



## **ESTO – European Specialist in Traditional Orchards**

Progress Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

Traditional orcharding in Europe has had a changing history over the last decades. In some regions there are still agricultural models guaranteeing the continuity and development of these hotspots of biodiversity, but in other regions, changes in land use, missing marketing actions and the widespread loss of professional knowledge about traditional orchards are threatening their survival. Therefore, the overall aim of the project is to contribute to keeping traditional orchards as a multifunctional (both ecological and economical) sustainable system, which guarantees high biodiversity. The development of new and innovative ways of teaching and learning will help to maintain their characteristic landscapes in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context.

The ESTO Project ‘European Specialist in Traditional Orchards’ involves partner organisations and other associated experts in the field of traditional orchard farming, management and education from six European countries. The ESTO-project team includes experts from the educational sector experts of research sector and experts from associations active in organic agriculture, environmental and nature protection.

The ESTO project aims to develop a curriculum, based on ECVET criteria (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training). This will cover the most important aspects of knowledge about traditional orchards in fields of pomology, management & care and processing & marketing of their products. The curriculum will be addressed to interested educational institutions – vocational schools, universities and adult educational centres.

The project started with an ex-ante analysis of target groups in order to identify their needs – the needs of potential users of the curriculum.

The next step was to collect a comprehensive body of material as a solid base for the curriculum. The collection of available literature, contacts, links, courses and a photo-pool of traditional orchard topics in each country was summarised into a single project result. Thereafter, the curriculum elaboration started. The formation of Focus Groups (FG) of partners and external experts was a very effective step for further cooperation. The FGs (Pomology, Care & Management, Processing & Marketing) were formed in order to elaborate a ‘traditional orchard’ curriculum to a high-quality ECVET-level. The whole process of curriculum development was accompanied by the ECVET-expert.

The project will implement a number of ‘pilot orchard schools’, where the parts of the curriculum will be tested on three levels (vocational, university and in adult education). The curriculum will be tested through elaborated teaching material for parts of the curriculum. For the teaching material, partners will provide expert texts on selected topics. In order to ensure the sustainability of project results, National Competence Centres (NCC) will be established in partner countries to provide a platform for the maintaining and creating new networks of stakeholders active in traditional orcharding on national and European level and to promote the curriculum for further users.

Project management and the consortium are cooperating with an external evaluator to ensure a high quality of project management and project results.

In the first project year, the project folder and project web-site ([www.esto-project.eu](http://www.esto-project.eu)) was prepared by the consortium in cooperation with experts and graphic designer.

Project partners are currently disseminating information relevant to the project during different events dealing with traditional orchards e.g. meetings, conferences, exhibitions, training courses. Project results are also being disseminated via different media in partner countries. The ‘ESTO demo package’, with a presentation of project and its results, will be used as an effective dissemination tool, informing target groups about the curriculum and the

project itself.

During the whole project the partners appreciate the exchange of knowledge, become acquainted with traditional orchards in other countries, and collect experiences in transnational cooperation and project development.

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# 1. Project Objectives

*Objectives of the ESTO-project:*

## *Qualification*

The development of a 120 - 160 hour 'traditional orcharding' modular curriculum with an emphasis on innovative teaching/training methods is one of the main objectives of the project. It will be available as a web-based curriculum based on ECVET criteria (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) and translated into the languages of the participating countries. The curriculum will be tested in pilot 'Orchards Schools' and afterwards offered to interested adults and students at vocational schools, universities and non-formal education institutions. The project also intends to start the integration of the curriculum into the national educational systems of partner countries in order to harmonize the educational aspects on a national level.

Improving awareness of traditional orchards

The curriculum will be applied within the EU-wide consortium network and will contribute to an increase in awareness and knowledge of traditional orcharding. The National Competence Centres established during the project should facilitate the transfer of knowledge about traditional orchards between professionals, networks of authorities, institutions and organisations dealing with traditional orchard farming and secure networking on both national and international levels, beyond the end of the project.

## *Networking*

The eco-systems of traditional orchards constitute a characteristic landscape element in many European countries. This habitat, however, is endangered in many places due to insufficient care, abandonment to nature, shrub invasion, re-plantation and also due to the absence of (economical) use. There are movements in several European countries attempting to re-establish use of these eco-systems and there is therefore a need and demand for linking and networking these existing initiatives. The National Competence Centres established during the project will strive to provide this missing link on both national and international level providing a long-term benefit beyond the initial scope of the project.

## *Continuity and development*

Providing education and qualifications for adults and students at vocational schools and universities will aid the development of a stable system for the use of traditional orchards and their products. The economic and ecological functions of the orchards will be secured, by teaching participants the ecological background of managing and caring for traditional orchards and all the steps of production, processing and marketing. Thus, traditional orchards will be maintained as a source of healthy regional food and a demand for expert skills will be created in the labour market in rural areas.

## 2. Project Approach

*The methodical approach of the ESTO-project:*

- Carrying out ex-ante analysis: In order to study the needs of target group, an ex-ante analysis was carried out. The contents of the curriculum have been designed on the basis of a questionnaire filled in by partners. The interpretation of the questionnaire provided a preliminary index/overview of the curriculum.
- Material collection: All available material on the topics of pomology, care & management and processing & marketing, in partner countries and beyond, has been analysed and collected, forming the basis of prepared 'material sheets'. This collection of material comprises available literature, contacts, links, courses and also a photo-pool of all traditional orchard-related topics.
- Curriculum development: Three trans-national Focus Groups (FG) of partners focused on each relevant sector of traditional orchards (a./ pomology, b./ care & management, c./ processing & marketing) have been established. The "ECVET-sheets", as a frame of the curriculum based on the ECVET-tools and methodology, have been designed. FGs have developed Units with Learning Outcomes, creating a frame for the curriculum. The whole process has been supervised by an external ECVET-expert. The ECVET-sheets will be pedagogically upgraded and graphically designed.
- Elaboration of expert text: An expert text on selected parts/units of the curriculum for each thematic field is being elaborated by FGs. This text, together with relevant material from the material collection, will serve as a basis for the teaching material.
- Development of the teaching material: The expert text will be adapted and edited for pedagogic and didactic purposes, and teaching material that uses innovative and attractive teaching methods will be prepared by experienced partners in cooperation with FGs. The teaching material will be also used for the pilot testing of the curriculum in "orchard schools".
- Implementation of the curriculum/teaching material: The curriculum will be offered/implemented in educational institutions like vocational schools, universities/universities of applied sciences, adult education centres.
- Dissemination of ESTO project information and information about curriculum: Project partners are presenting project in different events: meetings, conferences, and exhibitions, training courses. They also contact and communicate with educational institutions in order to inform about the curriculum's possible users.
- Sustainability of project results: The dissemination and application of curriculum and other project results will be ensured via ESTO-website ([www.esto-project.eu](http://www.esto-project.eu)), ESTO-

facebook, media relations, and National Competence Centres also beyond the project lifetime.

- **Networking:** Project partners are building up ‘Traditional Orchards’ networks in their countries, and link stakeholders from the agriculture, education, environmental, market and tourism sectors.
- **Co- operation with an external evaluator:** To ensure the quality of the project’s development, cooperation and partnership will be monitored and evaluated by external evaluator. He will communicate with the whole consortium and provide useful recommendations for the project to run more smoothly.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

#### *Realized project activities:*

- Establishment of the project partner network and working structure.
- Realization of the Kick-off Conference in February 2012 in Ehrenberg/DE.
- The design of the project's workplan, regularly updated according to actual project developments.
- Implementation of the additional project meeting (the 2<sup>nd</sup> project meeting) in September 2012 in Nieborow/PL to clarify ongoing project changes (in management and partnership) and ECVET-methodology/accreditation issues.
- Implementation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> transnational project meeting in April 2013 in Pöllau/AT to take final steps in the material collection and curriculum development.
- Design of the ESTO-folder in six languages informing about project, traditional orchards in Europe and in general and provide the information about project objectives especially about the curriculum.
- Development of the ESTO-website in 6 languages ([www.esto-project.eu](http://www.esto-project.eu)) providing actual, project-relevant information (project objectives, contents, target groups, traditional orchards in Europe, actual news and events etc.) and serving as a distribution platform of project results (curriculum, material collection etc.)
- Establishment of the ESTO-facebook profile offering a possibility for information and exchange for interested public, especially younger audiences.
- Publication of articles in journals and newsletters, radio and TV interviews, interviews for newspaper editors help to raise awareness and knowledge of traditional orchards and enlighten the public about the added value and possibilities of traditional orcharding for the environment, sustainable agriculture and development of rural areas.
- Realization of the Ex-ante analysis to integrate target groups needs into the curriculum on the base of the questionnaire. The ex-ante analysis determined the index and overview of the curriculum.
- Material collection (consisting of available literature, contacts, links courses, photo-pool) as a supporting tool for utilisation of curriculum will be available on the project web-site and later also administrated by NCCs.
- Installation of three transnational Focus Groups of partners/experts in fields of pomology, care & management and processing & marketing for effective cooperation on project activities
- Elaboration of ECVET-sheets by Focus Groups including Units and Learning Outcomes as a frame of the curriculum. The curriculum offers a possibility to teach/learn and discover new/forgotten ways of sustainable orchard management. The curriculum will be available on the ESTO-web-site, directly offered to relevant educational institutions and further administrated by National Competence Centres
- Contacting the institutions dealing with accreditation processes of curricula and ECVET-contact points in order to start accreditation process. The ECVET- quality accreditation enables a European- wide accepted qualification of Specialist n traditional orchards.

- Contacting educational institutions – possible users of curriculum in order to disseminate information about the curriculum.
- Design of evaluation plan and preparation of evaluation reports after the transnational meetings related to project development (contents and partnership)

## 4. Partnerships

### *Added value of the multi-country partnership:*

- The partnership is diverse: partners from six different countries, having quite diverse backgrounds and levels of expertise and experience. However, commonality is high around topics of ecology, the environment, nature conservation and biodiversity. Moreover, some partners participated in the “Variety means life” project, where some would have become acquainted. So, in spite of the differences in profiles and expertise, this common ground is recognised strongly among the partners and provides for a good team spirit and strong alignment around the purpose of developing the traditional orchard curriculum.
- For partners the diversity also has the added value that they are exposed to other contexts and experts, which is enriching and allows them to work on course material that will be applied in the European context.
- The large international network of project partners and their networks and the interdisciplinary approach allows compensating deficits caused by the loss of knowledge, skills and tradition in traditional orchard management.
- An international curriculum based on the European ECVET-standards is an important need regarding the open labour market within Europe.
- Exchange of European-wide concepts of traditional orcharding and learning together about different European work habits and approaches contribute to better common understanding in European context.
- Join project cooperation contributes to building up and strengthening the partnerships for future.

### *Experience of working together:*

- The group shows a high level of unity on the curriculum development process and emphasizes commonalities instead of differences between different countries/participant organisations. This contributes greatly to good team spirit.
- The partners have a strong commitment and a unified understanding of the project, its objectives and approach. Focus groups are an essential and functional component and allow for expert exchange and delivery of quality products in the project process.
- As the chemistry in the partnership is good, the mixture between experts from universities, research institutions, vocational schools, practitioners and NGO’s works out well. Also cultural differences between partners are not considered as complicating. Nevertheless, the diversity of partners does make it complicated at times to agree on a common decision – e.g. to select the most suitable topic for the curriculum – as contexts are different as well as the individual interests of persons and/or organizations.
- Also the ability to speak and write in English contributes to different levels of engagement, which is expressed in the meetings and also in overall project communication and delivery of inputs.

- The interdisciplinary approach is best expressed in the focus groups, which are formed around the three main topics of the curriculum. The Focus Groups are a good mixture of levels of expertise, countries and partner types. They provide for a place to exchange with and learn from each other. They also provide a setting for the decision making process, regarding the key topics that are required in all participating countries. They hence ensure that the development of the curriculum is compatible with the broad European context.

## 5. Plans for the Future

*Remaining work to achieve the project objectives:*

- Realization of the 4<sup>th</sup> Transnational meeting in January 2014 in Hungary.
- Realization of the Project Final Conference in September 2014 in France including a dissemination conference to assure the spreading of project results to partner and also non-partner countries and agree further dissemination strategy.
- Further updating of ESTO web-site with new information about actions and events regarding traditional orchards. Project results will be presented and available on the web-site. The exchange, discussions to traditional orchards topics and new friendships on ESTO-facebook will be initiated.
- Implementation of more press work/maintenance of media contacts.
- Information about and the dissemination of the curriculum using various ways (e.g. existing national networks; relevant web-sites, newsletters and special journals; fairs/exhibitions; direct contacting of educational institutions etc.). The “ESTO-demo package” as a tool for the presentation of project results including tangible results will be prepared.
- Finalisation of the expert text elaborated by Focus Groups as a basis for the teaching material.
- Pedagogical and didactical upgrade of the expert text into designed innovative and user-friendly teaching material for target groups.
- The visual designing and translation of the curriculum. Production of 100 pcs of CD-rom/USB sticks of the curriculum for promotion and dissemination purposes.
- Continuing the process of the curriculum accreditation.
- Implementation of (4) “Pilot Orchard Schools” at different educational institutions (vocational schools, university, adult educational centre) in May 2014. Afterwards, practical remarks from the pilot course will be included in the practical guide for curriculum users.
- Establishment of National Competence Centres to ensure the viability of project results especially curriculum beyond the project.
- The external evaluator will carry out the monitoring of the project and a final project evaluation in summary.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. This year coincided with the 2010 Biodiversity Target adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and by Heads of states and governments at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Set up on these strategies the European Commission declared to reduce/stop the loss of biodiversity in the next decades. Therefore every country in Europe is obligated to develop National Biodiversity Strategies and several Actions Plans in order to ensure the biological state of the art. One point of these strategies is to ensure traditional genetic resources of agricultural crops. Furthermore, in the most of the European Countries traditional orchards are HNV-Areas (High-Nature-Value) with a very high level of biodiversity. These areas need to be protected. The ESTO-project supports over mentioned international policies with two specific actions: Development of a curriculum/teaching material that teaches the user how to manage this HNV-Areas in a proper way and how to keep old and endangered fruit varieties for the future.

