

Gabriela CIOBANU,
"Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi, Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Environmental
Protection, Iasi, Romania
Constantin LUCA,
"Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi, Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Environmental
Protection, Iasi, Romania
Octavian CIOBANU
"Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Faculty of Medical Bioengineering, Iasi,
Romania

H-CARE PROJECT - AN INNOVATIVE EUROPEAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

Viewpoint

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JEL Classification

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Abstract

An innovative European training programme for salespersons of medical devices, assistive technologies and food supplements was launched in 2014 with 6 partners from 5 European Union countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria and Belgium). The project, called "Launching of Sector Skills Alliance for Training & Apprenticeship of Health Care and Food Supplements Salespersons" (H-CARE), contributes to the Europe 2020 growth strategy in particular to the European Union's employment rate target of 75% by 2020, by helping people learn new skills and adapt to changes in the labor market. By development of a new occupational job profile in Health Care Sales the project will encourage the employment in this sector. The project offers exactly new skills for new jobs Agenda, providing opportunities for the inclusion of unemployed or low paid people in the European Union job market.

1. Introduction

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) is funded by European Union (EU) and meant to improve the quality of vocational training systems and best practice dissemination in the field of vocational education. The activities of LLP continue under the new Erasmus+ programme from 2014-2020. The LLP was designed to enable people, at any stage of their life, to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as developing education and training across Europe (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/index_en.htm). The LLP promotes international cooperation and envisages training for the new professions emerging as a result of technological and social changes (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_social_policy_equality/education_training).

The LLP programme stimulates:

- promoting innovation and high quality programs dealing with initial training,
- enhancing a professional competitive edge through continuing training,
- improving the employment rate and
- contributing to increased social cohesion.

In the LLP context, the project, called “Launching of Sector Skills Alliance for Training & Apprenticeship of Health Care and Food Supplements Salespersons” (acronym H-CARE), contributes to the Europe 2020 growth strategy by helping people learn new skills and adapt to changes in the labor market.

2. H-CARE project

Factors contributing to continued growth in health care services and food supplement trading include the aging population, which will continue to require more services and the increased use of innovative medical and assistive technology for intensive diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, improved quality of life and independent living. The effect of the increasing proportion of the elderly is already being felt in Europe. At the same time the rapid development of this market impose the necessity of more qualified salespersons to be involved in the process food supplements, assistive technologies and devices marketing. Researchers recently revealed that these sell services are being offered either by low qualified staff without relevant education/training or by high qualified medical professional (physician and pharmacist).

In this context, the project “Launching of Sector Skills Alliance for Training & Apprenticeship of Health Care and Food Supplements Salespersons” (H-CARE) was developed by a consortium of six partners from 5 European Union countries: Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria and Belgium. The consortium is made of the governmental organizations, universities, associations and small enterprises that complement each other in their respective contributions to the project.

The project is coordinated by Istanbul Education Authority - Lifelong Learning Department (Istanbul IL

MilliEgitimMudurlugu - Hayat BoyuOgrenmeBolumu) from Istanbul, Turkey and has next partners: - The “Gheorghe Asachi” Technical University of Iasi, Romania,

- The European Medical Association, Brussels, Belgium,

- BFI Institute of Vocational Education - BBRZ Gruppe (BerufsförderungsinstitutOberösterreich) from Linz, Austria,

- The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training

() from Sofia, Bulgaria and

- ZGURA-M Ltd. () from Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

The project takes up the problem of the shortage of skilled professionals in the specific area of trade with medical assistive technologies and medical devices and food supplement at European level. It will analyze the training standards in the field of trade with medical assistive technologies and medical devices and food supplement professions in the participating European countries.

The project offers exactly new skills for new jobs Agenda, providing opportunities for the inclusion of unemployed or low paid people in the EU job market. The H-CARE innovation can help make the Health Care sector more sustainable and find new cures for health conditions.

The H-CARE project will provide national qualification descriptions (by learning outcomes) and will build them on “Integrated Competencies Framework for Public Health Workforce Development” and with European Qualifications Framework (EQF), so that the existing qualifications in this field will become more transparent and comparable. Thus, the employability of professionals in trade with medical assistive technologies and medical devices and food supplement will be improved across Europe and their professional mobility will be facilitated.

The project will introduce training on health care and food supplements salespersons, through VET blended learning curriculum that embraces the use of a wide range of training approaches, such as e-learning, group work and apprenticeship, which will bring the acquired skills and knowledge into the tangible practice. This novel way of cross-sector collaboration needs to ensure that the learner will be able to gain competences and skills in a way that will be beneficial for both: for the learner and clients, who in a short term period will take advantages of high quality services.

The H-CARE project products are meant for:

- Unemployed graduate adults (18+) who are seeking employment in the Health Care and Food Supplements sectors; Current employees at aforementioned sectors who would like to increase their sales skills and competitiveness. Those two groups will directly participate during all stages of the project development. For those who are current employees at Health Care sales providers – the impact will be immediately

envisaged and will reflect not only on enhancement of their knowledge and skills but also will influence the level of services at the companies where they are employed. For unemployed people who would like to work at Health Care sales establishments the H-CARE project will provide required knowledge, skills and competencies (with regards to communication and working with disabled customers) and will increase the level of their competitiveness on the labor market.

- VET trainers and VET training centers. Those people will benefit from the H-CARE project by using free of charge training resources in the field of Health Care and Food Supplements sales. So far the project partners investigated that in partners' countries and also in EU level there is current gap of availability of such of training resources.

- Trade companies (SMEs) in the field of Health Care. The representatives from those countries will participate as members of the National Advisory Boards (NAB) in partners' countries. They are interested to participate since H-CARE training materials will train more competent employees who could work in their establishments and/or will increase the performance sales level of their current employees. The project partners will sign a memorandum of understanding with those companies who are interested to take part (see Associated partners list) as direct free of charge beneficiaries.

The work programme of the H-CARE project consists of work packages which are partially autonomous but strictly linked to each other in order to give coherence and continuity to the project process. Partners, according to their specificities and competencies have the leadership of different work packages and the budget cost-benefit ratio will be implemented in accordance with those responsibilities.

Furthermore, the project partners will provide suggestions and will develop training modules in the field of trade with medical assistive technologies and medical devices and food supplement. This will improve the training quality of Vocation Education and Training (VET) in this sector.

The project aims to provide an innovative and practically oriented training curriculum for health sector stakeholders, who offer services in the assistive technologies, medical devices and food supplements.

The most important activity is the preparation of training courses and the most important training courses in the area of health care and food supplements.

The H-CARE project provides blended training based on specially designed training modules, as follows:

- M1. Health Care Introduction & Health prevention recommendations;
- M2. EU and National legislative framework;
- M3. Trading with medical devices and Assistive technologies;
- M4. Trading with food supplements;
- M5. Communication & Work with disabled customers;

- M6. Sales management skills;
- M7. Entrepreneurship skills;
- M8. E-commerce;
- M9. Internship.

These modules will be elaborated by project partners and sector organizations, which possess both: theoretical knowledge and market skills to guarantee that the content is useful and fully practically oriented. The learners can have direct access to training material, even when being on the job. At the same time by using the newly developed curriculum of this project, the employers in the health and food supplement sector will save time and financial resources.

The e-learning platform of the H-CARE project is realized (<http://www.healthcaresales.eu>) and it will provide training lessons in Romanian, Bulgarian, Turkish, German and French languages starting with 2015.

It should be emphasized that the project is totally in line with the Lisbon Convention objectives that clearly state education systems must be modernized to make Europe a world leader in the quality of its education & training systems. The H-CARE project provides a totally new approach on how to provide training support, by not only making use of them, but also training of people, seeking professional career in Health sector to become experts and to acquire a completely new qualification "Health care and food supplement salesperson".

In European context the project will be sustained by establishment of informal networks, which will bring together sector organizations, interested to introduce, adapt and mainstream the new job core profile in the practices of the companies from the Health Sector.

3. Conclusions

The H-CARE project introduces a training programme in health care and food supplements salespersons, through VET blended learning curriculum. The training program of the H-CARE project is focused on making innovation widely accessible, executable, repeatable and transferable.

The main aim of the proposed alliance is to create innovation in VET in the health sector. The project mission is to overcome the increasing fragmentation between key players in the provision of services in the field of health and food supplement commerce.

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