Chapter 5
e−Bridge to Mobility:
A Non−Formal Online Learning European Platform

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

e-Bridge to mobility is a platform designed to encourage a more prospective future for people from Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania. The objective of this project is to promote mobility to the UK, Germany, and Spain, by offering education, via English, German, and Spanish language courses; practical information about the UK, Germany, and Spain; and membership in an e-community. The project is aimed at people who seek employment in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain.

Its main goal is teaching English, German, and Spanish, and gaining knowledge about the country that the project participant intends to visit. The products and information regarding country-specific characteristics of UK, Germany, and Spain are complementary to the course. e-Bridge supports adjustment to the requirements of the European job market, and its users have the opportunity to learn a foreign language with the aid of innovative communication tools, such as the Internet and mobile phones.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The purpose of this case is to present the *e-Bridge to mobility* platform (http://www.2mobility.eu) as a real example of non-formal online learning. The aim of this lifelong learning initiative is the personal development of different European Union (EU) citizens (Colardyn, 2002). This project has been funded with support from the European Commission inside the Lifelong Learning Programme (Education and Culture DG).

As the European Commission pointed out, adult education is a major instrument against social exclusion (European Commission, 1997, p. 3). Thus, adult education in lifelong learning programmes is a crucial factor for achieving personal development (Williamson, 1997; Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004; European Commission, 2006a; Nimmo, 2010).

Online learning is the main delivery method to train employees (Simmons, 2002). For learners, online learning means no time zones, no distance, and moreover, no location. Thus, learners can access the material at anytime (Ally, 2004).

Non-Formal Learning (NFE) does not lead to formal qualifications, but it can be organized through formal methodologies (Malcolm, et al., 2000; Zepke, 2006). NFE helps young people and adults who have no opportunities to access formal education and, on the whole, creates new chances of employment (Weyer, 2009) and life improvement (Shlomo, 2000) in the modern knowledge-based economy.

Researchers show that a much higher number of adults prefer non-formal learning to formal learning, because NFE has significant benefits for their own quality of life (Eraut, 2000; Björnavåld, 2001; Hinzen, 2007; Tóth, 2007) and a sociocultural value (Andersson & Andersson, 2005).

The e-Bridge to mobility *initiative is a very innovative and creative case of non-formal online learning, which combines formal structure learning, e.g. English, German, and Spanish courses, with non-traditional learning, e.g. information about the law system and mobile phone applications (Figure 1).* Realization of the e-Bridge to mobility project addresses the needs that appeared on the EU's labour market after the accession of new Member States in 2004 and 2007 (Kogan,, et al., 2008; Frazer, et al., 2010). The project is a response to a phenomenon of mobility among vocationally active citizens, young (aged under 25) and elderly (aged over 50), who plan to move to another EU country for purposes related to work, education or economic and social status. More specific data about the project partners can be seen in Appendix 1.

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