

## INFORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

A practical approach with Small and Micro enterprises

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## The Challenges

- “Traditional” small and micro-firms
- How to capture learning that is often not recognised
- How to validate this without losing the informality
- How to ensure employers see the benefits
- How to ensure employees benefit
- Demanding!



## Background to the INFLOW project

- Develop a transferable model for identification of informal learning in the workplace
- Develop an accreditation methodology including the potential use of e-portfolios
- Pilot initially in the Engineering Sector in the UK
- Test the transferability to France, Germany Sweden, Spain and other sectors in the UK

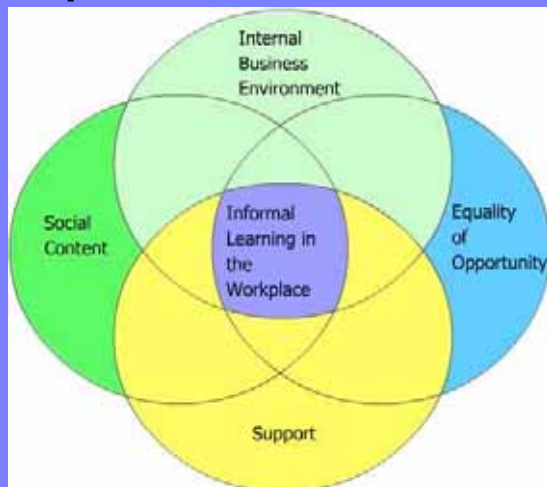


## Progress to date – theoretical aspects

- Model developed and translated into partner languages <http://www.inflow.eu.com>
- Desk research completed and report written
- Validation and Accreditation methodologies developed
  - Company / SME focus
  - Individuals within an SME



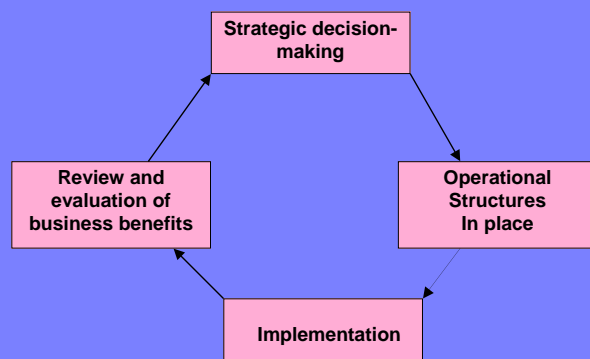
## Business Culture / critical factors for development of informal learning



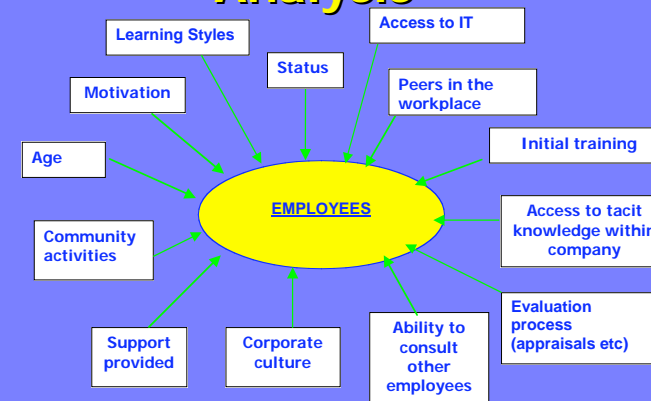
## Model – recognition of informal learning in SMEs

- Two sections
  - Marketing strategies
  - Framework
- Marketing strategies
  - Key issues
  - Critical success factors
  - Identification of key stakeholders
  - SME recruitment
  - Messages – employers + employees

## Framework – Macro level Themes – Business-focus



## Framework – Micro level Analysis



## Macro-level approach

- Quality award / endorsement of company
- Benefits of such an approach
- Criteria
  - Outcomes
  - Indicators
  - Evidence



## Criteria

- Commitment to informal learning
- Company environment in which informality and collaboration can flourish
- Work processes demonstrate support for informal learning
- Evaluations are in place to assess contribution of informal learning to business performance



## Outcomes and indicators

Outcomes	Indicators To achieve each outcome a company / enterprise must demonstrate the ability to:
<b>1 Demonstrate a commitment to support informal learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how informal learning is strategically positioned in the company</li> <li>• Develop appropriate strategies for enabling informal learning</li> <li>• Communicate to employees the processes/ opportunities for informal learning</li> </ul>



## Indicators and evidence

Indicator	Evidence
<b>Identify how informal learning is strategically positioned in the company</b>	<b>Managers can explain / quote examples in face to face interview</b>
<b>Develop appropriate strategies for enabling informal learning</b>	<b>Strategies available in written format or other mechanisms</b>
<b>Communicate to employees the processes/ opportunities for informal learning</b>	<b>Works notices, Entry in job description relating to Mentor and/or Job rotation, Staff newsletter, Union learning representatives</b>



## Quality Assurance – macro-level

- Assessors visit the company
- Interviews – management + other employees varying roles
- Observation of culture / activities
- Recordings made – audio, video, written
- Common assessment forms completed – record evidence collected, where stored and whether criteria met
- Sampling



## Individual award (1)

- Three potential routes for accreditation
  - of informal learning **processes**
  - of generic skills mapping against EQF / NQFs
  - job-specific skills using NQFs
- Chose process route with links to EQF and potential links to generic and job-specific skills
- Generic and job-specific skills acquired will evidence informal learning processes



## Individual award (2)

- 5 essential criteria
  - Able to recognise that learning takes place in workplace
  - Be motivated to learn and improve own performance in workplace
  - Has capacity to identify what has been learnt
  - Flexible to adapt to new situations which require learning to be undertaken informally
  - Capacity to access relevant knowledge and experience
- 6<sup>th</sup> optional – supports others - informally learn in the workplace



## Individual award (3)

- Each criterion has set of potential ways in which it might be demonstrated and evidenced
- Expect at least two different ways in which a criterion has been identified to state successfully achieved
- Encourage the use of an e-portfolio



# Individual award (4)

Criteria	How demonstrated	Potential evidence
Is motivated to learn and improve own performance	❖ by solving problems yourself	❖ <i>description (verbal or written) of identifying work problem and how problem was solved [trial and error etc] and relating it to work context</i>
	❖ during conversations during work breaks	❖ <i>recalling discussions and can describe how relate to specific problems of work tasks</i>
	❖ by positive participation in regular rotation of tasks which can keep skills up to date	❖ <i>can explain the significance of skills acquired and their application to subsequent tasks within work context(s)</i>
	❖ responding with a positive reaction to complaints of customers	❖ <i>can explain how complaint involved acquisition of new knowledge or skill(s) or a change of work procedure(s) etc in particular work context(s)</i>



# Use of e-portfolio

- Development of e-portfolio
- Dual purpose
  - Individual award
  - Knowledge sharing
- Key features
  - ease of use – minimum skills
  - small amount of text / little translation required
  - Interface with Inflow website + standalone
- User / reviewer / assessor facilities
- <http://inflow.eu.com/eportfolio>

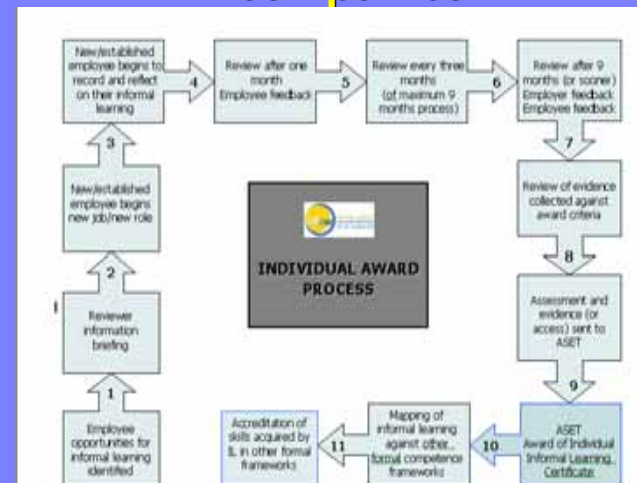


# Progress to date – piloting

- Initial piloting completed and first awards made
- Current piloting in Latvia, Sweden, Germany, France, Spain, UK (75 SMEs)
- French Example



# Integration of processes within companies



# Thank you for your attention

Have you any questions or comments?

