning policies and further develop these**
- **Contact relevant organisations, stakeholders and individuals to help build collaboration around the identified needs and initiatives**
- **Support learning practitioners in providing relevant lifelong learning opportunities for people in need of basic and further skills**
- **Analyze how different kinds of initiatives can be financed through local funding, consortium funding, national or European funding**
- **Help the key players in the community to further develop the community into a learning community or city**
- **Build a relevant and useful European contact net of learning communities and help the local community in exploiting such a network**
- **Help the community and the key players in lifelong learning identify and exploit useful European learning resources**
- **Monitor and analyze the development of the European lifelong learning policies and make this knowledge useful to the community**
- **Help community players to develop new initiatives and projects and provide guidance on project development and project management**
- **Use the acquired knowledge and experience to peer train other colleagues in the community**

These topics are valid no matter if the guide is full time employed or only works with these tasks one or two days a week. The different contracting levels will, of course, determine the extent to which the guide can provide results to the community.

It is, however, of the utmost importance to understand that the lifelong learning guide is not expected to carry out all these tasks herself, but expected to guide the community towards carrying out these activities and towards addressing the needs in question.

Example: the guide is not expected to be a player in the empowerment of elderly to use ICT, but the guide is expected to guide the players to useful knowledge about, how this could be done, and to discuss the overall framing of this activity with the people involved.

HOW WILL THE TRAINING BE ORGANIZED IN XPLOIT

The first training activity will be in connection with the second Xploit partner meeting (counting from the Udine meeting) in Girona in April 2011.

The training will last for 2½ full days.

This means that the Girona meeting in April will in total cover a full week

- 2½ days of training for appointed lifelong learning guides
- 1½ day partner meeting

- 1 day for community activities in Girona / Catalonia

This leads to the following development plan:

- This paper is discussed with the partners in Udine in October 2010
- A team responsible for the Xploit training activities is formed at the meeting
- This team produces a training concept, a small training material and an agenda for the first training days, based on the discussions in Udine
- Community participants in the training are appointed in January 2011
- Dialogues online between the training team and the participants in February 2011 as to needs and interests
- Dialogues in March as to the activities and detailed preparation of the training days
- Training step 1 in Girona in April 2011
- Team evaluation of training days in May 2011.
- Project support plan for the lifelong learning guides during the Action phase 1 in May 2011

The project should be able to finance 1 person attending the training from each partner. The coordinator will analyze the financial situation of the project early 2011 to find out if further financing is possible. If not, some local financing for second persons attending the training might be needed.