



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



New curricula in Precision Agriculture using GIS technologies and sensing data (CUPAGIS)

Erasmus+ 597962-EPP-1-2018-1-EE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

Online Coordination Meeting

Minutes

of the teleconference held between the management team of the
Erasmus plus project CUPAGIS (Grant Agreement number 597962-EPP-1-2018-1-EE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)
and the external evaluation expert Dr. Andrey Girenko
“_30_” April 2020

Subject: Results of the external evaluation after 18 months of the project implementation

Background

The project CUPAGIS (New curricula in Precision Agriculture using GIS technologies and sensing data) supported by the Erasmus plus Programme of the EU is aimed at modernizing the higher education curricula in the field of Precision Agriculture in Algeria. In the framework of the Quality Control activities the project contracted the external evaluation expert, Dr. Andrey Girenko, to perform the analysis of the situation in the project by using various information sources and designing and implementing surveys. The first evaluation report covering the period of 18 months in the project was provided as of April 07, 2020. In the course of the teleconference the external expert presented his findings and formulated the recommendations for the project. The current document provides the summary of this information.

Discussion:

The general assessment made by the expert on the basis of the analysis of the project documentation, interviews with the representatives of the PMT, participation in several project management teleconferences and carrying out data collection/processing activities, is positive. After 18 months the project is on the track and is capable of achieving the expected goals. At the same time, the current COVID-19 crisis might influence negatively the project implementation to the extent that the consortium will have to re-plan the second part of the project and, for instance, apply for a financially-neutral extension.

Conclusion and recommendations

1. The current corona crisis is a real challenge to the project as it will definitely result in re-scheduling and re-planning many activities. At the same time, it is a chance to incorporate several corrective measure allowing to strengthen the impact of the project. The recommendation is to use the unavoidable re-planning to engage more with the Algerian partners and improve the communication. Below, there are a couple of recommendations how to implement it technically (e.g. regular teleconference, better communication tools), which is especially important when the international mobility is impossible. Still, the concrete suggestion is to organize the general project meeting (teleconference) at the end of May –

beginning of June to discuss and decide on the project activities originally planned for months 19-36. In preparation to this meeting the PMT shall develop the list of suggestions for re-planning.

2. There is a concern about the relevance of the capacity building and curricula development activities to the actual needs in the partner Universities and to the conditions they operate in. Therefore, the recommendations for the next project period can be as the following:
 - To speed up the preparation of the next training (capacity building) measures to complete them before the curricula evaluation. Consider moving these activities to virtual space (e.g. webinars, online consultations, etc.)
 - When designing the content of the training invite 1-2 most active and knowledgeable Algerian specialists into the process of training preparation (e.g. via teleconferencing) to ensure that the content developed for training corresponds to the needs. Where possible, use the principles of co-creation.
 - Use the multiplication approach when training is provided to local trainers who later adapt it and replicate in local conditions. In general, greater engagement with local specialists and giving them the leading role, while giving to the European partners more advising and supporting role, would be useful.
 - Reconsider the content paying more attention to low-cost technologies (e.g. open-source software, open databases of sensing data, low-cost sensor equipment, etc.)
 - Promoting the Bologna-compatible curricula, but, still allow the flexibility in courses organization. Main goal is to ensure the acceptability of new courses, that they will sustain after the project end.
3. The practice of regular consultations with the Algerian colleagues can help to improve the relevance of the project activities to the needs existing in Partner Country Universities. Recommendation: agree and organize the regular (monthly, bi-monthly) general teleconferences with contact persons to exchange on the project status. As many respondents complained about the quality of infrastructure, the coordinator can consider using professional teleconferencing solutions with high tolerance to weak infrastructure (e.g. Go-to-meeting, Zoom). Also, consultations in partner countries about the best technical setup can be organized. If needed, the plans of equipment acquisition can be modified to include the necessary teleconference equipment.
4. The analysis of KPIs shows that after 18 months in the project no equipment was purchased and installed. Recommendation: the coordinator shall urgently speed up the purchase of the equipment to enable its use in training and curricula development activities. Definitely this activity shall be completed within next 3-4 months.
5. The analysis showed that the traditional dissemination has a bigger impact in the Partner Country. Recommendations: request more targeted dissemination actions targeting the partner Universities staff members (e.g. internal dissemination workshop or presentations collocated with other internal University activities). Include the report on such activities into regular management teleconferences (see recommendation 3). If possible, allocate more resources and attention to the project dissemination events (maybe by downsizing the electronic dissemination). The final conference shall be a really visible and highly attended event.
6. The next evaluation round should include the attendance by the EE of one of the project events (if the Corona situation will allow) and the organization of special meeting with the project participants. The timing shall allow drawing conclusions before the closure of the project. It is recommended to carry out the next impact survey after month 30 of the project.

List of participants

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