TENCompetence
Building The European Network for Lifelong Competence Development

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For Lifelong Competence Development

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Report on Competence Network for Associate Partners

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Abstract (for dissemination)	In the first 12 months of the TENCompetence project WP9 was tasked with, among other things, the setting up of networks of Associate Partners. With the networks in place and the advent of the second Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP2), in month 13 of the project, the onus of the task has shifted from the creation of the network to its ongoing maintenance. Details relating to the job of maintaining and developing the network form the main focus of this report, which will also provide an overview of the various Associate Partner roles, an update of their status and a description of target achievements to be undertaken in the coming months.
Keywords List	WP9, training, PhD, associate partner networks

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1 Introduction

This document provides an overview of those activities and their results in the second year of the TENCompetence project, which are related to the following task:

Task 2. *Maintain the TENCompetence Network for Associate Partners*, in particular SME, to spread the research results of the consortium as well as to getting the feedback and understand the issues surrounding the implementation of the project results.

Put simply Associate Partners are organisations that contribute components to the TENCompetence project, its architecture and infrastructure. Moreover, Associate Partners can also be organisations that are instrumental in helping to establish a TENCompetence support network for the duration of the project subsequent to the expiry of the project. More specifically, Associate Partners have an important role to play in helping to provide important feedback on the project outcomes thus influencing future directions of the project and its development. SMEs are considered to be particularly valuable in helping to take the project outcomes beyond the project lifecycle.

By providing associate partners with privileged access to project outcomes including the results of pilot trials, it is anticipated that Associate Partners will embed these results in their own activities. More specifically the network aims to provide Associate Partner with:

- immediate access to the latest project documentation
- invitations to participate in on-line and real-life project discussions and events
- the opportunity to participate in test beds, pilots and demonstrators
- access to specialised training
- links to other professional communities in the life-long learning domain

The task of maintaining the Associate Partner network is to facilitate access to these results and coordinate provision of valuable feedback and data on the wide range of issues raised by this activity. Within the Associate Partners network, training (WP9) and dissemination and exploitation (WP10) is key to providing the various stakeholders with the support required to prepare them to conduct demonstrators that will stimulate the wider use and the uptake of the integrated system beyond the confines of the project and onto the market.

The demonstrator activities are aimed at exploring exploitation scenarios and services with a view to ascertaining their viability in the market and gaining additional insights into sustainable scenarios. It is anticipated that the outcomes of the demonstrators will result in fine tuning activities in relation to the system and services it provides, as well as providing opportunities to exploit the system

in real life settings and to test the market and raise the interest of potential customers, including associate partners, who might wish to exploit, adopt or build on the tools and services provided. Moreover, the demonstrators will serve to nurture better awareness and understanding of the integrated system within the user community.

Whilst Demonstration Activities are managed and coordinated by WP3, maintaining and training Associate Partners in the various facets of the system (function, exploitation etc.) and keeping them informed of developments to the system are a critical task peculiar to WP9 Task 9.2.

2 Composition of the Network

Recruitment of Associate Partners into the project falls within the remit of WP10 whose job it is to maintain a list of potential candidates drawn from contacts made and to help negotiate Associate Partner activity prior to initiating the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sign up process. On completion of the MoU the fully fledged Associate Partner becomes a member of a network.

Since its inception, the Associate Partner Network has grown to include twenty one Associate Partners (at the time of writing) with the number set to increase as the project outcomes continue to be made available for dissemination. The network includes members drawn from a variety of organisations and institutions and comprises both private and public organizations, projects and networks. The make-up of current members can be broken down as follows:

- Higher Education
- SMEs
- Networks/communities
- [1]Initiatives
- Government/ institutions

 Regardless of type, Associate Partners are free to participate in TENCompetence activities according to their respective strengths and interests and can be categorised according to the role they wish to play. The following section provides a listing of the various roles that an Associate Partner adopt.

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[1] "Initiatives" is used as a blanket term to refer to work efforts which operate independently as providers of education or networks that work with, but not for any public body .

3 Associate Partner Roles

In order to ensure Associate Partners participate in TENCompetence in keeping with their various profiles and ambitions, four different roles have been identified and implemented within the structure of the network. The following table lists the four key roles and provides a description of the type of participation implicit in each. Details of membership type and roles in relation to each of the fully – fledged members can be found in the Appendix.

Role	Participation	Benefits
User organization	Potential users of the TENCompetence infrastructure. In this role users could contribute Use Cases, scenarios and user requirements and participate in pilots.	Users will be able to help to shape the TENCompetence infrastructure to better fit their needs, and be assisted in implementing early versions of the TENCompetence infrastructure within their organization.
Technology provider	Developers of open source components or service implementations or intending to do so - that fit the TENCompetence architecture.	Users will get full access to technical documentation, discussions, testing sessions etc. just like a full TENCompetence partner.
Service provider in life-long competence development	Materials developer, training provider, assessment center, HRM service provider, etc. Users in this role could contribute Use Cases, influence business model development, and participate in pilots and demonstrators.	Users will get full access to functional requirements definition, business models, discussions, training sessions etc. just like a full TENCompetence partner.
Project or network in the field of life-long competence development	Users in this role are a project, consortium, or network that wants to harmonize RTD and dissemination activities with TENCompetence.	Users will get full access to documentation, discussions, testing sessions etc.

4 Overview of Work Performed

Given the variety of roles available, Associate Partners are catered for on the basis of the roles they have opted for. To date the bulk of work has concentrated on documenting Associate Partner interests, expertise and proposed contributions with a view to "activating" their participation as and when opportunities arise and project outcomes permit.

With the recent "release" of the PCM as a proof-of-concept tool for expert use and demonstration purposes, this task (9.2) has involved informing and recruiting Associate Partners for PCM related training events including the PCM workshop organised and run by WP9 as part of the "Open Workshop on Current research on IMS Learning Design and Lifelong Competence Development Infrastructures" which ran in Barcelona in June 2007.

With the creation of an Associate Partner mailing list, relevant announcements and invitations to workshops, conferences and meetings continue to be delivered across the network and in some cases individuals have been contacted and one-on-one meetings arranged (either virtually or face-to-face) to discuss training needs or to talk through updates on Associate Partner progress.

Another substantial task involves the monitoring and maintaining of links forged by WP10 between core partners working on Aspect workpackages (WP5-8) and Associate Partners whose interests and expertise lie in the provision of technology. WP10 has facilitated the initial part of this process by determining which workpackages the Associate Partners should collaborate with. The subsequent monitoring process requires workpackage leaders to contact Associate Partners and provide any help they can offer and to take advantage of any practices that the Associate Partner can offer. Whilst there are currently no tangible outcomes resulting from the collaboration of these two sets of partners, work, although tentative at his stage, is ongoing in the fields of assessment and the competence observatory.

A recent call for participation among SME's is expected to boost the involvement of this category of Associate Partner which, as noted in section one, are considered to be integral to helping sustain the project beyond its lifecycle. To this end the project has reserved somewhere in the region of Euro 125.000,- as a special SME incubation fund from which it will finance SME-related activities that will emerge as the project progresses. In addition to launching the scheme at the recent ePorfolio conference in Maastricht (October 17-19, 2007), the scheme has been announced through the public website as well as to SMEs who are currently enrolled as Associate Partners.

5 Future Directions and Activities

Three major areas of activity have been identified as key to the future success of the Associate Partner network.

Dissemination
In concert with plans to provide more training and training related events for Associate Partners in WP9, task 9.2 will seek to produce and disseminate regular newsletters on project outcomes in addition to the announcements they currently receive. The dissemination of regular updates in this way is considered integral to maintaining the interest and cohesion of the network, and efforts to sustain levels of interest and activity will be redoubled. With the stabilisation of the PCM scheduled for the beginning of December, a battery of resources is being prepared to help better inform Associate Partners on the project and the system. These include:

- Aspect workpackage briefings intended to clarify the research and development taking place in the field,
- a rollover version of the domain model to explain the infrastructure as a whole
- PCM training video, updated manual and worksheets
- Increased focus on and moderation of the PCM forums

Task 9.2 will be instrumental in providing access to and raising awareness of these resources. It will also liaise with Associate Partners subsequent to the release of the resources in order to help coordinate and organise wider dissemination and awareness raising activities.

Consultation
A further initiative designed to further consolidate and improve the effectiveness of the network includes consulting Associate Partners on their needs and ideas for future network activities. In collecting and acting on Associate Partner suggestions, it is anticipated that the network activity and dynamism will increase. WP9 will remain attentive to the needs of the Associate Partner and will continue to monitor their level of participation while maintaining regular contact to ensure their needs are being met. Moreover, wherever Associate Partners see a need for change in the work of TENCompetence, their concerns, ideas, suggestions etc will be forwarded to the relevant authorities for subsequent discussion and action where required.

Collaboration
In order to facilitate and clarify objectives and working relations between Aspect workpackages and Associate Partners in the role of prospective technology provider, it is proposed that both sets of partner produce a schedule or description of work in collaboration with one another. To date, progress in this respect has been laborious and lacking in solid commitment due, in part, to

shifting priorities and intermittent correspondence between the parties concerned. A schedule would be useful in providing sustained focus and increased levels of commitment leading to a fruitful collaboration.

With the stabilisation of the PCM scheduled for the beginning of December, Associate Partner's who have expressed an interest in piloting the system will be notified of the development and provided with the necessary assistance/training needed to run a successful pilot.

Associate Partner training

Whilst the provision of training falls within the remit of WP9 Task 3, it is anticipated that the maintenance of the network is contingent on the provision of training related events. To this end Associate Partners have been invited to two impending training events: EUCEN and the Winter School. Given the difficulties inherent in assembling a relatively small number of people from across Europe for training, further events will most likely be in the form of Associate Partner workshops combined with other TENCompence events. Virtual events, conferences, seminars, etc. targeted at the various role players are also undergoing consideration as a solution to the current problem of the distributed nature of the network.

6 Appendix

Associate Partner name	Roles	Membership type	Proposed participation
Acknowledge.Be	• User organisation • Service provider	SME	TBC
Bulgarian Investment and Consulting Agency	• User organisation	SME	Potential for piloting TENCompetence software AND dissemination of project outcomes
Eifel	• Network	Network	Dissemination and harmonisation of RTD
e-Learning Technical R&D Laboratory, Technical University, Sofia, Bulgaria	• Service provider • User organisation • Technology provider	HE	Contribute use cases and user requirements AND develop materials AND provide training AND develop open source components AND participate in pilots
EVALFOR (Universidad de Cadiz)	• User organisation • Technology provider Network •	HE	Dissemination and exploitation. Pilots.
Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and informatics, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia	• Technology provider • User organisation	HE	Design a prototype of an adaptive testing system AND apply the prototype in grading of maths in 2nd level of primary school AND produce a project report after field use.
Grupo d'Investigacion de Tecnologia Educativa	• User organisation • Network	HE	Dissemination, PhD student exchange, Pilots, joint publications and virtual research seminars.
ICT in Education Directorate - Ministry of Education and Sciences, Republic of Bulgaria	• User organisation • Service provider • Network	Government	Pilots. Addition of learning resources to improve quality of networks. To disseminate and engage in joint activities to improve the network.
Inst.of Informatics and software	• User organisation • Network	HE	Pilots. Dissemination and exploitation

engineering, Slovak Uni of Bratislava			
LICEF	• Network • User organisation	Network	Visiting scholar programmes AND joint scholarly programmes AND joint applications for research funding
MGA educaion Ltd	• User organisation • Technology provider • Service provider	SME	Develop technology for capture of learning data and development of competency criteria. Run pilots.
Moribor High School of Economics	• Network	HE	Interested in all Aspect WPs. TBC
RayCom BV	• User organisation • Technology provider • Service provider	SME	Open source development particularly in IMS LD and ePortfolio
Tallinn University	• Network	HE	Exchange of doctoral students AND collaboration in research AND dissemination of project outcomes
The Computer Architecture and Technology Department at the University of Seville	• User organisation	HE	Using the IMS-LD spec to guide the design of a prototype of a pedagogic scenario provided by CATD AND to evaluate the convenience of using IMS LD support tools for blended learning experiences in the framework of the CATD
The Department of Information Technologies, Vilnius, Gediminas Technical University	• User organisation • Technology Provider	HE	e-Learning technologies AND internet, groupware and intelligence

The Learning Societies Lab, School of electronics and computer science, University of Southampton	• User organisation • Technology Provider	HE	Competence modelling and implementation AND eAssessment and computer aided assessment AND service oriented architectures for elearning and eAssessment AND technology enhanced learning and teaching
The People's Open Access Education Initiative	• User organisation	Initiative	Application of prototypical tools AND project reports on use of TENCompetence system
Une idee derriere l'ecran	• User organisation • Network	Initiative	Dissemination and possible pilots
University of Wollongong	• User organisation • Network	HE	Joint research and publications AND visiting scholar programmes AND trial of TENCompetence implementation AND joint conferences and workshops AND joint applications for research funding
Verening Van Openbase Bibliotheken Netherland Public Library	• Network • User organisaiton	Government institution	Virtual workshops. Piloting system and dissemination