

REPORT ON MULTIPLIER EVENT

Multiplier Event No 7 (E7): RUR'UP Regional workshop on innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas.

Receiving organisation: **University of Thessaly**

Dates of the event: **22/07/2022**

1. The description of the Multiplier event

The event targeted peers in academia, both from the fields of sustainability education and sustainable rural development, environmental educators in secondary education, Regional and Local Development agencies, environmental and agricultural authorities and NGOs. The event was organized with the aim to a) inform about the novel educational tools developed during RUR'UP project, b) motivate educators from Greece to use the innovative tools developed and c) find out possible utilization of the innovative tools produced during the course of the project for wider audiences. The workshop was an opportunity for dissemination of the project results related to a) the skills and competencies that graduates of these training activities have obtained and the gaps that they can fill in sustainable development in peripheral rural areas, and b) the results of the project to potential employers in these areas regarding graduates' skills and abilities and the needs that they meet

The event was organized at Mouzaki, in Pindos in Western Thessaly, a research field site for a series of years for the Laboratory of Rural Area (UTH) and the study area of the e-course for Greece. Invited to the event were representatives from (a) higher education institutions (eg Agricultural University of Athens, Panteion University, Aristotelio University of Thessaloniki), (b) local authorities, (c) local organisations (cooperatives, local chambers, local development agencies, Network PINDOS, etc.), (d) environmental educational centers, vocational educational centers.



The agenda of the Multiplier Event “RUR'UP Regional workshop on innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas” was:

AGENDA
July 22, 2022 – 18:00 to 21:30
Mouzaki Thessalia, Greece

Time	Subject	Speakers
18.00-18.30	Participant registration	
18.30-18.40	Welcome -discussion's organisation	<i>Gaki Dimitra</i>
18.40-19.00	Presentation of the RUR'UP Project <i>Innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas</i>	<i>Gaki Dimitra</i>
19.00-19.10	Innovations and their contribution to the sustainable development of <i>peripheral rural areas</i>	<i>Vlahos Georges</i>
19.10-19.45	Presentation of the Summer school results	<i>Students participated to Summer School</i>
19.45-20.00	Needs on advisor's specialist to the PRA at the Local authorities, supporting the adoption of innovation	<i>Stergiou Andreas</i>
20.00-21.30	Discussions, debates feedback from participants	

Photos: ME Agenda, 22nd of July 2022





The Registration to the event started at 18:00.

After the welcoming address, Dimitra Gaki, RUR'UP project coordinator, responsible for University of Thessaly, initially and briefly presented the agenda and course of the event, while emphasizing the need for and importance of the participants' active participation in the discussion that will follow.

The content of the first presentation focused on the following: Presentation of the RURUP project - the partners and the intellectual results of the project. the concept and importance of regional rural areas at the European level. The audience (representatives of Municipalities, Chambers, local bodies but also research and educational institutions) responded to the proposed topics for discussion: training needs and gaps for the sustainable development of regional rural areas, the training and skills needs of professionals in regional areas and the project's evaluations of training needs and gaps to date. The importance of acquiring knowledge directly related to the specificity of these areas was the main observation of the participants along with the understanding that the practical approach to study cases is the most effective way of learning through solving real situations.

The Local Government representatives, elected and executives, supported the need for specialists concerning the innovations at rural areas and their implementation. They need them for supporting the business potential of their area (farmers, homemakers, small artisans, tourism entrepreneurs). These collaborations will contribute to elaborate development plans for their area, based on their resources, the mobilization of local business potential and the emergence of their territorial resources

The representatives of educational and research institutions (University of Thessaly, Agricultural University of Athens, Hellenic Agricultural Organisation DEMETER- Educational Center, Center for genetic improvement of animals of Karditsa) they agreed with a) the need for advisory support to farmers and b) the development of business activities in peripheral rural areas with respect for the environment and primarily utilizing local knowledge and know-how. The insufficient support of the producers was formulated through the fact that: " several new breeders in the mountainous areas start their exploitation by choosing animals not of local breeds but of foreign ones. These animals are not able to cope with the area's climatic conditions, as well as rely their diet on grazing". This example is an indication of the great lack of training and advice of both producers and their specialist advisors. This support will contribute to the recognition of their role in the rational management of the environment, but also in the production of quality products, highlighting their important social role

The Chambers representatives expressed the need for a) practical education of future specialists in the field of rural development and b) specialized experts for supporting small entrepreneurship in the rural areas and the coordination of horizontal development between the involved bodies.

The participants were interested to know if the proposed training RUR'UP can be applied beyond the students, to executives of their institutions and their external specialists. The answer was that the University of Thessaly through KEVIDIM can organize this online asynchronous training for their staff. UTH, in cooperation with the local actors, can planning a summer school if they are interested in.

The UTH representative emphasized the importance of education for the preservation of the biodiversity of peripheral rural areas, through grazing practices (since in these areas the main activity remains animal husbandry despite all its downward trends). Both the Local Authorities representatives and much more the Chambers representatives presented the efforts (strategic plan for their mountainous area, formation of an agro-tourism organization of Karditsa) that they are planning for organize their tourist product based on the area's principal resources: natural resources, productive activities (livestock, small craft)



Development agencies and farmers cooperatives representatives argued that the approach of peripheral rural areas should be reviewed. They agreed that approaching the entrepreneurs (farmers/breeders, small investors in crafts, tourism) must be differentiated. The entrepreneurs have to include in their strategy, the extensive management of the area and the production of agri-food and other goods and services based on the area's capacity and their ties with the place. It was argued that the consultation is a very important tool both for mobilizing local producer-entrepreneurs and for forming consensual decisions.

The Greek students who successfully participated in the RUR'UP e-learning pilot program and in the summer school, presented their experience in this activity. They gave their comments on the process they went through. They mentioned the main advantages/features of taking the course: interactive, efficient online platform, originality of assignments, etc.

Towards the end of the event, participants highlighted the need for everyone to engage in discussions but also in consultations about how peripheral rural areas can be sustained in the long term. This discussion was built on the key points presented by all the speakers and the students who graduated from the modules. Conclusion: it is a reality that employers expect future specialists to have an in-depth understanding of the interplay between land use, environment and economy-specific issues, targeting peripheral rural areas. In order to meet this demand, it is necessary to adapt the study programs of HEIs to the current needs of employers.

2. The intellectual outputs covered:

- ⇒ The assessment of the education needs and gaps for the sustainable development of the EU peripheral areas
- ⇒ E-learning course
- ⇒ Bank of Case-studies
- ⇒ Digital Teaching Platform and Digital Learning Resource
- ⇒ Syllabus and materials for Intensive Study Activity
- ⇒ Reflective report on the approach and methodology adopted

3. The leading and participating organisations:

The leading organization was University of Thessaly, represented by 3 team members (Dimitra Gaki, Georges Vlahos, Serafim Felekis) who organized the Multiplier event and have assured that the agenda was followed (start time, breaks, end time) and that any changes were adapted without affecting the scope of the event.

Invited to the event were representatives from (a) higher education institutions (eg Agricultural University of Athens, Panteion University, Aristotelio University of Thessaloniki), (b) local authorities, (c) local organisations (cooperatives, local chambers, local development agencies, Network PINDOS, etc.), (d) environmental educational centers, vocational educational centers.

Among the participating organizations were:

1. Hellenic Agricultural Organisation DEMETER- Educational Center
2. Center for genetic improvement of animals of Karditsa
3. Region of Thessaly (Regional Unit of Karditsa)

4. Epirus Region Regional Unit of Arta -Environmental Department
5. Network of Pindos
6. Mayors and representatives of municipalities
7. Representatives of the Chambers of Karditsa, Trikala and Arta
8. Professor at University of Thessaly
9. Professor at Agricultural University of Athens
10. Development Agency of Kalampaka-Pyli (KENAKAP SA)
11. *Greek Breeders Association of Cattle Breed*
12. *Producers*
13. *entrepreneurial agronomists*

4. The venue of the meeting

The multiplier event took place at Mouzaki Karditsa (Mouzaki Palace hotel) at 22.07.2022

5. The numbers of local and international participant

There were 29 local participants in total.

