

ECVET-STEP NEWSLETTER 6



ECVET-STEP as a way out of European unemployment

So far we focused our attention in these newsletters on the importance of lifelong learning for *existing* workers in the professions, with emphasis on agriculture.

The idea has been that in order to sustain employment in the competitive world market, the labour force must have a way of efficiently incorporating the latest trends in knowledge and update their skills in order not to be “left behind”.

However, the overall future economic fortunes of the European Union on the international scene are dependent on many more factors than skilled labour force (like the current Russian embargo; see our next News-

letter for this developing story) and thus it would be unfair to think of ECVET-STEP as a panacea to all EU’s ills.

However, there is one specific burning European problem that ECVET-STEP can address. The problem of unemployment.

When the system of skill transfer becomes more efficient thanks to ECVET-STEP, it will be a benefit not only to existing workers but also to *new entrants* into the profession. And there is no better pool of potential entrants than the unemployed.

In principle it does not matter whether unemployed, after they acquire their skills through ECVET, then get employed or, even

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Strengthening Training to Employment Pathways

better, whether they start their own business. Either way unemployment goes down, and so does the pressure on social security budgets of EU states. The mountain of state debt can start to shrink and/or taxes can be lowered.

An overall win-win-win situation.

To that purpose the ECVET-STEP project has partnered with a new project AGROBUSINESS-START, aimed at supporting conversion from unemployment into agricultural self-employment. Read more on this project and on the synergies with ECVET-STEP inside this issue.

Highlights

- ECVET-STEPs cooperates with AGROBUSINESS START
- Together their cooperation may help towards curbing EU unemployment
- There are serious synergies that can be exploited from this cooperation

AGROBUSINESS START starting business

People want to work and new jobs are not created. However, the opportunity for stock breeding and planting crops exists. In these areas the only way out from unemployment could be if the unem-



employed become agricultural entrepreneurs or agricultural self-entrepreneurs and start up their own businesses.

In pretty much every EU country, one serious

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(continued from p1) **AGROBUSINESS START** starting business

In agriculture, vocational training schools and adult education institutions are finding it very hard to attract learners interested in acquiring agricultural skills, and they are running over-capacity

AGROBUSINESS STARTUP

is a project funded by GRUNDTVIG programme. The consortium contains **Békés Megyei Kormányhivatal** from Hungary, **Se.Ri.Fo. and Agricoltura e Vita Associazione** from Italy, **Sächsische Aufbau- und Qualifizierungsgesellschaft** from Germany and our project's own **Technological Educational Institution of Athens**.

Find out more at agro-business-start.jimdo.com

obstacle to increasing employment is that the unemployed do not have appropriate qualification; in many cases they actually have none. Overall the level of qualification is low and skills are out-of-date.

Within agricultural sector, the main emphasis of the ECVET-STEP programme, the situation is even worse. In other sectors, such as IT or foreign languages, there are numerous government-funded programmes which tend to be popular with the previously unemployed users (and would therefore likely be popular also without the government support).

In agriculture, however, vocational training schools and adult education institutions are finding it very hard to attract learners interested in acquiring agricultural skills, and they are running over-capacity because of the

deficient demand. (This over-capacity of skill-providers may prove to be a serious problem too for the ECVET-STEP programme to tackle.) In



"IF I'M LEARNING THE AGROBUSINESS "INSIDE OUT", CAN I LEARN IT ON THE INSIDE TODAY?"

spite of great efforts and time invested, it is still difficult to achieve progress in this field. There are still insufficient number of applicants.

That is why the AGRO-BUSINESS START project aims to share examples of good practice, methods and adult learning models that help to solve the problems in adult agricultural learning mentioned above.

AGRO-BUSINESS START is a Grundtvig programme. The duration of the project is from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2015. The project consortium consists of partners from Italy, Greece, Germany, Hungary.

Among the program's aims is the development of training materials, as well as the training of individuals who want to start or improve their skills in the agricultural sector. The project is also aimed to work with organizations involved in adult education and to increase the employment of professionals in the agricultural area.

Europe needs a start-up culture

Compared to non-European OECD countries, European businesses are much older. The difference from the United States is neatly illustrated in the chart The Economist published two summers ago.

The good news that in agriculture the start-up costs do not have to be insurmountable if there is a good rent market for land.

The cooperation between ECVET-STEP and AGROBUSINESS START may help to buck this trend, at least in agriculture at first, but as ECVET-STEP is subsequently broadened to other professions, the impact will hopefully grow.



Synergies between ECVET-STEP and AGROBUSINESS START

The two projects are very good complements to each other.

What can AGROBUSINESS START do for ECVET-STEP?

AGROBUSINESS START emphasises for ECVET-STEP the importance of paying attention also to the issue of drawing into the system also the unemployed, not just those already in the profession or in the learning.

It also offers important insights from the reality of agricultural vocational training on the ground. It becomes clear that even the best-designed system of “lifelong learning without borders” will not achieve much if the low interest in agricultural training on the ground persists.

What can ECVET-STEP do for AGROBUSINESS START ?

The other direction of influence is equally important, if not even more.

The question is what is the cause of the lack of interest.

Two possibilities exist:

1. Either potential agricultural “converts” (from unemployed or other sectors) are unconvinced of being able to make a living in agriculture,

2. or they have doubts about

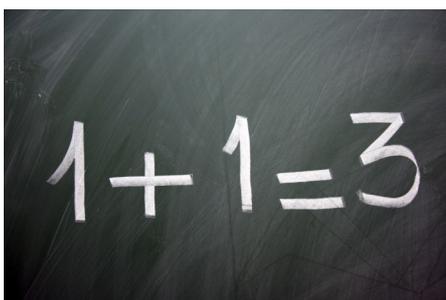
the use of the training they would receive.

Clearly, the first reason is unlikely. Especially under the generous provisions of the Common Agricultural Policy it is relatively difficult not to be able to make reasonable living in agriculture. So the second reason may dominate. These doubts have, in turn again, two possible reasons. Either they training is perceived as poor, or stakeholders may just be misinformed or underinformed about the opportunities.

Either way, ECVET-STEP covers both possibilities.

1. By helping to make the ECVET system for European lifelong learning more usable and streamlining the flows of information within it, it will improve not only the overall quality, but especially the **quality of matches** made between individual stakeholders in the system.

2. By providing stakeholders with a **quality-assured path** towards (and through) the ECVET system, ECVET-STEP helps to dispels the mist of uncertainty which may be surrounding ECVET and will therefore



increase the demand for agricultural learning.

Impact of the synergy on European Unemployment

As a result, unemployment will be able to go down through a multitude of channels.

New learners will subsequently either start their own business (removing themselves from the unemployment register) or start an actual AGROBUSINESS (removing themselves as well as their future employees from the register).

And, of course, with greater demand for teachers, their ranks will also increase to serve the burgeoning market.

It is only to be hoped that governments will then recycle the money they save on unemployment benefits back to the economy and the taxpayers, so that even more jobs can be started through a multiplier!

“Two possibilities exist for the lack of interest: Either potential agricultural “converts” (from other professions or from agriculture) are not convinced of being able to make living in agriculture, or they have doubts about the use of the training they would receive.”

Trivia: When and from where did SYNERGY appear?



Take the ECVET step!

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This newsletter is published monthly. If you want to receive it electronically by email, please sign up on the website. (Archive of past issues is on the website.)

ECVET-STEP aims in making the best value of the ECVET system, facilitating the transfer, accumulation and recognition of credits and learning outcomes or competence acquired otherwise between countries, thus promoting mobility and lifelong learning.

ECVET-STEP's mission is to support European citizens and industry to "take the ECVET STEP": adopt and use ECVET through a stepwise, quality-controlled framework and online services for building knowledge-based employment for the 21st century... And beyond!

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