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Progress Report

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Executive Summary

INNSENS is a project that consists of the creation of an innovative and efficient on-line training program for the small and medium size companies (SMEs) of the Food & Drink sector, related with Sensory Analysis and Consumer Research Sciences. So, the principal outcome of the project will be the e-learning program framed in the vocational and educational training of professionals of the Food & Drink SMEs.

The main objective of the project is to provide to European SMEs with abilities and competencies that will help them in the process of development of new products by means of the adequate application of the Sensory Analysis and Consumer Research Sciences.

The Project involves three main phases: exploration of the needs and preferences of the targeted professionals, the creation of the on-line course (design, structure and contents) and the piloting of the course by means of 50 professionals.

During the first year of the project, exploration of needs has been done. Methodologies applied for this have been interviews to 50 professionals and a survey to 100 professionals belonging to Quality Assurance departments and Research & Development departments. In this sense, the first key results of the project have been the identified needs and preferences of the SMEs. These results will be used in the next phase as a guide for the development of a course adapted to the specific industrial context.

INNSENS, a European Commission funded project, is executed in collaboration with 5 European partners: ainia (Spain), IBA Bucuresti (from Rumania), SIK (Sweden), SSICA (Italy) and UCPH (Denmark). These companies form a Consortium with a strong SMEs support research component besides the training provider component.

As future plans, it is foreseen to improve and adapt the course by means of the inputs of the piloting phase and the exploitation of the course in other SMEs of the sector and in related sectors.

For more information see the project website available in 6 different languages.

www.innsens.eu

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1. Project Objectives

The general project's objective is to develop an innovative and efficient e-learning training program with focus on the use of Sensory and Consumer Research sciences applied to the process of development of new food and drink products.

Sensory and Consumer Research Sciences are a key discipline for consumer goods companies. These sciences consist of different methodologies to explore and identify consumer's preferences, needs and expectations. This information is really valuable when it is used as a guide for the product development process. An adequate application of the sensory and consumer sciences will make the innovation process more efficient and so to increase the probability of success of new products. Ultimately, this will improve competitiveness of SMEs and adaptation capability to a continuously changeable market.

Professionals of the Food & Drink sector, which is the main beneficiary of the project, are involved in the project in two phases: exploration of the sector needs in the area of education (by means of interviews and survey) and piloting of the course (taking part in the course as students).

Besides the main objective, further objectives of this project are:

- To improve the efficiency of the training by means of e-learning as a way to reduce the training efforts of SMEs and increase the cost/benefits of the action.
- To contribute to vocational training by means of new technologies such as the e-learning platform Moodle, by targeting participants' relationships and by means of visual and attractive, exemplifying and visual contents.
- Through this pilot training course to trigger others web based training initiatives in this field at a European level and for other possible beneficiaries.

2. Project Approach

The project includes the development of the following big tasks to assure the fulfilment of its main objective:

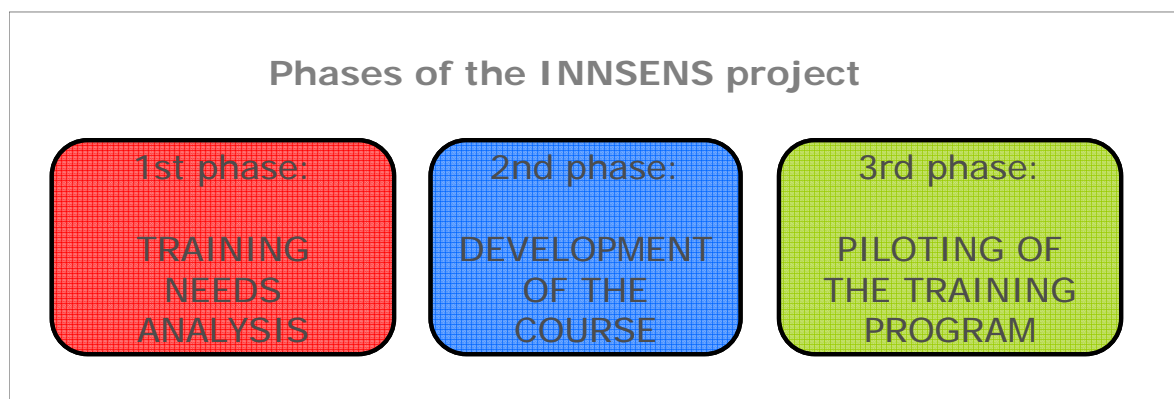


Diagram showing implementing phases of the INNSENS project.

1st phase: Training Needs Analysis

The first task is the exploration and identification of the major needs affecting European food SMEs related to Sensory and Consumer Research sciences involved in the innovation processes. Knowledge about training contents and related training characteristics have been explored (e-learning preferences, duration and structure of the course, interaction between participants...). Methodologies used for it have been individual interviews with professionals of the Food & Drink SME sector as well as a more quantitative study by means of an on-line questionnaire. Guide for interviews and questionnaire for the survey have been developed for the project and used by all partners in its own country. Afterward the leader of the task has compiled and analyses all results and created a report about training needs.

2nd phase: Development of the course

Based on input from the analysis of needs of SME's development of the course is done. The development involves definition of the structure of the course, the training content and the interactive e-learning platform creation.

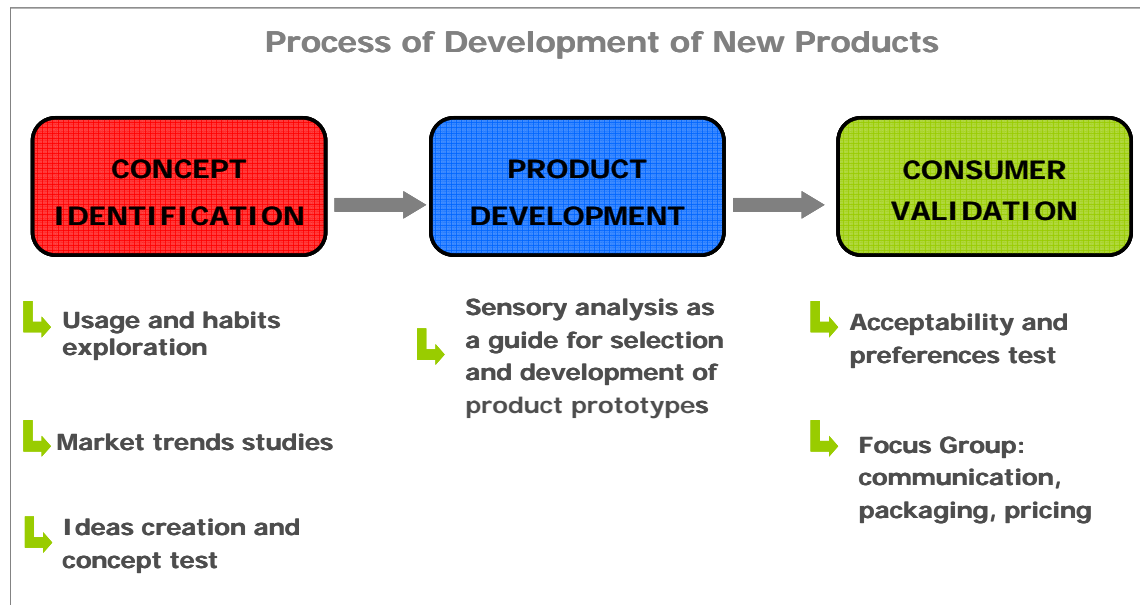


Diagram summarizing the sensory and consumer research tools in the process of product development.

The course will be formed by different learning elements such as theoretical lectures, practical activities and evaluation activities.

The e-learning course is constructed in a free website of e-learning called Moodle. Moodle needs to be adapted for the particular course in terms of corporative image of the project, structure of modules and content of the course.

5 e-learning courses will be created according to the 5 local languages of the partner countries.

3rd phase: Piloting of the Training program

Once the courses in the 5 local languages have been created, these e-learning courses are run for first time as a piloting test. In each country, at least 10 professionals of the Food and Drink SME will take part.

All partners will contribute by running the program in their respective country and being responsible for the guide and follow-up on those SME's participants.

The development of capabilities of SME's participants will be analysed, as well as other aspects of the e-learning course. A final report about the impact of the course and possible improvement aspects will be created.

Dissemination is another important task which includes different activities to be carried out during the project lifetime. Dissemination activities are planned to spread results, raise awareness of its benefits and encourage participation and interest of SME's.

Main activities for dissemination are as follows:

- Web for the project (www.innsens.eu)
- Newsletters releases
- Leaflets
- Communication in European events
- Articles and press releases

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The **main result** of INNSENS project will be the 5 versions (5 European local languages) of the course “**INNOVATION THROUGH THE CONSUMER AND SENSORY SCIENCES**”, which will be ready at the end of the project.

In the first year of the project, the main outcome has been the **Training Needs Analysis report**. Some results that have been obtained are:

- All countries are aware for the need of training on sensory and consumer analysis techniques to develop new products.
- A course of 80 hours of duration represents a time commitment conflicting with normal companies activities. The option of 40 hours is preferred.
- A great interest of professionals of SMEs for facing with other European participants has identified.
- Almost half of the professionals enquired desire to have the possibility of running the course both at home and at work, have the desire of free management for scheduling and more than 1 person participating in the course.
- Check of content learning after each learning module is preferred by companies.
- Main companies interest areas emerged from a list of more than 40 displayed topics

These results have been used as **guidelines** for the definition of the course characteristics and structure. Related with characteristics of the course:

- The course will consist of 10 modules.
- Each module will include theoretical lessons, practical exercises (assignments), self-evaluation and other complementary but not compulsory material.
- Simple and illustrative videos of practical aspects of the course will be recorded and available.
- A forum in each local language will be available for inter-relationship between participants of the same country. Besides, a European forum will be available for all the European participants to share their opinion, experiences and make networking.
- Only free software will be needed to take part in the course.
- 80 hours is the estimated maximum time that a student will use to follow the whole activities proposed in the course.

The **program of the course**, according with explicit needs of companies but also with the training experience of partner, is the following:

- Module 1: Sensory attributes and the way we perceive them
- Module 2: Factors affecting sensory measurements
- Module 3: Introduction to product innovation, Quality Control and consumer tests
- Module 4: Methods (classical methods & fast/new methods)
- Module 5: Subjects (assessors, consumers & panel leader)
- Module 6: When products becomes samples
- Module 7: Test environments
- Module 8: Planning a sensory project
- Module 9: Analysing and reporting
- Module 10: Putting sensory analysis into practice “case study”

The development of a course with these mentioned characteristics will cover the **main objective** of the project which is to create an **attractive** and **friendly course** of sensory analysis and consumer research adapted to the particular industrial context: **flexibility** demanded by professionals, **efficiency** related with time and **utility** related with the practical application of the discipline.

Modules 1 and 2 have been already developed in English.

Regarding **dissemination**, the more visible element is the **website**. It has been translated to 6 different languages, corresponding to the partners' own languages. The website acts displaying and spreading the knowledge about the project for all different target groups. The website has *Documents* and *Agenda* sections which are updated for following the project progress. It has been designed according with the image created for the project, as all the other dissemination elements.

Brochures have been created in agreement with all partners and translated into local languages. Some of them have been delivered in two European Events. Other dissemination element already done is the **newsletter** distributed directly from the central system adopted in November 2014. Most of the partners have also communicated about the INNSENS existence and objectives in some local events scheduled in its companies.

All these dissemination activities have been previously planned in a Dissemination and Communications Plan. Other Plans developed at the beginning of the project for its internal management and monitoring are the Management plan and the Quality Plan.

All the public results are available in the website of the project (www.innsens.eu) and in the Leonardo Da Vinci Projects and Products Portal (www.adam-europe.eu).

4. Partnerships

The need for training in Sensory and Consumer Research Sciences is common in the Food and Drink SME'S of Europe. Nevertheless, knowledge and skills in this field is **not homogeneous** along SMEs, food research centres and Universities. Nordic European countries and France has been traditionally countries in which Sensory analysis is well extended and used in contrast with other European countries.

European cooperation for the development of vocational training could **promote** the **regularization** and **homogenization** of the knowledge and skills in sensory analysis and consumer research in food product development of SMEs and thus **mobility** of professionals between the European companies.

Moreover, working in the trans-national expert consortium will help to **reduce investment** in financial and personnel resources.

The cooperation within the multi-country partnership also allows the following aspects:

- Exchange of good practices among partners and learn new methodologies
- Learn about vocational training in other EU countries
- Participate in the European dialogue for exploring industry needs and providing solutions
- Promote culture exchange between partner countries

5. Plans for the Future

For the near future, the consortium has to face with the **development of all the contents of the course**. Development of contents is done by one of the partners and the rest of the partners review contents and make contributions. Contents are created in English and then all partners translate them into its local language.

Besides development of contents of the course, the **e-learning platform** already adapted to the INNSENS image and structure of the course needs to be nourished by all these content and for each of the 5 local languages.

Good coordination between partners is needed for achievement of the tasks in the foreseen time tasks have been grouped and scheduled in a document.

Final participants of the course will be defined at last the 1st of February. They will be 13-15 professionals of the Food & Drink SMEs which will express their strong will to participate in the course with the aim of being trained and help in course validation.

The **launching of the course** is foreseen for the beginning of March 2015. During 11 weeks participants will follow the course with the help of local tutors.

The **evaluation of the course** will be done with the feedback of participants during the course and at the end by means of interviews.

For **dissemination activities**:

- Following newsletters will be created and delivered.
- National communications will continue in each country
- More European events will be selected to spread results and promote the project: i.e. AEPAS (Association of Spanish professionals of sensory analysis) congress (Spain): poster or speech; i.e. INTED 2015 (International Congress about technology, education and development): poster; i.e. PANGBORN 2015 (Main International Congress about Sensory Sciences): poster.

Related with internal coordination of the partners the celebration of two **consortium meetings** are foreseen, one in February 2015 and the last during October 2015. Besides, during all the project partners are in continuously communication to discuss about different aspects of the project and overcome raising difficulties.

At last, guidelines and rules for the exploitation of the course will be discussed and agreed by partners and recorded in an **Exploitation Plan**.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The development of the e-learning program “Innovation through the Consumer and Sensory sciences” responds to a clear demand for training in sensory analysis and consumer research on the part of professionals from the European SMEs of the Food and Drink sector.

Typically, sensory and consumer science is not taught through e-learning programmes. However, recent methodological developments allow for procedural and practical training implemented via informatics and communication technologies contents and methods.

By means of transnational cooperation between the European partners and answering to the common need of SMEs for attractive, flexible and efficient e-learning for sensory and consumer sciences a new and easy way of learning will be developed.

Sensory and Consumer Research Sciences allows the SMEs to develop new products in alignment with consumer preferences and needs, being this as diverse as they are in Europe. Thus, the vocational learning which the project aims promotes diversity within European tastes and products in Europe. Moreover, diversity of languages is respected by the development of local language versions of the course.

