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Common report of the testing phase

**ANALYSIS OF THE LEARNING PILLS THROUGH THE
NATIONAL TESTING REPORTS OF THE PARTNER
COUNTRIES**

Common report was prepared by I&F (*Ireland*).

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SNAIL PROJECT

Most of us have a frantic work rhythm, doing more of one task at once with the wrong idea we are being more efficient. This is the point where personal life and working rhythm need to find a balance, and here is where the slow movement claims for the needs of the people. The slow movement was born in Italy 30 years ago with the concept of “slow food”, asking for time to enjoy healthy and natural food instead of industrial fast food, but not only as a product, but as a philosophy to reconquer the time we had lost for ourselves. Adapted to the labor work, we can find concepts such as slow company, slow management and the essence of our project, slow work.

This is the origin of SNAIL, based on the idea of the higher productivity of works made with calm, dedication, attention to details and enjoyment of the creative process. It is Slow, Necessary And Improves the Level: SNAIL.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SNAIL PHILOSOPHY

Slow, necessary and improves the level is a vision to productivity and employability through work pace and individual satisfaction at workplace which is linked to the introduction of Emotional Intelligence in the workplace, cognitive flexibility and the development of social skills in the work world.

TESTING PHASE

A10 Test of learning pills.

A10.1 Edition of a National report and conclusions about the results of the testing phase.

A10.2 Creation a common European report in English version about the testing phase, conducted by I&F.

ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL REPORTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Each partner country has tested their own learning pills developed as part of IO1 in order to verify the implementation procedure of the tools created, as well as their objectives and usefulness for the targeted companies.

45 people participated in the testing phase, about 8 from each country.

Each partner organized a session (most of them were carried out in an on-line format) during which the participants interacted and exchanged opinions, impressions and points of view regarding the four training pills proposed by each organising partner. These forums took place after a brief training introduction on the type of tools delivered, along with its specific goals and its importance in the transition to a slow pace at the workplace.

At the end of the activity, the beneficiaries, male and female employers, were given an evaluation questionnaire. At the same time, the evaluation of the tools was proposed to the same trainers who proposed the tools for experimentation to the participants. Therefore, we proceeded on a double level: beneficiaries and trainers.

The most important point of the testing phase is to know the effectiveness of the Learning Pills developed within the consortium. Its pilot application during the testing phase allows us to validate them in a real context and verify their usefulness.

The questions posed about the Learning Pills were used to obtain feedback that can guide us in measuring the level of satisfaction among the participants during the testing phase and also getting some ideas on how to improve the tools and therefore modify them according to their suggestions.

Two detection levels were envisaged:

- the first level by the facilitators / teachers,
- the second by the participants of the trial.

All the information constitutes the end point of the experimentation and indicates the guidelines for any changes / additions to the proposed tools.

First level by the facilitators

It should be noted that contributions from the various partners and facilitators have been included in the report, reporting them as answers to the questions indicated below. Procedures were considered useful in this way, and not only to focus on the specific contents of the learning pills but in order to have information available in a single report useful for the evaluation and validation of the testing phase.

Serving as a guide for partners, the following questions were suggested:

1. Have the contents developed during the testing phase been useful and adapted to my expectations?

The participants of the testing phase agreed that the contents included in the pills were especially important in the connection to the COVID-19 crisis. In their opinion, these materials are necessary to be shared with people that suffer from burnout, stress and anxiety at work since these are symptoms that are increasing due to uncertainty of the situation.

Even the vast majority found the topic of slow work very interesting (some of them were unaware of the concept), they also pointed out that it is not always possible to apply this philosophy, especially when you have a boss who is always demanding tasks from you. As a consequence of the current frenetic pace of working life, participants also indicated that the quality of work is compromised, and its results are therefore worsening

In general, the modules have proved particularly useful for facing the new challenges of the current context and, overall, a qualitatively high level was indicated for what concerns the fulfilment of expectations.

2. Is what I have learned important for my professional practice? Why is it necessary?

The unanimity of the participants expressed a positive opinion with respect to the learning tools tested. Managers agreed that the training pills provided will help them in their professional practice because today companies put a lot of emphasis on the new techniques that help them build customer and employee loyalty and reward.

The fact that emotional skills are required nowadays at the workplace was highlighted. Indeed, even though it was seen as useful and important for professional practice, participants mentioned they needed practical help with its implementation.

Taking into account the opinion of the participants, it is difficult to take control of every minute of your day, especially when there are too many distractions, so it is necessary to

learn how to manage your time and learn tools that allow you to manage it in the most efficient way possible.

One of the participants pointed out that it is important to control the pace of work and to focus on what is being done, with dedication, care and calmness, as this can increase productivity in companies, allowing priority to be given to activities that benefit the personal development of workers.

According to the majority, what they have learned in the testing phase was important for their professional practice, as work organisation and time used for that were important elements in their work implementation. One participant mentioned that she saw many distractions at work and has now learned that they could be minimised by proper handling. They agreed that all employees, especially managers, faced several challenges at work and often lacked the knowledge on how to handle those challenges. With the workshop, participants agreed that they have gained a lot of practical tips that will enable them to tackle the problems better.

Overall, therefore, the validity of the tools and their applicability in the professional context was noted, as they offer interesting perspectives for orienting any sectoral company towards a slower and more productive philosophy in the long term.

3. Have you acquired knowledge of emotional skills that can help you in your work?

The participants indicated that the development of emotional intelligence in companies is a good way to improve the environment for workers in order to reduce the moments of tension, stress and hostility that occur all too often.

The discussion regarding emotional skills went in the direction of dealing with stress and anxiety since stress management is key in their day-to-day interaction and in planning work.

- Among acquired knowledge of skills that can help at work was mentioned:
- Skills to create proper habits and protect the team from multitasking
- Problem-solving skills in order to deal with stress
- Working under pressure
- Putting the philosophy of slow work into practice

They also mentioned as an important emotional skill the importance of taking frequent breaks throughout the day to clear your head and improve your mental concentration.

The practical dimension of the didactic tools used during the training allowed the participants to understand their value to use them in the future in their work teams

(especially when introducing changes or creating new project teams). Therefore, the unanimity of the beneficiaries expressed a favourable opinion with respect to the acquisition of new knowledge and useful tools in their work context.

4. Do you consider that the Learning Tools used are suitable for the development of the skills to fight against those 12 enemies from the leadership point of view?

Most of the participants confirmed that the pills are suitable for the development of the skills to fight against identified enemies from the leadership point of view.

The perspective of the leader, the team, and the entire organization presented in the materials emphasize the leader's influence on the behaviour, efficiency, satisfaction, and well-being of other employees.

The learning tools were therefore considered to be coherent, fundamental and necessary for the employers to discuss such content with their employees on regular basis to ensure proper productivity, work organisation and planning.

They also stressed that some of them serve to acquire theoretical knowledge but that it is necessary to accompany it with practical training to develop the necessary skills to fight against the 12 enemies of the philosophy of slow work. In other words, although the theoretical approach was seen as necessary, they were looking forward to the presentation of practical tools to deal with those enemies of the work pace.

5. Will you be able to apply the knowledge acquired in your professional life?

Regarding this question, the answers were varied. Applying the knowledge gained was seen as feasible, but they all agreed they would need time for that. First, they will try to focus more on the possible enemies, try to warn their employees or inferiors and other co-workers as well as use some tips in practice.

There were also participants who said that they can try to apply some of the acquired knowledge for help that in the end prevent us from applying this philosophy of slow work. Others stressed that the most important knowledge they have gained and can apply is to categorize tasks, quickly identify time wasters and thus help to optimize time management and increase efficiency. In general, all felt that there is much of the content that they can apply to their professional lives.

In general, participants acknowledged that it would not be easy for them to put it into practice because some of it did not depend directly on them since many decisions have to be taken at the managerial level.

Finally, the conditions of managing dispersed teams related to remote work due to Covid-19 were also pointed out. Listening to and reacting to employees' problems is much easier during face-to-face meetings or informal conversations, which are not always possible in an isolated workspace.

6. What decisions must be made to make it a reality in your work place?

Participants indicated that in order to apply the concept of slow work at work, it is essential that its benefits for both managers and employees are widespread and understood.

One of the participants mentioned that in many companies there is still the idea that more dedication equals more working hours. However, a person's productivity cannot be constant throughout their 8-hour working day and requires moments of pause to relieve the pressure of work.

So, they all agreed that even if they try to apply this work philosophy, it is not so easy to apply in practice and decisions at higher level must be taken to ensure they made progress. There is a willingness to make it happen, but perhaps they see a reluctance at organizational level.

Then, participants suggested that first people should become aware of all distractions, plan dealing with them in compliance with the tips and then start implementing them. Therefore, the organisation could assure a step-by-step introduction of improvements. Some said that it would be beneficial if such workshops were carried out on monthly basis or were part of regular training for safety at work to ensure that the employees are warned regularly.

In short, we must do away with the idea that the term "slow" is associated with negative values: incapable, unproductive, late...

7. What would you change or do differently to improve it?

Participants indicated the following suggestions for improvement:

- Distribution of tasks that complement the moments of maximum concentration with times of simple work that involve less responsibility.
- Relaxation time with colleagues to create a more social working environment where they can create more open, involved and sincere relationships.
- Train managers in organisations and companies on the benefits of applying this work philosophy.

- Setting limits at work and schedules.
- Working focused on a single task and avoiding distractions.
- Setting mobile phone notifications on “mute” mode,
- Putting signs on doors or using other ways of improving awareness.

Polish participants made suggestions on the theoretical pills tested during the session, highlighting that they could be additionally enriched with interesting short movies or some storytelling on concrete situations, for instance, good practices from other companies.

8. Do you have any suggestions or comments that help us improve it?

A fundamental condition that was generally set is that both the training and the tools require the involvement of a facilitator. So, it is necessary that the facilitator has a good preparation to conduct the sessions.

It is also important to give participants materials, articles and examples of implementations (good and bad practices) for them to feel guided.

One participant emphasized that there should be more such trainings and some contents should be repeated several times so that they could be more easily put into reality.

In general, there were comments that depends pretty much on the person conducting the training, his own dynamics and inventions. Sharing one's own experiences - both by the trainer and among participants - could definitely have a positive impact on the training effectiveness and the trainees' impressions.

9. After testing the Learning Tools, what is your opinion about this training system for managers? Does it help you to anticipate future risks in your company or organization?

The opinion about this management training system was good in general and most of the participants agree on the benefits of this philosophy and to apply it but they also said that sometimes it is difficult because society demands a frantic pace of work and that makes it difficult to apply the slow work philosophy. They all agreed that a better organization, planning and prioritization of tasks can help to be focused on the really important tasks, avoiding distractions that sometimes are the ones that prevent this work philosophy.

Most agreed that training is only part of building and improving work culture. Much depends on the procedures, their compliance, and enforcement by responsible persons. To anticipate future risks in the company, a comment was given that slightly different tools are used to counter threats, such as employee mood or satisfaction surveys, HR indicators, and others.

In general terms, all participants indicated that the modules had been very useful and had allowed them to broaden their understanding of the Slow Work concept, or even to know about it for the first time. They confessed they were going to implement it in their work thereafter.

10. What is your level of satisfaction with the testing phase?

The level of satisfaction of the participants in the testing phase was very satisfactory and positive. They all found the training pills very useful and from which they can learn a lot of things to apply in their working life.

Despite this good feedback, opinions have emerged that the content is not particularly revelatory. It all depends on the degree of knowledge and awareness of the trainees.

Broadly, participants found the training pills very useful not only for their professional, but also for their daily living.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall feeling with the testing phase was quite good and positive. Everyone found it very practical and educational, many of which they can apply in their daily working life.

The testing sessions gave managers the opportunity to check the modules developed for the identified enemies, but also to compare them with situations or practical expressions that can be used in different situations of the company. All managers agreed that the SNAIL project is innovative and has the most current objectives and priorities being a new project idea for them.

Another conclusion was that companies and professionals encourage work under pressure because they believe that it leads to better results. Therefore, the first step to being able to apply this philosophy is to change this idea and make them understand that quality versus quantity is a tool for improvement also in the workplace.

The slow work philosophy was relatively unknown to many, but they were willing to give it a go. They all thought it made a lot of sense but failed to be able to apply it in a practical way and they needed help to do this. In any case, participants expressed they looked forward to more theory and practice and wanted to continue being in touch to learn further.