

The Timisoara DAAD Workshop 5-6 May 2003

Following the line of the previous collaboration within the DAAD Project regarding the Reconstruction and the Reforms in the Agricultural Higher Education in the Southeastern Europe, under the umbrella of the Stability Pact, this workshop aimed to formulate and to create a Core Working Group able to use the networking benefits for designing and creating concrete tools for further development.

During the last Rector's Conference in Sopron the idea of a network, with all advantages and perspectives has been rising. Together with this proposal, considered and observed as a common need and will, the profile of the contact points was defined. The invited participants to this workshop were identified as being the proactive, young and motivated persons from their own faculties, able to work together, share and advance on more pragmatic issues.

The participants: Jochem Gieraths from Eastern European Center of University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany, Zora Dajic from the Faculty of Agriculture Belgrade, Ivan Pejic from the Faculty of Agriculture Zagreb, Cosmin Salasan from the Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences Timisoara, Dragana Saric from the Faculty of Agriculture Sarajevo and Michal Demes from the FAOSEUR Office Budapest, gathered on the 5th of May in Timisoara willing to define their position and precise activities for the next six months. Mr. Michal Demes attended the workshop as a specialist in information systems for agriculture, head of the FAO SEUR department dealing with this specific topic.

An interface has been done, updating the current situation in all participant faculties, considering the changes that occur during the last six months. As not all changes were positive we noticed that the spirit is still open and optimistic and the will of the reforming teams will prevail and succeed in the cooperation with the new management teams or policy changes.

As the initial formulated proposal of the network addressed the academic evaluation in terms of tools and methodology, the participants considered more appropriate to develop concrete products for the very next steps in

the educational reforms, able to feed the change and leave room for further development.

Topics like new modules, cross border cooperation, shortening the classical education length, further education, distance and e-learning, information systems for agriculture were coming into the discussion. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Bologna process constitute the frame inside which the compatibility issue represents a critical aspect as shown by participants in reflecting the position of their institutions. Even if not all participant countries have signed the Bologna Declaration, the process is ongoing, prepared and developing on the new bases. It is estimated that our contribution within this project will accelerate the base level changes in order to strengthen the position of the new coming system, fully compatible with the European model, in respect with EHEA principles and based on the cross border cooperation of the countries from the Balkan region.

In this respect, the modules' building has been brought to the group attention as an immediate need in restructuring, a near-future step to be done and a common demand. In order to maintain the opening dimension of the network, the suggestions focused on building and structuring modules of three weeks, with 60 hours of direct teaching, based on cross border cooperation, as a team work grouping the most competent colleagues from the participant faculties. The web based distance learning possibility is seen as a next developing step considering the actual orientations and the perspective. According to these considerations and to the time constraint, the group can project a suitable form for the modules in e-learning shape.

The next six months perspective is realistic for delivering the first modules and opening an e-learning platform. The working language would be for this first step, the Serbian-Croatian language, with a follow up in English in a later stage.

The modules subjects agreed by the participants were the following: Plant/Crop Production and Breeding under the coordination of Ivan Pejic from FoA Zagreb, Natural Sciences under the coordination of Zora Dajic from FoA Belgrade, Basic Economics in Agriculture under the coordination of Dragana Saric from FoA Sarajevo and Animal Sciences proposed for Prof.

Tafaj from FoA Tirana. Ivan Kraljevski from Veterinary Institute Skopje can actively contribute on the web based learning platform preparation and future e-modules shaping.

All coordinators agree to exchange contacts of their colleagues in the field of specialty of the other team leaders in order to facilitate the initial exchange. The team creation/planning should not exceed, in the participants opinion, two weeks in terms of scheduling. An intermediate meeting for synchronizing/planning can be held in Belgrade during June, according to the teams' needs.

The SEE Core Group will promote his activities through a sub-portal, linked to the Agroweb Information System and portal. For a closer integration, the participants will use the existing communication infrastructure, more precisely, the forum, within Agroweb. All network coordination and moderation activities, the sub-portal, the forum topic and the e-learning shaping will be assured by Cosmin Salasan from USAB Timisoara.

The further schedule proposes a possible intermediate meeting in Belgrade during June (to be defined according to the teams' needs), a coordination meeting in Sarajevo, 12-15 July, a presentation meeting in Hohenheim, Stuttgart 30 September - 05 October, and aims to come with a final product by the Rector's Conference.

The modules structure, summary and elements/parts of content should be presented in the coordination meeting in Sarajevo. A working module, e-learning prepared is projected for the Hohenheim meeting together with the modules'.

As an overall estimation, the group appreciates the workshop as an important and successful step forward and it's keen to initiate the activities as an educational network.