



ALL-ECOM



Summary of transnational results

“Skills Gap Study” WP2

“Analysis of training offers and innovative learning methods” WP3

**Carried out in
Spain
Portugal
Austria**

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Brief Presentation of the Commerce Sector on E-commerce (Austria / Portugal / Spain)

Developments in the commerce-sector have been influenced by several drivers, like globalization, demographic changes, the economic crisis and the resulting decline in purchasing power, technological innovations and the use of e-commerce. The globalization of markets has led to the setting up of global supply and sales networks, and to the implementation of ICT supported business activities.

Consumers tend to live longer, are more urban and diverse, have a higher level of education and are more informed. Therefore, they are more demanding, look for products that have integrated services and are increasingly using information and communication technologies, resulting in new consumption patterns, as the multi-channel approach to the market (cross-channel).

A higher valuation of assistance and service quality, as well as of advising function is required.

Concerning the information obtained from three countries involved in ALL-ECOM, 70% of Portuguese and Spanish companies and 62% of Austrian companies in commerce-sector belong to the retail-sector. The overwhelming majority of enterprises in Portugal, Spain and Austria are micro and small companies. In all of the three countries the commerce sector is an important employer, micro and small companies are responsible for the highest proportion of persons employed (65%).

Most employees in the wholesale-sector are men, in contrast to the retail -sector, where most of the persons employed are women.

The commerce-sector in all three countries is characterized by a low education level, in Portugal and Spain, a very significant percentage of people employed in the sector had level 2 of qualification or lower. In Austria 63% of all employees have completed an apprenticeship or middle vocational school, 15% have none vocational training, but only compulsory education.

The results we obtained with a questionnaire for a group of employees from the trade sector, made for ALL-ECOM project, shows us that most of them have a qualification level between 1 and 3 EQF: 38% of Austrian, 50% of Portuguese and 66% of Spanish respondents had only level 1 or 2.

Regarding the numbers of use of ICT in the sector, we observe that more than 85% of enterprises have internet connection. This is indicative of the degree of importance given by companies to this type of tool and follows the global development of society in the use of ICT.

However, the proportion of companies who use e-commerce to give or receive orders by electronic networks is only 39% in the three countries. Austria is the country with the highest proportion of enterprises using e-commerce (67%). More than 80% of Portuguese companies use internet in order to interact with public authorities and others, against 70% in Spain and 24% in Austria.

With regard to human resources with specific expertise in this area, we can verify a low-percentage of this expertise in small businesses. Large companies are the ones where we can find the highest percentage of employees with ICT skills.

New occupations

There is an awareness concerning the fast development of e-commerce which leads to new occupations in the sector. According to a study from the European Commission on digital competitiveness, the quick development of ICTs opens new perspectives for business and the creation of new professions.

The increase of new technologies in the commerce-sector has brought severe challenges and we have to take into account the development of new profiles and jobs (or functions) in the sector. These trends lead to monitoring the integration of these technologies in the development strategies of business activities and in the anticipation of more skills, so that companies can be more competitive.

In the commercial area, we can highlight the following needed profiles: **buyer** who should have the ability to negotiate and to make purchase orders at the best price, expanding the function to the buying services and to the knowledge of other markets; **sales-manager** and **commercial technician**.

In the area of logistics, we can identify **logistics manager**; **shopkeeper**; **responsible for deliveries**; **maintenance technician and expert**.

Concerning the supporting functions, we highlight **administrative worker**; **financial, accountant, internet and information system specialist**; **marketing technician**; **quality and sustainable development technician**.

Regarding with the impact of new technologies in the sector, promoted by multichannel consumers, we can add the new jobs (or functions), such as those described below:

- Analytical Web systems
- Commerce director
- CRM manager
- Data security expert
- Database administrator
- Design of technical and web functions manager;
- E-business manager
- E-Commerce Consultant
- E-commerce developer
- E-commerce front office and / or back office technician
- E-commerce operator;
- E-merchandiser
- E-Lawyer
- E-logistician
- E-procurement manager
- Entrepreneurs of e-commerce
- Graphic designer
- Online Marketing Consultant
- Online merchant
- Online store controller
- SAP Consultant
- Specialist for e-tourism
- Systems manager
- Technical specialist in e-commerce
- The "integrator"
- Traffic controller

Qualification frameworks (NQF, EQF)

This process of developing new occupations also means that the national qualification frameworks (NQF) and the existing qualifications in the commerce area have to be revised in order to integrate the dimension “e-commerce”. New qualifications need to be created and integrated in the NQF and EQF.

New and different skills are increasingly required - a mix of technology skills, business and entrepreneurship, a strong customer orientation, foreign languages, negotiating skills and contracts management, project management and the ability to work in multidisciplinary teams. Job-profiles and vocational training have to be adapted in order to face this new reality, what means a significant challenge for social partners.

Training offers

The current qualifications have to be improved and updated, in order to respond to the skills needs resulting from the trends identified in this analysis.

During 2014 e-commerce has shown an average increase of 21,8% compared to the previous year. It means that shopping habits are changing. The permanent development and change in the sector can only be faced if workplaces are seen as learning-places and if life-long learning becomes a part of personnel development, which means a great challenge for companies.

We face the situation that requirements are not compatible with the (low) qualification level of the current staff in commerce. Therefore certain key competences have to be increased and/or developed to enable employees to deal with the field of e-commerce.

Prerequisite for this personnel development are efforts to promote lifelong learning, reduce fear of this new field of work, increase affinity to new technology and to provide target group oriented access to innovative learning methods.

In the result of the survey regarding “training offers used in companies” there is a striking difference in the perception of employees and employers concerning the offers, especially “training on the job” where employers estimate a substantially higher proportion, and “none” which is indicated by significantly more employees. In general employers see more training offers used in companies than employees.

Responsible persons for personnel development have to be involved in the development of training offers in order to provide an insight into the “reality” of employees and to improve the quality of internal trainings.

Depending on the level of qualification and the field of work trainings covering “key skills”, “digital and technological skills” and “soft skills” have to be developed:

Key skills

- Learn to learn / motivation to be updated / Lifelong learning
- General computer literacy skills

Digital and technological skills

- General e-commerce skills
- Role and function of e-commerce
- Working with new technological applications
- Training concerning online consumers, motivation, purchase, marketing
- Using social media to communicate with clients
- Using of e-commerce and social media to increase sales

Soft skills

- Communication: ability to communicate via new technologies “at distance” (spoken and written communication)
- Training concerning foreign languages and intercultural skills
- Planning skills: using IT-supported tools for planning connected with “traditional” planning
- Problem solving skills: multichannel business models “create new problems”
- Stress management: new technologies cause expectations that everything has to be dealt quickly; multichannel costumers are well informed and critical

Innovative learning methods

Learning methods which position the learner (her/his learning aims, her/his learning style, circumstances, ...) into the center do not rank the pedagogical approach behind the technical approach and use a diverse mixture of methods.

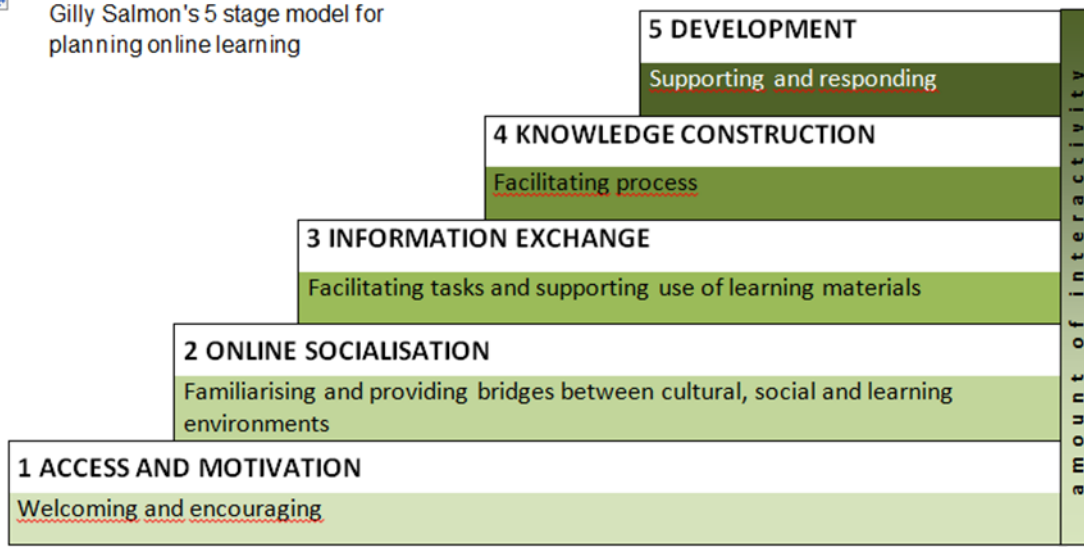
Though a gender- and diversity-perspective always has to be integrated, the most important factor to gain knowledge is motivation and curiosity.

If we aim to provide access to the various forms of e-learning for employees in the commerce-sector the step “online socialisation” is indispensable. The analysis showed, that the respondents preferred only those innovative learning methods they knew which does not automatically mean that these methods are the most suitable.

We propose to follow Gilly Salmon’s 5 stage model for planning online learning as a guide through the ALL-ECOM development process of tools and trainings.



Gilly Salmon's 5 stage model for planning online learning



Final comments

The fast evolution of e-commerce requires an increased investment in technology and human resources in the sector, to train employees and employers in key skills, technological skills and soft skills in order to achieve a higher business performance. Given the gap between the required and existing skills in e-commerce it is urgent need to focus on the improvement of skills in this area. The lack of ICT skills of managers and entrepreneurs, responsible for managing businesses, may be critical to the success of their companies.

It is important to take into account the rather low qualification level of employees and employers who face a multichannel situation of business in various forms in their practical work, for which they are unprepared.

Life-long-learning, in general, has to get a more central position in life and work-concepts, because, in the broad sense, life-long-learning is not seen as an essential requirement for personal and professional development, as well as an investment in the competitive performance of the company. The company has to be seen as a learning place by employers and employees.

It's urgent to define the set of qualifications and the set of skills and training references/standards that will require a reassessment in order to better adjust themselves to the sector's needs. On the other hand, it is essential to review the currently ICT qualifications and references, assuring the possibility for their restructuring, so that they can be more adjusted to market needs and more easily upgradeable.

The connection between educational institutions and companies and the urgent adaptation of training offers to the needs of employers is essential, as well as high quality trainings and a framework that guarantees the employability of trainees.

From the point of view regarding training offer, it is logical that if the skills to be developed are around "e" (e-marketing, e-consumer, e-commerce, etc.), then the methods used in "e" should be perfectly appropriate and should cover different levels (stages are required and must be considered). The pedagogical and technical components must be seen as two essential parts of a whole. We cannot value one and neglect the other, both are essential for a proper and effective training.