

APPLICATION OF INNOVATIVE METHODS AND EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES IN A TRAINING SYSTEM FOR YOUNG FARMERS: THE FEAL PROJECT

Martina Slámová*, Alexandra Kruse, Iacopo Benedetti, Johannes Dreer

Around half the EU's land is farmed. Agriculture is a vital activity and along with forestry it is considered to be a driver of the rural economy and a platform for economic diversification in rural areas (Augère-Granier, 2016). Today, farmers have two roles: producing our food and managing the countryside. In the second of these, they provide public goods (European Commission, 2014). Depopulation of the countryside is a European phenomenon. As incomes plunge, those who remain struggle to maintain a way of life that seems doomed. Projections based on European Commission figures suggest up to 22 % of people in rural France, Greece, Spain and Portugal are elderly retirees, while only about 10 % of farmers across the EU are aged 35 or younger (Tisdall, 2015).

The benefit of taking on new activities on the farm is, for its owner, a higher level of income. Diversification also means more security and stability for the farm household, and it can create employment for other members of the family; several sources of income make a farm more resilient in the event of an agricultural crisis (Augère-Granier, 2016). Landscape retains tangible or symbolic traces of local, regional, national and European history. The highlighting of this history through landscape protection, management and planning contributes to Europeans' fulfilment and to the consolidation of the Council of Europe's funding principles (CoE, 2000). Rising awareness of the worth and cultural value of European agricultural landscapes (EALs) serving as production factor and added value for the farmer is considered to be very important. Successful concepts of business strategies in this field can improve the situation of employment in the farming sector.

There is a need to train young farmers and landowners in order to make them able to "manage" the countryside in the sustainable way that society is asking for but also to earn a fair living. Although the people living in rural areas are surrounded by European Agricultural Landscapes (EAL), their knowledge in terms of cultural value, history and emergence of it is limited (Printsmann et al., 2012), even among farmers themselves. The share of population participating to lifelong learning courses in rural areas of the EU-27, reaches only 6.6% (European Commission, 2013). Therefore, people living in rural areas may represent a group at risk of exclusion and free access to vocational education and training (VET) material is crucial.

The FEAL project (multifunctional Farming for the sustainability of European Agricultural Landscapes), N° 2016-1-SK01-KA202-022502, was approved under the ERASMUS+ programme, in the Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, and in the field of Strategic Partnerships for VET. The targeted group are young farmers, young rural entrepreneurs and family farmers. It aims at the development of a flexible open source e-learning Training System about the conceptualisation and the implementation of sustainable and multifunctional farming practices linking diverse interests of farmers and rural society within different types of EALs with case studies documenting farming activities implementing win-win-situations.

The project has started in December 2016 with a kick-off meeting at the Technical University in Zvolen (Slovakia) (Figure 1). The project consortium consists of the lead partner in Slovakia and 7 partners from Western, Mediterranean and Eastern parts of Europe (Institute for Research on European Agricultural Landscapes (EUCALAND) e.V. and Hof und Leben GmbH from Germany; On Projects Advising SL and Union De Agricultores Y Ganaderos-Jovenes Agricultores De Jaén from Spain, Associazione Media Valle del Tevere GAL from Italy;

Biotehniški center Naklo from Slovenia; and European Landowners Organization from Belgium).



Figure 1. Participants of the Kick of Meeting and FEAL workshop at the Technical University in Zvolen (1st -2nd of December, 2016).

1. ábra A nyitókonferencia és a FEAL workshop résztvevői, Zólyomi Egyetem (2016. December 1–2.)

The main innovating elements of the project will be:

- Training System representing comprehensive, flexible, free and open-source online educational material showing sustainable and multifunctional farming practices maintaining and improving the quality of EALs in a pan-European context;
- Case studies providing the opportunity for trainees to learn through real, successful experiences and, for the first time, an entrepreneurial exchange about the topic on regional, national and European levels;
- Implementing international knowledge exchange into the entrepreneurial, cultural and social context in different countries, giving it full coverage of different contexts of farming practices in EALs bearing a variety of cultural and historical values
- Information and communication technologies and e-learning Open Education Resources (OER) for training a targeted group of farmers to guarantee high penetration of the project outputs to the wider public.

The project's conceptual research framework consists of a methodology to compare farming practices in different European landscape types considering landscapes' values. Cultural landscapes have become of higher importance over the last decades (van der Zanden et al. 2016); nevertheless, cultural and historical values of EALs are still neglected and they have not been included within commonly used European datasets on landscape types and land use (Lanmap2 and CORINE Land Cover). The scientific background of the FEAL project is developed by the EUCALAND partner (Kruse et al. 2010; Pungetti and Kruse, 2010). However, its outputs will be interlinked with relevant results of similar projects (for instance HERCULES) and initiatives (a global initiative of International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes ICOMOS/IFLA for conservation and management of world rural landscapes or with Activity on Cultural Landscape implemented under The UNESCO World Heritage Centre).

FEAL is performed in two groups of working packages (WPs); the first one focuses on the implementation of project's intellectual outputs and the second consists of transversal WPs running throughout the whole life of the project covering management, monitoring, evaluation, dissemination and exploitation activities (Figure 2).

The Training System has been performed in 3 WPs:

- Wp1 (O1): Summary report about the state of the art of the relation between sustainable/multifunctional farming practices and EAL;
- Wp2 (O2): Development of the training materials: case studies and complementary OER with the main integrative element - the FEAL interactive online e-atlas;
- Wp3 (O3 & O4): Pilot testing and development of the definitive training system.

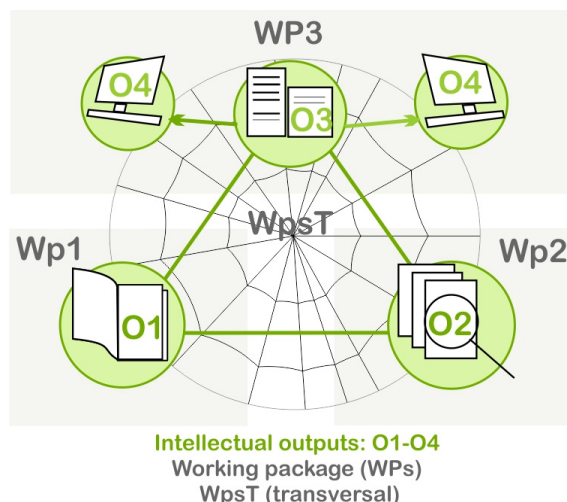


Figure 2. The realisation of the FEAL project through working packages.

2. ábra A FEAL projekt megvalósítása a munkacsomagokon keresztül

Currently, concerning implemented activities within WP1, we organised a workshop after the Kick-off-Meeting in Zvolen. Further, a group of direct beneficiaries was selected, a research instrument was designed (includes interview instructions and questionnaire for experts) and the minimum content and structure of a national report was formulated.

In this phase, we have started intensive work on dissemination activities and the project's web page was set up (<https://eka2feal.joomla.com/en/>) where we will publish all outputs of the project. The latest updates are shared via social networks and in case of your interest please, follow us and share your ideas about the FEAL project on Twitter: https://twitter.com/FEAL_ERASMUS.

Acknowledgement and disclaimer.

This ERASMUS+ project no. 2016-1-SK01-KA202-022502 has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

References

- Augère-Granier, M.L. 2016: Farm diversification in the EU. Briefing, April 2016. [online]. [cit. 08.03.2017]. European Parliamentary Research Service. Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/581978/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)581978_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/581978/EPRS_BRI(2016)581978_EN.pdf)
- Council of Europe (CoE) 2000: The European Landscape Convention [online]. [cit.08.03.2017]. ETS No. 176, Strasbourg. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/Landscape/default_en.asp
- European Commission 2013: Rural Development in the EU Statistical and Economic Information, Report 2013. [online]. [cit.08.03.2017]. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/statistics/rural-development/2013/full-text_en.pdf

- European Commission 2014: The EU explained: Agriculture. [online]. [cit. 08.03.2017]. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/file/560/download_en?token=y2S-gysF
- Kruse, A., Centeri, C., Renes, H., Roth, M., Printsman, A., Palang, H., Jordá, L.B. Velarde, M.D., Kruckenberg, H. 2010: Glossary on Agricultural Landscapes. *Tájökológiai Lapok Special Issue*: 99-127.
- Printsman A., Kruse A., Roth, M. 2012: Introduction for living in agricultural landscapes: practice, heritage and identity. *Eur Countryside* 2:89-100.
- Pungetti, G., Kruse, A. Eds. 2010: European Culture Expressed in Agricultural Landscapes. Perspectives from Eucaland Project, Roma, Palombi Editori.
- Tisdall, S. 2015. Silent blight as the young leave villages for cities, *The Guardian Weekly*, 193 (12).
- van der Zanden E.H., Levers Ch., Verburg P.H., Kuemmerle, T. 2016: Representing composition, spatial structure and management intensity of European agricultural landscapes: A new typology, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 150, 36-49.

Contact

*Martina Slámová PhD. (ERASMUS+ project nr. 2016-1-SK01-KA202-022502 coordinator)

Technical University in Zvolen

Faculty of Ecology and Environmental Sciences

Department of Landscape Planning and Design

T. G. Masaryka 24

960 53 Zvolen

Slovakia

Tel: +421 45 5206 664

E-Mail: martina.slamova@tuzvo.sk, WWW:

https://www.tuzvo.sk/sk/organizacna_struktura/fakulta_ekologie_a_environmentalistiky/organizacne-clenenie/katedry/katedra_planovania_a_tvorby_krajiny/zamestnanci/ing-martina-slamova-phd.html