



needs of specific target groups. The necessary assurance of the quality and efficiency of start-up business advice is currently facing various challenges such as the lack of an occupational image for business advisors. UBA' s goal to establish and develop European quality partnerships in terms of start-up support was approached by adapting the SFEDI manual to four European countries. In terms of improving the conditions for inclusive entrepreneurship by means of European collaboration, Germany and two Spanish regions are currently considering to implement the SFEDI standards. In the Q&A, the balance between the business advisor's formal education and his personal background was discussed. Norbert Kunz stated that if the business advisor's competences are transparent for the client, he can make his individual choice. Therefore, quality standards can help to provide the necessary transparency.

- 4. Entrepreneurs Topic: What did I want from a Business Advisor?** In this part of the conference, two entrepreneurs talked about which competences a business advisor should have out of their own experience. Sophie Kebede who together with her husband founded a importing service for Teff flour, a gluten free product initially from Ethiopia, pointed out communication skills as highly important, especially when clients are nervous.. For her, it was important that the business advisor separated out what she wanted from what she needed in order to start the business. Furthermore, the business advisor's task is in her eyes to lead the client into the right direction in terms of information about funding, legal processes etc. She summed up the business advisor's role as a link to resources and as a great communicator.

Leonor Gomes talked about herself having started a business and giving advice to business starters as a so-called business angel in Lisbon. She had the luck to be born into an entrepreneurial family, her father mentoring her while starting a bus company. As not everyone could get this support from a member of the family, she valued the role of business advisors who share the client's background and are able to build up trust highly important.

- 5. Workshops:** After lunch, the conference continued with two sessions of five parallel workshops. The conference guests could choose two different workshops.





based business advisors/ business informers who lack qualification. It is also considered to transfer some tools from e.g. Galicia to the UK in return. The workshop participants agreed on the CoPIE goal to make quality management a precondition for public funding in business advice.



Workshop III: The UBA Experience of Adapting the Manual. Facilitated by Estibaliz Hernández and Josune Prieto Alonso, Research workers from MIK the management research centre of Mondragon (MCC), in the Basque Country.

In Portugal and Spain there is no requirement of formal accreditation of skills for business advisors. However, the UBA partners found the list of required skills and competences for the self-evaluation of staff or consultants very useful for working on capacity-building and strengthening of informal groups towards the setting-up of a business. In the Czech Republic they do not have any accreditation system for this profession, but in this case they have considered a better option to delete all the references to the SFEDI accreditation system and its corresponding Business Support Standards. Germany is the only UBA partner with their own Business Support Standards, and these have been substituted for the SFEDI ones used in Britain

The concept of Community Based Business Advice (CBBA) is used the least in the Czech Republic, Portugal and Spain, the concept is still in its early stages.

In Germany the CBBA concept is developed with a degree of similarity to the UK. This explains why throughout the manual and especially in the initial chapters, partners have explained differences among the CBBA concept in UK and their specific Business Advisors. The majority or the partners have integrated some of the Case Studies they have developed. In the Czech Republic and Spain, they have also kept some of the original cases, since the national ones did not apply to the approach given in that chapter.

All partners have incorporated national sources regarding websites, organizations, institutions, social entities, Government Departments, methodologies, laws, regulations... Partners have also used additional



knowledge and understanding to help the BA. This has included advice on key business areas, concepts such as strategic overview, finance and accounting, ICT and e-commerce, people, innovation and technology and marketing/Sales are described in this chapter. They are structural concepts

The following key issues were discussed in the workshop:

- What are the essential characteristics of a CBBA?
- What are the most important soft and hard skills of a CBBA?

Workshop IV: Can Common Standards for Business Advisors Help Relieve Poverty?

Facilitated by Armando Pardo, Managing Director of the Association of Community Based Business Advice (ACBBA), UK. This workshop explores issues around the possible role of business advisers in the alleviation of poverty, in the context of a new economic cycle and dramatic policy changes in the UK.

No doubt the development of common standards can be an effective strategy for ensuring good practice in business advice in terms of the professional conduct and competence required of business advisers. However, the main question for this workshop was not just whether common standards for business advisers are good in a general sense but whether they can help reduce poverty. And this is a much more challenging issue, one which nevertheless deserves close examination, particularly at times when the UK – and the global economy – is slowly emerging from one of the worst recessions in decades.

The scenario for funded business support is changing rapidly, affecting the existing support infrastructure and creating uncertainty about future programmes in particular about start up support targeted at disadvantaged groups.

Can enterprise help alleviate poverty? – Whilst the importance of SME businesses in terms of employment, output, and innovation is well documented, there is less of a consensus about the role of enterprise as a vehicle for overcoming economic disadvantage. Several studies have highlighted the limitations of enterprise as vehicle for overcoming economic disadvantage and social exclusion, particularly regarding certain social groups such as young people, older people and women with childcare responsibilities.

A good set of standards would underpin and inform the interaction of business advisers not just with clients but also colleagues, partners and other stakeholders. These standards would place learning as a central activity, stimulating a process of continuous development to ensure advisers maintain standards and remain up to date. Although there is increasing recognition for the importance of the personalised support provided by business advisers, it seems that current approaches tend to better support those who are more ‘business ready’ but is still not effective in helping those with more complex support needs.

Although economic growth, employment and progressive policies are the main factors in the fight against poverty, business advisers working with disadvantaged groups also have a role to play. Any attempt to strengthen the business advisory profession, for example through the development of common standards, should have a positive impact on their clients. However, the full potential of their work could only be realised if accompanied by enterprise policies that are truly client centred and adequately funded.

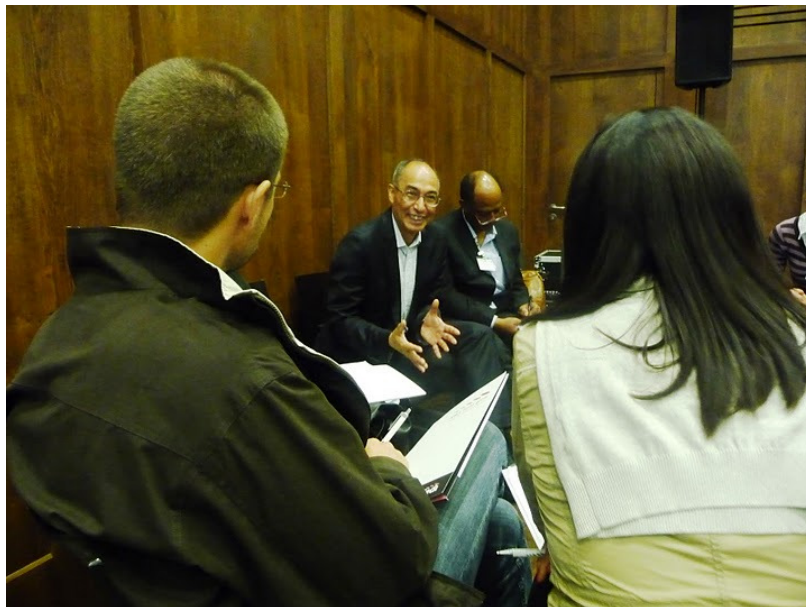
The workshop participants discussed on the following challenges:

- Managing the poverty line



- Will supporting people through enterprise help?
- What is our understanding of enterprise as a vehicle
- German cited approach was very important
- Division of soft/hard skills demeaning

During the discussion, the importance of business advice based on a profound qualification was pointed out: If a business advisor can combine building up confidence and empowerment with communication of a basic knowledge of finance and marketing, their work might help clients to leave poverty behind. By using their professional knowledge, the business advisor can establish credibility by encouraging the client to talk about his abilities, skills and experience. In addition to high qualification in a holistic sense, the business advisor should help the client to build up a good relationship with his bank. In summary, business advisors are not expected to have all the answers, but they should know where to go and be able to give clients a starting point as reference. Business advisors and the support they give can alleviate poverty, but it takes time.



Workshop V: What Can We Learn About Quality From Advisors and Entrepreneurs? Facilitated by Sandra Almedia, Director of the Urban Community Support Programme K’CIDADE, Portugal. This workshop wanted to explore the different approaches to business advice from the perspective of both the advisor and the entrepreneur. One of the outputs of the UBA project was the production of 50 case studies of business advisors and entrepreneurs from all participating countries: 25 case studies recording the issues business advisors experience in their daily practice and 25 case studies of entrepreneurs reflecting their view of the Business Advising practice.

Sandra Almedia presented the results of the case study report to the workshop participants. The analysis of the 50 case-studies provided a detailed overview of the different business advising practices in the five European countries involved in the UBA project, extracting key success factors with a particular emphasis on transferability.



One obvious finding is that the institutional and organisational environment in which business advisors (BA) perform their job in the five different European countries involved in the UBA project are *diverse*. However, performance and professional challenges faced by BA in the same five European countries tend to be *similar* both at individual and business levels.

The study has revealed different approaches to the practice of business advising, in the five different countries: *community-based approach*, *individually-based approach* and *assessment-based approach*. These tend to co-relate with different organizational contexts in a harmonious way.

The different approaches to promote entrepreneurship have implications in what is expected from business advisors. In a simplistic way, one could say that community-based interventions would demand for business advisors very much aware of each community reality and able to intervene effectively as a recognized agent of the community. BA in this framework will, obviously, combine these skills with business advising “traditional” know-how.

Many *common challenges are identified*, particularly in what concerns one-to-one interaction between business advisors and potential entrepreneurs.

- 6. Closing remarks:** Overall, the necessity for (common) standards in business advice such as provided by SFEDI has been pointed out as a central issue to deal with both on a regional and transnational level. Being asked for any comments on UBA and the conference, many agreed on that the topic was so multilayered that more time for the discussions in the workshops would have been necessary.