

FADERTIC – On-line support for rural development agents

FADERTIC – On-line podpora poradenství ve venkovském prostoru

T. ŠUBRT, H. BROŽOVÁ, E. JIROVSKÁ

Czech University of Agriculture, Prague, Czech Republic

Abstract: The FADERTIC project – open on-line support for Rural Development Agents (RDA) based on the use of latest information and communication technologies (ICT) is a project in frame of the EU Leonardo da Vinci II program. Three authors of this text form the Czech partner team. 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 and checking a product (web on-line training tool) and making it available to rural development agents. The philosophy and structure of Fadertic project is shown in the paper together with selected output previews of web based training tool.

Key words: Leonardo da Vinci program, distance training, training tutor, guidance system, on-line training tool, strategic planning, project emergence and leading, cross – disciplinary behaviours and skills

Abstrakt: Projekt FADERTIC – otevřená on-line podpora poradenství ve venkovském prostoru založená na používání moderních informačních a komunikačních technologií (ICT) je mezinárodním projektem 5 zemí EU v rámci programu Leonardo da Vinci II. Cílem celého projektu je navržení, vytvoření a otestování výukového systému pro poradce, působící ve venkovském prostoru (tzv. RDA). Jde o systém umožňující především on-line samostudium v několika tématických okruzích s možností verifikace a hodnocení výsledků studia. V článku je podrobně popsána celá filosofie a struktura projektu, včetně ukázkových výstupů.

Klíčová slova: program Leonardo da Vinci, distanční vzdělávání, tutor, vzdělávací systém, nástroje pro on-line studium, strategické plánování, projektové řízení, interdisciplinární dovednosti

INTRODUCTION

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 the European Community Leonardo da Vinci programme (Internet: www.nvf.cz/leonardo).

The project aims at meeting the training needs of the 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 the recent years (for instance, via the 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 (Goikoetxea 2003).

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 the Rural Development professionals, as well as the agents-to-be in the near future (Goikoetxea 2003; Isson, Russel 1999).

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 pre-accession countries willing to implement important Rural Development Programmes complementing the application of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) in the short term:
- The Czech Republic – partner the Czech University of Agriculture
 - Hungary – partner the University of Szeged

AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

Aims of Fadertic project

The aims of Fadertic project could be defined as follows ((Goikoetxea 2004):

- Defining the professional profile, setting up the functions and establishing the training needs of Rural Development Agents in a common context for the EU and pre-accession 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 the Development Agents working in rural settings.
- Validating the new system and the training material and subsequently making it available to the 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 the 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.

Beneficiaries of Fadertic project

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 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 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.

Tutor guidance system

The work on the Fadertic project has been primarily divided into several work packages. Among the most important ones following could be mentioned (Goikoetxea 2004):

1. Analysis and identification of the continuous training requirements of the 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 October 2004, the project was in of its last fourth. It means it was 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 form various countries have been developed.



Figure 1. The role of a distance training Tutor

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 the 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 (Figure 1):

Social role includes:

- motivation aspects,
- creation of positive and friendly relations,
- promotion of the 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.

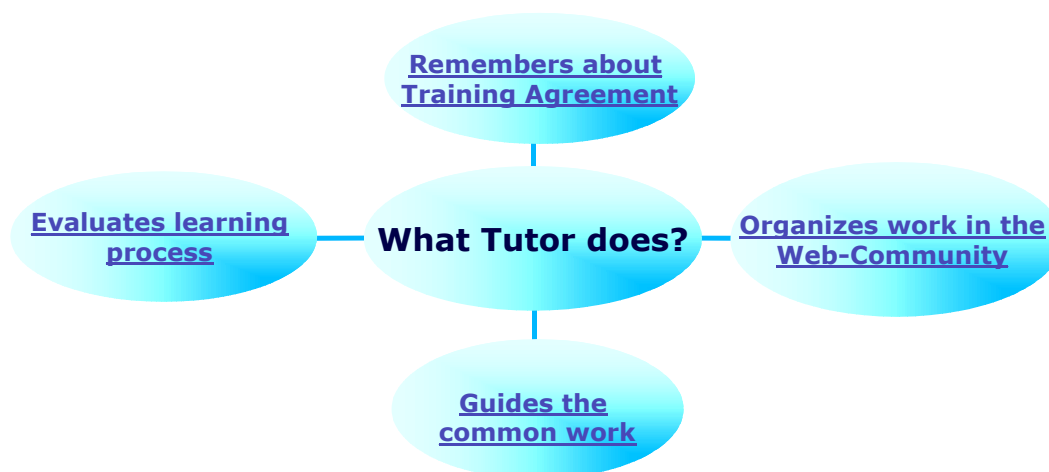


Figure 2. Tasks of a distance training Tutor

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.

Tasks of distance training tutor could be circumscribed as follows (Figure 2):

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/her own rhythm and his/her own conduction style, in order to face the complexity of the process and keep a working group under control.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organization of learning process

Considering principles mentioned above we decided to organize on-line training tool in the following way (Figure 3):

- **Module_n**
 - **Sequence_n**
 - Lesson_n
 - Unit_n
 - **Filename.ppt**
Documents_name.doc/pdf/html
 - **Instructions!** (*workplan of the sequence and instructions*)
 -
 - **Library** (*folder*)
 - **Glossary** (*folder*)

Figure 3. Structure of learning process

- *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

Name of Module	Begin	End	Category	Status	Priority	Leader	Contact	Hours
Hungary Meeting - November 2003	2003-11-27	2003-11-28	working	% 1				0
Hungary Meeting - November 2003	2003-11-27	2003-11-28	working	% 1				0
MODULE 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING	2004-02-16	2004-06-30	waiting	% 1	LPO			30
SEQUENCE 1: What is strategic Planning?	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1	LPO	Laurent Pourtau		30
Lesson 1 - Introduction	2004-02-16	2004-02-18	waiting	% 1	LPO	Laurent Pourtau		0
Unit 1 - Territory in the Changing Reality	2004-02-16	2004-02-18	working	% 1				0
Unit 2 - Task of the Local Actors	2004-02-16	2004-02-18	waiting	% 1				0
Lesson 2 - Theory	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 1 - The Idea of Local Development	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 2 - The Principles of Strategic Planning	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 3 - Strategic Planning Approaches	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Lesson 3 - Implementation	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 1 - The Operational Meaning of Territory	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 2 - The Steps of Strategic Planning	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Lesson 4 - Questions	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				20
Unit 1 - Theoretical Questions	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 2 - Practical Questions	2004-02-16	2004-04-30	waiting	% 1				0
SEQUENCE 2: Analysis and Diagnosis of the Territory	2004-03-16	2004-06-30	waiting	% 1				0
Lesson 1 - Introduction	2004-02-16	2004-03-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 1 - From Analyses of the Territory to Diagnose	2004-02-16	2004-03-30	waiting	% 1				0
Unit 2 - Diagnosis as Part of the Project Cycle	2004-02-16	2004-03-30	waiting	% 1				0
Lesson 2 - Theory	2004-02-16	2004-03-30	waiting	% 1				0

Figure 4. Distance training tool – interactive structure of modules

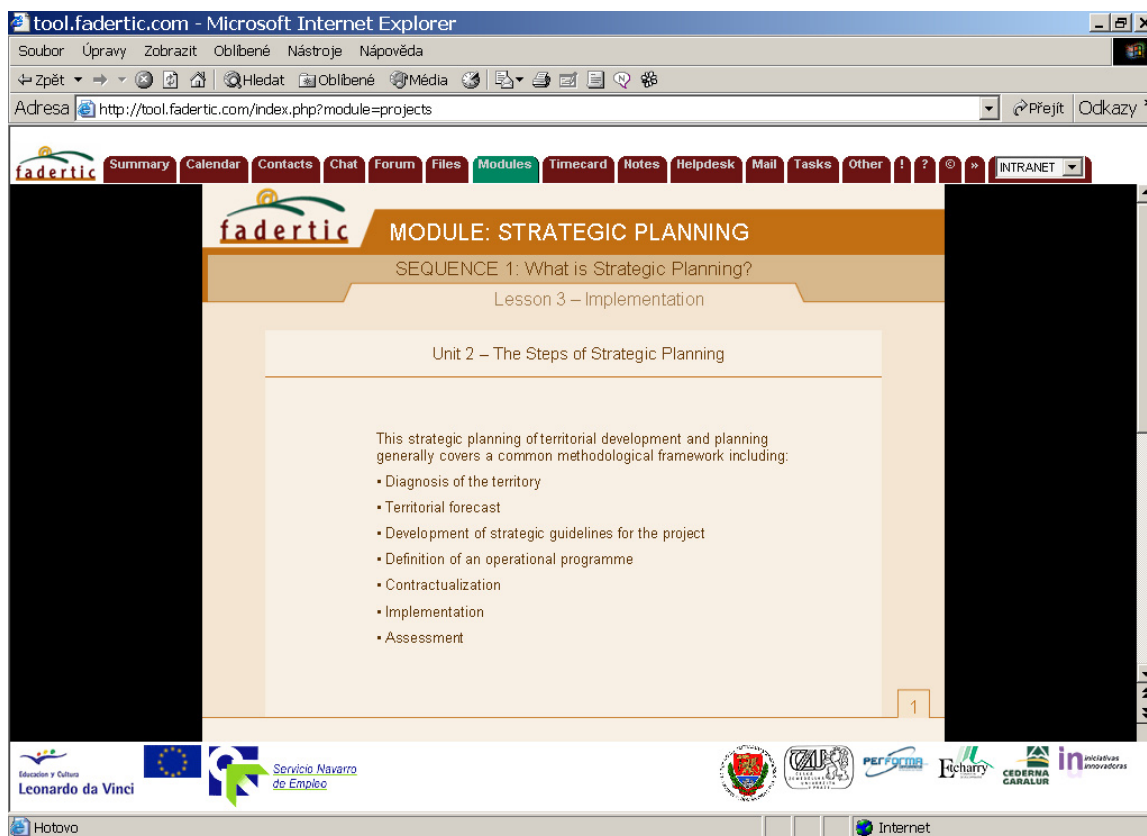


Figure 5. Contents of modules in the format of on-line power point files

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.

Evaluation

Tutor is responsible for the quality of a learning process. S/he organizes the work in the framework of the general timetable. S/he is in charge of conducting and evaluation of the tests of learning at the end of each module and at the end of the training activity. S/he provides participants for proper questionnaires and collects them after fixed period of time. At the end, tutor gathers all questionnaires and transmits it to the coordinator (Performa – Italy), which will draw the final evaluation report.

Technical realization 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 partners' 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.

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.

REFERENCES

Goikoetxea de M.L. (2003): Fadertic – First Interim Report. Iniciativas Innovadoras, Pamplona, Spain.

Goikoetxea de M.L. (2004): Fadertic – Final Report. Iniciativas Innovadoras, Pamplona, Spain.

Isson R., Russel D. (1999): Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Breaking out of Traditions. Cabbridge University Press; ISBN 0521642019.

Internet: www.fadertic.com.

Internet: www.nvf.cz/leonardo.

Arrived on 26th November 2004

Contact address:

Dr. Ing. Tomáš Šubrt, RNDr. Helena Brožová, CSc., Ing. Eliška Jirovská, Česká zemědělská univerzita v Praze, Kamýcká 121, 165 21 Praha 6-Suchbát, Česká republika

tel.: +420 22438 2680, e-mail: subrt@pef.czu.cz, brozova@pef.czu.cz, jirovska@pef.czu.cz
