

## **2.2. Modular Education Network – ModENet**

### **Introduction**

ModENet (Modular Education Network) is a network of modular training providers as well as individual enthusiasts, researchers and experts across various disciplines who aspire to the modular approach in various fields of vocational education and training. One of the main aims of EMCET2 project was to create the network of training providers across Europe and beyond. The task was led by the team from Cambridge Professional Development (CamProf) with the co-operation of the rest of the partnership of the EMCET2 project. A four-phase strategy was proposed during the project kick-off meeting:

#### **Phase One:**

Market Research: to identify the target groups who could be the potential members of the Network and to gather information about their numbers, needs and expectations

#### **Phase Two:**

Product Definition: to develop the business plan, agree on the services to be offered, the institutional setup, devise the name, investigate the financial viability and pricing structure.

#### **Phase Three:**

Establishing the Brand: to create the functionality on the website, to develop the 'look and feel' on the website, and other materials such as a publicity brochure for the network, and to develop the legal framework, constitution and to identify office bearers for the network

Phase Four: Building Membership: to recruit members for the network and devise strategy for self-sustainability after the end of project

### **Market Research – Target Groups**

With the expansion of EU and more countries joining the Union, the size of population of EU has expanded to nearly 500 million and it is expected to grow still further. As EU has expanded dramatically, the scope of the Network across Europe is increasing significantly. Keeping in view the varied composition of EU countries in terms of size and structure, the estimated number of Vocational Education (VE) students and trainers is numbered in millions. For instance in UK alone the number of Vocational and Further Education (VE/FE) college students is over 6 Million. This huge pool of potential Network members in the shape of University researchers, VE/FE College lecturers, trade associations or professional vocational training providers could be linked together through the Network. Our market research conducted in 2006 suggests that the most likely members for the Network will be the vocational training providers in both public and private sectors (see below). All partners in the project have identified it as the area where the probability of finding members will be maximum.

In the first phase, market research was carried out in order to identify potential target groups who would become potential members of the Network. A further aim was to carry out needs analysis for the identified target groups in the partner countries and therefore a two-part questionnaire was prepared:

- Part 1 to know the likelihood of finding potential members from various sectors from partners' perspective.
- Part 2 for onward distribution to at least 10 potential members in each partner country.

A discussion paper containing the questionnaire was distributed to the partners and the questionnaire was also piloted with experts in the field of VE/FE in the UK; and the final draft was distributed to partners in February 2006. The summary of results from nine countries was presented to the second partners meeting in June 2006. Some issues and concerns were raised by the partners

throughout the process of data collection; and their concerns were addressed through web discussion and extended e-mail replies.

A summary of the potential market segments in each partner country is shown in Table 1 below: It is interesting to note that there are both similarities and differences in the potential target groups in different countries. The colleges of further education, universities, training providers as well as educational research institutes have emerged as highly potential target group within the project partnership.

Table 1: Countries identifying the Market Segments (category of person in type of organisation) likely to join the Network

Market Segments	Trainers	Researcher	Head of Institutions	Consultants /Experts	VE Students
Employers (internal Training/Staff Development)	U, P, S, F		P, G, F, Gr	P, I, E, F,	
Voluntary organisations/NGOs	S, E, F, Gr		I, G	P, I, G, E, H, Gr	
R& D organisations	P, E, SI	P, E, I, G, S, H, Gr, SI	E, I, G	U, P, E, I, G, H, Gr	P
Network/ Association of Training Providers	P, I, G, S, F, H, Gr, SI, Sp		P, I, G, S, F	U, P, I, G, S, F, H	
Professional Institutions	P, I, G, S, E, SI, Sp	P	P, I, G, S, E, F, Gr, Sp	P, I, S, F, Gr	
University/FE/ VE Departments	U, P, I, G, E, F, H, Gr, SI	U, P, I, Sp, G, S, E, F, SI	P, G, E, Gr	G, S, E, F, H, Gr, SI	U, P, I, G, E, F
Educational Research Institutes	P, I, SI, Sp	U, P, I, Sp, G, S, E, F, H, Gr, SI	P, G, S, E, H, Gr	P, G, S, E, F, H, Gr	
Vocational Education Training Providers	U, P, I, G, EGr, S	U, P, I, E, Gr	U, P, I, G, S, E, H, G, R, SI	U, I, E, H	
Trade Associations	U, F	G	U, P, I, F, H	G	

Key: U = United Kingdom, P = Poland, I = Italy, G = Germany, Sp = Spain, Gr = Greece, F = France, E = Estonia, SI = Slovenia, H = Hungary, S = Switzerland.

In Poland, UK and Italy, there is a high probability of of recruiting potential members from Educational Research Institutes and from Networks or Associations of training providers. On the other hand, all partners are of the view that there is least probability of recruiting potential members from Trade Associations, Employers or NGOs.

In response to part 2 of the questionnaire, we received 64 filled questionnaires from a variety of respondents: teachers, university trainers, and association of networks of small/medium enterprises. The most precise data set was obtained from Italy, however, due to small sample size (in some cases only two or three respondents), it is not meaningful to draw quantitative generalisations at national level. However it is possible to identify similar or different patterns in the opinions of the respondents, and to take all respondents together:

- Only 11% wanted to join the Network in order to communicate with other modular training providers on a regular basis. The reason for the small percentage might be due to the fact that not all respondents were training providers and others would be least interested to communicate with the training providers.
- On the other hand, 46% of the respondents mentioned their keen interest in exchanging ideas through the network. A possible explanation could be that more teachers/ trainers had responded to

the questionnaire. The implication is that the Network should provide a forum for on-line exchange of ideas.

- 42% of the respondents wanted to use the Network for increasing their network of contacts.
- Interestingly, 44% looked for the opportunity to sell courses and only 19% for the opportunity to buy courses from the Network.

In response to the question on how current needs were met and at what cost, there was a huge variety in responses. The time invested for meeting their current needs ranged between none to 150 hours with a cost ranging from nil to 3000 Euros in some cases. This indicates that a network with an affordable subscription would attract more individuals and organisations. One of the respondents mentioned that even a 'subscription to VET directory' costs £295 per year, which was quite a lot, and they do not want to subscribe to the directory. Though the individuals (as opposed to organisations) mentioned that they would be interested in selling their courses, none spent money for this, and they currently used their contacts and invested time to get information about new courses.

## **Brief Summary of Target groups in EMCET2 partner countries**

The partners provided information on the size and characteristics of the target groups in their country.

In UK, there are 171 universities and around 409 institutions of Further Education. There are over 6 million students nearly 150, 000 trainers in the area of vocational and further education. These target groups use modular training across various vocations and can be targeted as potential members for the Network. However virtually all this training is modular and modular training is already fully established.

Poland has a huge potential as modular vocational education and training is beginning to be introduced. There are over 20,000 vocational training providers, 1,000 vocational training consultancies and over 2,000 trade associations. Over 50 networks of training providers also exist and hence there is a high likelihood of recruitment of members to the Network from Poland.

In France people's access to further education and training is directly linked to their employment status. Employees can be trained as part of their company's training scheme or ask for personal training leave. French job-seekers, by benefiting from an additional qualification, can increase their chances of getting back into employment. AFCCI (Association of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry) are the second biggest training body in France after the National Ministry of Education. Each year the 540 training centres that they manage, train 500,000 students, apprentices, from first level qualifications through to higher business schools or engineering qualifications. The number of young people including apprenticed young people (in France apprenticeships of basic training) is about 747,000. Companies and public sector employees are around 3.5 million and generally get support from employment-based routes to training.

In Italy, training organisations and Universities are producing and executing training mainly connected to the productivity context aimed at SMEs, new immigrants and disabled people. New training is taking place for people with low qualifications or just graduate – looking for first employment – all of them are subject to 120 hours a year of "New apprenticeship training" in a modular setting. At present each provider is preparing their own modular content in the same subject area so there is a huge market of training providers and consultancies that would be interested in joining the Network.

Greece has high proportion of potential enthusiasts in the area of vocational education and training. Research carried out for the national Statistical Service of Greece in 2002 suggests that 9.2% of the population was involved in vocational training, from which 5.6% (6.9% men and 4.3% women) have attended and completed a vocational training course lasting more than six months.

In Estonia, there are two Educational Research Institutes and 76 VET schools enrolling 29,915 VET students. The number of graduates in the year 04-05 stood at 7049. This number suggests that there is likelihood of finding members for the Network from Estonian market.

In Germany, the number of young adults leaving general schools alone are about 950,000 and they will enter the training market in 2006-7. In addition, there will be young people seeking vocational education and training after leaving partially qualifying vocational schools or vocational preparation schemes, their number cannot be accurately estimated. Assuming the VET participation rate of 2003, about 593,000 new training contracts would have to be concluded nationwide in 2006-7 (Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2006).

Hungary has an estimated number of 23,000 VET trainers and around 216,000 VET students. The modular approach is quite new in the Hungarian context and it is estimated that a large number of individuals and organisations would join the Network. Spain has a slightly different system and 55 universities of higher education and 75 employment services are jointly responsible for providing training to the staff.

General data concerning VET and the school system in Switzerland shows somewhat similar trends. There are around 1.5M pupils and students (of whom 400,000 people participate at tertiary level, where modularisation could play a significant role). Also 130,000 secondary and tertiary level certificates and diplomas are delivered every year by training institutions. Those involved in providing training could be the potential member of the Network.

The estimates mentioned above provide the basis for reaching out to the potential target groups in the 11 partner countries. The figures mentioned above are estimates provided by the partners for their own countries and give an over-view of the potential market for the Network.

## **Definition of ModENet**

The partnership decided that the Network would need a better name than ENMTP (European Network for Modular Training Providers) and so an internal competition was held, which ultimately selected "ModENet" (Modular Education Network). This name was registered in Poland and the domain name [www.modenet.org](http://www.modenet.org) was purchased.

The partnership decided that the EMCET DataBase and ModENET should be brought together under a single organisation and management structure.

After careful deliberation and brainstorming, the EMCET2 partnership agreed the following vision and mission statements for ModENet:

### **Vision**

*ModENet (Modular Education Network) will become a self-sustaining network of modular education providers and enthusiasts across Europe and the rest of the world, known throughout the community of modular education providers in VET, the first source of expertise on modular education and training, with active participating members.*

### **Mission**

*ModENet's mission is to enable individuals within organisations to develop and share best practices and modules, enhancing their capability in developing career-oriented lifelong education.*

The next stage was to develop the business strategy for the network and the CamProf team drafted a comprehensive business plan for ModENet. The Business Plan built on the information from the market research. Its 15 pages provided sections on:

- the relationship between the EMCET database and the ModENet network,
- categories of membership,
- products and services,
- the market,
- subscription ratek,
- activities including those which are potentially income-generating activities,
- staffing,
- marketing strategy,

- corporate organisation,
- administration, responsibilities of the administration,
- governing body, responsibilities of the governing body,
- responsibilities of the ModENet members,
- the legal structure and constitution,
- critical risks and vulnerabilities: political, socio-economic, environmental, technological and others,
- financial projections.

Some of these sections are spelled out below. CamProf engaged John Konrad, the animator for the most successful CEDEFOP Virtual Communities, to advise it on how best to run the Network.

## **ModENet Offer**

ModENet aims to be the first point of contact for all training providers, researchers and enthusiasts interested in a modular approach to teaching/learning. ModENet offers:

### **for a Training Provider:**

ModENet is the 'one-stop-shop' bringing together potential buyers and sellers of training modules. Some of the featured benefits include:

- Global Networking with training providers from all across the world.
- Access to debate rooms, web blogs, and contact information about the special interest groups for the exchange of experiences and best practices.
- Opportunity to up-load and download information about training modules, and contact with other training providers.
- Unlimited access to training databank of modular training providers in various disciplines.
- An opportunity for international comparisons and benchmarking.
- The first point of contact for latest news and events in the field of modular education and training.

### **for an Individual Trainer/ Researcher:**

ModENet enables individuals to network with experts/ trainers and colleagues. They can exchange ideas, learn about latest developments, find links to relevant organisations and access to the latest research. They will also have an opportunity to publish their work.

### **for Enthusiasts:**

Those who wish to promote the use of training modules will find ModENet a great opportunity for connecting with the global community of like-minded enthusiasts, and fulfilling their training and professional development needs.

## **Types of Membership Offered**

It was decided to offer three types of Membership, with the subscriptions depending on whether the member is from a high or low GDP country.

- Individual ModENet membership – for those enthusiasts who don't buy or sell course modules, but want to participate in ModENet.
- Organisational membership – allows an unlimited number of staff of member organisations to benefit from individual membership of the ModENet network, exchanging expertise and using it for professional development.
- Advertising membership – allows member organisations to upload information of their modular training offer to the EMCET database and update it. Members of the organisation also benefit from membership of the ModENet network, exchanging expertise and using it for professional development. The annual fee is substantially higher than either of the above, and is dependent on the number of training modules advertised.

High GDP countries are defined as: in Western Europe (UK, IRL, D, F, I, CH, S, PT, Benelux, Nordic), North America, Middle East (Israel, Saudi, UAE, Oman), Far East (Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand). Other countries are considered to be low GDP countries and will be offered substantially lower subscription rates.

## **Establishing the ModENet Brand**

Having reached agreement on the nature of ModENet, it was possible to start creating the functionality and establishing the brand, At the same time, the legal statutes were carefully planned and the first draft of constitution of the network was created. The ITeE Graphics Department designed a house style for ModENet, which has been used for the website contents as well as for a brochure. A strategy was also devised for marketing and promotion of ModENet. As part of this branding, it was decided to rename the EMCET DataBase as “ModDB” so that it shares the brand image.

## **ModENet website: [www.modenet.org](http://www.modenet.org)**

The heart of the network is its website. CamProf engaged Elspeth and Mark Timmans, first to advise on how best to create the desired functionality, and then to build it. They recommended the use of Moodle software.

Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is ‘open source’ (and therefore free) and is a free Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and Learner Management System (LMS). Moodle has been developed for and by the educational community and provides extensive functionality to cover the requirements of the local school through to universities and hospitals. It is well established with over 30,000 education sites operating worldwide with 63 sites having more than 20,000 users. Moodle is acknowledged to be one of the easiest VLEs to download and upgrade. Moodle is free to download and use, making it a cost effective method of developing online communities. There are alternative open source VLEs but Moodle is the most established and widely used. Moodle is being constantly updated and improved by users in similar situations. There are no commercial influences or restraints imposed: Moodle allows client customisation without any of the constraints put on by proprietary versions. The Moodle website is extremely informative and facilitates collaborative support for users in a number of ways. The Moodle Community has over 200,000 registered users speaking in over 75 languages including discussions in Polish.

Although the requirements for the ModENet community differ from the traditional teacher /student relationship in which Moodle developed, there is all the functionality in Moodle which ModENet will need.

The site requires all users to register and be logged in before most of the site content can be viewed. A pre-login page welcomes users and outlines the site’s aims and facilities. Clicking the “login” button takes users to the login/registration page. When the user has logged in, the homepage appears with navigation to all of the site’s pages and features.

The homepage shows:

- Terms and conditions (link to).
- Classified advertising (potentially).
- Links to a chat room, glossary etc.

In addition there are screen areas containing:

- Calendar.
- Upcoming events.
- List of participants.
- Links to other websites such as ModDB.
- Latest news.

The core of the ModENet site is the discussion forums.

New users can register themselves as guests using “Email-based registration”. This system allows ModENet to collect personal information before automatically emailing a link which, when followed, allows the user to create an account. Users can specify in their account profile whether they can be contactable by email.

A privacy policy has been developed and a code of acceptable behaviour for members.

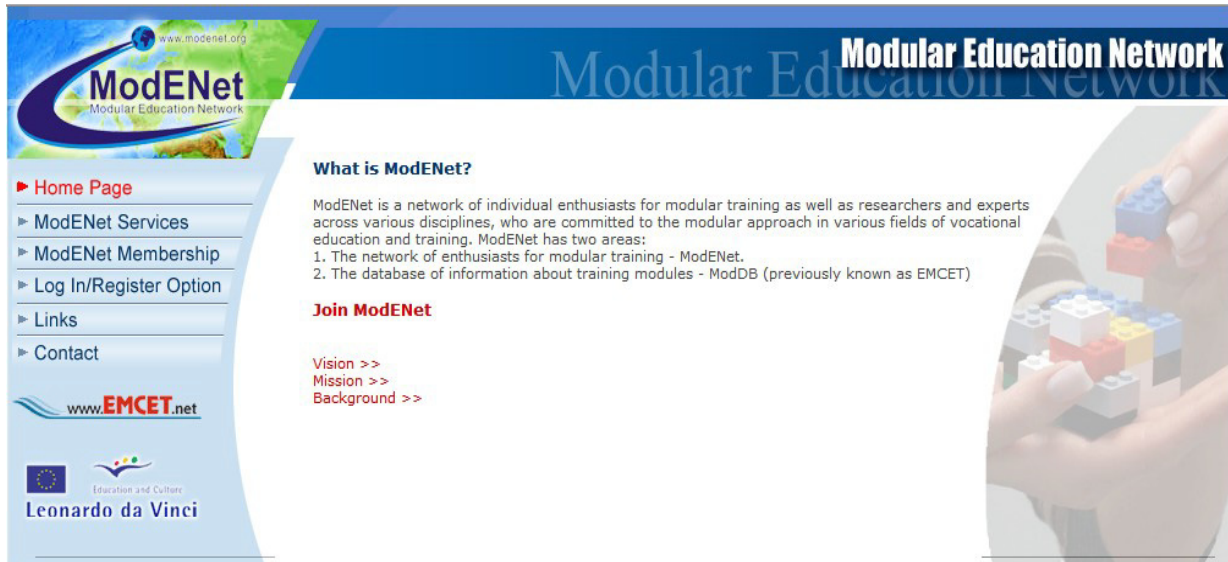


Figure 1. The main website of Modular Education Network – www.modenet.org

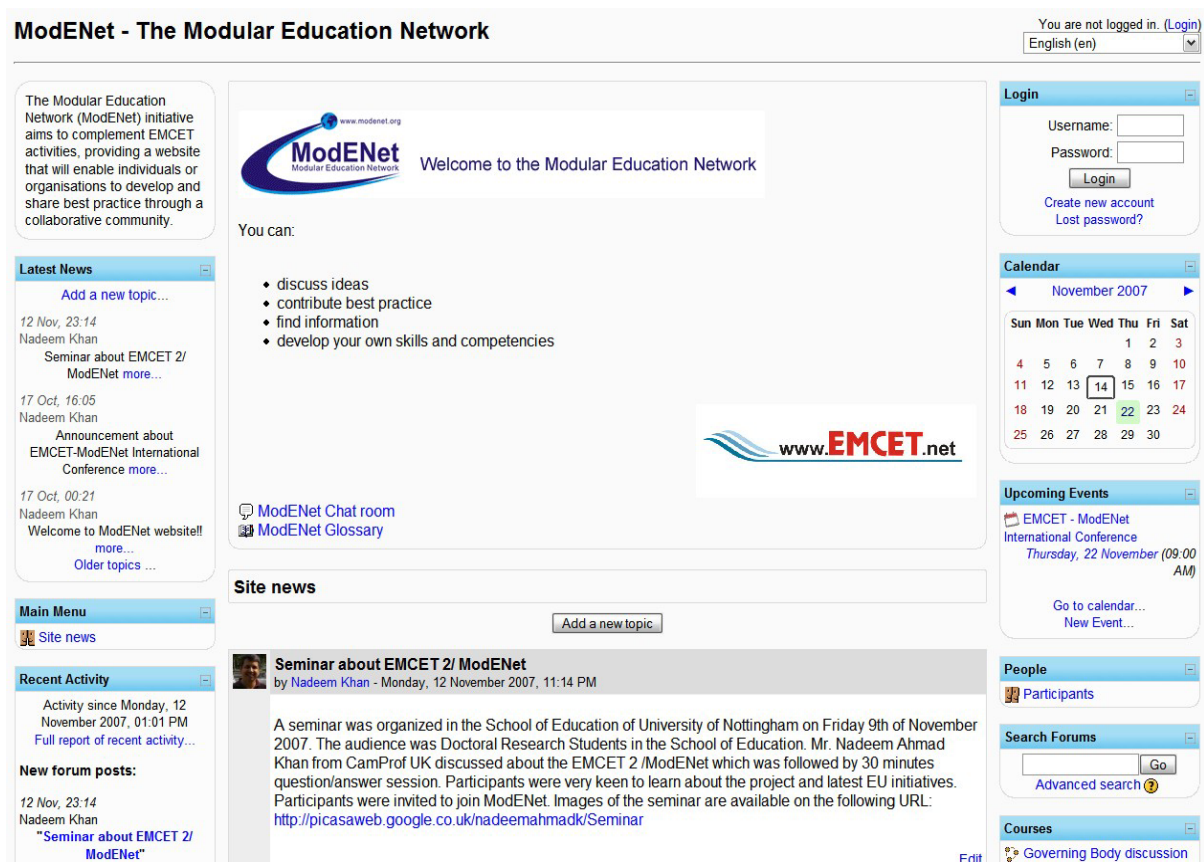


Figure 2. The discussion platform of Modular Education Network

## **Social networking**

ModENet aims to promote social networking between members. This is possible via a homepage link "Participant" which provides a list of all registered users (not necessarily logged in). From the list it is possible to see details of other users and view their profile, send messages and access their blogs and site contributions. Whenever a user makes a contribution to the discussion their name is attached, other users reading their contribution can view their profile. Users can upgrade and update their own profile by adding:

- Free text descriptions.
- Keywords describing interests, projects and so on.
- A Picture.
- Whether they are contactable by e-mail.

It is possible to host online meetings such as chat rooms and discussion forums. Such meetings can be time limited, restricted to specific user groups and can link to documents, links, websites, images, video or other types of content. Chat rooms allow multiple users to chat in real time achieving quick results but with only the administrator able to create a log of what has been 'said'. Discussion forums allow participation at times of the individual's choosing, and generate a visible record.

ModENet offers collaborative content development, for example of the glossary.

## **ModENet Governance**

The ModENet Constitution was agreed and it has been officially registered as an organisation in Poland. The first meeting of the Governing Body of ModENet was held after an EMCET2 Partnership meeting in Cologne, Germany. Mrs. Marta Jacyniuk-Lloyd was elected as the founding ModENet chairperson and the roles of secretary and treasurer have been entrusted to representatives from ITeE, Poland. Nadeem Khan is the Facilitator.

## **Recruiting ModENet Members**

At the end of the EMCET project, ModENet has been publicly launched at the EMCET conference in Warsaw. This included workshops for conference participants to learn about ModENet and the opportunity to try out its facilities with the support of the CamProf ModENet team.

In addition there is a membership recruitment campaign. All the partners have provided the facilitator with contact lists of potential members. The new members comprise individuals and organisations from well beyond the project partnership and from well beyond Europe. Invitations have been sent along with the ModENet brochure to over 500 experts/ individuals. Members have started on-line registration and we envisage membership to grow in the near future (see part 5.1).