



**Agricultural Alliance for Competence and Skills
based Training
(ACT)**

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

Agriculture is suffering from a lack in qualified employees as well as appropriate, tailored-made and modularised VET opportunities. The demand for qualified farm workers and managers is not satisfied by an adequate supply of properly trained staff or training opportunities, especially in the light of environmental (climate change and biodiversity loss), economic and territorial challenges, as well as EU directive reforms (Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)).

Agricultural VET providers, labour market and VET policy makers often use different terminologies and concepts in order to approach training, and a common sector-specific approach with shared definitions among the different actors involved is necessary to create a stronger link between emerging job profiles and training opportunities. Launching ECVET and EQAVET has been a major achievement in Europe, which can ease these processes, but adoption in agricultural E&T is moving slowly.

The **ACT project** focuses on the development of **Pathways for Agricultural Competence and skills based Training (PACT)** – a competence framework for agriculture - to reduce the mismatch between new jobs and existing skills in the agricultural sector and to improve the agricultural curriculum design and delivery by innovative VET services and broad dissemination throughout whole Europe.

It contributes to making definitions of competences reusable and accessible across learning and recruitment systems, thus facilitating the development of additional services related to the generation of personal profiles, achieved learning outcomes and competences, etc. In essence, the outcomes of this effort will facilitate the bond for the actual building of effective pathways between learning and employment through the planned PACT Framework based on EQF and ECVET for the better integration of competence and skills modelling and with clear relevance for the current agricultural labour market as well as technology based solutions and services.

The PACT Framework, matching emerging job profiles and existing training opportunities, will be a valuable approach such as the linking of training opportunities and units of training to learning outcomes, the expression of job profiles through the use of competence descriptions and the generation of personal profiles of achieved learning outcomes and competences.

The project will act towards the following new situation:

1. VET providers are offering modularised, tailor-made trainings based on the validated PACT curriculum and framework integrating ECVET and EQF;
2. Agricultural VET trainers are successfully applying the PACT framework for their trainings;
3. Employees of the agricultural sector are gaining the specific skills and knowledge via reformed trainings and workers have opportunities to complete and enlarge their competences;
4. Other E&T sector are adapting the innovative ACT results for their training provision.
5. The agricultural business and organisations are able to recruit appropriate skilled personnel and thus, can offer qualitatively excellent products responding to EU consumers' needs and in line with environmental and sustainable goals of the EU directives.

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1. Project Objectives

The “Agricultural Alliance for Competence and Skills based Training” project (ACT) aims to facilitate and accelerate a better match between the needs of the agricultural labour market and the vocational educational training opportunities

ACT will reach this aim by engaging core actors from the complementary fields (VET, labour market and policy) in a constant and constitutive dialogue with the following more specific objectives:

First, to create a shared awareness of emerging job profiles and existing gaps of skills and competences in the current work force.

Second, to create and improve a framework “Pathways for Agricultural Competence and skills based Training” (PACT) based on EQF and ECVET, which will allow to share definitions among the different actors involved, i.e. agricultural VET providers, representatives of the labour market and VET policy makers, and serve as a tool to modularise future training and make it more adaptable to the needs of the agricultural labour market.

Third, to build a European PACT online service which will serve as a common entry point for:

- VET providers to describe their training solutions targeted towards skills gaps (as previously determined) and get inspired to adapt and reuse by browsing solutions of their “peer institutions”
- Agricultural businesses and membership organisations to become aware of existing training opportunities (information pool) but also indicate further emerging training needs (communication and dialogue tool)

The portal will be built with extended search functionality and scalable manner in order to account for an ever developing labour market.

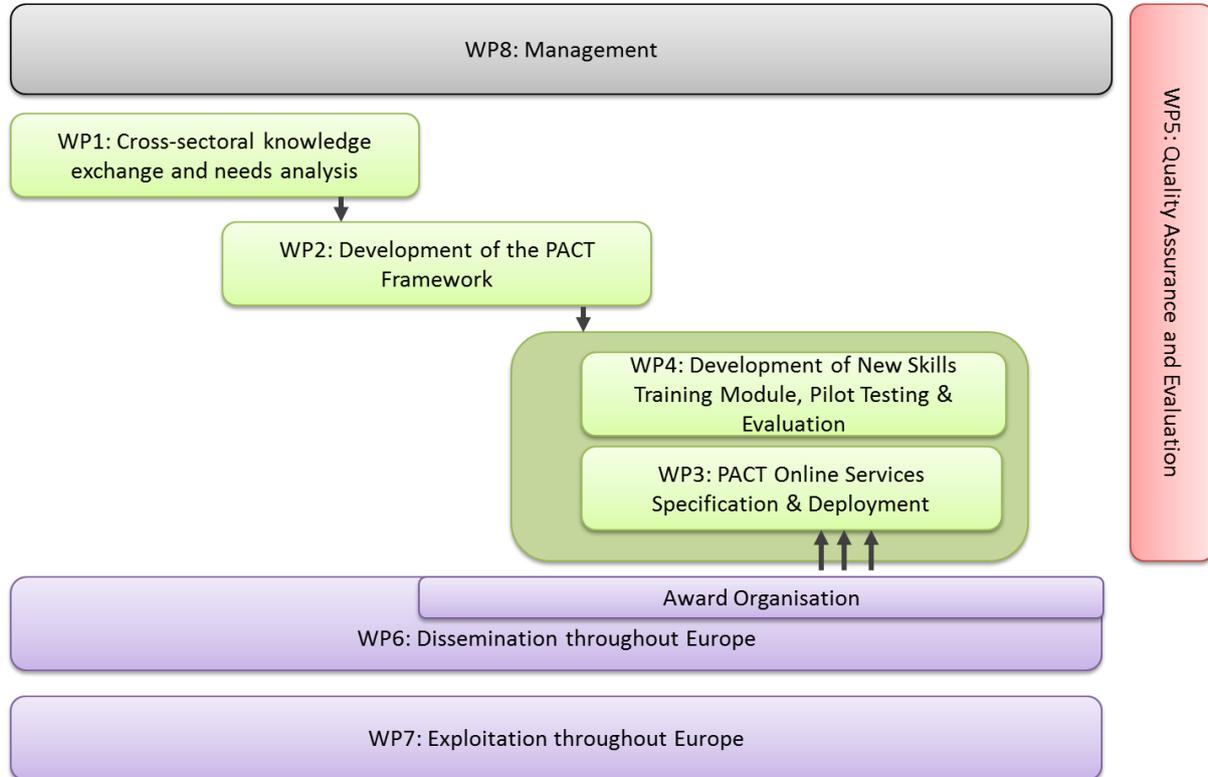
Fourth, to better recognize existing training opportunities which already address existing skills gaps in the agricultural sector, and make them more visible on a European level as well as to show-case and encourage VET providers who have already modularised their agricultural trainings to integrate elements new training units.

Fifth, to organize four trainings on PACT according to a well-designed up-to-date curriculum which will bring together different multipliers from complementary fields (following the concept of an alliance) and make PACT sustainable through an online training module with successful elements and materials of the face-to-face interventions.

Six, to facilitated the transfer of the PACT Framework including its underlying concepts (e.g. learning outcomes approach, modularisation into units, etc.) to more sectors by providing concise, tools such as a multilingual handbook, and a white paper with policy recommendations.

2. Project Approach

The ACT project is structured into 8 work packages:



The core activities (*WP1-4*) comprise the following phases:

1 Cross-sectoral knowledge exchange and needs analysis

Following a desk-research on policy-documents/white papers/public statements on existing skills gaps in the agricultural sector in the four partner countries, the consortium members organize four national focus groups which triangulate knowledge between VET policy-makers, representatives of the labour market and VET institutions.

Milestone in M6: Report on National Focus Groups, which refines/revises the desktop needs analysis

2 Development of a shared framework

UDE drafts a reference framework "Pathways for Agricultural Competence and skills based Training (PACT)" for the agricultural sector as a common model for expressing information on job profiles, qualifications *and* training opportunities and for future definition and design based on competences and skills in alignment with ECVET and EQF. This framework is translated, localised in terms of national key actors and competent institutions. An online consultation engages the ACT target group in constructive feedback.

Milestone in M8: PACT Framework (Version for online Consultations)

3 Development of an Online Services for PACT in agriculture

After technically specifying connections and combinations between training opportunities, competence definitions, job profiles, diplomas and certificates (based on the PACT framework) a searchable portal is created in order to serve VET providers and business' needs.

Milestone in M15: Prototype of PACT Online Portal and Services and Short Manual

4 Organising a training for potential multipliers

A corner stone of the project is to introduce the Pathways for Agricultural Competence and skills based Training (PACT) Framework to Trainers, VET providers, VET policy makers, Labour market representatives, associations in agriculture, advisers and consultants. This is put into practice following a well-designed flexible curriculum with much space for interaction also taking into account the diverse backgrounds of participants.

Milestone in M10: Prototype of ACT Curriculum for PACT

Evaluation and Valorisation activities accompanying *WP1-4* are of major importance to the project since three complementary fields need to be involved and consulted for reaching the ACT project aim. Suitable instruments are created early for timely information gathering and analysis, which ensures a better fit of final outcomes to target users' needs. Further activities are bundled under *WP6 Dissemination throughout Europe* and *WP7 Exploitation throughout Europe* such as:

5 Launching an award for VET providers in agriculture

Milestone in M19: Results of ACT Awards

Milestone in M24: European Conference with award winners, 70 participants in total

6 Creating transferable results

A handbook on PACT, an online training module and a white paper target towards policy makers will be composed, the latter with concrete proposals how to overcome skills gaps in the agriculture sector based on evaluation/validation results and lessons learnt throughout the project.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

So far, the project produced the following outputs, most of them in form of formal deliverables. These outputs belong to different stages of the project.

The basis for the project was laid in work package 1 with three deliverables:

- D1.1 Cross-Sectoral Knowledge Exchange and Need Analysis.docx
 - This report presents the results of the desk research about the agricultural sector in the four countries represented in the consortium (DE, EL, IT, NL), highlighting differences and commonalities in emerging jobs and articulated skills needs between partner countries. The report also lists some key players who have publically raised concerns or issued positions and white papers.
- D1.2 Focus group methodology.docx
 - This document outlines the methodology for the focus groups (FG) that have taken place in four countries (DE, EL, IT, NL). It describes how participants were engaged in the discussion on emerging jobs and existing skills gaps in order to verify, disprove or refine results from the desk-research by providing key questions which were then discussed across the four partner countries (for comparability) without restricting to adapt to the national context.
- D1.3 Report on national focus groups.docx
 - This document reports on the workshops organized within the framework of the ACT project in the countries Germany, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands. After the stages that were followed, describing in detail the workflow of each stage, the results and conclusions are described.

The results of WP1 served as input for the development of

- D2.1 Analysis on Agricultural Competence Models and Job Profile Descriptions.docx
 - This report presents the analysis of existing competence models in the agricultural sector mainly amongst policies, white papers and research reports as well as related LLP projects and approaches to describe job profiles. That includes the clear definition of roles for bodies of VET and the world of employment in the agricultural sector and the identification of the key actors.
- D2.2 Development of a common PACT Framework.docx
 - It presents the reference framework "Pathways for Agricultural Competence and skills based Training (PACT)" for the agricultural sector as a common model for expressing information on job profiles, qualifications and training opportunities and for their future definition and design based on competences and skills in alignment with ECVET.

The technical infrastructure for the application of PACT in practice is described in

- D3.1 Specifications for describing PACT.docx
 - This document specifies how various objects of the PACT framework (see D2.2) such as training and certificate opportunities, training and certificate providers, competence definitions, job profiles and user profiles are connected and combined in a searchable portal in order to serve VET providers and business' needs.
- D3.2 Design and Mock-up of PACT Online Portal and Services.docx

- This document describes the entities within the Mock-up of the PACT Online Portal and Services such as training and certificate opportunities, training and certificate providers, job profiles and user profiles. It also describes the permissions and roles of the portal and presents personas and scenarios involved in its functionalities. The personas and scenarios are employed in order to show in a comprehensive way how the entities and functionalities are connected and combined in a searchable portal in order to serve VET providers and business' needs.

Spreading the PACT framework and transmitting the right use of it was the topic of

- D4.1 & D4.2 Methodology & Prototype for the ACT Training Module for PACT.docx
 - This document outlines the purpose, methodology and program of the Training of Trainers course for the ACT project, presenting the complete course material (handouts, presentations) in the annex.

In addition, the project produced several outputs that can be found in almost any project, but of course in a customised version, tailored to the needs of the ACT project:

- D5.1 Quality Plan.docx
 - This document describes the methodology and tools of the Quality Management System used in the ACT project, including a continuous improvement cycle. The process-oriented instrument is based on the unique ISO quality standard for learning, education and training (ISO/IEC 19796-1).
- D5.2 Interim Quality Report.docx
- D6.1 Dissemination Plan.docx
 - The dissemination plan defines operational details for the different dissemination activities to be performed by the Consortium in order to promote the ACT project and its outcomes all around the European Union. Furthermore, it defines the dissemination for reaching all relevant audiences, namely: 1) VET providers 2) The agricultural labour market, and 3) VET policy makers.
- D6.3 Design ACT Award.docx
 - The scope of this document is to provide useful and practical information to prepare the launching of the ACT Award to be promoted across Europe. The document provides some useful hints for the organization and implementation of this Award throughout Europe.
- D6.4 & D7.1 Interim Dissemination Report & Affiliation plan.docx
 - This document reports about the dissemination activities in 2014 (D6.4) in comparison to the dissemination plan (D6.1). Within the reporting, also overlapping activities between dissemination and exploitation (similar or combined) are listed. Therefore, the affiliation plan (D7.1) is part of this report as well as materials which belong to those tasks.
 - Furthermore, it defines the dissemination for reaching all relevant audiences, namely: 1) VET providers 2) The agricultural labour market, and 3) VET policy makers.
- D8.1 Project management handbook.docx

- The Project Management Handbook includes all formal rules, procedures and obligations for the project cooperation, activities, and the internal and external communication and reporting to ensure close and efficient collaboration and best results. It includes defined methods and templates for the reporting concerning activities, deliverables, and financial issues by all partners and the Consortium Agreement established before the project start amongst all partners as the consortium's basis.

In addition, the project website at <http://www.act-now.eu> provides the interested audience with information on the project and related issues.

4. Partnerships

The project consortium is well balanced with 8 Partners from 4 countries, composed of universities, international organisations, and associations in the fields of quality (UDE), agriculture (AIAB), learning technologies (AK, TEIA), training & VET (IFSAT, DLG, BIBB) and competence modelling (TEIA, UDE). It comprises extensive networks through AIAB, DLG and IFSAT.

All partners have consolidated experience in EU project work and in extra EU-international collaboration and guaranteed capacity to implement their work plan.

The ACT consortium guarantees the following requirements:

1. The partnership is a multi-disciplinary team of leading actors in the field of agriculture, competence modelling, training and learning technologies;
2. Leading expertise in the domains of quality and innovation through a sound methodology, since project partners are involved in several related projects/initiatives;
3. Capacity to organise high level events and to involve key policy and research actors, stakeholders, and public at large;
4. Expertise in the specific processes that are covered in the ACT project, e.g., desk research, organising surveys, and qualitative focus groups, running pilot experiences, identifying and exchanging good practices, as well as building consensus and sustainability around project activities, dissemination, valorisation, and exploitation;
5. Representative coverage: the consortium represents different areas of the EU and different agricultural sectors.

5. Plans for the Future

On the basis of the "Pathways for Agricultural Competence and skills based Training (PACT)" competence framework for the agricultural sector, the ACT consortium will do the following actions:

- Translate and localise the PACT Framework in four languages (DE, EL, IT, NL) ;
- Perform online consultations in the partner countries languages on PACT ;
- Develop the prototype of the online service for PACT ;
- Realize the pilot testing by delivering four trainings including validation workshops
- Launch an award for providers of trainings in agriculture using the PACT framework ;
- Organize an ACT final conference during the last months of the project which will be widely promoted and serve both to present main outcomes (as the PACT framework, training and curriculum, the PACT handbook) and to invite award winners to present and participate in interactive sessions ;
- Build an online training module on PACT based on the curriculum and materials prepared before in order to keep the curriculum accessible also after the project life-cycle has ended.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The ACT project responds to the demand for qualified employees for the agricultural sector facing environmental (Climate change and biodiversity loss), economic and territorial challenges, as well as EU directive reforms (Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)).

It is therefore addressing the challenges encountered in the agricultural sector taking into account the promising results of recent researches and projects.

Furthermore, the ACT project addresses the main object of the ET 2020 Work Programme: "Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality". Within this framework the continuous development and management of knowledge, skills and competences at the individual and organizational levels is clearly set as a priority and challenge for the EU and member states, education and training providers, companies, workers and learners.

The variety of educational systems, teaching contexts and assessment methods among the countries is a challenge for the elaboration of common trainings, but the learning outcomes approach and particularly the ECVET and EQS are flexible solutions for modular units, that can be used in different places, transferred, and accumulated.

The Pathways for Agricultural Competence and skills based Training" (PACT) concept and technical tools based on EQF and ECVET as the main results of the projects are exploitable and will be exploited in all European countries and will be optimized for the transfer and adaptation to any preferred sector, branch, and region in Europe.

Due to the European and inter-disciplinary consortium possessing the complementary competences and skills, ACT can ensure inter-sectoral, cross-border, and trans-national exchange of knowledge and experiences.

In particular ACT aims at tackling the following European challenges and demands:

- Providing a needs analysis involving policy-makers, VET providers, representatives of the labour market to identify and report on skills gaps and emerging job profiles in the four partner countries and whole Europe,
- Developing the PACT Framework for bridging agricultural skills needs and VET opportunities in Europe,
- Designing the Training Curriculum for the PACT Framework for whole Europe,
- Developing the ACT portal gathering VET opportunities on existing skills gaps from around Europe,
- Creating Online Training Modules accessible throughout Europe,
- Producing multilingual transferable outcomes like the PACT Handbooks and the PACT-Framework,
- Establishing a European Award for promoting best practice in agricultural VET by using the PACT Framework for addressing competence and skills needs through pathways to employment.

7. Extra Heading/Section

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