



Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture



LivOrg
**Design and testing new VET frameworks for
the transfer and recognition of organic livestock
management skills in Europe**

Final Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

The LivOrg project developed an innovative European competency Framework - VET Curriculum and professional profile for “practitioners in organic livestock management” who can work in the organic farming system across Europe.

The LivOrg journey, undertaken through a series of nine closely-related work packages, developed and established the partnership as a collaborative high performance team.

LivOrg was primarily concerned with the vocational education and training (VET) dimension of the organic livestock and farming management systems.

The LivOrg partnership consists of ERIFO (IT), the coordinator, ENFAP Toscana (IT), EkoConnect (DE), EULS (EE), MAICH (EL), INFODEF (ES), IPED (PL) which are organisations involved in VET, higher education, labour and organic agricultural sectors. ERIFO (IT), VET provider in project development and management, was the coordinator.

The main beneficiaries of the project are young aspiring entrepreneurs (learners) wishing to work in the organic farming system, but the project also provides substantial benefits to the organisations working in the agricultural-training sector using VET as a tools to increase employability chances for those learners at the European level.

The LivOrg project addresses the increasingly relevance of the Organic Farming system in Europe organizing a harmonic and common VET (Vocational Education and Training) framework in the organic livestock management area and encouraging the conversion from high-input agriculture to organic agriculture systems in Europe.

LivOrg produced a comprehensive series of inter-related results to address these issues, specifically:

- Collaboratively developing a common professional training curriculum for “Practitioners in Organic Livestock Management” with a strong package of “VET” Units tightly connected to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF Level 4) and experimenting the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)
- Designing and delivering PILOT and Laboratory activities at national level, through a blended training approach, involving young and well-motivated aspiring entrepreneurs, farmers, experts and VET providers.
- Defining and producing tools for VET providers in order to deliver, assess and transfer training activities and contents concerning the organic farming system through formal and non-formal training methods.
- Undertaking a comprehensive raising awareness programme about the VET dimension of the organic farming system across Europe, through the production and distribution of project e-brochure; building of content through the project website (www.livorg.eu) and social channels (Facebook and YouTube) and its promotion through the LivOrg Newsletters. The project approach and its results were also widely disseminated, including the specific organisation of two project dissemination workshops in each Country and a Final International Seminar in Estonia and through showcases at major sector and skills events.

The future for the practice that has been developed in LivOrg depends on three key factors and these have been the focus of the exploitation strategy. These factors are:

1. Evidence of the demand for the recognition and validation of professional qualifications in organic livestock management sector to implement the NQF and RQF of different Countries across Europe.
2. The development of new European initiatives that enables the development of a strategic sector skills alliance for VET providers and professionals, farmers, social partners' representatives and stakeholders concerning organic farming system and sustainable agriculture across Europe
3. The potential to encourage training-exchanging experience across Europe and to work for an effective impact in the VET and labour systems at National, Regional and European Level.

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1. Project Objectives

The overall LivOrg Project's objectives were:

- A. Increase the awareness of organic livestock management area to meet the sector and policymakers' needs in EU improving the system to be competitive with conventional processes.
- B. Extend the sector skills alliance activities reinforcing the effective cooperation between Organic Farming and stakeholders.
- C. Improve the quality of training systems through the development of innovative contents, methods and procedures within VET system in response to evolving skills needs.
- D. Encourage the growth of a sense of entrepreneurship through a double transition:
 - from organic family owned and managed business farming to the next generation family members;
 - from conventional agriculture methods and production to organic farming system.

In concrete, LivOrg deal with the development of an innovative European competency Framework - VET joint Curriculum and professional profile for "practitioners in organic livestock management" closely connected with EQF (4 EQF Level) and ECVET system for the transfer and recognition of organic farmers' skills in EU across 6 different EU Countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Germany, Poland and Estonia).

The impact foreseen by the project was to design and test pilot VET courses through an integrated blended approach: classrooms, e-learning activities (indoor) supported by learning on the job methods (outdoor) and Laboratories around "VET" Units package related to organic livestock management qualification covering production, processing and certification areas. Moreover, designing and testing business incubator Laboratories where developing models of organic farming and entrepreneurial capacity building. The National PILOT and LABS experiences were mainly addressed to young aspiring entrepreneurs particularly with VET high-secondary school diploma.

The challenge for the project therefore was to identify common values, practices and competences that are suitable for the diverse EU contexts. Ultimately, this is to be done so that the Organisations with VET regulatory capabilities in each Country, recognising the profile's contents developed, can allow VET organisations, Education institutes and the trainers employed by them to better support their learners to develop their career in the organic farming system domestically and across Europe.

LivOrg was primarily concerned with the VET dimension of the organic livestock management and the aspects to start-up and run an organic farm. The learning contexts of the project include workplace (farm), agricultural community and both conventional farmers and "organic" farmers' involvement. The main beneficiaries of the project are the young aspiring farmers who wish to work in these contexts, but the project results also provide substantial benefits to the organisations providing training and education in this sector. The

new professional profile developed of practitioner in organic livestock management may be employed or working as farmer; he/she may be highly skilled in animal husbandry or breeding practice, implementing organic certification elements, health safety rules in the workplace and management-business knowledge and expertise in their work.

The LivOrg project, over a period of two years and through nine inter-related work packages, identified the core skills, knowledge and competences of the work and developed a method for the assessment and recognition of them.

The primary challenge involved in the project was to ensure that the inclusive culture and entrepreneurship of the sector was not stifled or constrained by a restrictive or overly-rigid structure but that the proposed model and methods provided a unity of approach across Europe, with internal coherence, and external validity.

The model developed benchmarks for the professional standards at four levels:

- Define and design learning contents
- Delivery PILOT training experiences and LABS through blended approach (80hs)
- Assess and evaluate the learning outcomes achieved
- Review and transfer the main results

It is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and has been tested and upheld by the community across Europe that formed the action learning set of providers and trainers. The model will need to be accurate, flexible and widely-applicable to different EU contexts and organisations not only those involved in VET paths but also to agricultural associations with training responsibilities in the sector. The LivOrg partnership considers that it has met this challenge and developed such a model for the sector.

We also believe that we have fully achieved our objective to establish a first step towards a wider take-up of the organic livestock and farming management practices within the agricultural system in Europe, leading potentially to our designing and delivering strategy generating a wider formal accreditation within the framework of the EQF.

2. Project Approach

The methodologies employed in LivOrg were designed specifically to achieve the implementation of the project with high quality standards, ensuring that all consortium members were involved in the network and work packages development. In recognition of this, we have deployed an approach, which has provided added value through an innovative work programme aiming to define, implement and assess the Curriculum training contents and professional profile of “practitioner in organic livestock management” (4 EQF Level). The purpose of this has been to identify and quantify a quality cycle of methodologies that could be captured and published on the way to develop a framework that has led itself to an appropriate form of implementation.

1. Planning: define and design

The LivOrg project began with the work of the TOP Team group members and the analysis of the main findings of previous EU projects carried on by some partners of LivOrg Consortium around organic agriculture subjects and education and training sector (LOVET; CerOrganic; Organic.Edunet). This approach was designed as a “bottom up” approach in recognition of the need for an innovative work programme that started in the first phase of the project, when TOP Team group at EU level along with local stakeholders and experts’ support have identified the relevant project framework and subsequent criteria on which the LivOrg training activities and tools could be based. When undertaking a classification exercise across a wide range of countries one also runs into the thorny issue of different (and often multiple or even overlapping) contexts and institutional settings. The core concern of the LivOrg project was to develop a basic typology for characterising and describing various kind of training key elements existing in the LivOrg partners’ countries in terms of training contents, learning outcomes, learning location, target groups, methods of learning/teaching, quality training-management approaches, etc. Conceptualising and constructing a practical “Competency based Framework” for a successful training Curriculum. Initially, we were doing this through an in-depth programme of investigation and peer sharing through the action learning set – a ‘bottom up’ approach that is nonetheless fully informed by three key frameworks: The European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the ECVET system and also the National/Regional Qualification Framework (NQF; RQF). The aim of this domain of investigation was to analyse some descriptive dimensions of vocational training offer design; these dimensions have constituted the first analysis framework of the national context analysis and made it possible to evaluate the currently existing elements, which facilitated or restrained their adaptation to EQF in every participating country. In this sense, there was a number of features, which have been taken into consideration while creating a basis for establishing a typology of training curriculum including training plans assessment methodology and training elements in terms of their EQF/NQF adaptability. Along with this, the major task was to design the operational and transferable “organic skills and knowledge” Units for the training Curriculum in accordance to NQF, EQF (4 Level) and with ECVET system references to facilitate the recognition of the learning outcomes achieved by learners and to support lifelong learning. This new

common understanding has been shared by both trainers and trainees in the Training Toolkit, where Consortium has been describing the successful planning methodologies.

2. Implementation and Assessment

During this phase, Consortium has developed proper National Training Plans and delivered effective 80hs PILOT training course (Italy, Germany, Estonia, Greece) and Laboratories activities (Spain, Poland). They have promoted the training initiatives across the Countries and selected classes of young aspiring farmers as students. Usually they were young learners with VET high-secondary school diploma, deeply motivated to undertake the experience and wishing to get new employability opportunities in the farming sector. The LivOrg project has been delivering two training pathways for “practitioners in organic livestock management” (4 EQF Level) through blended training methodologies facilitating interactive learning experiences:

- 1) A flexible learning approach combining face-to-face classroom methods (lecture, group discussion, case study, open discussions, presentation) with on the job activities within farms (concrete experiences in farm, training visits, reflective observation, and active experimentation) and e-learning experience, with the use of various technologies for PILOT.
- 2) An innovative learning approach combining classroom activities with on the job within farms and business incubator experiences (business plan designing, active and practical interactions) for two editions of LABS: a) exploring inter-generation aspects and b) improving inter-ethnic organic farm process.

Through the Training Toolkit for trainers and VET providers, Consortium aimed to promote and develop a blended and flexible learning with innovative training methods, designing and approach that analysed the relationships between flexible learning opportunities, in order to optimise learners’ engagement and equivalence in learning outcomes regardless of mode of study. These methods have created a more integrated and interesting learning environment for both trainers and learners, enhancing the learning outcomes. The training experiences delivered at National level involving trainers, providers, stakeholders and experts of the farming system have allowed learners to explore innovative non-formal and formal learning opportunities improving their skills, knowledge and competences around different learning areas: animal disease and prevention methods, welfare and feeding system, the organic certification, health and safety rules within the farm, the business-administration methods and the entrepreneurial strategies to start-up and manage with an organic farming system.

Alongside with this, the major task was the transfer of know how (the process of learning) from a restricted habitual training by means of role-taking, face-to-face interaction, narratives, panels, practices, experiences etc. in a learning situation which is tinted by formal and non-formal aspects and also to some extent described and understood (by the trainer) in a vocabulary of labour pedagogy and into a new, common understanding, which is shared by both trainer and trainee.

The productiveness of this method has encouraged educational and information review beyond the classroom settings. Through these pathways, the trainers have remained at the central point of learning. They had the flexibility to deliver activities and skill practices (on farm and in the business incubators) that suit their specific group of learners at various stages of their learning developed during PILOT and LABS editions. This has facilitated improved learning outcomes, access flexibility, a sense of community, the effective use of resources, and learners' satisfaction.

During the PILOT and LABS activities, trainers and providers in the LivOrg partnership were used to test the products of the training activities and the learning outcomes achieved by learners, ensuring the best learning fit of the materials, methodologies and resulting level of achievement by trainees.

Certainly, the assessment and evaluation procedures were an important component of the quality improvement process and the Consortium has defined and described the evaluation and assessment methods adopted in the Portfolio. In this sense, it was necessary to determine the type of training data / information to be collected and plan the assessment method from the beginning of the training development process. This took place through mainly individual observations, individual or group interviews, questionnaires, project work, self-assessments and between discussions and sharing between trainers and trainees.

The trainer interacts with the trainee in this process, thus stimulating motivation, activity, productivity and reflection - a continuing process of evaluation and reviewing aiming to:

- Facilitate experience
- Encourage interaction
- Provide feed-back
- Encourage reflection
- Support choices

The assessment procedures have been also connected to the learning environment and methods. Indeed, in the LivOrg experience, we have to distinguish formal learning environment from non-formal learning environment and methods. The LivOrg Consortium has also analysed the possibility to connect the learning outcomes achieved to the ECVET system assigning to each unit some credits. This strategy, if this process is successful, is "empowerment", so LivOrg partners endeavoured to map this process in practice through different tools like Toolkit and Portfolio.

Raising Awareness, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities

Dissemination and promotion strategies and tools have been described in the *Dissemination and Promotion Plan* managed by Estonian University of Life Science (EULS). In order to raise initial awareness of LivOrg, a Project E-Brochure was designed and shared amongst the partners for distribution in networks and at relevant events attended by the partners aside from the events in this project. It explains the project concept and objectives and is translated into English, Spanish, Italian, German, Estonian and Greek. In addition, a specific project website was set up, which is www.livorg.eu. Initially it was designed and established as an on-line promotional vehicle for the project, but it was progressively

developed, in terms of references, news and project results for public attention and contains summaries of project activity. Besides, it has become the “door” to log in the e-learning course. Consortium has also set up a project Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/220075864857744/?ref=bookmarks>) promoting not only the project findings but also a lot of news and information about organic farming system in Europe. The second year of the project, as the project results evolved, the social channels were utilised more proactively as a dissemination vehicle and we have also created a project YouTube channel to upload and disseminate the National Video Lessons and the Final Video Trailers, with English and National languages subtitles. This offers a vehicle to showcase the national training activities carried out and the main experiences generated during the PILOT and LABS editions. A second E-Brochure and five Newsletters distributed through strategic mailing lists with more than 3,000 contacts of stakeholders and target groups across the partnership have constantly supported the development of dissemination and promotion at different levels. Through the information we disseminate from the social channels and the distribution of the e-brochures and LivOrg newsletters to more than 3,000 stakeholders, we have ‘opened up’ our partnership steering group meetings to incorporate a greater degree of participation from aspiring entrepreneurs as well as established professionals.

We have been widely promoting LivOrg at the National promotional workshops (two in each Country) and at the Final International Seminar in Tartu (Estonia) in November 2015 (which was attended by about 100 people, including project partner’s members and invited stakeholders from Spain, Poland, Germany, Estonia and Greece) providing presentations and discussions (photos of the final event in Tartu: <http://mahekeskus.emu.ee/galerii/fotogalerii/maheloomakasvatuse-konverents/>). The main part of the participants at LivOrg events were organic farmers, representatives of organic farming associations who organise trainings, produce training materials, and implement different development projects, policy makers, social partners, VET providers, European Union multiplayer stakeholders, end-users, learners and project partners.

Over the project period, partners in different ways have also undertaken more targeted raising - awareness and dissemination activities at EU, national and local level aimed at specific stakeholders in VET and in the organic farming sector:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/220075864857744/?ref=bookmarks>.

Concerning the exploitation strategies, they have been described in the *Exploitation Plan* managed by IPED (PL). In terms of exploitation activities and as a result of the development of the project training Curriculum for “practitioners in organic livestock management”, we discussed, shared and reviewed the outcomes of our work with a number of stakeholders and experts. In particular, we have arranged Local focus groups in each participating Country inviting members and representatives of the sector skills alliances for organic farming system working in different sectors: VET and education, labour and social partners, public/private organisations/bodies and farmers, in order to fully mainstream and transfer our core methodology, its alignment to the EQF (4 Level) and our main results achieved. This was also to agree and sign a final Project Agreement for mainstreaming and sustainability to be transferred to the VET Regulatory Institutions in

each Country in order to make them aware about the project framework and verify possible improvement and upgrade of contents included in the developed professional profile in the view of a real transfer in the NQF/RQF. Through this strategy, we wish to embed the contents of our training Curriculum to be taken to NQF/RQF so that can be “used” towards any other related VET, school or University courses level. Exploitation was also addressed in fostering mobility and exchanging periods across EU for young aspiring entrepreneurs through the “Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs” programme and defined a “New EU project proposal” with the ERASMSU + programme, see below.

Management, Quality and Evaluation

Overall management of the project was undertaken by ERIFO, the lead organisation supported in the Quality and Evaluation activities by ENFAP Toscana (IT). All Partners participated fully on the LivOrg Steering Group and Monitoring Unit activities, which generated three specific management and quality-evaluation deliverables:

- *Project Management Plan*

It constituted the governance document for the partnership, describing the content of the activities to be progressively “filled”, including all milestones and indicating when they have to be reached. The project management was an operational instrument which explained the sequence of events, the procedures to verify the results and the conditions necessary for reaching the expected results and milestones. This document set out the remit of the partnership steering group, the work packages and the quality assurance and performance indicators, success measures, with roles, timelines and approaches.

- *Internal Communication and Cooperation Plan*

This document described the recipient of communication, content of communication, media of communication and protocols, the language, including equal opportunities and diversity considerations, conflict resolution

- *The Quality Assurance Project Plan*

The QAP managed by ENFAP Toscana described the purpose of quality and evaluation in LivOrg and the methods that would be utilised to gather data for evaluation. Evaluation in the project was based upon an on-going process of review and feedback through the action learning approach. This was complemented by four monitoring reports (one every six months), which represented a formal assessment point in the Quality and Evaluation Plan, bringing together the abovementioned factors to produce initial findings and recommendation across the evaluation criteria, to improve, adjust or review the developed activities, at the mid-point and at the end of the project. It also set the baseline for subsequent priorities in the remaining part of the project, pointing in particular to risk management strategies with tools to mitigate it. Evaluation and monitoring findings include the analysis of data collected through “feedback forms” delivered to partners, attendees and learners at:

- 2 promotional workshops arranged in each Country
- The final internal seminar in Estonia
- The PILOT and LABS activities
- The five transnational partnership meetings

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The “centre-piece” result arising from the LivOrg work programme, in terms of results, was the production of the VET Curriculum for “practitioner in organic livestock management”. The contents of the Curriculum were described in different deliverables: Training Toolkit, Training Plan, Portfolio and Compendium, all available at the project website: www.livorg.eu

LivOrg set out to make an impact by exploring ways at the European level in order to define, design, test and assess the skills, knowledge and competences of the professional qualification “practitioner in organic livestock management”. The professional figure developed is an expert in managing organic farming system defining and implementing the different procedures to support an effective organic control process in the organic farm and mainly in coordinating and managing livestock-husbandry procedures. He/She knows and he/she has the expertise to work with disease prevention and alternative treatment methods; feeding and housing systems in organic livestock production; planning and developing health and safety approaches and behaviours to prevent and manage risks, which may derive from organic livestock management activities. He/She can work with different animal breeds and husbandry within the organic farming system.

- ***The LivOrg Training Curriculum***

A comprehensive training programme of activities was undertaken to develop the subsequent activities of the project, led by ERIFO with the cooperation of the LivOrg Consortium. The VET Curriculum developed by LivOrg explored professional standards in organic farming system at three levels:

- Design
- Testing
- Evaluating
- Transferring

In the first year of the project, Partners have defined a common **Competency-based framework**, defining learning outcomes that were customized in specific “areas of activities” and then implemented at national level in proper “**Training Units**” delivered through national **Training Plans** (English and National language versions). The aforementioned steps have been proposed by the Consortium, with the specific support of the T.O.P Team members, to implement the selected strategy and achieved project results with the effective definition of the skills, knowledge and competence to include in the Training Plan. Through the LivOrg **Training Toolkit** for trainers, teachers and VET providers, Consortium have defined an operational tool with the strategies and methods, as well as relevant guidelines in English and national languages to deliver the skills, knowledge and competence of the each National Training Plan through 80hs **PILOT** and **Counselling LABS** editions in organic livestock management sector. The Toolkit has been robustly tested with the target audience of the training activities to optimise the blended training methodologies delivered, the relevance and the impact of PILOT and LABS activities in each National context.

Since LivOrg supports interactive learning experiences, the Toolkit has been supporting trainers to:

- Reflect on the key training strategies and methodologies to deliver PILOT and LABS editions at National level through a blended learning approach (indoor; outdoor; E - learning) and into innovative learning environments as for the business incubators during the LABS editions.
- Assess the learning outcomes achieved by the learners defining assessment strategies, procedures and good training evaluations. These have helped trainers to measure how well their participants have learnt, how they could apply their new skills and knowledge in the work place, and how they experienced the training, including suggestions for training improvement.

LivOrg focuses on organic livestock management, organic farming system and training methods to support aspiring entrepreneurs to manage with organic farm, providing a bridge from conventional system to organic and sustainable methods in new learning opportunities. In order to use the Training Curriculum, trainers and learners have demonstrated experience, knowledge and skills in the following training areas:

- I. Disease prevention and alternative treatment methods.
- II. Feeding and housing systems in organic livestock production.
- III. The set-up of an Organic Certification Action Plan for a company in conversion.
- IV. The health and safety rules for the organic livestock management activities.
- V. Management and business activities to set up and run an organic farm

Following this elaboration and testing in the training PILOT and LABS activities set of learning outcomes with learners and trainers, the draft Competency framework, the Training plan and Toolkit were completed. The professional profile defined was referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Credit System for VET (ECVET) and has been upheld by the partners across Europe in the **Portfolio** for evaluation and validation. As such, it represents a common European solution to assess competences and qualification gained through formal and non-formal settings, providing a framework that can be deployed throughout Europe, for organic livestock management pathways. The LivOrg partnership considers that it has met this challenge and developed such a model for the sector. This captures and cross-references the range of practices and approaches adopted by partners, trainers, learners and stakeholders in the partner organisations. In order to explain the Training Curriculum development in an easy understandable framework, a final **Compendium** was produced in English and National versions. It also provided insight into how to facilitate and enhance the transferability of the designing, testing and validation strategies, best practice, activities and results across the partnership and within the national mainstreaming and other appropriate contexts.

The results of the Training Curriculum activities provided some very rich quantitative and qualitative data with interesting good practice that did give clear directives in terms of the direction of LivOrg. The Training Curriculum experience enabled the partnership to gain an understand location of the sector, the potential interfaces with other stakeholders, and how to uphold the integrity of the sector. For this reason and to reinforce the follow up sustainability, at the end of the project period partners have been committed to supporting three aspiring entrepreneurs in each Country to be involved in the **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs** Programme. Certainly, the LivOrg project contributed directly to revitalise the sense of entrepreneurship of some learners stimulating their entrepreneurial capabilities and opening their minds to new opportunities presented by the EU market in the farming system.

4. Partnerships

A transnational European partnership can really produce effective work if there is a shared vision and they feel ownership of the vision, the process and the outcomes of the project and the project and partnership is taking them further than they could travel individually in their own national contexts. Below there is a brief description that sets the LivOrg context for each organisation (partner websites, which also contain fuller descriptions and their own perspective on LivOrg can be found on the project website www.livorg.eu), The LivOrg Project partnership is composed of seven organisations from six EU Countries. The choice of consortium partners is based on five criteria: **A)** the experience as VET Provider. **B)** Direct knowledge, expertise and competences in the organic farming sector. **C)** The experience in terms of entrepreneurship training and counselling. **D)** A strong financial soundness proven by a long experience in EU projects. **E)** A multi-actors diversification and complementary to reinforce the Sector Skills Alliance profile.



(P1) ERIFO – Ente per la Ricerca e la Formazione (Italy) is the Applicant. ERIFO and its leading staff bring some 15 years of experience in the lifelong learning sector in Italy and Europe, and an extensive portfolio of project work in relation to research, quality assurance, evaluation and EU transnational projects. ERIFO is an accredited VET provider, authorized by the Region Lazio. ERIFO's mission is to contribute to the reinforcement of Vocational Education Training system at Local, National and European level to ensure the development of the human capital and cover the ever-growing needs and demands of the labour market. (www.erifo.it)



(P2) ENFAP Toscana (Italy) is the Regional Professional Training Agency belonging to the National Trade Union U.I.L. ENFAP is a not-profit organization, which has been operating since 1964 throughout Tuscany with a large-scale of activities targeted at professional training, counselling and advocacy. ENFAP is involved in European, national and local projects most of them are concerned with the creation of new initiatives to support disadvantaged workers and learners to progress to mainstream education and employment opportunities to maintain job post. (www.enfap-toscana.org)



(P3) EkoConnect e.V. – International Centre for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe e. V. (Germany) is a charitable non profit organization founded by organic agriculture experts 2003 in Dresden. EkoConnect works for a sustainable growth of the organic agriculture sector throughout Europe with focus on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). (www.ekoconnect.org)



(P4) Estonian University of Life Science (Estonia) is the only university in Estonia whose priorities in academic and research activities provide the sustainable development of natural resources necessary for the

existence of Man as well as the preservation of heritage and habitat. The institute performs high-level modern teaching and R&D activities in the field of animal nutrition, animal production, including aquaculture, animal genetics and breeding, reproductive biology, biotechnology, normal and pathological morphology, animal health, infectious and invasive diseases, therapy, food hygiene, food technology, and other subject areas related to animal science and veterinary medicine. (www.emu.ee)



INSTITUTO
PARA EL FOMENTO
DEL DESARROLLO
Y LA FORMACIÓN

(P5) INFODEF - Institute for the Promotion of Development and Training (Spain)

is an institution founded with the intention of providing management services, advisory and consultancy for projects development in the field of professional qualification, local development and promotion of entrepreneurship, knowledge of the socio-economic environment and management of European and International projects. (www.infodef.es)



CIHEAM
MAI CHANIA

(P6) MAICh - Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (Greece)

is a constituent institute of the International Centre of Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM). It is an intergovernmental organization comprising thirteen member countries from the Mediterranean Basin whose purpose is the development of scientific cooperation by providing postgraduate education, research and training in economics, management, and applied biological, technological and environmental sciences related to rural areas. (www.maich.gr)



(P7) IPED - "Institute for the Private Enterprise and Democracy" of the Polish Chamber of Commerce (Poland)

was established at the beginning of 1993. It is one of the first independent research institutes in Poland and a leading Polish think tank. The Institute supports market reforms, development of democratic institutions and creation of friendly climate for economic activity by realizing projects, conducting objective researches and analyses, education and preparing recommendations for economic policy. (www.iped.pl)

The Partnership committed themselves to the development of a training curriculum for “practitioner in organic livestock management” with 4 reference level to the EQF. Added value has been achieved by the partnership through the project for a number of stakeholder groups composing the “*LivOrg Sector Skills Alliances*” (Strategic Networking Group) beyond that of the targeted beneficiary, for example:

- a. Farmers: providing international professional standards and benchmarks and encouraging mobility of aspiring entrepreneurs.
- b. Social Partners: representatives of workers and employers (farming system) will be able to accept the training curriculum increasing the employability opportunities and the training-working criteria to work within the farming system.

- c. VET providers and professionals: the LivOrg project will provide an example of the application of blended approach to train in the farming system, providing strategic tools and strategies.
- d. VET Regulatory Institutions: public and private institutions will have the training contents (learning outcomes) to implement in their NQF/RQF ensuring the sustainability of the professional profile beyond the project lifetime with other training opportunities and upskilling scheme (mainly through national funding and ESF).

5. Plans for the Future

ERIFO and the Partnership are committed to the sustainability and continuation of the LivOrg experience beyond the project's official closure. We have planned different levels and strategies to get an effective impact of the project sustained beyond its lifetime and in order to mainstream and multiply the results in the sector of activity for the future.

1. Project Agreement (National level)

Partners produced a Project Agreement in each Country in order to make national and local stakeholders aware about the Training Curriculum contents and the LivOrg goals in order to achieve an effective sustainability beyond the project period. Through the Agreement, supported at National/Local level by the strategic networking groups' members and representatives of VET-education organisations, agricultural organisations, social partners, farmers and public bodies, partners aimed to:

- Create a specific-sector curriculum with a stronger package of “VET“ Units in organic livestock management area and strongly connected with EQF and ECVET system for the transfer and recognition of organic farmers' skills in EU, available at national or local level through NQF and RQF.
- Increase the awareness of organic livestock management area to meet the sector and policymakers' needs in EU improving the system to be competitive with conventional processes.
- Extend the sector skills alliance activities reinforcing the effective cooperation between organic farmers and stakeholders.
- Improve the quality of training systems promoting the innovative contents, methods and procedures within National VET systems, developed during the two years project also in response to evolving skills needs.

Partners have shared the Agreement, during national focus groups. In Italy, ERIFO and ENFAP Toscana have exploited the Agreement with VET Organisations, Social Partners representatives and Farmers and they have delivered it to Regione Lazio and Regione Toscana (Local Institutions with VET regulatory capabilities in accordance with Italian legislation) in order to implement RQF. EkoConnect in Germany, has exploited the Agreement with organic farmers, agricultural advisors, members of organic farming associations, vocational education school teachers active in the field of teaching organic farming state authority responsible for vocational educational training in the field of agriculture, representative of the Saxon ministry for environment and agriculture MAICh, in Greece, has promoted and delivered the Agreement to the Greek national Agency for Certification and Validation (EOPPEP), achieving a positive feedback on behalf of the agency for the consideration of the project's output. IPED in Poland, have exploited the Project Agreement with the National Center for Agricultural Education (NCAE) – public

institution at national level responsible for vocational training of teachers who teach in agricultural schools. Moreover, it has delivered the Agreement to the Ministry of National Education, to the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education and to the Department of Strategy and International Cooperation to take into account during works on the Polish Qualifications Framework level 4. EULS in Estonia was able to integrate directly some main findings (training units) in the mainstreaming context of the University's activities.

2. Erasmus For Young Entrepreneurs (EU Level)

Within the LivOrg project's strategy, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs represents a significant cross-border exchange programme for stimulating and encouraging the new and aspiring entrepreneurs to acquire relevant skills to run and make it grow a small business by working with an experienced entrepreneur in another country for a period lasting from one to six months. Partners have been committed to supporting at least three aspiring young entrepreneurs in each Country to be involved in the programme. They could be the learners attended the PILOT and LABS activities or external aspiring farmers aimed to improve their entrepreneurial expertise in the sustainable-organic agricultural sector. In accordance with the EYE deadlines and rules, most of the participants will start their exchanging period over 2016, so in the forthcoming weeks and months, partners will be again involved in finalising the programme actions. Two Greek aspiring entrepreneurs (learners during the PILOT), from MAICH, have already participated in the experience, during the project activities, with an exchanging period of 1 month in two hosting farms based in Italy (Mugello area – Florence). For what concerns the rest of our aspiring entrepreneurs involved, this EU opportunity will allow them to keep reinforcing and testing on skills, knowledge and competences achieved through the LivOrg experience and to reinforce their entrepreneurial attitudes increasing their know-how and foster cross-border transfer of knowledge and experience between entrepreneurs.

3. A New European Project Proposal (EU Level)

After more than 2 years of activities, the LivOrg partnership is wishing to maintain a proactive cooperation even for the future, if we consider that some of the partners planned to design a new EU proposal under the ERASMUS+ (KA2-VET Strategic Partnership) programme. If it success, they will be involved for other two years in reinforcing and transferring the LivOrg framework addressing the target of "Innovation Brokering services" for sustainable agriculture systems and social inclusion across EU. During the LivOrg experience, they learned that all farming systems, from intensive conventional farming to organic farming, have the potential to be locally sustainable. Whether they are in practice depends on farmers adopting the appropriate innovative strategies in the specific agro-ecological environment. They observed that the field of social innovation in agriculture remains fragmented and there is a need for more developed networks as well as innovation intermediaries for brokering the connections needed to nurture and scale up innovations, connecting key players and promote the establishment of operational groups composed of different interested actors: public and private. The new EU proposal will aim effectively to develop innovation services in order to facilitate mainly:

- Weak disadvantaged rural areas/farming systems to shift to better business conditions
- The change and development of new markets and new systems (from conventional to organic and sustainable system).
- The development of sustainable cooperation in rural areas (even through the start-up of agri-cooperatives/social enterprises run by minority ethnic people).
- Initiatives improving income and reducing vulnerability for low-skilled farmers (mainly migrants) through capacity building and a comprehensive value chain approach.

4. Project Social Channels

ERIFO and the partnership are committed to the sustainability and continuation of the LivOrg Project Website and Social Media (Facebook and YouTube) following the end of the project and beyond the 12-month commitment stated in the application. Indeed, it is intended that the LivOrg “brand” and social channels are to be developed and used as an exploitation tool for the continuing promotion of the LivOrg framework and the accompanying results, which are available and open to all interested parties. It is also intended to develop the “LivOrg Facebook Group” as a “public-space” to keep extending the project network and maximizing both the collection of feedbacks, the impact of the forthcoming initiatives and the diffusion of information about the organic farming system across Europe.

6. Contribution to EU policies

Since we started our project, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development has adopted the Organic Action Plan, together with the EU Community strategic guidelines for rural development including the European Rural Development Fund for the period 2007-2013. A recommendation for Axis 2 measures – chapter 3.2 of the strategic guidelines – points out the "consolidation of the contribution of organic farming", because "organic farming represents a holistic approach to sustainable agriculture. In this respect, its contribution to environmental and animal welfare objectives could be further reinforced".

The results of LivOrg will also contribute to the new "Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020" approved by the European Commission between 12 December 2014 and 11 December 2015 stating "Rural development aims at promoting competitiveness, the sustainable management of natural resources, and the balanced development of rural areas by more specific and targeted measures.(....). Other CAP initiatives, such as quality policy, promotion and **organic farming**, also have an important impact on farmers' situation. (....). It is also essential to further strengthen and simplify the quality (including organic farming) and promotion policies in order to enhance the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. Finally, the Innovation Union initiative should also allow new approaches to achieve the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy [COM (2010) 672 final]. Certainly , the policy priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy as set out in the Commission Communication entitled 'Europe 2020: *A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*' include the aims of achieving a competitive economy based on knowledge and innovation, fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion and supporting the shift towards a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy. The organic production policy should therefore provide operators with the right tools to better identify and promote their products while protecting them against unfair practices. In addition, the Regulation(EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation stating "Payments to farmers for the converting to, or maintaining, organic farming should encourage them to participate in such schemes thereby responding to the increasing demand of society for the use of environmentally friendly farm practices and for high standards of animal welfare". All of these factors were identified in the LivOrg Training Curriculum programme and have been incorporated in the dimensions of the LivOrg implementation.

LivOrg contributes to the **Europe 2020 Strategy** in that resource-efficient and low-carbon economy, innovation and entrepreneurship are heavily stressed as they encourage:

- risk taking and experimentation
- experience-based learning
- exposure to non-routine work and non-typical situations
- giving individuals the ability to set up and manage with their learning and new business

LivOrg recognises the concept of “promoting competitiveness, the sustainable management of natural resources” and the idea to develop the “use of environmentally friendly farm practices and for high standards of animal welfare” in the way that as well as equipping young people for careers in the organic farming system, so much of our work in our organisations supports young people and those from other communities to wider their employability and education (i.e. outside the sector) through the development of their core skills, aptitudes and knowledge. LivOrg organisations through the new ERASMUS + proposal can potentially build new stakeholder partnerships and enhance the development of the entrepreneurial expertise and trigger the development of rural area (farmers) and organic farming system through innovative VET services and a range of qualifications. These stakeholder relationships are crucial to drive the external legitimacy of the framework and to the success of the validation proposals.

LivOrg partnership contributes to set alight again the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe being involved in the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme which is one of the key actions of the **Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan**, supporting new businesses in crucial phases of their lifecycle and help them to grow.

LivOrg project was delivering results and promises to become an important tool to trigger more and better entrepreneurs – thus contributing to combat the unemployment, particularly among the young.

In terms of the European **Lifelong Learning Programme** objectives, the project addresses objective (5) in that LivOrg aims to contribute to the development of new training paths and qualification in the organic farming system increasing the employability opportunities for young-adult and the chances to learn and experiment entrepreneurial routes across Europe. In terms of the **new ERASMUS + programme**, LivOrg is directly connected with the *recognition and validation of skills and qualifications* strategy which makes specific reference to support EU transparency and recognition tools for skills and qualifications – in particular the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) - which are at the heart of the project.

7. Extra Heading/Section

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