

GESTPYME

GESTPYME is a training project for SMEs launched in Catalonia under the EU ADAPT Initiative. The project has a broad scope and operates on the premises that training is one of the most effective tools for keeping people in employment and achieving a qualitative improvement in the management of SMEs. Overall responsibility for GESTPYME was largely undertaken by CEAC, a leading European private training group and Fomento del Trabajo Nacional, the largest Entrepreneurs Association in Catalonia.

Training workers for the future

GESTPYME is a very practical training programme designed to meet the real needs of workers and to be of benefit to the companies who employ them. As a great deal of care has gone into the development of relevant, accessible courses, positive results have been recorded. For instance, businesses are better placed to adapt to the constant changes taking place in the work environment, yet they are able to provide greater job security. Other benefits include:

- Improved on-the-job training skills
- A better working atmosphere
- A more competitive approach

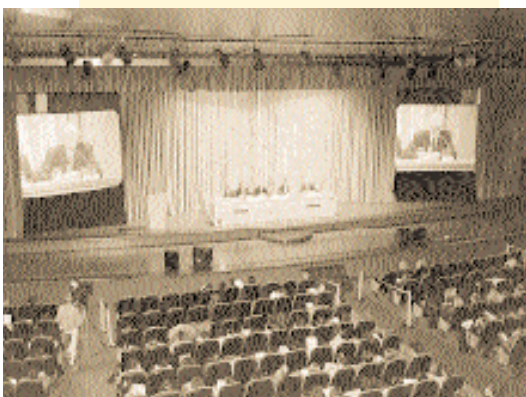
GESTPYME was designed for a variety of different situations. Training programmes were tailored to meet the varying needs of the workforce. Training was provided for workers needing to upgrade their skills before taking up newly-created job positions or for people who need to polish certain skills due to internal promotion. A clear need for effective training courses

was identified in companies where workers faced the threat of redundancy. In cases of job loss, considerable retraining is often necessary. Recently unemployed workers (no longer than three months) were also taken under the wing of GESTPYME and provided with the opportunity of learning new skills.

What's on offer?

A broad range of courses were set up to meet a wide variety of employee needs. These include: Commercial strategies (CE), Managing the EURO challenge in SMEs (GEP), Environmental Management in SMEs (GMP), SME Management (GPME), Management Skills (HD), Labour Relations (RL), Negotiation Skills (TN) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). All but one of these courses covers OHS and WHP to some degree.

As far as teaching tools and materials are concerned, all courses use videos and CD-ROMs as well as written material. Communication between participants, tutors and supervisors takes place within a



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Virtual Campus situation, making optimum use of a range of modern learning tools and technologies.

A key factor in GESTPYME's success has been its ability to assess and improve the courses it runs. Part of this analysis includes feedback from participants via a 'training process evaluation' system. Despite the potential disadvantages of long distance learning it has in fact proved to be a very positive experience. Most students made excellent use of the Virtual Campus facilities. Adequate contact was maintained between pupils and tutors and it was possible to create a supportive atmosphere. Students were motivated and showed great enthusiasm for their work. The teaching tools and educational materials used were also considered to be highly effective.

Although all the courses proved to be very popular, the Occupational Health and Safety course was particularly highly thought of and well subscribed to. The success of all GESTPYME's courses is reflected in the encouragingly high numbers of students completing them. A total of 3,503 students completed their courses, this was out of an initial figure of 4,463 enquiries and 3,806 people enrolling on courses.

Learning lessons for the future

A number of lessons can be drawn out of a project such as this.

Detailed assessment of the programmes on offer enables the organisation to create even more effective courses. By obtaining feedback from participants and the companies who employ them it is possible to find out what the training preferences of SMEs are, not only in terms of content but also relating to training tools. Continuing to meet the needs of SMEs in an effective and relevant manner is absolutely crucial.

Other useful elements that can be developed further include:

- Learning how to manage successful fund-raising strategies
- Learning how to build good partnership agreements and developing effective technical and marketing strategies.

In all training programmes launched by CEAC, regardless of the subjects involved, students are given an excellent opportunity to familiarise themselves with accessing and using new IT tools. IT is an integral part of almost every type of employment and is an essential skill to master.