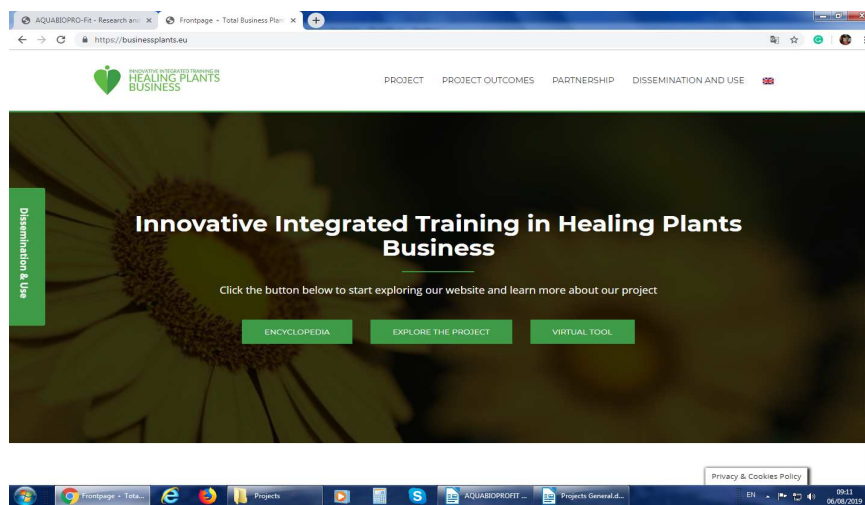




## Innovative Integrated Training in Healing Plants Business- Total Business plants



### THE NECESSITY

Farming is important for the EU's natural environment, the economy and the employment, as around half the EU's land is farmed.

The cultivation of aromatic and medicinal plants, known for their healing and aromatic properties, are recognized as one of the most profitable alternative crops, taking into account that aromatic and medicinal plants can be cultivated in poor mountainous and semi-mountainous areas.

For the successful and sustainable development of this sector, specialized knowledge and skills for cultivation and handling procedures are necessary to certify the quality characteristics of the end product.



Major importance is also the knowledge of therapeutic value and possible application of medicinal plants which can increase the public demand, create new jobs and provide a serious additional income for rural residents.

## **THE CONCEPT**

The concept of Total Business Plants Project is to fill the training gap in the sector of medicinal and aromatic plants, offering an innovative educational system not only to Farming Trainers and Advisors, but also to farmers.

According to the European Rural Development Program (RDP) all project partner countries are going to invest on training for farmers. The Total Business Plants Project will be able to act as complementary training through the offer of an innovative training system, aiming to increase employability in rural sector.

Moreover, the RDP finances startups of young farmers, if they have the required skills and knowledge. The Total Business Plants Project will establish national models, methods and experiences, in the partner countries, based on EQF/NQF frameworks, offering specialized knowledge, skills and competences.

## **THE PROJECT**

The Total Business Plants Project provides a competence based training programme, built in different modules, for total management of aromatic and therapeutic plants cultivation and handling. To this end, the specific objectives include the implementation of organic farming techniques in aromatic and therapeutic plants cultivation, certification procedures of the



production process, quality characteristics of the final product needed in order to be admissible from the pharmaceutical industry, business orientation for expanding in new markets, knowledge about therapeutic use of aromatic and therapeutic plants as well as a database for alternative ways of healing and improving health status of the population.

The Total Business Plants Project introduces a modern, efficient and interactive learning management system (LMS), using different channels, like mobile applications and videos. The users can recognize their competences, which have been achieved in different countries, through transnational cooperation.

The Project stimulates plants sales by new producers, in the local communities and opens a new wide horizon for alternative tourism, nutrition innovation and exploitation of the primary sector.

Besides farmers and professionals in agricultural sector, the Project's training programme can influence physicians, medical students, pharmacists, as well as alternative healers and general audience, restoring knowledge about herbs and therapies provided by ancient healers.

## TARGET GROUPS

The Project Consortium offers a unique training tool to as much as possible target users. This includes **individuals** (farmers, rural entrepreneurs, traders, inspectors, advisers, managers of agotourist SMEs, life science professionals, etc.), **associations** (farmer cooperation, associations of rural enterprises, other associations, chambers, agencies, foundations), **authorities** (state, regional, local, policy decision makers, social partners), **companies & SMEs**



active in: cultivation, certification, promotion, use), VET professionals from (universities, higher educational institutions, private institutes) and **other interested parties** such as partners networks

## **IMPACTS**

The performance of Total Business Plants Project exploits new approach for shifting of existing lack of training to learner-centered training which is one of the primary goals in the Consortium countries. The accumulation of such experience, produces an added value, since working power mobility and sharing of common experience ensure durable effect and practical application.

The impact on target groups comprises an introduction of the pathway for development of knowledge, skills and wider competence, a provision of innovative systematic approach for design of VET learning pathways on Project's main topics, a proposition of transnational ECVET-based study circles based on the learning outcomes and blended learning approach, the delivery of innovative content in the field of currently important fundamental and practical knowledge within medicinal plants sector, with strong economic value as well as the implementation of Common Agricultural Policy strategy and outcomes into recognition of non-formal or informal VET and stimulation of on the job training.

The impact on relevant stakeholders related sectors is based on the establishment of a network for transfer of the results and provision of ultimate utilization of ECVET-based project outcomes as well as the establishment of sector-oriented network for transfer of knowledge and skills in Total Business Plants Project. Additionally, there will be a supply of resources database available and adapted to meet needs of the sector and general public, assurance of flexible



basis for continuing education with quality enhancement in respect to the sectoral or national needs, facilitation and improvement of VET process and differentiation between different sectors and areas and harmonization of European measures at sectoral level in the field of education and certification process.

## **THE INNOVATIVE RESULTS**

### **IO1. National Case Studies on targets' needs in rural sector**

One of the major difficulties in design and implementing training programs in the rural sector is the vast variety of educational background of the trainees. Especially during the recent years in many countries there is a return of young people possessing university degree to primary sector activities. Thus arises the necessity through Project implementation to define the EQF levels of possible project end users, to design and provide an appropriate training system and training material according to EQF requirements.

This intellectual output is a desk research, in each partner country, collecting current information about the state of the art and analyze it, in respect to the following key issues:

- State of art for organic cultivation of medicinal plants in partner's countries, and description of possible areas (mountain and semi-mountain appropriate for implementation of such cultivations via GPS data
- Present situation in rural sector education status at national level with emphasis on the capacity of this sector to adopt new ICT



- technologies in education and training, including comparative review of national competence standards, NQFs, EQF and ESCO
- The responsibility to apply into practice European/national policies for rural development and the necessity for project target groups proper education.
  - The necessity for expansion in new markets, possible limitations for further development and threats; possibilities for further growth promotion: “new skills for new jobs” strategy implementation and shift from “knowledge” to “competence”

## **IO2. Interactive Web Platform**

An interactive web platform including the three core elements of the Project’s innovative character.

**1. The Total Business Plants Virtual Tool:** The trainee is able to open the Total Business Plants Virtual Tool in order to:

- take a virtual tour through the plants that can be cultivated accordingly to specific geographic latitude
- open specific category of plants to see images with individual plants
- take more specific information on: plant’s name, cultivation requirements temperature, humidity, substrate, growing seasons, the certification procedure required, possible markets for the harvest and the possible income.

**2. The Total Business Plants Training Material and E-**

**learning:** The training material, based on EQF principles, is offered in 3 modules:

- organic cultivation
- harvest treatment and certification



- market implementation of the product

Trainee is able to create a **personal dossier** for training and with the completion of the training cycle a **certificate** of accomplishment will be purchased. Once the dossier is opened with individual choices of plants, a **calendar of actions** is created on which the trainee have to perform actions, gained through the training, in order to successfully cultivate the plants of his choice, implement the harvest treatment and certification and boost his product to the market.

The aforementioned steps create a personal training cycle and when the user accomplishes parts of the circles, he gains a successful training certificate.

**3. The Total Business Plants Open Learning Resources:** Within the Virtual Plant tool a useful data base is created, presented as open resource tool, offering information to visitors who wish to gain certified knowledge about the use of healing plants, but not to take the whole training. This data base is prepared in a form of online database/catalog, equipped with a searching engine that will allow visitors to quickly locate plants of their interest.

### **I03. Training Material**

The Project offers integrated multilingual professional training material on healing /medicinal plants. The Total Business Plants innovative VET training programme is realized through the following main steps:

- Organic Cultivation of medicinal plants
- Methods for harvest treatment
- Quality assurance of the final product
- Business startup in the sector of medicinal plants



- Extended use of medicinal plants

#### **IO4. Training System**

The Total Business Plants Project offers an Innovative training system based on improved accessibility and providing academic content, but also practical activities and functional experience.

This intellectual output foresees the creation of structured information and activities to promote learning Integration and at the same time the establishment and functioning of a competency based scheme for organization and operation of training process. In order to endorse accessibility and keeping in mind the professional portrait of possible end users, the Project's innovative training system is structured in different modes as distance, part-time and modular learning and it is accessible after registration by the potential users.

The programme is flexible and the trainee can choose either full work or part-time while working. Trainees, in part time module, will be able to complete certificate-level training, through participation in evening and weekend classes, since modular learning is enriched with blended training material and tests, which allow to measure trainees progress in learning the content.

#### **IO5. Online Encyclopedia**

Within this Intellectual Output, an Online Plant Encyclopedia (OPE) is created, lied on the Total Business Plants web platform. The Online Plant Encyclopedia is prepared in a form of online database/catalog that allow visitors to quickly find relevant information regarding specific plants that can be cultivated in their geographical latitude. It uses geolocation functionality,





automatically adjusting the list of results to the location of visitor's interest, taking into account aspects such as the seasonal weather and ambient temperature. OPE allows farmers and rural inhabitants to browse through the list of the most important characteristics of specified plants, such as the full name of the plant, growing seasons, the kind of final product e.g essential oil, dried plant's leaves and their quality characteristics. Additionally, it can be accessed through mobile devices like tablets, in order to be used by professionals in life science sector, by people interested to improve their health status, but also by entrepreneurs at medicinal plants shelling points for sales promotion.

The Design of Total Business Plants Encyclopedia consists of variety of specialized tools and the learning content there are integrated interactively in all partners' languages.

## **INNOVATIONS**

The Total Business Plants Project is innovative because of the development of an important economic and societal field that is the integrated cultivation of medicinal plants, where there is lack of information and training and the creation of a transnational strategic VET partnership

The innovative and competence based approach of training is achieved through the development of innovative ICT based training curriculum, teaching methodology and tools for VET, based on a modern Open Learning Management system (LMS) while enhancing an integrated approach and presenting best practices on training by implementing EQF principles



The creation of assessment and self-assessment tools for the LPs and their implementation in the training process by applying ECVET and the empowerment of the mutual learning within partner organizations and their associated and social partners widely characterize the TBP project highly innovative.

Besides that, the establishment of a learning network within the partner institutions based on an Open Learning System (OLS), which will increase public interest for medicinal herbs as well as dissemination and exploitation of the project results to increase public awareness about the qualitative production of medicinal plants, alternative ways for healing and health status improvement enlarges the possible end users beyond the Project's life compose a uniquely empowered project initiative.

The Project's main innovation is its educational system which is addressed to farmers and not only to Farming Trainers and Advisers in area of medicinal and aromatic plants.

The Total business Plants innovative results are:

- National Case Studies over viewing targets' needs in rural sector
- Total Business Plants Interactive Web Platform and virtual tool
- Innovative Integrated Training Material and E-learning
- Online Plants Encyclopedia

## **Multiplier Events**

Multiplier Events constitute part of the Dissemination and Use Strategy, organized by each partner separately, gathering a significant number of participants and took place as follows:

**ME1: Innovative integrated training in healing plants Business.** The available solutions offered by the integrated



educational system of the Project. The interactive virtual tool will be accessible for navigation. To be held in Greece by University of Thessaly and Biognosis.

**ME2: Work shop: Online Plants Encyclopedia.** The interactive multilingual online plants encyclopedia will be presented to wider audience. To be held in Greece by Biognosis and University of Thessaly.

**ME3: Work shop: Total Business Plants project's ICT-based prospects for local community development and cross-border mobility.** The workshop aims at informing specialized users and general public on the ICT-based approaches for job-oriented VET. To be held in Bulgaria, by Sofia University.

**ME4: Work shop: Business oriented innovative integrated training in rural sector, implementing new skills.** The scope and main achievements of Total Business Plants Project will be presented, with special emphasis on the innovative integrated training model. To be held in Spain, by FYG Consultores

**ME5: Learning opportunities in virtual Total Business Plants world.** Presentation to the wide audience of the Total Business Plants Project and its contribution to contemporary knowledge-centered models for VET. The user's friendly, Project's web platform and its virtual facilities will be presented. To be held in Poland, by Danmar Computers.