



# Referential of skills for an agronomic adviser

---

WP3 – Improve the methods - Outcome n°14

**Karl Heinz KOLB – Ann-Kathrin SPIEGEL (P4)**  
**Claude FALGAS (Yotta-G) - Claude DELBOS (P10)**  
in collaboration with all project partners

**LEONARDO DA VINCI TRANSFER OF INNOVATION  
CONVENTION: 2011-FR1-LE005-24388**



## **PARTNERS INVOLVED IN 'NEW ADVISERS' LEONARDO PROJECT**

### **Lead partner:**

P00 AC3A - Association des Chambres d'agriculture de l'Arc Atlantique – France

### **Partners:**

P01 CEA - Casa Escola Agricola Campo Verde - Portugal

P02 Federacion EFA Galicia – Spain

P03 Teagasc Agricultural and Food Development – Ireland

P04 Bayerische Bauernverband LandSiedlung bbv-LandSiedlung – Germany

P05 Hushallningssällskapet Väst – Sweden

P06 Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture – Hungary

P07 Slovenian Chamber of agriculture – Slovenija

P08 APCA - Assemblée Permanente des Chambres d'agriculture – France

### **Silent partners:**

P09 IALB - Internationale Akademie land- und hauswirtschaftlicher Beraterinnen und Berater – Germany

### **Coordinateur**

P10 Chambre d'agriculture de Loire Atlantique (Nantes – France)

## **IMPORTANT MENTION**

This report engages only the author(s), and neither the Leonardo National Agency nor the European Commission is responsible for any use which may be made.

## **SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT**

### **English**

In order to contribute to the emergence and dissemination of innovation in reducing pesticides, agricultural advisers and trainers are looking to strengthen and diversify their skills, giving more importance to the soft skills and personal dynamics.

Based on the results of the Leonardo New Advisers project, we propose to supplement existing training by practical learning modules with the three tested tools, while remaining faithful to the teaching of "learning by doing".

Recognition of the training process will be implemented in the context of ECVET. Its effectiveness, of course, will be enhanced by the involvement of advisory organisations and managers.

### **French**

Pour contribuer à l'émergence et la diffusion d'innovation permettant la réduction des pesticides, conseillers et formateurs en agronomie cherchent à renforcer et diversifier leurs compétences, avec une place accrue aux compétences relationnelles et aux dynamiques personnelles.

Sur la base des résultats du projet Leonardo New Advisers, nous proposons de compléter l'offre de formation existante par des modules d'apprentissage des trois outils testés, en restant fidèles à une pédagogie de « l'apprentissage par l'action ».

La reconnaissance du processus de formation se fera en l'inscrivant dans le cadre des ECVET ; son efficacité sera bien évidemment renforcée par l'engagement des organisations de conseil et des managers.

### **German**

Um zur Entstehung und Verbreitung von Innovationen beizutragen, die Pestizideinsatz reduzieren, wollen landwirtschaftliche Berater und Trainer ihre Fähigkeiten stärken und diversifizieren. Dabei wird ein stärkeres Augenmerk auf soziale Kompetenz und Dynamik von Prozessen gelegt.

Basierend auf den Ergebnissen des New Advisers Leonardo Projekt schlagen wir vor, die bestehende Ausbildung durch den Einsatz der drei praxiserprobten Beratungswerkzeuge in Anlehnung an die Pädagogik des "learning by doing" zu ergänzen.

Die Anerkennung der Ausbildung wird im Rahmen des ECVET stattfinden. Ihre Wirksamkeit wird durch die Beteiligung Beratungsorganisationen und den jeweiligen Vorgesetzten verstärkt.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	5
I - Umbrella competencies for agronomic advisory .....	5
II - The transfer tool is an opportunity to develop skills.....	6
III - Training modules.....	7
VI - Recognition of professional development.....	7
Conclusion.....	8

## Tables

Tab 1: S & C mobilized by the three tools.....	6
Tab 2: S & C at stake in the training.....	8

<b>References</b> .....	9
-------------------------	---

<b>Abbreviations and acronyms</b> .....	9
---	---

## Introduction

The reduced use of pesticides in European agriculture with at the same time stable yields strongly depends on efficient, competent and reliable agronomic advisory services. Advisory services on the other hand strongly depend on the competencies of their advisers, which represent the link between regulations, technical and scientific knowledge and the daily farming practice of the farmers. Key for competent advisers is a suitable initial education and most important periodic training to remain up to date on the latest issues.

Regarding advisers' training, the starting points in the European countries are very different and a broad range of institutions cover a broad range of different topics, which can be very specific aspects of plant protection.

Therefore, in the following overview, we do not aim to give an exhaustive insight in all possible aspects of knowledge and competencies that plant protection advisers should have or develop. Having described a common basis so called "umbrella competencies", we will use the experience of the 'New Advisers' Leonardo project to propose operational device to contribute to the development of skills and adaptation of agronomic practices. In this paper, we will focus on the training modules and recognition of prior learning (ECVET).

## I - Umbrella competencies for agronomic advisory

In his daily work an advisor had to face a multitude of tasks and challenges. To be able to manage all these demands now and in his/her future work he/she need a special set of skills and competencies. These competencies should not be simply deal with technical issues but had to cover also self-organisation and the so called soft skills & competencies (relational and attitude s &c).

The most fundamental skills and competencies for a today advisor were summarized by the project "New Advisers" as "umbrella skills & competencies". They cover a broad range of personal and relational skills & competencies which advisers nowadays and in future require to fulfil their tasks in the huge frame work of different advisory subjects: technical assistance, management assistance, management of information, management of problem/conflict situations – as wells as different advisory situations: coaching at agricultural colleges and schools, one-to one advisory, facilitation and working with groups, further education/training and coaching. Therefore "umbrella skills & competencies" may be defined as competencies which are basic as well as ubiquitous for all (agronomic) advisers. Because they are not focused only on technical knowledge they can applied in all advisory situations including adult education, integrated pest management, Cross Compliance and others.

What are the identified "umbrella skills & competencies" in the three main fields self-organisation, technical s & c, relational & attitude s &c.

1. Self-organization: In this field there are 4 core competencies being important: work and time management, administration requests, improve of personal development and ability to give internal support
2. Technical skills & competencies: For this classical field of advisory there are 3 core competencies to mention: technical/agronomy reasoning, knowledge of what is at stake, access to resources
3. Relational/attitude skills and competencies: In this field of advisory neglected for the last decades, 3 main competencies were identified: holistic view and ability to carry on change, ability to listen and to empower, networking and continuous progress ability.

To face the tasks, challenges and problems arising in future agronomic advisory the "Ne Advisor" had to be provided with the whole set of skills and competencies shown above.

Beneath skills and competencies new advisory tools as the tested Problem Based Learning (PBL), Clear vision (CV) and Discussion Groups (DG) will enable the future advisers to do a real good job.

## II - The tool transfer is an opportunity to develop skills

A global organization of training of agricultural advisers in the form of modules is already in place within the CECRA (Certificate for European Consultants in Rural Areas) developed by IALB, which is also a partner (P09) in the New Advisers Leonardo project.

Consultations and observations made during the project show the interest of advisers to enhance their interpersonal skills and personal dynamics. Experience of tools transfer has shown the relevance and feasibility of training where the appropriation of new tools created an ad hoc open and questioning position that goes beyond the tools themselves.

People facing new tools are also facing their own habits, beliefs and representations. If this confrontation is long enough, and repeated if necessary, it will produce learning effects beyond the appropriation of the tools themselves, it will allow reconsidering, adapting or enhancing professional practices. The transfer of tools is a kind of “side project” that facilitates the development of new postures in advice.

Tab 1: S & C mobilized by the three tools

<b>S&amp;C Tools</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Competencies</b>
<b>Clear Vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Functions on farm</li> <li>- Environment and stakeholders</li> <li>- Rules for making decisions</li> <li>- Strategic and holistic approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active listening</li> <li>- Formulation of a problem</li> <li>- Taking notes and processing information</li> <li>- Building of an action plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment of internal and external resources</li> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Anticipation and openness to emerging issues</li> </ul>
<b>Problem based Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic knowledge (physical biological, social, etc.)</li> <li>- Writing and Speaking</li> <li>- Identification of sources of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Processing of information, critical analysis and synthesis</li> <li>- Negotiation</li> <li>- Project management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment of internal and external resources</li> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Anticipation and openness to emerging issues</li> </ul>
<b>Discussion groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Techniques for producing</li> <li>- Agronomy, machinery, business management, etc..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitation of groups</li> <li>- Project management</li> <li>- Conflict management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment of internal and external resources</li> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Anticipation and openness to emerging issues</li> </ul>

The three tools that we have transferred are different and complementary with respect to the question of posture in advice. They meet the fruitful use of co-construction, the need for a systemic and holistic approach of farming (Clear Vision), the redistribution of cognitive resources between partners (Discussion groups), the development of a proactive and participatory behaviour vis-à-vis the technical information (PBL), etc.

In other words, it is an opportunity to reduce dependencies, conscious or unconscious, individual and collective, vis-à-vis sources of information or habits of thought. We see an analogy with the reduction of dependence vis-à-vis pesticides in agricultural systems.

To illustrate, we identified some of the S & C mobilized by the three tools chosen for the transfer of innovation within the Leonardo project (see above Tab 1).

### III - Training modules

The positioning of the profession of agronomy adviser or trainer can vary in the scale to eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), particularly in relation to autonomy facing more or less predictable difficulties. Anyway, changing agricultural practices and cropping systems needs strong capacity of innovation efficient on economic, ecological, social and territorial levels, in other words on sustainable development.

Our purpose is to encourage, in all countries or administrative regions in Europe, a process of professional development, involving advisers and trainers: professional development on practices, knowledge, tools and methods, collective and individual mastery. We propose to supplement existing training in enhancing the experience of New Advisers project, where participants spontaneously noted the learning they personally benefited.

**A - Enhancing national (or sometimes regional) trainings with a module on 'the use of tools for advisory' for 3-5 days** (e.g. 3 days + 1 day back on experience)

- *Implementing the three tools (Clear vision, Problem based learning, Discussion groups) on issues provided by the participants themselves. Knowing the tools is having practiced as a facilitator, but also as a single participant, several times under different conditions and on different issues.*
- *Questioning professional practices and representations, share with training colleagues on resources to drive changes, enrol in networks that facilitate access to knowledge and exchange of experiences.*
- *Integrating new skills and competencies (attitudes): apply tools with farmers, debrief with a tutor or colleague, inform his/her team and communicate new skills.*

**B - Develop a transnational training module on 'the use of tools for advisory', in addition to existing courses** (e.g. CECRA). This module takes the previous frame, adjusting the level of constraints (limiting travels, linguistic areas, etc.) and enhancing resources (diversity of backgrounds and experiences, linguistic areas, etc.).

### IV - Recognition of professional development

By nature, the evaluation of 'soft skills' and of 'internal support' is harder than strictly technical knowledge or skills.

However some objective criteria of the professional development done through trainings as 'the use of tools for advisory' could be:

Tab 2: S &amp; C at stake in the training

<b>Knowledge</b>	Knowledge of the conditions of implementation of the 3 tools
<b>Skills</b>	Ability to provide major tasks: preparation, facilitation, real-time situational analysis, reporting and communication
<b>Competencies</b>	Ability to get information, to react to contingencies, to adapt the tools to the context, to take a critical look at his/her own practices

To recognize and encourage the process; it will be also taken in count and assessed the reality of attendance in training, of test and transfer into daily practices.

### Conclusion

At the end of our project, our proposal is to complement the training existing at national and transnational level, by promoting the three tested tools. The training process must involve professional skills and personal attitudes, and contribute to maintenance of internal support inside each person.

We must recall that training is important, but that each organization may also provide, through management, incentives and support, each being necessary to do agronomic advisers and trainers play efficiently for innovation.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Commission européenne, le cadre européen des certifications pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie (CEC), 2008, 15 p
- [2] Recommandation du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 18 juin 2009 établissant le système européen de crédits d'apprentissage pour l'enseignement et la formation professionnels (ECVET), J.O. de l'Union européenne (2009/C 155/02)
- [3] Commission européenne, Les crédits d'apprentissage européens pour la formation et l'enseignement professionnels (ECVET) – slideshow (42 slides)
- [4] European Commission, The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training – Questions and answers – Revised February 2011, 91 p.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- ⇒ CECRA: Certificate for European Consultants in Rural Areas
- ⇒ ECVET: European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (in French: système européen de crédits d'apprentissage pour l'enseignement et la formation professionnels)
- ⇒ EQF: European Qualifications Framework (in French : CEC: Cadre européen des certifications)
- ⇒ S&C: Skills and Competencies