

Leonardo Pilot Project VIVRE (Enhancing Life Initiatives through Training in the Rural Territories of Europe)

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the project VIVRE is to provide technical and methodological support for those wishing to set up an activity, principally in rural regions. This applies to people with their own professional projects or who are involved in the elaboration of the professional project of a partner or associate in a “lagging” rural area. It is also aimed at people who are faced with the necessity of diversifying their activity in order to remain in these regions characterized by limited employment. In these “lagging” areas, farmers who have a traditional farm business must constantly diversify their production, even having to develop complementary activities to survive.

The in-migration flow is partly made up of people who experience real integration problems due to a cultural isolation that already presents a major difficulty for the traditional structure of the educational system to resolve.

The combination of these rural and ‘new’ rural populations forms the target group of the project VIVRE. Based on these observations, VIVRE will put a working system of project accompaniment and evaluation at the disposal of trainers and teachers, who will be the principal users. A project of this type will also benefit local development agents and people in charge of associations working on developing rural activities and animation.

Actors concerned with the development of employment (“ANPE” (job centres), “missions locales” (youth orientation centres) and consular chambers or equivalent organizations (agricultural consultancy agencies in Romania) having a mission to develop installation will be associated as experts on management committees from the outset of the experimentation process. On a local level, the majority of people who would benefit from this project are ex-urban dwellers, often women who have made a life choice to live in a rural area, but who lack the necessary competences.

These people must develop transversal competences if they want to live in the country; in order to earn sufficient

revenue they must be able to set up and run several complementary activities. This presupposes a considerable training support system in diverse domains and a real exploration of the competences necessary to the development of projects that are often of a plural-active nature.

A needs analysis carried out during a procedure relating to the project Equal in 2001 revealed the extent to which the regions of certain partners of the project (notably in Andalusia et Portugal), like most European rural regions are subject to in-migration even though they are not necessarily employment offerers in the “classical” sense (weak economic activity, precariousness of existing services...).

Installation is also difficult due to the lack of available real estate and land. Even when a large amount of public land remains available, it is not used to help new installation due to a lack of information and the information/animation/training support necessary for the experimentation of such a procedure. In France for example, based on an «IPSOS» survey (15th of September 2003), the choice of a rural region is a veritable life-choice: two million urban dwellers are currently estimated as having made the choice to live in the country.

This phenomenon seems likely to continue to increase as two and a half million people affirm that they wish to take this step in the next five years. The “implantation” movement in the heart of a rural world with a declining population has not ceased but evolved. The organizations and associations currently active in organizing the contact between in-migrants and rural regions insist on the necessity of a better understanding of this phenomenon to optimise a successful encounter.

Almost half of the new arrivals are demanders of a training course/accompaniment programme. In Andalusia, elected representatives of rural areas that receive these new arrivals are increasingly appealing to training centres for help. The Portuguese leader groups have also clearly highlighted this need for accompaniment. The Romanians are directly confronted with the problem of an urban population in a situation of exclusion, returning to the countryside that is in itself in great difficulty. The needs manifested by this public are well known by the partners of the project due to their considerable territorial embeddedness; the existence of local partnerships enable them to develop a certain “expertise” concerning their areas of action.

The new arrivals in the regions are rapidly directed towards training centres and most of the time, the trainers and

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course leaders that receive them have no appropriate answer for these people whose projects are often “outside” the framework defined by the financiers. The trainers in these regions regularly express the need for accompaniment and to have an alternative response for training these people who manifest needs that, in order to receive an appropriate local response, must benefit from a certain « positive discrimination » encouraging innovation - this can be reinforced by European exchange.

A study carried out in 1999 within the framework of the European Leonardo project « studies and analyses » in the regions of the Cevennes (France), Portugal and Andalusia highlighted this need to develop new forms of accompaniment concerning « plural-activity ». During the three year construction of the resource centre for trainers and local stakeholders, the promoters of the project VIVRE have been able to realise that merely capitalising on existing systems is not enough, that the time has come to move on to a phase of resource production concerning modes of accompaniment of atypical projects.

Through local development associations, the political leaders of the experimental regions have manifested their desire to position their regions in a “project dynamic” and turn increasingly towards training establishments to provide the accompaniment necessary for the development of individual and collective projects constructed in a participative way. A number of needs analysis surveys carried out in these « project » regions using experimental frameworks such as the platform « Territoires d’avenir » (Regions of the future) make this necessity clear. Presented increasingly as the veritable stakes at play is the necessity to assist the training apparatus to develop appropriate responses to the emerging needs of lagging rural regions, and to take into consideration the social and environmental dimension. The training apparatus will be thus encouraged to develop its animation and information role in the region, and acquire a working methodological support for setting up such actions.

This in turn will encourage trainers to have a global approach to a “life project” and to avoid diluting the sources of information by separating the “professional” and the “life project” between the diverse actors of the area.

The essential objective of VIVRE is to provide trainers, and in general anyone with a mission to encouraging installation in rural areas, with a system of training « responses » adapted to demands expressed by initiators in rural areas.

For this, the partners will develop tools designed for the training apparatus to help:

- Consider (or reconsider) the dimension of facilitating social dialogue in the region, thus reinforcing the role of social cohesion.
- Identify the potentiality of a region by realising « participative » needs analysis surveys in order to optimise local resources.
- Transform « life projects » into « viable » and « sustainable » projects thanks to courses adapted to the public that will become vectors of a real added value locally.
- Reinforce the mission concerning the inclusion of the person and his/her project in the region, respecting multiplicity, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue.
- Lead collective approaches based on project pedagogy.

- Experiment innovative systems, based on multiple partnerships, from the emergence to the financing of the project.
- Accompany; anticipate even, the capacity of innovation indispensable to sustainable evolution of rural regions by becoming a force of proposition based on elements gleaned from the study of new forms of collective use of local resources.
- Participate in the construction of a rural environment that responds both to the demands of its inhabitants and the expectations of urban dwellers who are increasingly in demand of a rural environment as a “regulator” of social tension.

These operational objectives will be explored by setting up experimental situations associating the elected representatives, the group leaders, those in charge of local groups, and the individual and collective project initiators and leaders of the region.

The objective of our proposition is to enable the training system to reinforce their competence on demand design in order to respond to the specific needs of lagging rural areas.

This demand has evolved considerably, and the training organizations must now go over and above their tradition mission of qualification, initial and further training, in order to develop the missions of local development, social inclusion, experimentation and rural animation. This implies a “participative” construction of training response and course design, in partnership with the other regional operators.

The project « VIVRE » also aims to employ technologies of information and communication (TIC), using tools developed during earlier programmes, by constructing, flexible responses with the local operators that will be able to be transferred towards the European training apparatus. This apparatus, confronted with the problematic of the evolution of employment, currently operates at different speeds. These “TIC” should create an added value on the local scale, by placing the project regions, their elected representatives and local and trans-national development agents at the disposal of a platform of exchange (Agora projects) enabling project initiators to exchange and compare their situation with others.

Our proposition answers in the project is an in-depth reflection on professional practises. There is no longer a question of the trainer or the training organization being confined to a policy of « response to offer » but on the contrary, developing know-how in terms of participative construction of new pedagogy. “Project pedagogy » necessitates a reflection on the « return dynamic » with the region and the stakeholders who participate in the structuring of this region. The partners of the project currently master high-performance information and communication tools; decision-makers, project leaders, and those with a role in local animation must now appropriate these tools that have a high diffusion capacity.

The partners’ experimental regions present characteristics encouraging for the development of innovative procedures. They are orientated towards project procedures that should result in veritable contractual engagements concerning a response to needs and demands that present an increasingly specific character due to the level of the risk of

exclusion of an in-migrant population. The added value of VIVRE is to be found in the fact that the pedagogic systems and tools are constructed on concrete local levels associating the partners of these regions, from the political and administrative decision-makers to the final addressees (the students) and including the group leaders and trainers responsible for supporting local initiatives.

This added value is also to be found in the veritable trans-national exchanges between students, and also in the exchanges between management committees. The « Agora projects » procedure, developed within VIVRE, could equally facilitate the movement of students (project initiators and leaders) who could also become part of a collective project in another region.

For the trainers and local support groups of project initiators who are the primary users of the project, the results will be made available continuously; the experimentation of the methods and tools will be realized on the regional level directly engaged in the experimentation process through trainer training sessions and action/training sessions open to local animators, elected representatives and project initiators and leaders.

These « mixed » sessions will be capitalized on in order to develop and formalize the operational methodological procedures. The procedures resulting from these experimental processes will be enriched and validated during the trans-national exchanges before being made available on-line through the « FormaTer » system. «FormaTer» currently reaches a considerable part of the educative community as well as the local development agents working in the regions of the project partners, and has a wide diffusion in Europe due to the English translation of the database.

This procedure of resource capitalization will be enriched by the VIVRE interface, which will include an «open» distance-training platform and an «Agora projects» system, the function of which is outlined below

A technical training course module based around pluri-active practise, including the use of open training and distance learning tools.

A platform of «open» distance-training courses.

« Agora projects » a forum based on communication and distance intervention on the project .

VIVRE website constructed using the evolution of the «FormaTer» databank.

A methodological guide for trainers, available as a paper support, CD Rom and on the Internet through the FOAD platform.

A DVD video used to capitalize on, diffuse and promote the experience will be produced in order to inform elected representatives and institutions on the interest of the procedure, and to explain the running of the VIVRE system.

A resource centre with a high-diffusion capacity at the service of the project guarantees the European impact of the production, and will enable the creation of a range of pedagogic resources, for example on video, and also the setting up of interactive on-line tools informing on working experiences, a support currently little used. These results will be available as they develop, as indicated in the work programme.

1 : The first level of impact of the project will issue from the participative construction process, on a coherent local scale, of the development of methods and support tools designed to accompany the students' individual and collective projects through training course actions. This will enable elected representatives, (an innovative procedure for which the partners have already obtained concrete engagements) administrative agents, associative groups and project initiators and leaders to participate in these experimentations and will result in creating the conditions for a veritable participative construction by enabling each actor to find (or re-find) his/her place in the process concerning sustainable development of rural regions.

At a time when the necessity for participative construction is increasingly evoked, it is important to remember that participation is neither inherently automatic nor spontaneous, but needs on the contrary to be organized; the interest of constructing methodological procedures to reinforce the process is to be found in this necessity. The confrontation of local practices in other European regions faced with similar situations will contribute an added value to the process, and facilitate the creation of flexible tools that can be adapted to local situations. As a result of the experience, training organizations will be ready to set up the entire procedure supported by the platform of « open » courses based on distance training.

2 : The final results will be exploited using diverse operational «TIC» systems: FormaTer, Educagri editions, CEDER, IFAPA etc... They will be further developed within the networks of the project partners. These results will be capitalized on by means of a video communication support (DVD) to inform elected representatives and persons in charge of institutional organizations, and an interactive pedagogic case placed at the disposal of trainers and persons working in the field of project accompaniment.

The results will also be the subject of widespread communication using the usual communication supports of the various regional actors (thematic magazines, periodicals, Internet-based supports). The existence of a resource centre that is already regarded as an asset by the partners will facilitate the development of innovative tools such as « Agora projects » and a FOAD (Open Distance-Training Course) platform that will enable the distance-accompaniment of projects. Access to most of the resources produced will be without charge if this access is requested within the framework of the public service mission that the partners carry out in their respective countries. For other types of demand, it will be included in the cost of the training course modules that are dispensed by the training organizations, and will therefore be financed by the prescribers of these training actions.

3 : The continued implication of the various regional operators is, for the promoters of VIVRE, the guarantee of the continuation of the project at the end of the European Community financial support. The participative development of procedure implies that logically it will be supported by the organizations that have been involved in the experimentation process. European rural regions are undergoing massive changes; agricultural predominance is in permanent decline. Training organizations, regardless of their specialities, will

need face up to the challenge of enriching their fundamental mission of the transmission of knowledge in order to become veritable resource centres for local regions. VIVRE will not be limited to mere observation and analysis – in this case it would not have an innovative character; VIVRE has the vocation to accompany lasting evolutions, its modernity is to be found in the consideration of the « life project » at the very heart of a region.

This concept finds a resonance in the current European context where rural regions have to face up with ingenuity to the increasingly frequent demand of a return to a rural setting that is not always accompanied with a coherent professional project. In these conditions, rural regions will have to engage in a voluntarism policy to take into consideration these demands and continue experimentations such as the VIVRE system. VIVRE will reveal a part of its modernity in the suppleness and adaptability of a continuously developing production.

4 : The results will be transferable in the measure that they answer a problematic currently encountered in rural regions, and can be translated as an opportunity for development. These results are not limited to on-line communication and continual enrichment of methods and tools adapted to concrete local situations, responding to a clearly identified problematic and managed by local actors and their networks... the results of VIVRE will also be based on their participation of the rehabilitation of dialogue in the regions, listening to the needs of local people, and the consideration of their “life projects”. VIVRE will develop tools to accompany the transformation of a « life project » into a project that is economically viable, and locally acceptable, in the logic of the sustainable development of rural areas.

This problematic is not limited to any one region, the experiences that will be carried out and the production of the pedagogic tools for the accompaniment of projects developed in the regions, are bricks for the construction of a Europe concerned with the future of its regions. VIVRE is not a system operating outside the evolution of these rural areas, it is a support system for a given mission: the local organization of an appropriate response to transforming needs. It will accompany trainers in their work related to these needs, and they will enrich the system with their own experience.

The work programme The work programme will be divided into six progressive phases, each phase lasting approximately six months. The partners will move forward together at this rhythm because the programme will develop in the form of a study action, consisting of testing the methods and support tools in the field, working on their presentation, validating them on a local level (restitution), and validating them on a trans-national level before diffusing them through the VIVRE system. A trans-national seminar will conclude each of these phases.

Phase 1 : Programme launch

The objectives of this phase, carried out between September 2004 and February 2005, will be:

- To set up the local management committees and the local groups of project initiators and leaders,
- To establish an inventory of existing tools in order to con-

sider their adaptability to the procedure.

- To elaborate a protocol for the presentation of the projects.

Phase 2: Construction of the procedure.

The objectives of this phase, which will take place between Mars and September 2005, will be to set up the orientations and actions defined during the previous seminar, to develop the « Agora projects » procedure and to start the pedagogic tool construction phase.

- The local groups of project initiators will benefit from a post-training follow-up by mean of regular meetings with the management committees.

- The trainer training sessions will be continued in order to carry on with the work initiated, based on the support of project development.

- The « Agora projects » procedure will undergo its first computer-based developments.

- The local forums will achieve their level of operation (the local forum is the result of the contact between the local groups and the management committee).

- The tools used at the local level will be formalized and the existing resources adapted in order to create pedagogic files relating to the accompaniment of sustainable projects in a rural environment.

Phase 3 : Development of the procedure

The objectives of this phase, which will take place from October 2005 to February 2006, will be the development of the VIVRE procedure, in order to structure, experiment and adapt the various tools, and to put into place the diffusion and de-multiplication process.

- The trainer training sessions will continue the work already initiated on support for project development. The tools developed during the precedent phase will be validated during the trainer training sessions carried out in the regions of the CIFA (Spain), the University of Olstzyn (Poland) and the CEP (France). These trainer-training sessions will be the support for the design and structuring of the VIVRE pedagogic case (CD ROM and methodological guide).

- The partners will continue working on the collection and layout of the pedagogic resources.

- The training action sessions for the groups of project initiators will continue and a second group will be associated to the procedure. During this phase the edition of worksheets presenting experiences will begin through the “Agora project”.

- The distance-learning platform relating to the “Agora project” will be developed.

- The resource centre teams will carry out the filming for the DVD information video.

- The first trans-national exchanges concerning project initiators will take place.

Phase 4 : De-multiplication.

During phase 4, that will take place from March to October 2006, local actions will continue and reports concerning these actions will be edited. The formalization of diffusion and communication methods and tools, and the diffusion of the supports constructed within the framework of the proce-

dure will also take place.

- Diverse supports (DVD video and methodological guide) will be printed or produced.
- Support sessions for project initiators will continue (using tools elaborated during the programme).
- Trainer training sessions will permit the experimentation of the « open » distance-learning platform for organizations concerned with the support of project initiators.
- Work on the layout and presentation of pedagogic resources will continue (development of the FOAD platform)
- A presentation brochure of the procedure will be written in five languages.
- The trans-national exchanges will continue.

Phase 5 : Final diffusion of the procedure:

During this phase that will take place from October 2006 to March 2007, the setting up of the procedure will continue; it will then be put it into action. Phase 5 will also permit a capitalization of the procedure and an appraisal of the project.

- This phase will be the occasion to continue the development of the « open » distance-learning platform and the Agora projects.
- Meetings between local groups and management committees will carry on.
- The appraisal reports of the local groups will be published on-line using the FOAD platform (VIVRE Interface of the FormaTer resource centre).
- Trainer training courses will continue in order to de-multiply the procedure.

Phase 6 : Appraisal of the local groups and project

This phase that will run from April until September 2007 (241 days) will be devoted to the redaction of the final report of the procedure, to continuing the diffusion process and the formalization of the working method with the aim of setting up a European training module based on accompaniment through training of sustainable projects in rural regions.

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