The glossary defines all relevant notions and concepts used in the SME ACTor context. It follows an alphabetical order. Each of these definitions is only supposed to be consistent referring to other concepts within the SME ACTor context. Although formulated with a scientific foundation, none of them pretends to be true or correct in a scientific sense, whatever truth or correctness in a scientific sense may be.

| **Action learning methodology** | All those methods and instruments facilitating learning and action, i.e.  
| &middot; Facilitating dialogue, reflection and the construction of common sense (shared meanings or shared models)  
| &middot; Facilitating processes of co-operation and trust building  
| &middot; Facilitating active learning in such processes, and  
| &middot; Facilitating personal involvement (participation) of regional actors from companies and institutions in all activities and processes developing social capital. |
| **Action research** | The concept was introduced by the German psychologist Kurt Lewin who in 1933 had to flee from Germany to the USA. Action research is a process wherein people having common interests actively participate in a research activity with the explicit intention of bringing about change through the research process. Action research consists in an intervention guided by a team of researchers-consultants who interact with organisation members on the basis of cyclical steps including planning, action, and evaluating the result of action. Starting from a specific problem to be solved in the given context, the experts continually encourage actions (data collecting, interviewing, etc.) and reflections on actions (through self-observation, discussion, etc.) by the organisation members. The activities carried out at each step are monitored in order to adjust as needed (Dickens and Watkins 1999). |
| **Case study** | Case studies constitute a research strategy, an empirical inquiry investigating a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research can mean single- and multiple case studies; it may include quantitative evidence and it always relies on multiple evidence sources benefiting from prior development of theoretical propositions (Yin 2002). Rather than using large samples and (continued)
following a rigid protocol to examine a limited number of variables, case study methods involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event - a case. They provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information, and reporting results. As a result, the researcher may gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might need more extensive examination in future research. Case studies lend themselves to both generating and testing hypotheses (Flyvbjerg 2006).

In the framework of a networking programme fuelled by the Action Learning approach, a case study supports the facilitator as well as the community as a whole, providing a better understanding of the overall context in which the networking path will take place. Data collected and analysed in such a case study constitute an empirical foundation for designing the strategy and the operative planning. In this case, the facilitator acts as an expert consultant for the institution or organisation promoting the co-operation or networking path.

**Clusters**

Clusters are regional aggregations of mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with varying forms and intensities of co-operation. According to Porter (1998) they are labelled as a “cluster” when they take on the form of “a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities”. In this particular context, companies compete but also co-operate, interacting with their external environment and creating dynamic mechanisms of knowledge creation and use.

**Coaching**

Coaching is a concept of consultancy directed to an individual and his or her personality with the aim of developing existing potentials and resources of this individual as a member of an organisation or a group within an organisation.

**Communities of performance (CoPe)**

Communities of performance are very advanced forms of communities of practice; they typically are or exist in learning organisations. They represent the social spirit of organisations and networks with a developed internal culture of learning and change, and they exist in a framework of an explicit common purpose and strategy and continuously managed or co-ordinated action to implement this strategy. If they are institutions, they usually have a self-image of being service agencies to their clientele. Professional organisations or associations of companies within an industrial sector tend to develop from mere initial communities of practice to such communities of performance with semi- or fully institutionalised agencies.

**Communities of practice (CoP)**

A community of practice is a congregation of people with mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire of meanings (Wenger 1998:45ff); and somewhat more explicit, CoP show three fundamental elements:

(continued)
• sharing a domain of knowledge which creates common ground and sense of common identity and, as a consequence, legitimises the community
• caring about this domain continuously re-creating the social fabric of learning
• sharing practice that people are developing to be effective in their domain

Such CoPs have a life cycle and may show varying stages of maturity, from their beginnings to their decline and decease.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Competence means being able to decide, act and learn adequately with respect to the functional and situative context.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message 2M9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence management</td>
<td>Competence management is the management of the development, use and maintenance of the growing and changing competence incorporated by the individual people belonging to a group of people, organisation or network and by the whole functioning body of such a co-operation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message 2M5 and 2M10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td>Co-operation means working together to achieve individual and common advantage. In more detail, co-operation is defined as joint or jointly directed, co-ordinated action of people for achieving individual and common aims, purposeful interaction.</td>
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<td>Message 2M7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of selected persons with a specific expertise related to the research topic are asked, according to a pre-defined set of questions, about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting in which participants are free to talk with other group members. The aim of the focus group is to identify and analyse research findings, perceptions, feelings, opportunities or shortcomings. Its purpose is not to develop a consensus, to arrive at an agreeable plan or to take decisions concerning the course of action.</td>
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<td>Tool 4B4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews with experts</td>
<td>Interviews with experts are semi-structured personal interviews on the basis of an interview guide containing all relevant items and questions. Experts are all those people in the region who are supposed to be able to provide valuable expert information and assessment. Supposed to be able means, they are experts in the view of the researcher/interviewer or in the view of other relevant actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tool 4B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>Leaders are people who take responsibility in building common sense for common action and for developing communities of practice into communities of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Messages 2M8, 2M9 and 2M10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Learning is an active process of appropriation (making one’s own) of knowledge, abilities and skills in order to enhance the personal or collective control potential (competence) of shaping reality in a given context or situation.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(continued)
A learning organisation is a group of people who need one another in order to achieve something and who in the course of time continuously extend their capacities of achieving what they really want to achieve” (Senge 1996:500). A more elaborate approach would define a learning organisation “as a processing structure determined by purposes, rules and values which conceives itself as improvable. It wants and enables its members to learn with this end in mind and considers this capacity of learning for improvement as a necessary characteristic of survival.” (Franz 2003:55)

A learnshop is a workshop with the intention of learning or reflecting on common tasks or purposes in order to improve the collective competence of accomplishing some common purpose or task.

Managers can be seen as people responsible for transforming the knowledge and competence of their personnel into products and services useful to other people and economic success for the organisation. Managers can also be leaders.

A moderator is a person who helps a group of people to solve a problem by supporting their communication, rendering it more effective and efficient. Any person with some basic competence in moderation methods and techniques can assume this role. The role requires impartiality and basically consists of securing agreed rules of communication and the visual safeguarding of the communication results.

A network facilitator is usually a formal network function or one of the roles of a network manager. In the framework of networks a facilitator is a person with specific competencies who is directed to develop trust to facilitate co-operation between organisations (in our case mainly SMEs) in a given regional or industrial context, despite and beyond their ongoing competition. This trust, if constituting a culture of co-operation, can also be called social capital. So, from a very general viewpoint, they may be called developers of social capital.

More specifically, network facilitators are those professionals involved in supporting and valorising aggregation processes of SMEs by promoting and making easier (i.e. facilitating) networking activities and animation of local expert communities and within this framework activities of inter-organisational non-formal and informal learning.

In this role as network facilitators they have four different sub-roles referring to both the action and the learning side of their role. They are

- moderators with the task of shaping successful communication in the network in general as well as and in its events, meetings, workshops etc.

(continued)
• experts in process management not only for communication processes but also for projects and other joint network endeavours
• trainers of facilitating methods and techniques, responsible for systematic reflection with all participants on common learning in such processes as a means of rendering them more effective and efficient and as a central mechanism of creating reflective co-operativity
• coaches, since they pursue a specific way of shaping enhanced communication avoiding conflict while, at the same time, they are experts at settling conflicts if they arise in such processes

Facilitating then means supporting and structuring the perception and communication of a number of people who have a common interest in order to lead a common process of analysis, design, planning, implementation and/or evaluation to become a success.

**Networks (of companies)**

Networks represent a specific, relatively open and flexible form of loosely coupled, yet purposeful co-operation between individuals and individual organisations on the basis of shared structures, rules, interests and values.

**Organisation**

Organisations are the distinctively structured and regulated form of purposeful interaction of individuals and groups. Put another way, organisations represent purposeful co-operation of (groups of) people based on shared structures, rules, interests and values. The first and foremost objective of organisations (as of all systems) is striving for survival by fulfilling their purpose. Economic organisations must fulfil a double purpose; they must produce the product or service they have been created for, and in doing so they must produce an economic yield that allows extended reproduction.

**Organisation development**

Organisation development is the way how organisations master changing framework conditions by changing themselves according to new requirements and with the active participation of all those organisation members affected by such changes. Frequent examples of OD are the introduction of team concepts, process reengineering, introduction of quality management.

**Organisational culture**

Organisational culture is the way we treat each other in working together.

**Participation.**

All those who are immediately affected by a problem or its solution are informed and involved in the process of problem solving in a way that respects their interests and responsibilities. This implies a non-hierarchical approach to improvement and learning processes.

**Private institutions**

Private institutions are those organisations that are overly or entirely privately-owned and that provide private goods that are customised and sold. These institutions are firms, including

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
<th>Consultancy firms, selling highly customised services to other firms.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public institutions</strong></td>
<td>All those organisations that are totally or overly publicly owned, operate in the targeted area by providing incentives, services and/or control mechanisms to the firms, and follow general goals for the development of the territory. Examples of public institutions are: local government, local development agencies, public research centres, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality (management)</strong></td>
<td>Quality is the intersecting quantity of satisfaction and perfection. Quality management consists of all activities safeguarding the quality of management of an organisation or a network.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>Responsibility, in our context, is understood as the individual and organisational ability of responding actively to perceived questions and problems. Accepting responsibility is the aim of learning and working together. Leading people to responsibility is the main objective of facilitating. Sharing responsibility defines the difference between communities of practice and communities of performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-organisation</strong></td>
<td>Self-organisation related to groups of people or organisations means that a number of individual group factors such as competences, attitudes, methods used, and certain processes with good or bad results, through their interaction (basically attraction or repulsion in common experiences) spontaneously lead to the emergence of a new, relatively stable structure, method, process or logic of action that is perceived as more effective and/or efficient. For example, Wikipedia is an encyclopaedia that grows according to this principle of self-organisation, which is characteristic of open systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semi-public institutions</strong></td>
<td>Semi-public institutions are those organisations that are privately owned and operate in the area involved by the project by providing general incentives and services. Despite private ownership, services provided by semi-public institutions have a public/collective nature. Semi-public institutions might require payment for their services, but the most important features are those services that normally have a general (non-customised) character and require a rather limited payment. Examples of semi-public institutions are: associations of firms providing non-customised and collective goods such as information or technical support to firms, non-profit organisations for economic development (foundations, etc.), industry education and training associations, technological institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social capital</strong></td>
<td>Social capital is the result and agent of social interaction of individuals in groups, organisations and networks based on reciprocity and leading to trust (Schechler 2002).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Teaching** | Teaching is a social interaction in the course of which the teaching person can help the student to learn offering certain knowledge, ability or skills in a way which makes learning easier.  
>>> Section “Making Learning Easy: Facilitation and the Didactics of Action Learning” on the didactics of action learning |
| **Visualisation** | Visualisation means making visible spoken or written information by using a different set of symbols, i.e. pictures, structures, graphics. Usually visualised information is provided for making understanding easier and more easily memorable.  
>>> Message 2M3 |
| **Workshop** | A workshop is a gathering of people with the intention of working or reflecting in order to produce results which are meaningful for action directed to accomplish some common purpose or task.  
>>> Tool 4A5 |
References


1The references used in the SME ACTor context only mirror the range covered by those who have written the texts. No efforts have been made to take in consideration the complete, partly very rich literatures on the themes referred to, available in the partner countries and languages of the whole SME ACTor project, i.e. German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Romanian.


http://www.12manage.com/ Website with a large number of tools in 13 languages December 06, 2008


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