



Green Program for
Organic Production
[GreenPOP]

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**VET STUDENTS PROGRAM FOR
PRACTICE (IMPROVEMENT OF
PRACTICAL TRAININGS)**

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INTRODUCTION

SCOPE

The project aims in this area at improving the effect and efficiency of the practical placements of learners at the partner schools. This is described in this document which is the deliverable O2-A1 “VET students practice training program curriculum”.

In order to be able to make proposals and suggestions thereto we need to understand the present situation and the legal room for development.

We feel the best way is to make a start with a dedicated inventory regarding specific questions which were not covered by the general survey.

The schools have mentioned that they implement a National Curriculum [NC], a national set of objectives and guideline on the delivery of the agricultural education. We have learned that practice is a subject mentioned in this NC, but a better understanding of the rules and the implementation as well as the views of the teachers concerned will help to build our understanding on which we can propose changes and interventions. We are particularly interested in the opinions and views of the teachers as they will also be the ones who will have to propose and make the changes.

This document is produced on the basis of the questionnaire that was answered by the two schools involved in the GreenPOP Project (Koco Racin from Sveti Nikole and Brakja Miladinovci from Skopje).

The recommendations are given by the EU Partners in the Project, based on their previous experience as farmers, teachers and project implementations, in full cooperation with Macedonian partners.

AUDIENCE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Intended audience: Partners in the Project and general public

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Definition of terms:

Accreditation	A process of quality assurance through which accredited status is granted to a programme of education or training, showing it has been approved by the relevant legislative or professional authorities by having met predetermined standards.
Learning outcomes	The set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or in-formal.
Accreditation of learning outcomes	(a) Formal recognition: the process of granting official status to skills and competences either through the:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles); or – grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers, validation of gained skills and/or competences; <p>and/or</p> <p>(b) Social recognition: the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders.</p>
Assessment of learning outcomes	The process of appraising knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria (learning expectations, measurement of learning outcomes). Assessment is typically followed by validation and certification.
Adult education	<p>General or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training for professional and/or personal purposes, and which aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provide general education for adults in topics of particular interest to them (e. g. in open universities); – provide compensatory learning in basic skills which individuals may not have acquired earlier in their initial education or training (such as literacy, numeracy) and thus to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – give access to qualifications not gained, for various reasons, in the initial education and training system; – acquire, improve or update knowledge, skills or competences in a specific field: this is continuing education and training.
Apprenticeship/ alternation	<p>Systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance).</p> <p>The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation.</p> <p>Education or training combining periods in an educational institution or training centre and in the workplace. The alternation scheme can take place on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis. Depending on the country and applicable status, participants may be contractually linked to the employer and/or receive a remuneration.</p>
Awarding body	A body issuing qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) formally recognising the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual, following an assessment and validation procedure.
Certificate / diploma / title	An official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following an assessment and validation against a predefined standard.
Competence	The ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development).

	<p><i>Another definition:</i></p> <p>The ability to demonstrate theoretic and practical skills in performing routine and complex tasks under a range of circumstances that meet industry standards.</p>
Skill	The ability to perform tasks and solve problems.
Credit system	<p>An instrument designed to enable accumulation of learning outcomes gained in formal, non-formal and/or informal settings, and facilitate their transfer from one setting to another for validation and recognition.</p> <p>A credit system can be designed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – by describing an education or training programme and attaching points (credits) to its components (modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.); or – by describing a qualification using learning outcomes units and attaching credit points to every unit.
Curriculum	The inventory of activities implemented to design, organise and plan an education or training action, including the definition of learning objectives, content, methods (including assessment) and material, as well as arrangements for training teachers and trainers.
Distance learning	Education and training imparted at a distance through communication media: books, radio, TV, telephone, correspondence, computer or video.
E-learning	Learning supported by information and communication technologies (ICT).
ECVET	<p>European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET)</p> <p>A device in which qualifications are expressed in units of learning outcomes to which credit points are attached, and which is combined with a procedure for validating learning outcomes.</p> <p>The aim of this system is to promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mobility of people undertaking training; – accumulation, transfer and validation and recognition of learning outcomes (either formal, non-formal or informal) acquired in different countries; – implementation of lifelong learning; – transparency of qualifications; – mutual trust and cooperation between vocational training and education providers in Europe.
EQF	<p>European qualification framework for lifelong learning (EQF)</p> <p>A reference tool for the description and comparison of qualification levels in qualifications systems developed at national, international or sectoral level.</p>
Formal- Informal-	<p>Formal education: Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view. It</p>

<p>Non-formal- education</p>	<p>typically leads to validation and certification.</p> <p>Informal education: Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective.</p> <p>Non-formal education: Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.</p>
<p>Key skills</p>	<p>The sum of skills (basic and new basic skills) needed to live in contemporary knowledge society.</p> <p>Comment: in its Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning, the European Commission sets out the following eight key competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication in the mother tongue; - communication in foreign languages; - competences in maths, science and technology; - digital competence; - learning to learn; - interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, and civic competence; - entrepreneurship; - cultural expression.
<p>Learning vs. Training</p>	<p>A process by which an individual assimilates information, ideas and values and thus acquires knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences.</p> <p>vs.:</p> <p>Activities linked to the (theoretical or practical) training function, either in an institution for education or training, or at the workplace.</p> <p>Comment: These are the CEDEFOP definitions: in practise learning is more used as addressing theoretical subjects and training as the acquisition of skills.</p>
<p>VET</p>	<p>Vocational Education and Training. Education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market.</p>
<p>Learning organization or Training Provider</p>	<p>An organisation which promotes learning, and where individuals learn and develop through the work context, for the benefit of themselves, each other and the whole organisation, with such efforts being publicised and recognised.</p>
<p>Mentoring</p>	<p>Guidance and support provided in a variety of ways to a young person or learner (i.e. someone</p>

	joining a new learning community or organisation) by an experienced person who acts as a role model, guide, tutor, coach or confidante.
Tutoring	Any activity offering a learner guidance, counselling or supervision by an experienced and competent professional. The tutor supports the learner throughout the learning process (at school, in training centres or on the job).
Module / Unit	A unit of education or instruction in which a single topic or a small section of a broad topic is studied for a given period of time.
Modular education	An education program in which the content is offered to the learners in modules or units which each are tested/examined at the end of instruction. Most e-learning programs are built of units.
On-the-job-training	Vocational training undertaken away from the normal work situation. It is usually only part of a whole training programme, in which it is combined with on-the-job training.
Qualification	<p>The term qualification covers different aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) formal qualification: the formal outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work. A qualification confers official recognition of the value of learning outcomes in the labour market and in education and training. A qualification can be a legal entitlement to practice a trade (OECD); b) job requirements: the knowledge, aptitudes and skills required to perform the specific tasks attached to a particular work position (ILO).
Qualification framework	<p>An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes.</p> <p>Comment:</p> <p>A qualification framework can be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – establish national standards of knowledge, skills and competences; – promote the quality of education; – provide a system of coordination and/or integration of qualifications and enable comparison of qualifications by relating qualifications to each other; – promote access to learning, transfer of learning outcomes and progression in learning.
Teacher/trainer	Anyone who fulfils one or more activities linked to the (theoretical or practical) training function, either in an institution for education or training, or at the workplace.
ToT	Theoretical or practical training for teachers and trainers.

PART 1 – THE CURRENT SITUATION

The analysis of the current situation started with the questions about the formal part of the national program application and the part of how the program is implemented in practice.

The formal part:

1. What does the Macedonian National Curriculum for Agricultural VET exactly say on the subject of Practical training in Agricultural VET?

In educational system in Macedonia, agricultural vocational education is realized through profiles in agricultural-veterinarian branch technician for agro management, wine growing technician, technician for farmer production, horticultural technician, veterinary technician and hydro ameliorative technician (the profile exists but there is no interest from the students).

Every of the profile has got Curriculum and according to it the teaching process is realized. These profiles are with annual duration of 4 years in educational process. There are profiles with 3 years of educational process.

In the above mentioned profiles besides, general and vocational subjects the practical work is realized too.

Practical training consists of three parts: Practical education, Professional practice and Ferial Practice.

Practical education is obligatory subject realized during the whole year in one day of the week. (exception is the second year in that there are not only 4 but there can be theoretical education in the same day, while in the third and the fourth year practical education is in one day in duration of 5-7 classes). Themes that are studied are adopted according to vocational subjects that are studied during the educational year in certain educational profile.

Professional practice is realized during the school year in duration of ten days (agro management technicians do not have professional practice).

Ferial practice is realized in the period after the finishing of the school year in duration of 10 or 20 days depending on educational profile. Students from the first, the second and the third year practice ferial practice obligatory (profiles agro management technician and wine growing technician only the second and the third year students).

2. Does this National Curriculum formulate learning outcomes or objectives?

Yes. In every Curriculum in practical work subject the goals are given that are realized with studying of school program of school subject practical work, that means which knowledge, skills the student will gain and for what he/she will be enabled.

3. Does it set any standards or instructions (time, subjects, skills, techniques?)

Yes. There are standards of realization of practical work in the Curriculum, that means teaching methods and activities of studying are given, the way of organization and realization of educational process, as well as teaching aids and means that should be used.

4. Is this practise using all the possibilities of the National Curriculum or are there possibilities within this not used?

Realization of practical work can take place in the school (school economy if there is) or at the employer/company. Even there are efforts for realization of educational contents, they must be realized on and the level of their realization depends on conditions where practical work is realized.

The implementation

1. How is this National Curriculum implemented, what is the present practise in the schools?

All schools with students that are certain profile schools are due to realized practical training as it is given in the Curriculum for certain profile and year. The most often the schools realized practical training in the schools. Only a smaller number of schools work with certain employer (company) and only for certain profiles. This means that the cooperation with companies is very small and limited.

2. How do the schools see the purpose of placements?

Very important part of the education process. Students, according to the branch, get knowledge and competence, Students gain practical skills, facing real life situations and managing the real problems in companies/on farms.

3. What do you expect students to gain from a placement?

With finishing of the school the students should gain certain knowledge, skills and practical skills that they can apply in practice.

4. What do you expect the placement to provide – in terms of experience, physical conditions (systems, machinery, technology, social, management, mentoring)?

Depending on the profile, the students should acquire knowledge and skills to work with certain machinery, tools, equipment, work organization, work planning, scheduling and use of certain raw materials and others. In practice, we are facing problems not that much with equipment and machinery, even they are outdated, but with the approach of the Companies as home institutions.

5. Is this practise using all the possibilities of the National Curriculum or are there possibilities within this not used?

For better implementation of practical training it is necessary to provide better conditions for the development of practical training and adjust the training to the actual needs of the labour market, or the students themselves. Also, it is essential for practical realization of the training to be done on real existing farms and greater engagement of students to be implemented.

6. What would agricultural teachers want to change in the present implementation?

The curriculum provides opportunities for the realization of practical training with an employer (farmer). There are clearly defined standards that need to be met to be able to perform the training with an employer. This approach should allow greater interest among students to acquire practical skills.

7. To what extent could this be realized within the present National Curriculum?

To certain extent. It is not the problem in the Program, but mostly in the way how this program is implemented.

8. What are the national regulations on Health and Safety matters with regards to practise at schools and on farms?

Standards are defined for carrying out practical training of students for employers who provide guidelines to ensure the safety and health of students during the performance of practical training.

The emphasis of the GreenPOP Project is that there is knowledge outside about agriculture and education, the most difficult part may be to be able to look at the things we do now from outside and give new approaches a chance. This applies both to people in agriculture about comparing, contrasting and appreciating the difference between conventional and organic agriculture and to people in education who have been using teaching methods that have served them well but can be changed and sometimes improved. We find it is of no use to describe in detail how exactly to run the training mentioned above but we want to explain the main ideas we want to make use of:

a) A strong regular contact between school and workplace / employers / farmers is of great importance. Not just occasional email or 'phone-call; not just a formal letter saying that 'now it is time to discuss placements for students'; not just a personal contact because of friendship or family connections; and not just signing a document on co-operation. This contact between school and farmer needs all of these methods of contact regularly, so that both know each other, and have confidence that the other one knows the situation and can match students to the training opportunities. This can mean that there must be an increase in the time used for this contact, but it will very likely save time later. Also, it is important that the school keeps a good database on the workplaces and farmers, so it is possible to limit the burden on some workplaces if needed and to be able to give information to a new member of staff at the school. It is advised to have a simple formal agreement as a framework between the school and farmers on work-placements.

b) When asking farmers or others to take part in training it is important to have good information on the content and list the benefits for participants. This applies also to the training of teachers to implement training and also when working with students in school and lifelong learners interested in organic agriculture. So information in compact form and directed to the reader is important. We should not ask people to find information in a big manual but just give them the part they need.

c) We emphasise the three-partner agreement on workplace training: between the school, the employer/farmer and the student. They are all responsible and all have duties stated in the contract. This contract is to be signed by a teacher, employer and student/parent (for under 18). The contract should be standardized for the things common to all work placements at all levels and specific for the level in the specific programme.

d) When preparing students for work-placements make the students partly responsible for the reporting using their own way of showing what they have been doing. A portfolio of evidence is not supposed to be in one format presented by the teacher but it must fill requirements and be done by the students, at least parts of it. This way the student is made responsible for knowing the competences they are supposed to be learning. Before the work-placement the students must be ready and they must have the knowledge and skills needed at the level they are.

e) The workplace is the key to the training. If the workplace supports the student this will most likely lead to a successful work-placement and to a more confident student more likely to finish the qualification. Therefore we suggest having a certain work-mentor supporting the student. In the case of the farmer there may not be anyone else working with the student so that the farmer must know his role and be able to both be a boss and a mentor in the way of support and being able to look at things from the student's side. Therefore, we would want people from workplaces to attend a discussion / training for work-mentors, not to tell them how to do things but to ask them to consider how to best support the student.

f) In training students and trainers / farmers we suggest that the teachers from schools try to involve students and farmers in the discussion and training. Using the techniques of participative training the teachers can involve their students and farmers in many ways so they feel they partly own the system. Using hum groups, structured visits and many other methods to involve people there may be an opportunity to convince farmers that they already know most of the things needed to support students but they must think about how to do this. Also the students should change from being in the role of taking information and skills from someone else into a person that builds his/her own skills and knowledge therefore becoming more competent. We feel that participation in a workshop is better than having lecturing about what to do, especially if we want students and farmers to take responsibility for their part of the training.

g) E – Learning. This project is working towards change in a double way, change in the organization and implementation of the practical training and transforming conventional agriculture into organic agriculture. It may seem too much to also expect students, teachers and to some extent farmers to use online tools. We feel it is, however, not worth initiating change without making use of smart technology in computers and 'phones. Using e learning platforms, social media and other online tools is likely to be more appealing to the young people and, when teachers and farmers also use some of the tools, this is more likely to show the students that they fit in. Students would have support also through the online communication. This will also change the way students view the new smart phones, they are not only for play but also for study and work. Therefore, we would encourage teachers to try to use online tools, Moodle or other e learning platforms, use Facebook groups and other social media and make use of icloud, Google docs and other online facilities for storing information, documents and reports.

We feel the idea of the Portfolio of Evidence is linked to the possibilities of using pictures, videos and other non-text methods to report and prove the competence of students. It is not possible to expect everyone to use online tools, in some places the internet does not reach everyone and the capacity for transporting information is not enough. In these cases it is preferable that the required documents be printed out as they are presented online, rather than begin with the conventional paper sheets and trying later to convert these into the online form.

PART 3 – CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions can be classified as follows:

- There is already good existing program for practical training of the VET Students.
- The existing curriculum formulate learning outcomes and objectives, it set standards and instructions (time, subjects, skills, techniques?)
- There are possibilities that are not used in full capacity, such as placements in companies.
- There should be strong regular contact between school and workplace / employers / farmers which is of great importance.
- It is important to have good information on the content and list the benefits for participants, especially for the Farmers/Companies that are involved in the educational process.
- A three-part agreement is important for defining the responsibilities and duties.
- Make the students responsible for reporting on their own way.
- The workplace is the key to the training. A work-mentor approach is good start by having a responsible person from the company supporting the student.
- The teachers from schools should try to involve students and farmers in the discussion and training, using the techniques of participative training.
- Try to use e-learning tools and platforms, social networks, as well as using pictures, videos and other non-text methods to report and prove the competence of students.

GREENPOP PARTNERS

The GreenPOP project is a partnership between the following partners:

	Fondacija Agro Centar za Edukacija, FACE	www.ace.org.mk
	Stichting International Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture Training, IFSAT	www.ifsat.eu
	Verkmenntaskólinn á Akureyri, VMA	www.vma.is
	Nevares Institute of Agrarian Enterpreuners, INEA	www.inea.org
	SOU Koco Racin Sveti Nikole	
	Balkan Biocert Skopje	www.balkanbiocert.mk
	SUGS Brakja Miladinovci Skopje	http://sugsbrakjamiladinovci.page.tl

The market for organic agricultural products is the fastest growing segment of the European agriculture products market, even in times of economic crisis. Because of the growing environmental consciousness of European consumers this trend is set to continue in the foreseeable future. The European Union has chosen to promote organic agriculture because of its recognized environmental (biodiversity, climate, animal welfare) and social (rural development) benefits. The lack of organic agriculture vocational training in many countries, including Macedonia, is one of the major obstacles in realizing this aim and therefore in enabling agriculture producers in these countries to benefit from this global growth trend.

The goal of the GreenPOP Project on the one hand is to enable VET Providers in Macedonia to deliver innovative training programs and courses for sustainable (organic) agriculture with focus on practical (on-farm) training [through capacity building of the teachers/trainers and potential work-mentors/organic farmers using innovative model of work placements for the learners] and on the other hand the project will enable delivery of agriculture courses to the farming community.



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