

# Creating a World Class Network in New Learning and Competitive Knowledge Innovation



*"I am an apostle of experience"*  
**Leonardo da Vinci**  
*Designer, innovator  
 and visionary*

ECUANET, the European Corporate Universities and Academies Network is a new project to conduct action research in strategic corporate learning and to create a best practice network of European players – adopters and providers.

The project partners have successfully completed a proposal for European Commission Leonardo da Vinci programme funding and the two-year project will commence operations on 1 October 2005. We invite selected corporate partners to participate, support the project and benefit from network membership and early access to results.

This transnational project will research present and future aspects of education, training and lifelong learning best practice in the context of organisations.

## Building the Knowledge Innovation Companies of the Future

For success in the global knowledge-driven economy we know that top management are looking for fresh insights into those pivotal ideas and practices that will create a culture of regenerative enterprise thinking and action.

The ECUANET project focuses on the development of best

practice in Corporate Academy Design and Performance Management through the creation of a world class Best Practice Network of private and public sector organisations.

We invite you to join us in this important European-mandated initiative.

This research approach will highlight the key success factors of a Corporate Academy in the most cost-effective manner and provide participating organisations

with useful, practical, actionable results, early.

Throughout the two-year programme, participants will receive feedback on the research progress and results through access to the ECUANET database, e-newsletters and a series of free seminars and annual conferences. Research results will also be presented at the ECUANET Partners national level conferences and published on the ECUANET project web site in summary under controlled access.



## Rationale

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### Why is this Transnational Action Research Project needed?

Research and process review work carried out by the project's Founding Partners to-date has shown that Corporate Academy practice varies widely across Europe and generally provides far lower ROI than the dynamic business-led corporate academies of North American competitors.

The ECUANET project will discover the many strategic and operational strands that make up performance best practice in Corporate Academy design, implementation and management. It will interactively disseminate these findings to the participating organisations through the ECUANET best practice database, the transnational partners, national level workshops, conferences and case research.

The project will also look to the future and create a forum for new strategic perspectives on the rapidly changing character of organisational learning and competitive knowledge innovation. It will, therefore, research with all the participating organisations how they view the reform initiatives being planned for European business education. These initiatives have the potential to redefine a significant part of the organisational learning environment to make it more compatible and comparable, more competitive and attractive. We will explore with all partners how these proposals will contribute to performance improvement, smoother recognition procedures and the quality of learning management across different business entities.

### Objectives of the Action Research Project

- To build a professional pan-European Corporate Academy Best Practice Network of private and public sector organisations.
- To discover World Class Performance Best Practice and identify effective management processes and tools.
- To develop strategic perspectives on the future organisational learning environment and its consequences for people, organisation and business development.
- To define competencies and qualifications for Corporate Academy practitioner-managers.

Through our professional management experience to date, we know that a growing number of organisations are successfully designing and implementing their corporate university and academy investments, but others are not. ECUANET aims to discover the most successful approaches in designing, implementing and managing these development platforms to enhance their future strategic role, thereby contributing directly to people being in-flow and to overall business performance and effectiveness.

## From Project to Network

The ECUANET project has secured €250,000 funding from the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci Programme out of a total budget of €500,000 to undertake the project. The remaining €250,000 is to be funded by contributions from Corporate Partners and the Project Partners' own resources.

The Project will be conducted in an interactive and professional manner which will provide progressive feedback to participating organisations over the two year period, through the Action Research programme and the network-building activities that are central to the Project.

Through the Project, the goal is to create a self-sustaining and dynamic European Network for Corporate Universities and Academies. The Network will become the reference point for best practice and operational excellence in corporate and enterprise academy management, enabling organisations to achieve world-class performance and results from their investment.

This new network will be a not-for-profit professional management partnership governed by its members. It will develop, share and promote best practice, enabling members to benefit from one another's experience and from research and benchmarking activities in organisational learning and development.

## Focus points for the Action Research

Our points of reference, practical experience and research to-date on world class developments indicate that there are certain areas in management that make a real and critical difference to corporate academy performance.

We will establish the individual and collective importance of the following imperatives in the management of education, training and lifelong learning in the context of organisations:

- Governance and future strategic direction
- Choice and the changing environment for training and development provision
- Managing strategic learning alliances
- Outsourcing – functions and processes
- Corporate branding and workforce engagement
- Knowledge innovation and harvesting
- Workforce planning, learning alignment and reward
- Learning leadership
- Building talent pools, talent deployment and resourcing new learning strategies
- Systems for integrated performance management – managing across entities
- Quality assurance and real-time learning process performance management
- People and organisational learning infrastructures
- Communication and Information Technology (C&IT) and E-learning process infrastructures
- Sustainability

## Benefits of participation in the ECUANET Project

The ECUANET Network will be built through a programme of formal and informal meetings, workshops and conferences. International benchmarking of best practice information and progress on training and educational reform initiatives will be disseminated via a dedicated web site, where the action research findings, other database information and ECUANET reports will be published.

The web site will also provide a Community of Practice forum for the sharing and exploration of key aspects of present and future corporate academy best practice.

Becoming an ECUANET Partners Organisation will provide high levels of return on investment by means of the following benefits:

- Membership of the ECUANET Best Practice Network and its activities
- Access to focused action-researched knowledge worth €500,000 for an investment of €7,500 per year for two years
- Access to new strategic thinking on the future management of organisational learning and emergent business knowledge
- World class information on the design, development and performance management of new generation corporate academies
- The opportunity to introduce best practice behaviours before competitors
- Community transnational networking opportunities for your Senior Executives at international seminars and conferences
- New strategic perspectives on the future of internal and external, formal and informal, training and development processes and practice
- Access to manager competency profiles for corporate academy best practice

and, as part of the research programme,

- Two days of top-level discussions on High Performance New Generation Corporate University and Academy practice, including the top-level evaluative toolkit software package and manuals used in the ECUANET research project.

Please note that all aspects of this project are subject to rigorous financial control and management in co-operation with EC Directives.

## What will the Project do?

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The ECUANET project will – by working with invited leading edge businesses and institutions – build an international database of knowledge on:

- i) Corporate Academy management as a contextual framework from which companies can benchmark their particular interventions; and
- ii) portfolios of organisational learning provision and future evolutions that will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of tactical and strategic learning at all levels.

The field research approach will be to visit case study participants at various stages of maturity, using evaluative action research toolkits to determine the extent and effectiveness of various practices. Accredited ECUANET researchers will establish the strategic context of the findings and discuss specific aspects of what works for them and what does not and why. The action research toolkits will remain with each of the participating organisations on a self-administered basis so as to assist in their further developmental planning and reviews.

The action research methodology will be monitored from start to finish using a web-based real-time monitoring process that puts the participating organisation in the key role of appraising their expectations against outcomes

Each of the research case findings will be reported to the participating company and reports on best practice findings will be held under supervised access arrangements in the ECUANET database as they emerge and as specified by the participating company.

Participating organisations can learn from the successes and failures and gain valuable insight into future developments in creating a culture of new learning and competitive knowledge innovation. A range of conferences and seminars will provide further valuable networking opportunities to discuss these findings and share experiences with others facing the same challenges.

## Founding organisations

The founding group of organisations in this Leonardo da Vinci project include those which already have a commitment and knowledge in this area of people, organisational and business development. And, importantly, they have the essential professional skill-sets to discover and disseminate the emergent management best practice at national level, whilst having the added experience, resources and communication networks to work efficiently with other EC Member States throughout Europe.

The founders group comprises a leading management publisher, networks of organisations rooted in organisational learning or corporate academy practice, and practitioners experienced in corporate academies, organisational learning and best practice methods.

This blend of organisations provides a critical mass of broad and professional strategic expertise and practical day-to-day experience to ensure that the project produces practical results of real value which can be implemented quickly and effectively to improve performance and make investments more cost-effective. It is planned that other national organisations will join the core group of partners as the work progresses.

## The ECUANET Founding Organisations are:

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### Emerald Group Publishing Limited (UK)

[www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com) & [www.managementfirst.com](http://www.managementfirst.com)

The Lead Partner in the ECUANET project, Emerald Group Publishing is a leading international publisher of academic and professional literature, currently publishing more than 150 journal titles in the fields of management and information science.

Emerald provides inspiration for management thinkers by presenting new ideas and theories, which have been tested through practical application and deliver real insight.

As an internationally recognised publisher, Emerald is committed to offering high quality, valuable products, while enabling the widest possible dissemination of their work through traditional (via subscription) and non-traditional (via partnership) distribution models.

In selecting titles and topics for publication and inclusion in its publications and databases, Emerald successfully spans two worlds – the academic world of debate and theory, and the practitioner world of action, decision and practicality. Emerald strives to be the publisher of choice for academics, researchers and professionals in the fields of management and information science.

### Intellectual Partnerships Co. Ltd (UK)

[www.ipc-ltd.co.uk](http://www.ipc-ltd.co.uk) & [www.corporateuniversity.org.uk](http://www.corporateuniversity.org.uk)

Intellectual Partnerships Co. Ltd (IPCo), the Co-ordinating Partner for ECUANET, is an innovative process management consultancy involved in real time organic organisational development activities. The company is founded on three main areas of activity: continuing professional development (CPD) services, co-creative process consultancy services, and learning management simulation models.

IPCo specialises in the design and application of dynamic management processes and products, founded on a powerful combination of business excellence, academic rigour, results-based learning and distance learning methodologies.

Their purposes are specifically aimed at building the collective intellectual equity and intellectual leadership capability in the organisation setting.

### The European Consortium for the Learning Organisation (Belgium)

[www.eclo.org](http://www.eclo.org)

ECLO professional membership consists of European organisations from the corporate and academic worlds as well as process consultancies in both the private and the public sectors. ECLO has been dedicated for more than a decade to the promotion and successful development of the learning organisation concept in Europe.

ECLO provides an opportunity for business and academic partners to explore new ways for effective business development. These activities include the identification of new paradigms for training and management development, generating models and tools for implementation, strengthening effective learning leadership and platforms for developing organisational capabilities.

## The Network of Corporate Academies (Denmark)

[www.noca.dk](http://www.noca.dk)

NOCA, linked to Copenhagen Business School, is the Danish Association of Corporate Academies and is a not-for-profit organisation funded by large and medium-sized companies in a number of business sectors. NOCA was formed two years ago as an organisation consisting of corporate academies from companies in Denmark, public organisations and several Danish universities.

NOCA is working with the patronage of the Minister of Science, Research and Technology. The purpose of NOCA is to secure the sharing of best practice concerning corporate academies and to foster the dialogue between research and practice.

## KPC Group (The Netherlands)

[www.kpcgroep.nl](http://www.kpcgroep.nl)

KPC Group is an “innovation institute”. By order of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Welfare, it organises a considerable number of research projects within the framework of educational innovation every year. It has been advising governments, education and training establishments, companies and non-profit organisations for more than 50 years. KPC Group is ISO 9001-certified and operates on a non-profit basis.

## Global Change (Portugal)

[www.globalchange.pt](http://www.globalchange.pt)

Global Change is a business and management development consultancy, based in Lisbon, and is leading the national interest in corporate academy and SM Enterprise academy development.

## Innovation Associates (UK)

### ECUANET Project Management

Innovation Associates is a UK-based innovation consultancy, established in 1992, with extensive experience in collaborative projects and organisation and people development. In ECUANET, IA will act as Consortium and Project Manager for the Lead Partner.

IA's core skills are project and consortium management, commercial management strategy and business planning, marketing and communications, coaching and mentoring and in Best Practice development and dissemination. IA has been involved in delivering and managing EU-funded projects in the technology, enterprise and technology-enhanced domains since 1996.

## People working together to create world class competitive advantage

### Founding Partners

#### **Emerald Group Publishing Limited (UK)**

– Lead Partner –

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#### **Intellectual Partnerships Co. Ltd (UK)**

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Leonardo da Vinci

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## Strategic Knowledge and Learning in Organisations

Your Ideas, Your Experience and Your Vision Count