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Vegucation - Training of European competency in sustainable, healthy and well-balanced nutrition for professional chefs and caterers

Final Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

Plant-based cuisine in Europe is currently experiencing an unprecedented growth trend. Customers are demanding healthier, more sustainable and meat-reduced menus. Vegetarianism has been booming like no other market. 1 out of 2 guests prefer plant-based options. Alongside the growing number of vegetarians, customers expect vegetarian offers to have the same high standards as the other dishes on the menu. Unfortunately, in classic cookery courses little attention is given to creative, sophisticated and sustainable vegetarian cuisine. In addition, several diet-related diseases can be prevented by a healthy, meatless diet. Plant-based foods suit a lot of people with food allergies, food intolerances and other special dietary requirements.

Our research showed that only a very few percent of the curriculum in vocational chef training deals with the field of plant-based products. This is not sufficient for a style of cooking which is growing in importance for many people. The project wanted to address this matter in order to meet not only customers' needs but also to respond to a change in nutrition in consideration of environmental and food shortage issues. The growing demand for plant-based meals discloses the need for a highly developed education for apprentices, teachers and current chefs. Therefore Vegucation developed a new syllabus for teaching of vegetarian cuisine.

In order to meet professional challenges and improve competitiveness in catering constant adaption to changing demands is required. Sustainable structures had to be created by the institutionalisation of a standardized curriculum and teaching materials. This project aimed to:

- Develop a transnational vocational training concept including
 - a 100-hours-curriculum,
 - multilingual teaching materials
 - innovative ICT and multimedia contents
- Provide vocational schools with training
 - spread pilot courses and extra workshops throughout the national and European vocational training system
 - continued training for accomplished chefs
- Involve students, teachers and professional experts in development as Feedback and Developer teams

The project created teaching material for VET schools and the initial support for their implementation. The various services were realized by March 2015 in print form as well as encompassing ICT elements on the projects web portal www.vegucation.eu. Contact: info@vegucation.eu

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1. Project Objectives

Vegucation fills the gap between labour market needs and vocational skills by the development of new competencies for the new Europe-wide job of the “vegetarian cook”. The primary aim of Vegucation was to develop and pilot a specific vocational training and teaching material for initial and continuing VET in gastronomy.

Vegucation addresses the central European concerns by

- **Gastronomic expertise:** Allowing chefs in training to develop new gastronomic expertise to meet the requirements for a modern, sophisticated, sustainable vegetarian cuisine during the initial and continued training periods
- **Specialist knowledge:** Developing resources to provide specialist knowledge. In this context a learning field-oriented curriculum, as well as target group-specific learning material and ICT materials in various language version will be compiled and accessible on the Vegucation’s web portal after the project’s runtime
- **Setting up pilots** and institutionalizing courses by fulfilling the respective national and European requirements for certification measures
- **Training:** Training educational professionals so that they are able to work with the method as well as to give better assistance to the students by acquiring gastronomical skills
- Preparing the **commercialization** for distance-learning courses in continuing VET for reasons of sustainability of the project results
- **Applying methodology innovative to traditional VET:**
 - ICT integration as innovative methodology
 - Learning field orientation and competence-orientation
- Continuing and strengthening the **cooperation between consortium** members and opening it up to new trans-sectorial networking opportunities

The aim was to provide expertise in the requirements of meat-reduced cuisine as well as profound background knowledge on health, climate, environment, organic produce, fair trade and other sustainability matters. Vegucation improved ICT capabilities and implemented an action-oriented learning and working style and the skills to mediate them. In the end Vegucation wanted to develop a better matching between skills and labour market needs and consequently better job prospects.

2. Project Approach

Representatives of every project partner formed an international Steering group. Together with teachers, students and chefs they built the Feedback and Developer team to achieve the objectives of Vegucation several stages:

At first a **pan-European analysis** of

- existing course material and practices
- the European structure of chambers and VET school situation
- further exploitation opportunities
- identification of experts and
- needs of vocational schools in the area of meat-reduced cuisine

was conducted. The status quo of all chambers and vocational schools with cooking options in the partner countries was determined. This stage covered the first three months of the project and resulted in a 100-page report.

After that an EQF based, learning field oriented, modular **100-hours-curriculum** in multiple language versions was designed by use of a virtual workbench and video conferencing. It is based on the findings in the analysis stage and easily to reconcile with national and school-specific frameworks.

Content Development: Based on the curriculum a student and a teacher handbook, ICT contents and methodology were developed as ongoing process:

1. Contents compiled by the Developer Team and the Steering group
2. Testing of each module by online surveys to the international Feedback Team; monthly integration of the feedback
3. First version of the material was presented during Train the Trainers for assessment by teachers in the partner countries and
4. Material was used on three focus groups of students interested in following the courses the subsequent year.
5. Recommendations from the target group were adopted in a Developer Team's working session in Austria

Scientific counselling ensured quality of the products. Material prevails in digital form for print-on-demand with a first version accomplished for Train the Trainers.

Adaptation of the curriculum and teaching material to the pilot applications is an 18-month process. Preliminary results were produced for use in the exploitation stage.

A chef specialised in plant-based cuisine offered **3-day trainings** to vocational staff in each of the four partner country respectively. The training contained:

1. Practical instruction
2. Theoretical instruction in ecological, economical and other correlations
3. Teaching methodology and introduction of the new material.

Exploitation: Pilots were established in two schools for each language domain of the consortium and in four different settings (initial VET, continuing VET, vocational preparation and advanced classes).

The pilot cases and project's outcomes were **disseminated** through intense networking, the associated partners' activities and an international symposium in Belgium organized within the project runtime.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Following outcomes and results were provided.

- I. European **Meetings** with accompanying reports have been organised.
 - Kickoff meeting in Berlin November 2012
 - Work meeting in Vienna in December 2013
 - Final Symposium in Brussels in February 2015
- II. A **pan-European Research report**: Analysis and definition of the impact and potential of exploitation of the project results on national, regional and local training facilities.
- III. A **EQF based 100-hour-curriculum**: Production of a modularised, target oriented frame curriculum for the well-balanced whole-food cuisine as well as the convenience product range for the use in vocational schools
- IV. **Teaching and learning material**:
 - student and teacher handbook in the target languages (6 languages)
 - ICT contents and methodology in multiple language versions
 - ⤴ cook videos in three language versions
 - ⤴ 3D-animated movies on environment and health aspects in three language versions
 - ⤴ twelve e-learning modules in five language versions
 - ⤴ learning videos with experts on health and environmental aspects of nutrition
 - ⤴ a climate calculator for analysing recipes
 - as well as a guide on ECVET based evaluation and certification
- V. **Adapted school material** for the respective partner countries: There are diverse possibilities for integration and certification of an additional qualification in vegetarian cuisine. It was nevertheless necessary to adapt the contents and to select those modules that may be appropriately used for piloting.
- VI. **Training for trainers**: A chef trainer specialised in plant-based cuisine offered 3-day trainings to vocational staff in two partner countries.
- VII. **Online questionnaires and surveys**:
 - The development of teaching material was accompanied by the support of the Feedback and Developer team
 - The participants received online surveys on a regular basis to evaluate the progress of the material ensuring the quality of the output
 - Internal and external evaluation activities are conducted as ongoing and accompanying process of the project to ensure quality of outputs

VIII. **Pilot courses:** In Jan and Feb 2014 pilot courses started in the partner countries respectively

DHA, Germany, by:

- DHA offers a ZFU-certified 6-months remote course to appr. 20 accomplished chefs per semester

KTA Wemmel, Belgium, by:

- 2h/week correspondence courses for one semester each. Two classes à 20 students were reached.

OSZ Gastgewerbe, Germany, by:

- The implementation of the 60 lessons on plant-based resources (initial VET), which reached 80 students.
- A 3-day-afternoon class for vocational preparation, initial VET and continuing VET reached 20 students
- A week's extra course for high-capacity classes reached 20 students

Syntra West, Belgium, by:

- The implementation of 100-hour training in 25 sessions of 4 x 50min, 1 session a week. 36 students were reached during the measure.
- Other European VET institutions reached through the exploitation stage and having implemented the projects' results (20% of around 500 VET institutions approached) integrate the results into their ongoing educative business

Subsequently the following measures were executed during the pilot:

- a module-wise pilot application of learning situations,
- the reflection of the implementation experience,
- execution and evaluation of the learning experience as well as
- the production of a test report

IX. **Dissemination material:**

- Brochures, flyers as well as
- A promotional video and
- An exhibition set with roll-up, banner and posters
- and a web presence

have been produced during the project.

4. Partnerships

The partnership was set up so that:

- Interests of everyone participating in the market (gastronomers and consumers) are represented
- Pilots for three different VET sectors (initial, continuing and distance-learning VET) were set up
- Two pilot institutions for each of the two language domains were set up
- A wide European outreach is granted by the European networks of the partners
- A language diversity (English, French, German, Dutch, Czech) allows for exploitation of the project's results in over half the European language community

Schools from each of the three VET sectors were selected for development, testing and exploitation purposes, while the respective NGOs provide dissemination of the pilot cases on national and European level and assistance to the development of the project results with the perspective of consumer needs.

The consortium thus consists of:

Belgian hotel & gastronomy school (KTA) (initial VET): extraordinary technical expertise, a privileged position within the European Association of Hotel and Tourism Schools (AEHT) and a long experience within the framework of the Leonardo program.

German gastronomy school (OSZ) (initial VET): with 6.000 students one of the largest VET schools of Germany. With the national curriculum demanding 60 hours in vegetable resources to each student the re-conceptualization of this module within the present proposal offers a large-scale pilot.

Belgian school for accomplished chefs (Syntra) (continuing VET): with 3,5 million training hours every year for about 55,000 trainees on 6 campuses Syntra adds company managers, senior staff and employees of small and medium-sized companies to the project's target group.

German hotel & gastronomy academy offering courses to trained chefs (DHA) (distance learning): is one of the largest distance-learning academies of Germany. Each year the DHA offers courses certified by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce like Business administrator in the Hospitality Industry, Chef or Dietary Cook, as well as Catering business administration.

German NGO (VEBU): met the current need for additional qualification in the sector by individual in-house courses offered by the organization itself. VEBU (founded 1892) and EVA are the only government funded vegetarian organizations in the world.

Belgian NGO (EVA): developed substantial practical experience in creating educational material regarding the subject and governmental and economical project management during their 10 year existence.

Dutch and Austrian NGOs (VGÖ / NVB): qualified to successfully manage the dissemination and exploitation of pilots, based on their expert knowledge on nutrition and their excellent networking capacities.

5. Plans for the Future

In order to ensure the sustainability and impact of Vegucation, following activities will be encountered after the projects' runtime:

Institutionalisation of piloting courses:

- DHA offers a ZFU-certified 6-months remote course to approximately 20 accomplished chefs per semester
- OSZ (P5) will offer a 1 year free afternoon practical class on egg- and dairy alternatives; they have changed their 60 hour module and modernized the contents completely; also for high-capacity classes extra workshops are provided frequently and project "veggie" days are planned
- KTA (P6): apart from the implemented piloting courses in 2014 (according to the project plans), the school will continue to give students a chance to learn more on plant-based products. In the 7th year called "Specialization of gastronomy" more attention will be put on workshops, internships and specialised plant-based cuisine or plant-based companies/fairs will be visited by students. Furthermore KTA considers having "veggie" days, offer teacher trainings in order to certify them as "Vegucation" teacher.

Vegucation 2.0 and certification:

- Train the trainers: institutionalising teacher trainings to continue the full implementation of the contents within the school curricula on a national and European level respectively
- Professional publishers: working with professional publishers in order to promote and distribute new editions and improved versions of the learning material, more than 10 000 students will be reached by this strategy
- Lobbying: working with social partners, chambers and educational institutions with the goal to improve the national curriculum for chefs, making plant-based cuisine an obligatory content in their exams
- Trademark and certification "Vegucation": in order to ensure quality of "Vegucation" as a certificate, we defined clear terms, criteria and conditions.

Update and publish material:

- partners are working with professional publishers to either implement Vegucation contents into other school reference books or to publish a 2nd edition of the student handbook "plant-based cuisine"
- thus the material will be spread nationally and to over 10 000 students in Germany and approx. 70% of the chef students in Belgium
- also the publishers are interested to implement the multimedia and ICT contents into their repertoire

6. Contribution to EU policies

LLP-Obj-c

Vegucation improves the quality of chefs-to-be and chefs participating in initial and continuing VET by constituting the first step towards a certified vocational training in sustainable meat-reduced culinary art. By turning four partner schools into pilots with 60 teachers and 200 students being trained during the project offers a reference framework for other vocational schools proactively encouraged to follow. Project results will be openly accessible for everyone interested.

LLP-Obj-e

Training reacting on recent customer needs leads to competitiveness in European economy. The planned curriculum and teaching material consist of specific modules:

- the *creative* use of a modern vegetarian product range within haute cuisine
- job opportunities like internships or mobilities for improved *employability*
- marketing strategies and business planning inciting an *entrepreneurial spirit*
- Learning field orientation and ICT enrichment allow for *creativity* in teaching methodology.

LEO-SpObj-a

Up-to-date know-how on sustainable and healthy food preparation, composition of a well-balanced, meat-reduced menu, marketing and business management within the gastronomical field and ICT competency lead to a more market-oriented perspective for the 60 teachers and 256 students trained and to increased confidence in their professional and personal qualification. Transferring the pilot experiences to other vocational schools results in an overall fitness for employment in culinary institutions.

LEO-SpObj-b

Vegucation is the first systematic way to improve the vocational education of apprentice cooks and gastronomical staff with regards to natural, meat-reduced food and therefore to meet the demands of the modern customer. Next to innovation in expertise, also frontal teaching as a methodology is replaced by learning field orientation supported by multimedia, e-learning and interactive technology. Departing from the pilot schools innovation is promoted to vocational education institutions Europe-wide.

LEO-OpObj-2

In the stage of analysis Vegucation explores cooperation potentials with at least 200 institutions: local and European NGOs, institutions of formal vocational training, caterers / companies, governmental departments and employers' associations, the

bonds with which are used and strengthened within exploitation and dissemination stages. During implementation the new partnership of the consortium learns from each other and makes use of the synergies of a transnational and trans-sectoral network.

LEO-OpObj-3

The methodology of explorative learning, learning field orientated teaching and modularisation is pursued. ICT measures contain six cooking videos, live video chat sessions, six 3D animated videos, online diaries, a climate calculator and five e-learning modules. Teaching material translated into five language versions will be disseminated and transferred by member organisations of the EVU into their resident countries' vocational systems.

7. Target group

In the narrow sense, the project's target group is current and future gastronomy staff, apprentices in gastronomy and the hotel trade as well as teachers and trainers in the initial and continuing VET. In the broadest sense, the project likewise aims at policy makers of VET, chambers and social partners.

Vegucation offers a way to

- Endow gastronomical staff and staff-to-be with accomplished expertise of a sustainable, vegetarian cuisine, improved ICT capabilities and learning-field oriented learning and therefore bring about a developed matching between skills and labour market needs with improved job prospects
- Allow VET institutions to offer innovative contents, methods and procedures, leading to increased satisfaction of the learners with their enhanced educational services and being an exposed pilot and best-practice to other VET institutions
- Further ensure the attractiveness of gastronomical services to meet an increasing customer demand for more healthy, higher sustainability and more informed chefs / better communication
- Promote an international, cross-sectorial cooperation in this field by strengthening an already existing cooperation in project management while allowing cross-networking and cross-fertilization between the European Vegetarian Union (EVU) member NGOs, AEHT's member schools and the consortium's schools' European partner schools
- Institutionalise the vocational training by integration into initial VET, commercialisation and certification.

