

POSSIBILITIES OF USING DEARS.NET PROJECT RESULTS FOR RURAL AREAS EDUCATION

Arion F.

*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca
felixarion@usamvcluj.ro*

Abstract.

This paper is trying to disseminate information about one of the Leonardo da Vinci Project on which USAMV Cluj-Napoca is involved. This particular project, DEARs.net “European Networking to strengthen Agriculture and Rural Development enhancing skills”, is a result of a former collaboration between our university and its promoter and it is focused on the possibility of developing and improving the vocational training system designed for agriculture and rural area all over the Europe.

Key words: Leonardo da Vinci Project, vocational training, rural, collaboration

INTRODUCTION

The project DEARs.net “European Networking to strengthen Agriculture and Rural Development enhancing skills”, coordinated by Marche Region, coordinated by Sviluppo Marche SpA and participated by 21 partners (including USAMV Cluj-Napoca) has the aim to strengthen and enhance the capacity of the vocational training system to work for the agriculture and the rural areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The project proposal DEARs.net “European Networking to strengthen Agriculture and Rural Development enhancing skills”, promoted by Marche Region, coordinated by Sviluppo Marche SpA and participated by 21 partners has the aim to strengthen and enhance the capacity of the vocational training system to work for the agriculture and the rural areas.

The sectors of intervention are the vocational training sector and the agriculture and rural development, which are lacking in the vocational training and refreshing courses for the teachers, the trainers of the trainer and the extensioner and the lack of an integrated training system for the agriculture connected to the agricultural development system and to the national and European educational and training system, with a view on the practices of life long learning.

The main objectives of the project

- to integrate and to improve the training competences within the partnership and to develop new methods and/or approach coming from the different context, in order to pool knowledge and resources regarding the sector of interventions;
- to identify and to experiment the innovative and the best solutions for the *lifelong learning*, through non-formal training modalities (workshop, study visits, mobility etc.), which allow to create new learning context;
- to share the informatics and multimedia tools (platform FAD Claroline), in order to guarantee a wider access to the materials, innovative approaches and face the challenges of the sector;
- to create a new procedure to include new partners in the network, in particular to those of the euromediterranean area;
- to create a European Resources Centre;

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Dears.net is a transnational Network aimed at contributing to strengthen and to enhance the training systems capacity to work in agriculture and rural areas on a European scale, supporting the course of development of rural economies in the coming years. In fact, important and complex change processes have taken place in rural areas, from a socio-economic point of view as well as on a normative and institutional level.

The Network comes from the Leonardo da Vinci II Programme with the aim at developing efficient teaching and learning contexts and innovative methods to offer a life-long education and training for target groups and potential users.

Partnership of the project brings together institutions from 10 countries, all part, at this moment of the European Union: Marche Region - Education, Training And Job Unit (Italy), SVIM - Sviluppo Marchespa - (Italy), Marche Region - Agriculture, Forestry Andfishing Unit - (Italy), Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania – Programme LEADER and Farmers Training Methodology Centre (Lithuania), University of Aberdeen – (UK), Faculty of Agriculture of The Polytechnic University of The Marche - (Italy), University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine – Cluj-Napoca – (Romania), CIHEAM - IAMB (Agronomic Mediterranean Institute of Bari) - (Italy), CIHEAM MAICH (Agronomic Mediterranean Institute of Chania) – (Greece), Centre National de Promotion Rurale – (France), SMEA - (Italy), GCOM Teoranta – (Ireland), Lithuanian University of Agriculture – (Lithuania), ONECO - Organización de Educación Comunitaria – (Spain), Warsaw Agricultural University – (Poland), CIPAT - Centro Istruzione, Formazione e Lavoro - (Italy), INIPA - (Italy), ENAPRA - Ente Nazionale per la Ricerca e la Formazione in Agricoltura - (Italy), Copagri Nazionale - (Italy), Foundation Open Society - Sofia – (Bulgaria). As can be seen the partnership is heterogeneous not only because of the countries that are involved, but, in the

same time, because of the profile of the institutions involved. In that way, project propose itself to use their different experience and specializations to work together for fulfilling the objectives.

The project addresses a target group which is made up of the following:

Trainers for trainers and extensioners of Training Agencies for Agriculture Trade Associations and equivalent agencies working in the life-long learning context, in order to adapt and enhance their own skills using the available good practices and innovative learning methods, so as to transmit technical skills to the entrepreneurs of the target sector, in particular:

- The trainers/extensioners employed by public, semi-public and private organisations have the role of improving and promoting human resources (skill diagnosis, training needs analysis, project planning, management and evaluation of training interventions), for managerial staff as well as farmers, in order to maintain the heritage of vocational skills, for this sector, open to novelties and flexible.

- The extensioners employed by regional research centres, research-divulgate link centres and statistics and information offices have the task of providing, what has been defined by recent research as *general assistance services*. In fact, they act as a link between research and diffusion, agricultural entrepreneurial activities and research, and the agriculture sector and other economic sectors. They participate in the processing and spreading of knowledge and promote data and information exchange between agriculture and other sectors.

Teachers and researchers from Universities and Higher Education Institutes, promoters and authors of plans and training practices, to meet the needs of the target sector, exposed to rapid and profound changes. Teachers should “be able to reflect on learning and teaching processes by being continuously interested in subject knowledge, curricular contents, pedagogy, innovation, research and the social and cultural aspect of education” (The European Commission – Education and Culture General Management “Common European principles related to teachers’ skills and qualifications”, 2004).

The potential users of the results will be:

- Training schools, universities and organisations which can make use of the project results in their training practice.
- Entrepreneurial systems with individual or member subjects to improve the competitiveness of the target sector and to create new employment.
- Civil service, Local Authorities and other bodies involved in the development of training and territorial policies working in the planning, management and project programming of training programmes and projects for agriculture and rural development.

- Stakeholders involved in the negotiation of agreements on the modernization of work organization to invest more in permanent training and to allow more time for learning.

The target sectors involved in this project proposal will be those related to vocational training and agriculture and rural development. Significant problems result in these target sectors, since they lack systems of training and refresher courses for trainers and extensioners. On a wider scale, these sectors lack an agriculture training system linked to a system of agriculture development and to other segments of a more complex education and training system, on a national and a European scale, which gives suitable **importance to life-long learning techniques**.

As regards the integrated and sustainable development of rural areas, which are at a structural disadvantage compared to other productive sectors, as well as having a dissimilar and differentiated development on the Larger European territory, the recent regulation on Rural Development (Reform Regulation for rural development for the 2007/2013 phase approved by the Board of Agriculture Ministries on 20th June 2005) has strongly restated that it is necessary to strengthen the training system which, first and foremost involves the “authors” and the “actors” of development courses in a situation where size and composition of the partnership present and test the levels of dialogue and the ability to pursue goals which are common to all subjects with their various roles and skills in order to qualify human resources.

2. The **DEARs.net** proposal aims at satisfying the general needs of target groups, who being involved in the planning and the implementation of training courses, for the enhancement and the qualification of the agricultural sector and assistance to rural development, need to re-examine the adequacy of their skills, their didactic techniques and to participate in existent innovation and research processes, in order to keep up-to-date with a society with a continuously evolving knowledge.

In the target groups, already described above, the following needs have been identified and for which the following answers have been planned:

Trainers of trainers and extensioners of Training Agencies of Agriculture Trade Association or equivalent bodies that work in the life-long learning context with the aim of adapting and enhancing their own skills (analysis of policies and organisations, problem solving, communication, project planning, management and evaluation) but also the multidisciplinary and multicultural skills, in order to obtain greater capability for adaptation and, in other words, greater flexibility and motivation for continuous training. Furthermore, there is the necessity to investigate the qualitative standards and the best practices used in the Partners’ training interventions. In particular, **the extensioners** should know how transmit the technical competences to entrepreneurs of the target sector through the available good practices and innovative learning methods in order to transfer the innovative contents.

Teachers and researchers from Universities and Higher Education Institutes, being promoters and authors of the plans and the learning practices which have been adapted to meet the needs of the target sectors, participate in the Network which creates a favourable context to understand systems in-depth in the various participating countries and to work upon the innovation of study courses and also to improve the dialogue between academic and socio-economic subjects.

CONCLUSIONS

The Dears.net Network aims at contributing in the innovation and the economic growth of knowledge, strengthening the research capacity and innovation networks, by transferring models and methodologies which have been already tested and in the identification of new solutions.

By means of the ICTs, communication among users will be facilitated and it will be easier to have access to the resources and services as well as to exchange experiences in a collaborative way.

Besides, the Network would like to contribute to the outlining of learning courses for training experts, collecting the best experiences into a European web-based resource Centre.

From a future perspective, which foresees the duration of the Network after the end of the project, the European Web based Resource Centre will have the task of permanently updating methodologies, didactic instruments and experiences obtained from vocational training in order to assist operators' activities and the link with European Centres for vocational training, as well as to be a permanent channel for the general and specific diffusion of the summary results from various research areas in the target context, that is, training for the agriculture and rural development sector.

The project **DEARs.net** aims at contributing in the innovation and the economic growth of knowledge, in the strengthening the research capacity and innovation networks, by transferring models and methodologies which have been already tested and/or in the identification of new solutions, having a significant importance for:

- improving the quality of trainers' training in the rural agriculture sector by identifying and diffusing the best practices of the "heritage" of the partnership and other competent subjects;
- sharing results from previous experience obtained from LdV (Mobility and Pilot), which are already targeted towards the continuous training of the above-mentioned trainers, and their added value through Network dynamics;
- the updating of needs analysis and the follow-up training solutions for the target sector, that is, the agriculture and rural development one, which underwent important and complex transformation systems in the socio-economic structure as well as in the European and national institutional and normative acknowledgement aspect.

REFERENCES

<http://www.dearsnet.net/>, last accessed 1.12.2007