



TCA CEMA-NET Working Group **Constructive Adaptability**

Constructive Adaptability – Definition paper

0. BACKGROUND

All the member countries of the Cema-net project, participating in the working group «constructive adaptability» are confronted by the same general problematic.

This problematic concerns the difficulties of inclusion of vulnerable worker collectives (disabilities, disadvantages, low qualification...) in the companies.

These persons face problems of accessibility to the job market and of sustainability in their job.

It's necessary to think about innovative strategies concerning notions of social cohesion.

The European Union gives wide attention to the struggle against discrimination in the work-environment. Measures are proposed and actions are organised but nothing can be done without the participation of the companies and without the creation of a link between the economic and social areas.

The key point of our transnational partnership is the constitution of our team. Indeed, we have institutions and centres who represent different social, economic, and educational organisations. This partnership allows to work together in the creation and adaptation of tools.

1. DEFINITION

CA is a creative empowerment process

- on an individual level it refers to the ability to find and maintain employment as well as to adapt to future changes in the labour market

- on an organizational level it refers to the ability to adapt to the diversity of labour force by providing a flexible work environment

CA requires the implementation of life-long learning concept and inclusive work practices. The responsibility for CA is shared by employers, employees and governmental institutions.

1.1 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL. PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL ADAPTABILITY

The notion of Constructive Adaptability implies numerous themes bound to the individual and to his or her environment. The accessibility to the job market, the sustainability of the employment, the creation of life-long-learning opportunities require a concentrated management of the problems and difficulties faced by the target group. Indeed, before entering the business world, it is necessary to work on the associated barriers which can be: social, educational, economic, health related, cultural, etc.

Answers must be given to the raised questions, realistic solutions must be proposed to the target groups on an individual level.

The idea of construction implicates an individual structured path (taking into account the background, personality, knowledge of the person).

The strategies of the teams in charge of the monitoring of the individuals must be professional and human, in the framework of preventive or curative interventions.

The training of the professional staff is fundamental at the initial level as well as at the continuous level. The training must take into account the difficulties linked to the guidance of individuals in term of conflicts, stress, tiredness, motivation, etc.

Our role is to invent strategies to build a bridge between two different ways (social and economic) of guiding and supporting the target groups. It's in the interest of the firm to go ahead in this direction: to open its jobs to disadvantaged people and to work on the idea of a inclusive business culture which has social and economic implications.

We must keep in mind that the firm is above all composed of men and women working for the well-being of their fellow citizen.

1.2 ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Workers can have some difficulties in finding and maintaining employment due to the firm characteristics. We include in the term 'firm', the colleagues, the intermediate managers, the top managers, the workplace, etc.

Amongst these difficulties we can find the following examples:

- ✓ There are **stereotypes** inside the firm affecting the worker (related to migrants, women, disabled people...).
- ✓ There is not **technical adaptation** of the workplace though it is needed for some workers.
- ✓ The worker isn't motivated in his/her job.
- ✓ The firm has **not defined** which **the tasks** of the job are.
- ✓ **Mobbing**
- ✓ The workers are **strictly overseen**.
- ✓ The firm is carrying out **changes** that require a big adaptive effort.
- ✓ There is **not transparency** and **communication** in the firm.
- ✓ **Traditional organizational culture** inside the firm.

To adapt company, workplace and worker constructively implicates actions for achieving job-search or maintenance.

2. DIMENSIONS OF ADAPTABILITY

By doing some literature review it's obvious, that there is no single definition of the subject "Constructive Adaptability". A research study performed by the University of Illinois and Michigan State University defined 6 dimensions of adaptability in the workplace. These dimensions should be taken in consideration before starting a CA-project:

1. dimension: Solving Problems Creatively: one aspect of adaptive performance that has been discussed by several experts involves the effectiveness with which employees solve the atypical, ill-defined, and complex problems that confront today's work situations and organizations.

Problem solving includes the awareness of the personal convictions and the wish to reach new results – having the understanding of doing the same gives the same result and therefore wanting to try new ways of acting might be a part of it.

2. dimension: Dealing with Uncertain/Unpredictable Work Situations: these work situations can result from many different factors, like formal organizational restructuring, shifting business priorities, reductions or changes in available resources, or joining a new organization or group.

Changes are taking place rapidly and also in the work environment the ability of being able to cope with changes is important for maintaining a job.

3. dimension: Learning New Tasks, Technologies, and Procedures: this dimension is about learning new ways to perform a job or learning different skill sets or tasks to re-tool for a job or new career. Within this dimension a relationship may exist with the Life-long-learning subject.

Years ago many employees had the same job for a long period of time. Now the employees have to learn new skills and adjust to the development and changes all the time.

4. Dimension: Demonstrating Interpersonal Adaptability: the need of this type of adaptive performance has become salient due to more fluid work environments that are increasingly characterized by work or project teams and the shift from manufacturing-oriented business to service-oriented business.

The communication reflects the way we are thinking and acting, so behaviour and communication style must be adapted to whom we're talking to -interpersonal flexibility – even to understand that the same word can have different understandings takes an effort. Emotional intelligence is a high demand of today's work place..

5. Dimension: Demonstrating Cultural Adaptability: this dimension concerns adapting to cultural demands within an organization. With the globalisation of the business environment and extent to which workers today change jobs and organizations the ability to perform effectively in different cultures and environments is increasingly important.

Having to cope with people of other nationalities and with foreign languages and cultures in our own country requires training and perhaps also the wish of wanting to understand!

6. Dimension: Demonstrating Physically Oriented Adaptability: this final aspect involves adapting to various physical factors such as heat noise, uncomfortable climates and difficult environments.

All the factors concerning the working place: noise, dust, no daylight, long working hours, night work can cause stress.

3. CONCLUSION

The CA-working group of the Cema-net project defined CA as a creative ongoing empowerment process on an individual and organizational level.

The groups who are involved in this process are employees, employers and governmental institutions.

It should also be taken into consideration that nowadays where unemployment rates are increasing the CA subject concerns not only disadvantaged people but also people who are at the moment completely integrated in the labour market.

Finally its useful to pay attention to the following 6 dimensions of adaptability in the workplace:

- Solving problems creatively
- Dealing with uncertain/unpredictable work situations
- Learning new tasks, technologies, and procedures
- Demonstrating interpersonal adaptability
- Demonstrating cultural adaptability
- Demonstrating physically oriented adaptability

All these dimensions require the implementation of life-long learning and social responsibility.

We finalized the definition process with this paper. Now we have to start a process to development tools and instruments for practical use.