

## PM WORLD TODAY – FEATURED PAPER – JULY 2008

**Enhancing Vocational Language Skills and Working Culture Awareness of European Construction Professionals**

Authors: The EVLAC GROUP

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*Editor's note: This paper was presented at the **PM-04: 4th SCPM & 1st IPMA/MedNet Project Management Conference in the Mediterranean, 29-31 May 2008, Chios Island, Greece** (<http://2008.pmgreece.gr>). As a Media Partner for that event, PMForum offered to republish selected papers in PM World Today. This paper is included here with the consent of the author and the permission of the Centre for Construction Innovation of the National Technical University of Athens ([www.innovation.view.gr](http://www.innovation.view.gr)) who is the copyright holder of the conference proceedings. All conditions and disclaimers of the copyright holder pertain.*

**Abstract**

The inability to operate effectively in markets with different working cultures/practices and languages has been an important barrier to the mobility of construction industry professionals. There has been an increasing necessity to improve communication skills of construction professionals by vocational and professional training programmes which enhance the linguistic and cultural knowledge of the graduates and/or professionals. The outcomes of LANCAM project (Languages for Contract Administration and Management in Construction) fulfilled these requirements for teaching and learning in English, German and Spanish with the construction related content. The aim of the current project (EVLAC) has been to adopt the methodology and the results of LANCAM project to Turkish, Austrian, Greek and English cases. The tangible outcomes will be language training materials based around specific scenarios which typify the key stages in the implementation of a construction project and will incorporate a range of authentic input and that can be reached via internet and digital media. The intangible outcomes will be enhancement of vocational language skills and working culture awareness in European construction industry and improvement of mobility of the construction labour force. The aim of this paper is to report on the initial findings of the project together with the findings of the LANCAM project.

**Keywords**

Culture, Construction Industry, Europe, Vocational Language

## 1. Introduction

There is an increasing necessity to improve communication skills of construction professionals by vocational and professional training programmes which enhance the linguistic and cultural knowledge of the graduates and/or professionals. The outcomes of LANCAM (Languages for Contract Administration and Management in Construction ) fulfilled these requirements for teaching and learning in English, German and Spanish together with the working cultures in UK, Germany and Spain.

The methodology and the results of LANCAM project will be used to develop new learning materials that will focus on the construction industry related work culture/ practice issues in Turkey, Greece, Austria and UK, while focusing on Turkish, Greek, German and English language learning and teaching.

## 2. The LANCAM Project

LANCAM was a pilot project funded within the language stream of the Leonardo Da Vinci training programme of the European Commission and took two years to complete, from 1999 to 2001. The project responded to a recognised need to facilitate the mobility of construction industry professionals within the European Union, by encouraging construction business which crosses national borders. The project outcomes focused on development of an e-learning material for teaching and learning in English, German and Spanish with the construction related content.

The content structure is given in Figure 1.

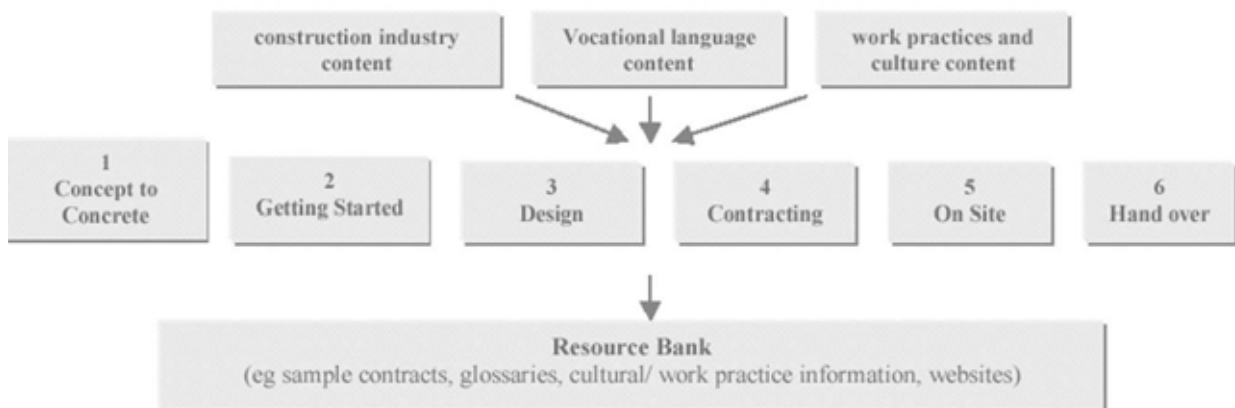


Figure 1 LANCAM Content Structure (Rogerson- Revell, 2003)

The e-learning material focused on all of the aspects of language learning, i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking within the frame of this content structure.

### 3. Aims and Objectives of EVLAC Project

The aim of EVLAC is to adopt the methodology and the results of LANCAM project to develop new learning materials that focuses on the construction industry related work culture/ practice issues in Turkey, Greece, Austria and UK, while focusing on Turkish, Greek, German and English language learning and teaching. The main objectives are to:

- increase the mobility of construction professionals throughout Europe,
- decrease the misunderstandings between nationals due to cultural differences,
- introduce different work cultures and practices to vocational students while increasing their language abilities,
- provide an e-learning material which is user friendly, easy to access and can be further expanded for both different languages/ cultures and for changing working practices.

### 4. Methodology of EVLAC Project

The project will address these objectives by;

- undertaking questionnaires to identify the communicative needs of construction professionals/companies and to gather useful information about working in construction project management in Europe,
- preparing an e-learning material that provides language training materials based around specific scenarios which typify the key stages in the implementation of a construction project and will incorporate a range of authentic input and that can be reached via Internet and digital media,
- implementing the e-learning material in vocational language and construction management classes (both at graduate and postgraduate levels),
- implementing the e-learning material by different construction professionals like architects, project managers and engineers in selected construction companies,

- getting feedback from the users and taking corrective action if required,
- introducing the final version of the e-learning material into the vocational training programmes and construction professionals/companies through seminars, and publications.

## 5. Current Stage of EVLAC Project

The project is at its initial stages. 2 different needs analysis questionnaires have been developed by the group members. First questionnaire is aimed at construction professionals who need language training themselves. Second questionnaire is aimed at construction professionals who can give an overview of their company's language needs. Each questionnaire has been translated into Greek, German and Turkish. Project members have started to distribute the questionnaires in their own countries. The questionnaires can also be reached through the web site ([www.evlac.mku.edu.tr](http://www.evlac.mku.edu.tr)) of the project. The results of the questionnaires will be collected together and statistical analysis will be undertaken in order to draw conclusions on the needs and expectations of European construction professionals related with the foreign language usage and learning. These findings will then form the basis of the e-learning language material to enhance vocational language skills and working culture awareness of European construction professionals.

## 6. Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to introduce EVLAC project to construction academics and professionals. The project has the aim of developing e-learning language courses to enhance vocational language skills and working culture awareness of European construction professionals. The project will last for two years and is currently at its initial stages. Developments about the project can be followed through the project web site ([www.evlac.mku.edu.tr](http://www.evlac.mku.edu.tr))

## 7. References

Rogerson- Revell, . P. (2003), "Developing a cultural syllabus for business language e-learning materials", *ReCALL* 15(2): 155–168, Cambridge University Press.

Project website: [www.evlac.mku.edu.tr](http://www.evlac.mku.edu.tr)

## 8. Acknowledgement

EVLAC project (LLP- LdV-TOI-2007-TR-048, Dec. 2007- Dec. 2009) is supported by Turkish National Agency within Life Long Learning Programme (Leonardo Da Vinci – Transfer of Innovation) of the European Commission.

*This paper was originally presented at the PM-04: 4th SCPM & 1st IPMA/MedNet Project Management Conference in the Mediterranean, 29-31 May 2008, Chios Island, Greece. It has been republished here with permission of the author and conference organizers. For information about the conference or to see the full proceedings, visit <http://2008.pmgreece.gr>.*

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