

WE ARE HALFWAY THROUGH THE PROJECT!

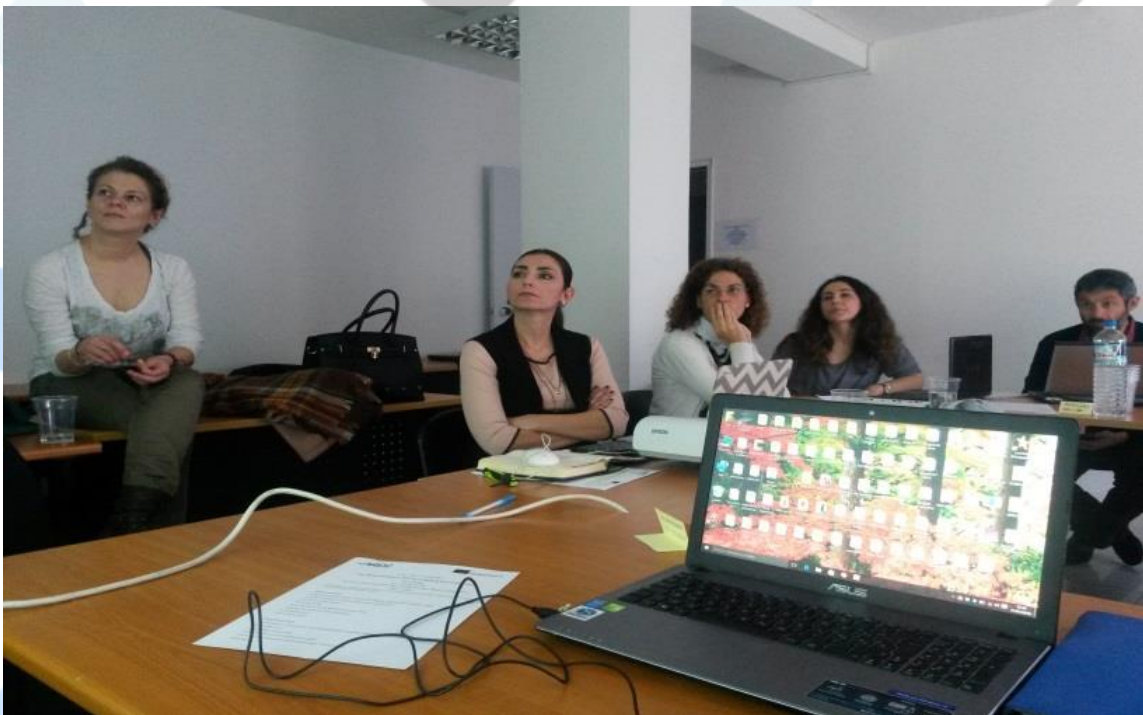
So... we are halfway through the project!

Many things have been completed, and others are about to start.

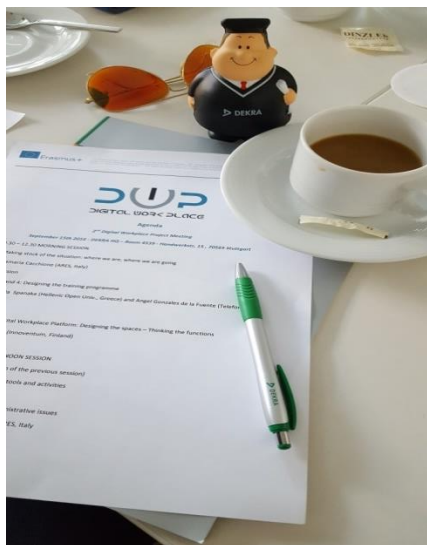
In this second newsletter we tell you about the project meetings and multiplier events, and about an interview made by TIM - the mobile branch of Telecom Italia – with Annamaria Cacchione of ARES.

Here we are and let's start!

We were in marvelous Athens for our Digital Workplace kick off meeting, the 21st-22nd January 2016. We set up goals and activities, and began our adventure in the world of digital and remote work.



On the 15th September 2016 we had the second project meeting in Stuttgart, Germany, at Dekra headquarters. We enjoyed the company of Herr Dekra – next to the sunglasses in the picture.



The following day we had our first multiplier event.

Multiplier events are meant to meet local stakeholders to present them the project and discuss relevant issues.

We met several managers and workers who shared with us their good and bad digital work experiences. We learnt about the digital work situation in Germany and got a better understanding of possible constraints in applying innovative organizational models.



The third project meeting was held in Madrid, at the amazing central Telefonica offices, the last 26th and 27th January 2017.

We also had our second multiplier event there, and we had the opportunity to meet several local companies and exchange ideas and practices with them. We learnt about the Spanish situation in the field of innovation in organizational working models and we found interesting differences and similarities with other EU countries.



Our Digital Workplace dream team! From the left: Colin Steadman (DEKRA), Gianluca Angelicola (ARES), Adamantia Spanaka (HOU), Paola Pietrangelo (ARES), Angel Gonzales (TELEFONICA), Annamaria Cacchione (ARES), Dietmar Metzger (DEKRA), Achilles Kameas (HOU), Janne Leinonen (INNOVENTUM), Jokin Garatea (GAIA).

This is the English version of the interview made by TIM with Annamaria Cacchione of ARES, Italy.

Learning about Smart Working

www.telecomitalia.com/tit/en/ambiente-sociale/intervista-annamaria-cacchione.html

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Learning about Smart Working

Annamaria Cacchione tells us about The Digital Workplace European project and the state-of-the-art of remote working in Europe

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“Technologies are absolutely essential to spread Smart Working, but - first of all - it is important to initiate a cultural change in attitude on the part of both business owners and workers. The European project The Digital Workplace can facilitate this process.”

Annamaria Cacchione, scientific manager at Ares

Visit the website Digital Workplace

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We report it here because it provides a comprehensive summary of the projects and of its outcomes so far, while presenting the future plans and goals.

Annamaria Cacchione's interview for TIM

Smart working is an important lever for the digital transformation of companies and the country.

Adopting forms of flexible working means not only changing the culture of companies and managers, but also spreading more digital skills among its employees.

"The Digital Workplace" multinational project was created in response to precisely this need. We talked to Annamaria Cacchione, scientific manager at Ares, the Italian professional education organisation leading the project.

The Digital Workplace is an education program to promote the dissemination of Smart Working good practices. What is it? What are the objectives of the project and who does it refer to?

The Digital Workplace is a European professional training project, within the Erasmus plus program. The primary objective is to promote the spread of a new model of work organization, based on results and not presence as such and, therefore, independently and remotely achievable. There are several ways to define smart working, from remote working to agile working: we called the project Digital Workplace, starting from the concept of digital working, because our initial focus was technology.

The project addresses two targets:

business owners and HR managers

workers, both employees and freelance.

The project is multidisciplinary and multinational. Who conceived the idea and who are the players involved at present?

The idea emerged a little while ago, in 2014, during the UNESCO Mobile Learning Week in Paris, because together with friends and colleagues we had to reflect on the new organizational models that exploit new technologies and, in particular, on remote working and the need for training in this regard.

The players involved are currently

the Italian professional training organization **ARES** (lead partner), the association for which I am scientific manager

Telefónica Learning Services, Telefónica's educational arm

GAIA, an association of business owners in the Basque Country

DEKRA Akademie, the educational sector that refers to the German Volkswagen

Hellenic Open University, a Greek "open university"

Innoventum the Finnish software house as technology partner

In short, partners from different countries and complementary in their areas of specialization.

At what stage is the project? What are the next steps?

We can say that the project is halfway. We plan on bringing a first version of the course online on the digital workplace platform in March 2017, but a lot of video content will be added later.

An important next step is the Learning Week that we are organizing in Italy for the month of March: it is open to all business owners and workers who will then be responsible for the next phase of the project, that of the pilot trials, to be held in Italy, Germany and Spain, with the aim of testing the entire training program in the field.

What are the basic skills behind the digital transformation promoted by Smart Working?

Smart Working requires a radical change of attitude, no longer based on presence in the office, but on objectives. Transversal skills are, therefore required, similar to so-called soft skills, which can be split into four main areas both for business owners and workers:

- self-management skills, hence, self-discipline
- the ability to collaborate remotely with colleagues and superiors
- the ability to communicate appropriately using technological tools
- lateral thinking and so-called change management

The online course modules were built on these four areas.

Smart Working is based on a mature relationship between company and worker. What elements can promote this relationship? Can technologies (video conferencing, instant messaging, etc.) speed up this process?

Technologies are absolutely essential, because they constitute the environment in which Smart Working can originate, but this is not everything. Even before using technological tools properly, it is important to initiate a cultural change in attitude on the part of both business owners and workers.

How is the online course structured? Is there a final certificate?

It is a MOOC course, therefore an online course, open and free to everyone. It is really two parallel courses, similar but with some differences: one is addressed to business owners, the other is designed for workers. Both are divided into 4 weeks for 4 modules, where each module covers a specific area of expertise.

The final certification is an important part of the program. We designed it taking into account not only the content learned during the course, but also the skills that a person may have gained in other situations. To do this, we have adopted the European Commission's ECVET system, which serves to ensure the transparency and recognition of qualifications between different systems.

We are also planning to use open badges, ensuring the transparency and the innovativeness of the system, and we are doing this together with the Italian agency headed by CINECA, which deals with open badges at national level.

Such a project requires a lot of research, from analysis of international best practice to comparison with the actual employees of the companies. How did you go about it?

We planned a first phase of research, entrusted to Spanish partner GAIA. The research was carried out both by analysing international best practice and submitting questionnaires to workers and business owners. It is not a search valid for statistical purposes, but it has served to give us an idea of what is happening in Europe.

What is the most critical element you have had to deal with so far?

When planning the project, the most complex aspect was designing the certification.

From the point of view of promoting Smart Working, however, the most critical element continues to be the resistance we encounter in business owners and workers.

Being a multi-national project, it seems natural to ask how Italy is seen. How is our country positioned compared to other European States? Which countries are more culturally ready and advanced for Smart Working? Which are the ones which have more difficulty?

It should be said that, at the moment, except in rare cases, there are no reliable official data on Smart Working, either for Italy or for other countries. From the data collected through research like ours or from direct experience, however, striking evidence has emerged. We particularly expected Smart Working to be more common practice in northern countries as opposed to the southern ones, which include Italy. This is true, but only in part. Two emblematic cases refute this perception.

One, negatively, concerns Germany. We thought it was very advanced in the promotion and implementation of Smart Working, however it is not, on the contrary it is quite behind for two reasons: on the one hand, the prevailing type of industry, the manufacturing industry, which it is impossible to translate into remote working, because if it comes to assembling pieces, it cannot be done at a distance; on the other, because the legislation on work organization is so strict that it often discourages the application of Smart Working.

A positive case is Spain, which is almost comparable to advanced countries like the UK. In particular, there are some communities, like the Basque Country, where many public administrations have produced important Smart Working programs and are analysing the pros and cons.

The most advanced European country, again without being able to count on reliable statistical data, is probably the Netherlands: in some companies in the Netherlands the concept has even reversed, so that it is the employer who has to justify having the employees at the office and not the other way round.

In Italy the situation is patchy: there are very advanced examples, like the one you are experiencing at TIM, but many are still lagging behind. The most innovative cases are the ones

regarding startups, especially in the IT sector, that are born digital, we could say they are native digital, because they are naturally result-orientated rather than control-oriented.

What obstacles still prevent a massive expansion of Smart Working in companies in Italy today?

The main obstacle is anxiety, both in terms of a need for control by the business owner and the fear of breaking patterns that are so deep-rooted to believe that they are the only ones possible. Anxiety is a major obstacle for workers as well, who fear that some of their ability will not be recognized or that they will lose contact with others.

Another major obstacle is due to the strong conservatism of the legislation, a problem experienced not only in Italy.

While awaiting legislative developments, I hope that The Digital Workplace project will make a significant contribution to cultural change and thinking in companies and workers.