

Innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas - Abstract

Serafim Felekis¹, Dimitra Gaki¹, George Vlahos², Irina Herzon³, Maite Puig-de Morales Fusté⁴, Tristan Berchoux⁴, Ruth BennettCoady⁵, Ionel Mugurel Jitea⁶, Yanka. Kazakova⁷, Myriam Kessari⁴, Olgica Klepac⁸, Valentin Mihai⁶, James Moran⁵, Snježana Tolic⁸, and Marija Roglic⁸

¹*University of Thessaly, Greece*

²*Agricultural University of Athens, Greece*

³*University of Helsinki, Finland*

⁴*International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, France*

⁵*Galway- Mayo Institute of Technology, Ireland*

⁶*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj Napoca, Roumania*

⁷*University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria*

⁸*University of Osijek, Croatia*

Summary

EU Peripheral rural areas cover almost 30% of the utilized agricultural area and almost 15% of agricultural holdings (Keeleyside et al 2014). Additionally, these areas contain a vast part of EU's biodiversity capital, a series of traditional farming practices and contribute meaningfully to the local economy due to the small-scale production procedures they maintain and the special geographical conditions. Despite their importance for rural livelihoods, cultural heritage, biodiversity, and ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water retention, these areas face a combination of social, political, and environmental pressures.

The State of European Environment report (2020) indicates an alarming rate of biodiversity loss driven by both agricultural intensification and abandonment. Depopulation, for instance, drains them of human capital and forces entrepreneurs to acquire a multitude of different skills and competences. Producers are often faced with a complex dilemma on how to modernize production while avoiding potential wider social and environmental damage inflicted by the process. Therefore, adoption and diffusion of innovation is critical in achieving sustainable development of peripheral rural areas. Innovation is not something new for the production practices that are present in these areas' farming systems, as a big number of these farmers have to adopt technologically advanced procedures in order to maintain their products' quality, to introduce them in the market at a competitive price and to capitalize on the specific high value characteristics of their products. The innovation process is not only limited in changing the farming practices only but also in aiding to bring together the multi actor audience, present in these areas in order to define the area's vision and set (local government authorities, local practitioners, NGO's, market representatives etc).

The gap identified by the RuR'Up Erasmus+ project has to do with the necessity of offering improved educational tools to scientists working in these areas aiming not only to the members of the academic community but also advisors and practitioners. The Erasmus+ project commonly implemented by seven European universities and institutions, aims to deliver educational material concerning the sustainable development in peripheral rural areas via an asynchronous module which is offered via a specially designed online platform. Additionally, the case studies of selected areas, used as paradigms in the offered module, are being presented in a specially dedicated platform.

The project consortium has made use of the available technology in order to offer an asynchronous online module to a European audience from seven countries. It is expected upon its completion to attract a wider audience, firstly due to the main subject's importance and secondly due to the form of the offered module.

The asynchronous online module along with the rest of the produced educational material aim at developing skills and competencies for students, educators, advisors and practitioners, towards:

- a broad understanding of social, environmental, and economic characteristics of peripheral rural areas, and recognize vulnerabilities of these areas
- recognition of needs and opportunities for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas

- distinguish the stages and key elements of the innovation process
- create awareness on the variety of existing innovations relevant to their own country and across the EU

Keywords

Sustainable rural development, peripheral rural areas, innovative education, actors empowerment.

Proceedings of HAICTA 2022, September 22–25, 2022, Athens, Greece

EMAIL: sfelekis@engineer.com (A. 1); dimgaki@uth.gr (A. 2); gvlahos@aua.gr (A. 3); iryna.herzon@helsinki.fi (A. 4); puigdemorales@iamm.fr (A. 5); berchoux@iamm.fr (A. 6); ruth.bennettcoady@gmit.ie (A. 7); mjitea@usamvcluj.ro (A. 8); yanka.kazakova@gmail.com (A. 9); kessari@iamm.fr (A. 10); olgica.klepac@fazos.hr (A. 11); valentin.mihai@usamvcluj.ro (A. 12); james.moran@gmit.ie (A. 13); snjezana.tolic@fazos.hr (A. 14); marija.rogljic@gmail.com (A. 15)



© 2022 Copyright for this paper by its authors.
Use permitted under Creative Commons License Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

CEUR Workshop Proceedings (CEUR-WS.org)