

FADERTIC - SUPPORT FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENTS

FADERTIC - PODPORA PORADENSTVÍ V RÁMCI ROZVOJE VENKOVA

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to present EU Leonardo da Vinci II project called FADERTIC - open on-line support for Rural Development Agents (RDA) based on the use of latest information and communication technologies (ICT). It aims at providing alternative means for the continuous training of Rural Development Agents, more specifically a self-training and guidance system. The project is focused on developing web on-line training tool.

Keywords:

Leonardo da Vinci project, distance training, guidance system, on-line training tool, strategic planning, project emergence and leading, cross – disciplinary behaviours and skills.

Anotace:

Cílem příspěvku je seznámit se smyslem a cíli projektu Leonardo da Vinci II "FADERTIC - otevřený on-line systém podpory poradenství v rámci rozvoje venkova na bázi užití nejmodernějších informačních a komunikačních technologií". Hlavním cílem je vytvoření průběžného webovsky orientovaného systému pro vzdělávání a sebevzdělávání lidí, pracujících v rámci poradenství pro zemědělství a rozvoj venkova vůbec (tzv. RDA).

Klíčová slova:

Projekt Leonardo da Vinci, distanční vzdělávání, výukový systém, on-line výukový nástroj, strategické plánování, projektové řízení, interdisciplinární dovednosti.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FADERTIC PROJECT

The project FADERTIC (Training - open online support for Rural Development Agents based on the use of New Information and Communication Technologies) is carried out within the framework of European Community Leonardo daVinci programme.

The project aims at meeting the training needs of Rural Development Agents (RDA). These professionals play a leading role in the promotion of socio-economic development of rural areas in Europe. They are usually university graduates with very different careers: Law, Economics, Business Administration, Sociology, Forestry or Agricultural Engineering, Biology, etc. The task of starting up projects requires a consistent methodological and training support allowing these professionals to seize the necessary encouragement, coordination, management and mediation skills as well as the necessary skills to mobilize the different local actors in the development strategy of the territory.

Most currently active professionals have followed self-learning strategies and have not had access to specific training, except for some short courses and seminars in recent years (for instance, via LEADER). However, the training shortage remains. This training need is even more notable in associate countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where rural development programmes are still emerging.

Another concurrent circumstance is the difficulty of delivering conventional long-term training actions on site, a feature that result in isolation feelings. It is therefore necessary to develop and validate a training proposal based on three factors, namely quality, innovation and having a European scope.

The target group consists of current Rural Development professionals, as well as the agents-to-be in the near future.

The geographical scope is Rural Europe, especially Southern European countries (where main project partners' offices are placed:

- Spain - promoter Innociativas Innovadoras and partner Cederna Garalur
- France - partner AFMR Etcharry
- Italy - partner Performa Confcommercio

and Preaccession countries willing to implement important Rural Development Programmes complementing the application of CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) in the short term:

- The Czech Republic – partner Czech University of Agriculture
- Hungary – partner University of Szeged

AIMS AND BENEFICIARIES OF FADERTIC PROJECT

The aims of Fadertic project could be defined as follows:

- Defining the professional profile, setting up the functions and establishing the training needs of Rural Development Agents in a common context for EU and Preaccession countries.
- Developing a new methodology and pedagogic support concerning self-training, distance training, supporting the development of projects and the use of information technologies.
- Creating an open and distance self-training system facilitating the competencies required by Development Agents working in rural settings.
- Validating the new system and the training material and subsequently making it available to Rural Development Agents throughout Europe via networks such as: LEADER, CARREFOUR and ELARD.
- Testing and validating the opportunities supplied by ICT for the continuous training of geographically dispersed collectives.

The project aims at developing and checking a product and making it available to Rural Development Agents, directly favouring the updating and enhancement of their abilities and indirectly improving their innovation capabilities and support they provide in business start-ups and job-creation in European rural settings. The project will also provide feedback on the use of Web platforms for self-training and providing guidance to other groups in similar circumstances.

The Beneficiaries will be:

- Local Action Groups
- Rural Development Agencies
- Municipalities
- Regional Agencies
- Development Associations and Partnerships and other organizations devoted to the promotion of socio-economic development in European rural settings.

Within the modern organisation, both private and public in charge of territory's development, we can realise the training demand turns more and more forward the satisfaction of the need of immediate practical application. This need may be satisfy only by promoting new tools, able to guarantee the

comprehensible and practical training. Training within the Fadertic project is the innovative opportunity to train oneself and to inform oneself according to the own needs of the professional growth. All participants share relatively free time and/or needs. Training's organisation within Fadertic enables the maximum of flexibility in management of training time and of the training objectives. Moreover, it creates the opportunity of the cooperative training among the physically distant bodies, thanks to work groups and discussion. This enables also making bases for the preparation of shared tools.

METHODOLOGY

Tutor Guidance System

The work on Fadertic project has been primarily divided into several workpackages. Among the most important ones following could be mentioned:

1. Analysis and identification of the continuous training requirements of Rural Development Agents in participating countries.
2. Elaboration of the methodology and pedagogic elements for the training action.
3. Identification and compose of the training contents.
4. Development of the distance self-training and guidance system, production of the training content.
5. Implementation of the self-training pilot – guidance experience for development agents.

In June 2004 the project was at the beginning of its last fourth. It means it is in the phase of evaluation of the **on-line self-training and guidance system**. All main topics for the pilot experience has been really defined, study texts and many case studies from various countries have been developed.

The on-line self-training system is based on individual on-line studies with supporting documents to be downloaded. A **tutor** leads the whole learning process. In the Distance Training, Tutor has the especially important tasks. S/he must **help, guide and motivate**. Students are physically far and run the risk not to follow training process and the right training schedule. What Distance Training Tutor usually does?

- S/he sends messages and answers - within the very brief time – to the messages that the students send to him.
- S/he verifies the outcome of the tests carried out during the training process.
- S/he leads and moderate discussion in the forum.

The tutor's role could be circumscribed as follows:

Social role includes:

- motivation aspects,
- creation of positive and friendly relations,
- promotion of common group (FADERTIC identification),
- helping with the individual tasks.

Organizational role includes:

- schedule work,
- explanations on what to do,
- when and how to realize it.

Pedagogical role:

- underline main points,

- help the participants to built their answers,
- help the participants to wonder themselves about their professional practices,
- promote constructive behaviours.

Technical role includes:

- help the participants feel comfortable with the e-learning system,
- help participants to use the technical tools,
- be able to choose the most adequate e-tools for the different steps of the modules.

Tutor assists and encourages the student during the phase of Distance Training by controlling the learning progress and the effectiveness of participation. Tutor should follow principles, sequences of working phases and of operations, proposed here as a model, but is free to adapt them to his own rhythm and his own conduction style, in order to face the complexity of the process and keep a working group under control.

Organization of Learning Process

On-line training tool is organized in the following way:

- **Modules** divided in Sequences
- **Sequences** divided in Lessons
- **Lessons** divided in **Units**.

The pilot experiment consists of three modules, all of them developed in English and in partner's national languages:

- 1) **Strategic Planning**
- 2) **Project Emergence and Leading**
- 3) **Cross – Disciplinary Behaviours and Skills**

Modules are divided in sequences (main topics of a module). Each sequence is divided in four lessons (composed of the certain number of Units) and is structured according to the following logical model:

Lesson 1 – **Introduction**

Lesson 2 – **Theory**

Lesson 3 – **Methodologies**

Lesson 4 – **Examples, Questions, Exercises**

Each unit is included as one ppt file with supporting pdf documents and links to corresponding files or sites.

Results - Technical Realisation of the Fadertic Training Tool – Project Outputs

The training tool is based on the web based PH-Project open source software. This software was modified for purposes of Fadertic project. The training tool control and contents of all modules was prepared in English and in all partner's national languages. It has three types of access:

- 1) Access for project partners (full rights), which allows modification of the contents and access to internal materials.
- 2) Access for tutors, which allows access to all learning texts and evaluation tools. It allows some simple modifications.
- 3) Access for students (rural development agents), which allows access to all study texts and supporting materials in national language.

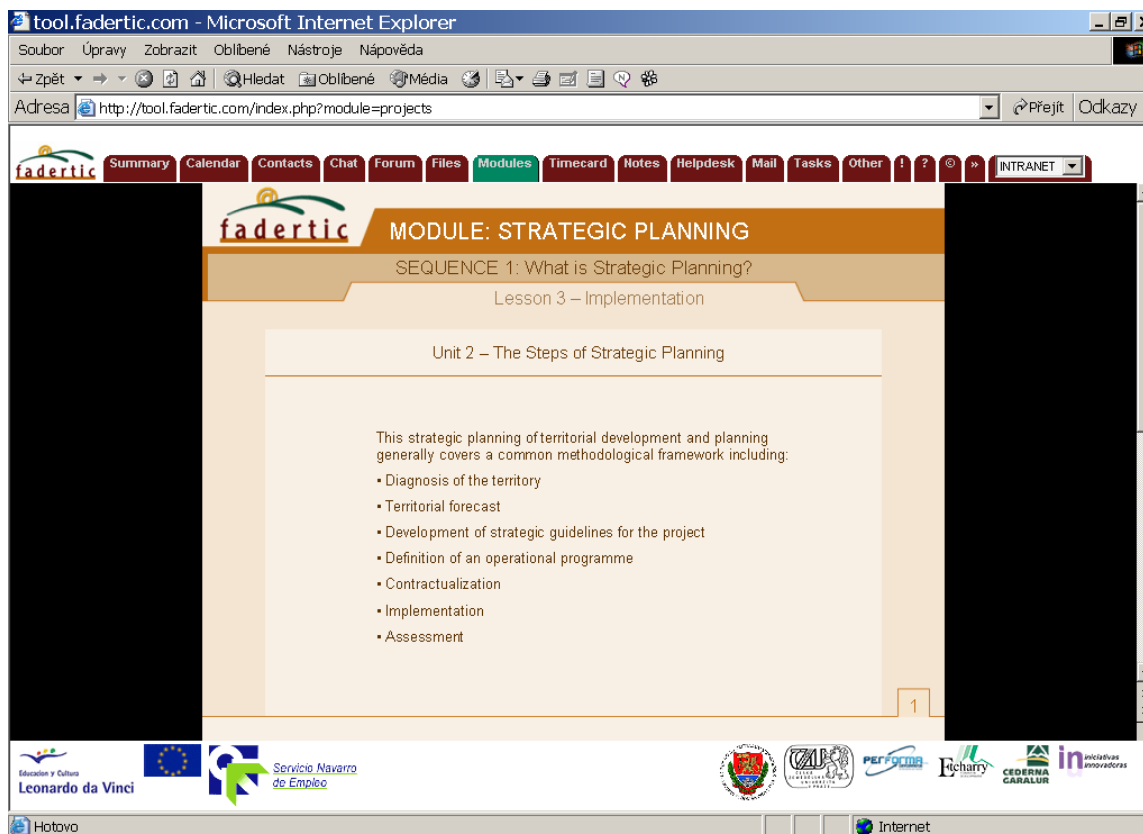


Figure 1: Contents of Modules in the Format of On-line PowerPoint Files

CONCLUSION

Fadertic project aims at developing and checking a product and making it available to Rural Development Agents, directly favouring the updating and enhancement of their abilities and indirectly improving their innovation capabilities and support they provide in business start-ups and job creation in European rural settings. The project will also supply feedback on the use of Web platforms for self-training and providing guidance to other groups in similar circumstances.

Actual information about the project is available on www.fadertic.com, final outputs and the training tool will be accessible after finishing of the pilot experience in autumn 2004 on the website www.ruralaula.net.

Literature:

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