

**RURAL/ITER PROJECT**  
**Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation**  
**RURAL/ITER LdV TOI Project**  
**Reintroduction upon Rural Agricultural Lands of Innovative Training for**  
**Entrepreneurs on Return**  
**Project Number 2012-1-GR1-LEO05-10058**

**Report on results of pilot tests on  
updated training material**

**November 2014**

## Table of contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. The methodology .....	3
3. Pilot tests in Greece, Italy and Portugal.....	4
4. Analysis of the pilot tests' results .....	9
5. Conclusions .....	14

## 1. Introduction

This report was prepared in the framework of Working Package (WP) 4 “Pilot testing of the training system”, as part of the European project “Reintroduction Upon Rural Agricultural Lands of Innovative training for Entrepreneurs on Return” (RURAL/ITER, [www.ruraliter.eu/](http://www.ruraliter.eu/)), which was implemented within the period 1/10/2012 – 30/11/2014. The project was partially funded under European Union’s Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo da Vinci - Transfer of Innovation, and is dealt with innovative training for targeted users (youngsters, “2nd chance” farmers and female entrepreneurs) interested in agriculture.

The aim of the WP4 “Pilot testing of the training system” was to measure the effectiveness of the e-training platform developed to transfer the innovation to the targeted users, indicate the advantages and disadvantages related to the updated and adapted teaching materials and evaluate the learning outcomes in terms of facilitating learning process and enhancing employment perspectives. The activities, which were foreseen, included:

1. Performance of tests in Greece, Italy and Portugal for the updated and adapted teaching materials developed in WP3,
2. Evaluation of user satisfaction and collection of feedback and suggestions after the tests,
3. Analysis of the tests’ outcomes for implementation and improvement of the draft teaching materials.

The present report gives a detailed description of the monitoring tests and elaborates on the methodology used and results obtained from the assessment efforts of the partners. The analysis outcomes will be used for the amendment of the teaching materials and training tools.

## 2. The methodology

The methodology that was followed towards the determination of techniques for improving the effectiveness of the training materials and the measuring of participant satisfaction and reactions was based on a survey research for primary data collection with the use of a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed to be concise, easy to understand and to be completed. It included three sections:

1. Evaluation of training experience with 10 (ten) closed-ended questions with predefined answers at a 4-point scale and two (2) open-ended questions to report the advantages and disadvantages/suggestions for improvement,
2. Evaluation of teaching materials (introductory tests, modules, cases studies, business plan tool) with 7 (seven) closed-ended questions with predefined answers at a 4-point scale and three (3) open-ended questions to test whether the developed material was appropriate for the intended users and also, to report the advantages and disadvantages/suggestions for improvement.
3. Statistics section, which included questions to examine the demographics of participants (gender, age, educational level, qualifications).

In addition, special attention was given when designing the questionnaire in order to ensure that answers could be reliably aggregated and that comparisons could be made with confidence between different survey periods to follow the organisation of national workshops in different countries.

Generally, a combination of quantitative and qualitative method was used. The following indicators were taken into account for the qualitative appreciation of the questionnaire:

relevance of the scope of the evaluation

appropriateness of the methodology

reliability of the data obtained

validity of the analysis

credibility of the results

impartiality of the conclusions and utility of the remarks that have been drawn.

The questionnaire was distributed to targeted users (young and new entrants - “second chance” farmers, female entrepreneurs in agriculture sector) and to training experts during the national workshops organised in each country (June 2014 – November 2014). The completion took place mainly on-site, where in some cases answers were sent via e-mail.

### 3. Pilot tests in Greece, Italy and Portugal

Partners in Greece, Italy and Portugal had to perform pilot tests with targeted users and training experts, so as to get feedback and suggestions for the amendment of teaching materials and training tools. The operations of this WP was planned to be implemented between Nov 2013 and April 2014, before the ToT conference in Brussels (11th April 2014). However, as the training platform-itself and its components, as well as their translations were pending, the tests had to be procrastinated and rescheduled.

On 3rd June 2014, a survey research for primary data collection with the use of a structured questionnaire was designed for the evaluation of the developed training course modules, and of the overall training experience.

A user guide\_v1 and user guides videos released to be used during pilot tests on 14th July 2014.

Translations of the developed material (platform, introductory test, modules, case studies, Business Plan) running from September 2014.

Starting from June, partners distributed the questionnaires so as to collect feedback/suggestions for the updated and adapted training material.

### **In Greece:**

On Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> of March, a first presentation of the e-training platform was realized by the Coordinator, with the participation of 15 targeted users (young and female farmers, new entrants in agriculture) in Achaia, at the premises of LP in Patras – useful insight gained was presented in Brussels at the 3<sup>rd</sup> partners' meeting. (<http://www.achaia.eu/gr/enimerosi/deltia-tupou/item/3599-parousiasi-ekpaideytikis-platformas-programmatos-sto-plaisio-ylopoiisis-tou-europaikou-programmatos-ruraliter.html> )

The group comprised of 14 male and 1 female beneficiaries of VET programmes who went through the platform and evaluated its content, usability and prospects. Overall, the attendees judged positively the initiative regarding the needs covered and the easiness to use; they would also recommend the platform to both young and existing farmers. The main comments arisen during the session were the following:

- The modules covered the attendees' interests
- The attendees would appreciate a greater number of best practices from EU
- Constant updating of the material would increase the platform sustainability
- Graphics and interface should become more attractive
- The certification could climb up level and new modules could be added
- Financing instruments should be included to a greater extent

Additionally, the same kind of testing session was organized in the premises of LP in Aegion Town (Achaia) with the participation of 1 female and 8 male beneficiaries of VET programmes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2014.

The training platform was perceived by the majority of attendees as a useful, consistent and user-friendly that could be helpful for new and existing farmers.

Overall, the testers recognized the value of distance learning tools and the learning outcomes that are in line with current trends nationally and within EU. However, they suggest the incorporation of a more attractive interface, a list of alternative educational resources and more examples from real farming business practices.



Targeting to receive feedback from training experts, in July 2014, PASEGES distributed by e-mail the questionnaire to training experts, including trainers of the Institute of Youth and Life Long Learning (INEVIDIM), lecturers of the Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly and of the Agricultural University of Athens, agronomists, and managers of vocational training centers.

Aiming to receive feedback from the targeted users (young people, “2nd chance” farmers – new entrants and female entrepreneurs) interested in agriculture, PASEGES presented on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October the e-training platform to farmers and representative of farmers associations from various regions and distributed the questionnaire. The completion took place mainly on-site, where in some cases answers were sent via e-mail.

Moreover, ProTeA Project Technical Assistance PC arranged a small-scale test of Rural/iter Training System, according to the obligations stemming from the 15/5/2014 contract with RCVTLL. The pilot test was organized in collaboration with the Technological Educational Institute of Western Greece Region, Department of Technologists-Agronomists, in Amaliada (Ilia Regional Unit) <http://www.agritech.teiwest.gr/> , which offers 3 specializations in the under-graduate Programme; plant production, animal production and rural economy. It has operated in its current structure since 2013. The Department offers its students and teachers web and e-class services.

The pilot test was organized during the lesson of “ICT applications in Agriculture” for 1st year students under the instructions of Mrs Aglaia Liopa-Tsakalidou, Biologist Phd and Assistant Professor. The sessions gathered all the necessary elements to evaluate Rural/Iter training system since:

- The approach involved a public Educational Institute which abides by the strategy of matching academia with lifelong learning and production processes
- The target group comprises of young people ready to be trained in rural development
- The local community where the sessions take place is mainly described as a rural area
- The lesson in which the test was integrated refers to the use of ICT applications

The pilot test took place on 12/11/2014 and 14/11/2014 at 11 am; totally 26 students attended the presentations of the training system among which 16 female and 10 male students.

The pilot test included:

- Presentation of Rural/iter content and objectives
- Demonstration of the training platform and its services
- Going through the modules and evaluating the training process and expected results

The impressions of the pilot test were quite positive since attendees expressed their great interest on the training application, the modules’ content and tools, the knowledge diffused and the inter-

relation of the training system with their regular education framework. The training platform was described as thorough and user-friendly.

### **In Italy:**

In June 2014, CeSAR distributed the questionnaires to training experts and sent to the task leader the completed ones for further analysis. Responses include feedback from training experts, agronomists, consultants in rural development, farmers and unemployed individuals interested to become farmer from various places (Terni, Bonn, Assisi, Perugia).

On 27th of October 2014, Agricoltura è Vita (Aè V) organized the national conference in Rome, at auditorium "GIUSEPPE AVOLIO" to present the results of the project Ruraliter. Feedback received from 63 persons who participated in the conference and expressed their interest on the developed training tools and the platform.



The agenda of the project and leaflet are available at:

<http://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/14357>

Also, it is attached a video from Agrinews with the presentation of the project.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZNIkHF-qgE&list=UU0iNaYRRl9AJzjRxOHxIpsQ&index=2>

### **In Portugal:**

In 26 June 2014, UTAD distributed the questionnaires and sent to the task leader the completed ones for further analysis. More than 12 farmers of the targeted groups have been contacted as well as 15 trainers, but the acceptance rate was very low probably because the translation of the training tools was not completed yet. For this reason, on 21 November 2014 and 27 November 2014, the partner UTAD repeated the pilot tests and collected another twenty-two (22) questionnaires which were distributed for further analysis.

### **Additional useful insight from CEJA:**

CEJA, on 11th June, hosted a meeting with a group of students in agriculture from Britany (FR), during which the updated training platform was presented.

Their useful feedback and suggestions were sent to us in order to be included in the analysis of the pilot tests outcomes for the improvement of the training platform.

Total number of participants: 22



## **4. Analysis of the pilot tests' results**

From the analysis of the questionnaires, the following results have been accrued:

**Profile of respondents:** Age and gender, Educational level, Qualifications

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	40	68%
Female	18	31%
Missing value	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	

	Frequency	Percentage
Age (18 – 39)	36	61%
Age (40 – 65)	22	37%
Age (65+)	0	0%
Missing value	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	

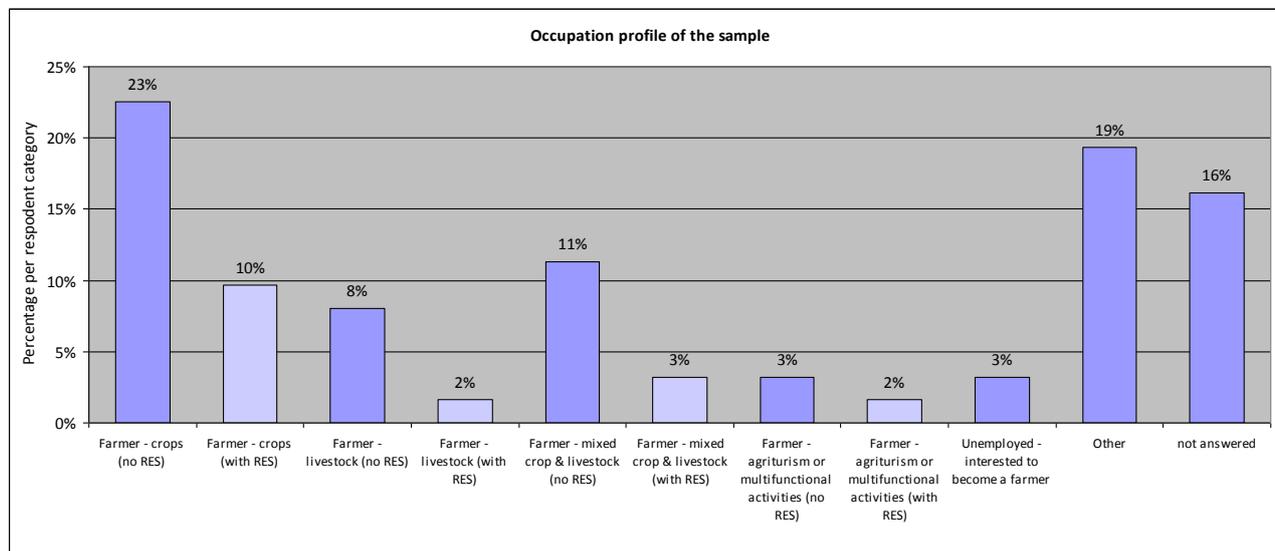
As shown in table 1, the respondents' profile split by gender, there is a higher proportion of male respondents (68%) compared to the proportion of female (31%).

Table 2 highlights the respondents' distribution by age group. Sixty-one (61) per cent of the respondents are in age category 18-39, thirty seven (37) per cent in category 40-65 and null percentages in the category over sixty-five. Consequently, the major part of respondents corresponds to young people.

	Frequency	Percentage
School graduate	22	37%
Vocational training school graduate	4	7%
University degree	24	41%
MSc degree	5	8%
Phd degree	1	2%
Missing value	3	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	

As far as the respondents profile by educational level is concerned, forty-one (41) per cent lies in group category "university degree", thirty-eight (38) per cent into "school graduates", nine (9) per cent into "MSc degree", seven (7) per cent into "Vocational training school graduate".

The distribution of respondents in relation to their profession / occupation is depicted in the following diagram:



The majority of responses twenty three (23) per cent laid in group category “Farmers – crop farming – without the use of renewable energy resources (RES)”, following by the group category “Other” at nineteen (19) per cent, which includes responses from consultants, agronomists, representatives of producer groups, training experts, managers of vocational centres. Only three (3) per cent of the respondents were unemployed and declared interested in becoming a farmer.

A comparison between the categories within the sample:

Farmer – crops farming (without the use of RES)	23%
Farmer - crops farming (with the use of RES)	11%
Farmer - livestock (without the use of RES)	10%
Farmer - livestock (with the use of RES)	3%
Farmer - mixed crop & livestock (without the use of RES)	8%
Farmer - mixed crop & livestock (with the use of RES)	3%
Farmer – agri-tourism or multifunctional activities (without the use of RES)	2%
Farmer – agri-tourism or multifunctional activities (with the use of RES)	2%

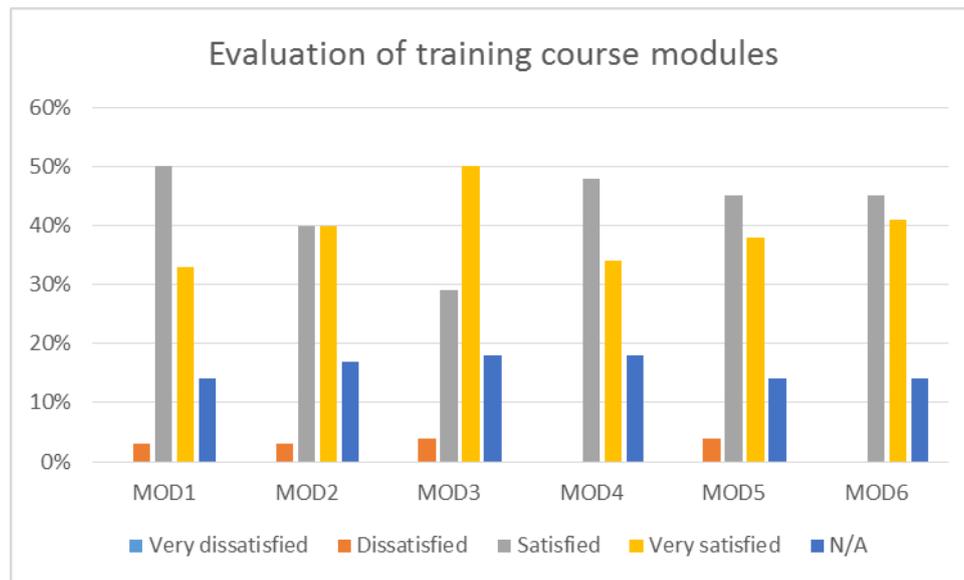
This distribution could explain partially the largest proportion of male respondents in the sample, as the majority of responds come from categories which are mainly male domain.

## Evaluation of training experience

The information, tables and graphs below include the elaboration of the evaluation of the questionnaires. Regarding their level of satisfaction of the overall training experience, the results accrued shows:

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not answered
a. Information provided on RURALITER webpage before starting the training	0	8%	63%	29%	0
b. Presentation of the training modules	0	7%	59%	34%	0
c. Topics of the training modules	0	7%	36%	58%	0
d. Length of the training modules	7%	25%	50%	17%	2%
e. Presentation of case studies	0	7%	33%	45%	16%
f. Usefulness of case studies	0	3%	22%	55%	19%
g. Easiness of using the tool to create your Business Plan	3%	16%	41%	9%	31%
h. E - Learning platform's user friendliness	7%	14%	40%	38%	2%
i. Achievement of desired personal learning goals	0	15%	54%	27%	3%
j. Establishment of an electronic means to facilitate lifelong learning	0	3%	44%	53%	0%
<b>Percentage of the total respondents</b>	<b>1,8%</b>	<b>11,4%</b>	<b>47,7%</b>	<b>39,1%</b>	<b>8%</b>

Exploring the overall satisfaction of respondents on the training experience showed that on a 4-point scale, the respondents recorded a high level of satisfaction in the developed training tools and the platform. As far as the developed modules is concerned, 43% of total respondents declared that are satisfied and 39% very satisfied. The results of the questionnaires are elaborated below:



Moreover, in response to the questionnaire item that measured the intention of interviewers to propose the training tools developed, 93 % of respondents declare that they would suggest for farmers to take this training course.

In addition to that, the majority of respondents deemed that the e-training tool would be **more appropriate for young farmers, or for people with low experience in farming.**

Indicative answers on the following issues of the questionnaire:

Best part of training platform / Advantages:

“It is a very thorough and intensive course”

“That the training and testing can be done at any time”

“Case Studies”

“The market focused production philosophy mentioned in all the training modules”

“It is good that the learning material can be downloaded in one pdf document and not slide by slide in ppt”

Useful knowledge for the occupation “farmer”: information about how to manage a farm on 21st century, rules about sustainable rural development and farm management, innovation to increase competitiveness subject to strict environmental regulation and sustainable practices

Suggestions / improvements:

- Add more case studies
- Improve the length of modules – shorter

- Improve and develop more MOD5 about the use of Renewable Energy Sources
- The system is very slow, the pdf is faster than the slides
- Include at the end relative readings, literature
- Translation of the platform into more languages, for example in French
- Creation of a network with contacts of the farmers from the case studies – in case someone wants to contact them and ask for advice or to do an internship at their farm
- Problems with different browser providers (internet explorer, mozilla firefox, google chrome)
- Provide the certificate at the end of the course and on the main page indicate which modules are completed and which are not.
- The information with login details should be visible on the top of the main page

## 5. Conclusions

This document includes the outcomes devired from the pilot testing of the innovative training tools developed for the agricultural sector, with relation to young, female and new farmers, coming form other work experiences. The methodology that was followed towards the determination of techniques for improving the effectiveness of the training materials and the measuring of participant satisfaction and reactions was based on a survey research for primary data collection with the use of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to be concise, easy to understand and to be completed. Special attention was given to ensure the validity and reliability of data and that comparisons could be made with confidence between different survey periods to follow the organisation of national workshops in different countries.

According to the responses gathered and analysed for the pilot testing, it is concluded that:

- The training platform has been satisfactorily developed and the training modules met the objectives set for the targeted users.
- The training modules topics chosen and their contents have been positively evaluated
- The assessment has shown promising results about the learning outcomes
- It has resulted that the e-training platform will respond well to the targeted groups (young farmers, people interested in farming with low experience, 2nd chance farmers) needs.



The suggestions include addition of more cases studies, improving the performance of the platform and translation into more languages. The advantages of the platform include the strong focus on sustainability and competitiveness of the EU agriculture with emphasis on environmental issues and multifunctional activities.

Farm management based on business planning and sustainable use of Renewable Energy Sources for farming activities can offer perspectives for the present and future generations of farmers and opportunities for the maintenance of populations in the rural areas. Young and female farmers, as well as entrepreneurs from other work experiences, seem to be particularly creative, interested in new trends so their training needs include innovative competencies to manage the farms of the future, develop the green economy and work opportunities in the rural areas.