

Project Title: Communicating in Multilingual Contexts meets the Enterprises: Awareness and development of academic and professional language skills for mobility students

Project Acronym: CMC_E

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CMC_E Survey Report

The CMC_E survey shows that percentages of contacts which western companies carry out with eastern areas are sensibly increasing. This shows that the companies involved in the survey are gradually transferring their businesses to Eastern countries, in particular Asia and Mediterranean Areas.

Companies interviewed in the six partner-countries where the survey was carried out highlight that, beyond English, French (13%) and German (11%) are the most used languages when having commercial relations. Indeed, English, French and German are respectively the best known languages among employees and the most required ones for employees of enterprises which carry out business in European and international markets. The knowledge of foreign languages is, thus, an essential component for enterprises which want to carry out business outside the country. In fact, we can see that the interviewed enterprises have considered almost all variables related to the language competence issue as an important aspect to develop. As a consequence, a rather large number of employees, within all sectors, need to acquire or improve language competences. In particular, sales, marketing and managerial areas need highly qualified language competent employees.

The investigation underlines that 20% of loss of business opportunity is due to the low (or lack of) knowledge of foreign languages in commercial negotiation. Although this is a low percentage in the global data, it represents the fifth part of commercial loss. Therefore, it is not acceptable to waste business for these reasons. It will be advisable to create opportunities which can help decrease these inefficiencies. Among the selected variables, “communicating over the telephone” is the context which creates major difficulties. Other critical factors are: speaking competence in formal contexts and understanding

specific/technical lexicon (9%), understanding written professional material and using specific/technical lexicon (8%). Again, these difficulties are due to the low knowledge of foreign languages. Therefore, listening and speaking skills, telephone skills, and writing skills are considered as strategic competences to achieve.

In order to carry out relations with foreign companies, the importance of the following variables is highlighted: company/sales literature or web sites offered in foreign languages, language competence is a criterion for staff selection, use of the target language of the customers, involvement of external interpreters/translators for foreign trade. Indeed, the interviewed companies underline that language skills are needed with the aim of entering new markets and capture new customers. In particular, specific topics which are considered relevant for the development of foreign language competences are: Business and Finance, Marketing (15%), Administration (14%), Technology (7%) and Development and Research (7%).

Yet, 75% of the sample companies affirms that they do not offer training for their employees. These data highlight that a didactic offer, in terms of language training, will be very relevant within enterprise contexts.