«INNOVATIVE BUSINESS INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS IN HERBS PRODUCTION AND ECO-TOURISM»

DELIVERED TRAININGS IN FLOREO FOR PARTICIPANTS - PARTICIPANTS' LISTS, FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION REPORT Del. 5.2.2 (Trainings in Greece)

Responsible beneficiary:
HELLENIC DEVELOPMENT CITY NETWORK

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
H	Herb
T	Tree
S	Scrub
C	Climber
WP	Whole plant
L	Leaves
AP	Ariel portion
R	Root
Rh	Rhizome
W	Wood
Cl	Cloves
FC	Frequency of Citation
FL	Flower
S	Seed
WP	Work Package
WPL	Work Package Leader

Executive Summary

Project summary: The **FLOREO project** aims to increase the motivation, knowledge and skills of entrepreneurs to innovate, create and take risks when starting a business and will facilitate the business activities of existing **SMEs** in the cross-border region. It will open new possibilities for start-ups and organize actions to support existing businesses with a special focus on herbal production and ecotourism.

Future entrepreneurs can develop and test their business ideas in a simulated and real environment, use business support services related to the cultivation and supply of unique herbs and flowers that can be found only in the cross-border region of **Greece – Bulgaria**, and develop and test ideas in the field of alternative tourism such as herbal packages and ecotourism packages.

The Training lessons were structured in sessions designed to impart knowledge, skills, and expertise to individuals in Herbs, Aromatic Plants and new Business Development. These lessons served as a fundamental component of learning and development, offering a structured approach to acquiring new abilities and enhance existing ones. Whether it's in a classroom, a workplace, or an online platform, training lessons play a crucial role in personal and professional growth.

The goals of training lessons may vary, ranging from academic subjects to vocational skills, from soft skills like communication and leadership to technical competencies such as programming or engineering. Regardless of the subject matter, the primary aim is to facilitate learning, foster understanding, and promote skill acquisition.

In a training lesson, various teaching methods, resources, and tools were employed, such as lectures, discussions, hands-on exercises, multimedia presentations, and assessments to gauge progress. The structure and content of training lessons can be customized to suit the needs of the learners, which may include students, employees, or anyone seeking to acquire new knowledge or refine their abilities.

Training lessons provide a structured and systematic approach to education, helping individuals develop expertise, enhance their problem-solving skills, and ultimately contribute to their personal and professional growth. They are essential in equipping individuals with the knowledge and capabilities needed to succeed in their chosen fields and adapt to the ever-evolving demands of the modern world.

Introduction

The aim of this deliverable was among other to inspiring young and interested people to get involved in FLOREO project education – training regarding herb production and product / service creation was a rewarding endeavor. The training was conducted in the cooperation programme area by the 5 trainers/mentors appointed and was attended by 22 Greek participants. The material used was produced in the WP3.

Here are the main strategies we have used to encourage their interest and participation the Training Plan:

TRAINING PLAN – STRATEGY

Education and Awareness:

a. We have started by educating them about the benefits of herbs, both for personal health and the environment. Shared information about the medicinal, culinary, and aromatic uses of herbs.
b. Highlighted the importance of sustainable and organic herb cultivation to protect the environment and promote healthy living.
c. Organized hands in action workshops, to provide in-depth knowledge and practical skills in herb cultivation, processing, and product creation.

Hands-On Experience:

a. We visited a herb garden in American farm School and also paid visit to Flee market with local herb cultivation projects. Communication with people involved in cultivating and use of herbs was really impressive. This practical experience was a great way to spark interest.
b. Also we created several opportunities for young and older “students” to get their hands dirty, sow seeds, care for plants, and harvest herbs. We allowed them to experience the entire process.

Mentorship:

a. Connecting all trainees with experienced herb growers, herbalists, and cosmetic product creators who served as mentors.
b. Encouraged one-on-one and group mentorship lessons where they had the opportunity to learn from seasoned professionals.

Entrepreneurship Opportunities:

a. We promoted the idea of entrepreneurship by helping them understand how herb production and product creation can be viable businesses.
b. We provided guidance on developing business plans, sourcing funding, and marketing their herb-based products.

Showcase Success Stories:

a. Shared success stories of young and mature entrepreneurs who have built successful herb-related businesses. These real-life examples were really inspiring and relatable.
b. We used social media and other platforms to showcase the achievements and project results from the team and also supported them to get engaged in a competition for new business.

Collaborative Projects:

a. We encouraged collaboration among them by organizing groups for the project. For example, one group researched how they can grow herbs with a visit in Lagada area, near Thessaloniki.
Another group had the opportunity to discuss with Maria Douma, an architect who developed "Ame-Nomade" company with cosmetic products from herbs, and visited AuraNuova in Thessaloniki and was introduced to the company's products.
Another group searched for natural aromatic candles around the area of Thessaloniki, and the last one research how to market these products discussing with the Trainers and Mentors.
b. Collaboration with local schools was amazing American Farm School opened the doors and cooperated fully with us. And community group, ARIADNI with careers, parents and teachers for young people with Autism was invited to attend our presentation and is open for further cooperation, mainly in a second stage of the project in Greece.

Competitions and Challenges:

a. We organized small competitions and challenges to encourage creativity and innovation. For example, a recipe contest and a product design challenge. This was extended to the simulation lesson as well.
b. We offed as prizes and recognition to the winners to motivate their participation, packages of tea and herbs from Trigrad.

Environmental and Health Awareness:

a In our teaching we highlighted the connection between herb cultivation and environmental conservation. Discussed how herbs can improve soil health and reduce the need for chemical pesticides.
b. We emphasized the health benefits of using natural herbs and herbal products, making

them aware of the impact on personal well-being.

Field Trips and Workshops:

a. We were planning to take them on field trips to herb farm and botanical garden in Trigrad but sue to short period of time and the absence of means this is postponed for next year and most possible in a second face, sustainability of the project. On behalf of this trip we organized a visit to American Farm School and observed the plants there.
b. We organized hands-on workshop where they can learn the art of making herbal products, tea packages, soap and candle.

Networking Opportunities:

a. We encourage them to attend relevant conferences and expos to learn from industry experts.

Online Platforms:

a. We introduced them, to online platforms like social media, blogs, and forums to share herb-related content, information, and success stories.

Through these training lessons we learned that patience and support are key when inspiring people to get involved in herb production and product creation. It's important to nurture their interest, provide resources, and offer guidance along the way.

Introduction to FLOREO training courses

The Work Package (WP5) of FLOREO Project was designed to improve knowledge and skills of all the interested participants in innovative business information and support services in herbs and eco-tourism and to make their educational training process more effective. In the activity of the WP5 it has been highlighted that there is a lack of specific and highly skilled profiles related to the eco-tourism and herbs related business process even though the area is full of herbs it has all the potentials for eco-tourism development.
Therefore, there is the need to enhance competences of all the actors involved in the educational and training process at local level. In this framework, the activity of the WP5 concerned the development of the specific training packages-modules addressing the target groups of young and already established entrepreneurs.

The report focuses on the methodology adopted for structuring the training - educational – mentoring lessons addressing the target group.
The overall aim of the educational and mentoring lessons was to make available knowledge and expertise to understand and manage the harvesting and business development process, bringing together different disciplines. Indeed, the 5 MODULE courses were structured in categories under which transversal topics were covered, starting from lessons about harvesting and agriculture the laws and national support for new farmers and entrepreneurs, the history of herbs and their use , the structural analysis of a business plan and the financing requirements, skills and competences for implementing a business plan, detailed marketing analysis plan and herbs and tourism development with lot s of mentoring and support in class and in person when needed.

All the materials were shared with the Consortium and the stakeholders. The “library” will be accessible by all interested new entrepreneurs and local people upon request via email in Greece and through the Informational Center in Trigrad, Bulgaria. The need for the project FLOREO sustainability is quite high since it is important to create a similar Center and a botanic-Herb garden in the Greek area as well.
This way we will be able to spread all the training packages and to a wider audience, enhancing the durability of the output and the transnational cooperation.
We were thrilled to have all these people as part of this learning journey, in FLOREO project and we are confident that these courses ware a valuable and enriching experience for them.

FLOREO training courses – Modules

We were excited to have all these people on this learning journey, in FLOREO project, and we are confident that these courses were a valuable and enriching experience for them.

Course Objectives

The MODULES have been designed with specific objectives in mind and lots of preparation time from the Greek and Bulgarian trainers. Trainers met several times online and in person discussed and agreed on the curriculum. Our search for previous projects on a similar subject

showed that there was nothing done like it. So everything was done from the scratch.
By the end of these training courses, students will have managed to:

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of Herbs and Aromatic plants and the basic for Entrepreneurship.
- Develop practical skills that they can apply in real-world situations.
- Enhance their expertise and confidence in related skills & and knowledge areas of New business, Herbs production, possibilities for alternative tourism and herbs attraction etc.
- Be well-prepared to create a business plan, run over a simulation process of their business and access finance and markets for sales of their products.
- Be able to cooperate in future projects and inspire others to participate in projects such as FLOREO as well.

During these courses, we expected our students to master the following:

- Engage in lectures and presentations by the expert instructors, Maria Gounara, Kosta Iordanou, Nikolao Iatridi, Stefano Vravosino and Lia Vourdouna.
- Be part of hands-on exercises and practical applications of all the concepts.
- Collaborate in group activities and discussions with their fellow participants.
- Check on resources and materials to support their learning journey.
- Keep on ongoing guidance, feedback, and support from our dedicated team until the end of the project.

FLOREO training courses were structured to provide a well-rounded and immersive learning experience. The divided modules and sections, were each building upon the previous one. The courses that were chosen to be used in the training of the trainees had a natural continuity and the trainers were redefining the implementation according to their needs.
At the end of each lesson, one student took it upon himself to make a very short summary of the lesson and, correspondingly, another one made the connection to the next lesson the next day. This way there was always a connection and any questions or clarification that needed to

be made were made immediately and the material was completely understandable fro everyone regardless of their previous experience.
The teachers also tried to create the course progress logically and designed it in a way to ensure that they grasped the material step by step.
These courses were open to the target audience, students, who were looking to learn more about herbs and aromatic plants, about business connected to tourism and herbs, about farming and harvesting, law, finance etc. in order to advance their careers, deepen their knowledge, etc..

FLOREO courses were suitable for both beginners and individuals with some prior knowledge in herbs, business plan, harvesting, etc.. There were no strict prerequisites, but only basic English language knowledge and passion to start a new business, learn herb harvesting skills and find ways to expand their future.

All trainers were excited to embark on this learning journey with their students and look forward to helping them achieve their goals and ambitions. These courses were not just about acquiring knowledge but also about applying it to make a meaningful impact.

The team of Trainers was there to help and assist in any questions or need of assistance at any point during the courses. The trainers cooperated with each other through out the lessons and tried to solve small problems that arose due to the limited time and the need to complete successfully the selected material and also offered counseling services that seemed to have enough impact to the trainees.

It is worth noting that the visits to ventures that took place both during and outside of classes helped the students to get in touch with entrepreneurs and get to know new products and services that helped them to broaden their horizons.

The three major learning styles were used for the training:

- Visual: Learning by seeing or watching.
- Auditory: Learning by listening to and absorbing information.

- Kinaesthetic: Learning through action, or by doing

The trainers knew that everyone is a little bit of each type, but in most people, one style prevails over the other two.

Visual learners learn best by utilizing graphs, charts, maps, colors and diagrams. They also tend to learn holistically, instead of sequentially, or in parts. The benefits of visual learners is that they easily see the big picture so they trainers used these students to explain maps and charts together with them engaging them in the class.

Auditory learners understand and remember things they have heard. They store information by the way they sound, and they have an easier time understanding spoken instructions than written ones. These students were the ones most of the time that they were responsible for making the summary at the end of a lesson and the brief report at the start of the next lesson. Kinaesthetic learners were the best in simulation and in hands in action lessons as they can read instructions or listen to instructions, but deep learning occurs via the process of doing.

Syllabus and bibliography are considered the most important elements of the training package since they represent the basis on which, eventually, prepare slides and lessons for the specific topic. In fact, the minimum contents of the training materials are outlined together with the objectives that should be achieved within the course.

However, some modules are considered of greater importance for the project dealing with the necessary knowledge and methodological tools for constructing a business for Herbs and tourism.

ANALYSIS OF MODULES - LESSONS

1. Basic Rules for Rural Entrepreneurship

1.1 Basic Rules for Initiating a Business

1.2 Agricultural Farm, Organic Agriculture

1.3 Financing support for startups in rural agriculture in general

1.4 Marketing strategy in rural agriculture in general

1.5 Development strategy in rural agriculture in general

2. How to Grow? Introducing Species of Medicinal and Culinary Plants into Cultures.

2.1 The most popular herbs

2.2 Climate and Soil Requirements

2.3 Culture Location Duration

2.4 Activities for setting up the culture

2.5 Harvesting

2.6 Drying and Storage of raw material

3. How to Plan Business?

3.1 Development and Formatting of a Business Plan

3.2 Outline of Business Plan Chapters

3.3 Added Value and Business Model Case Study,

3.4 Main skills and necessary competences of young entrepreneurs

4. Access to finance for start-ups & young entrepreneurs in herbs production and business.

4.1 Analysis of available funding for start–ups in herbs production related to alternative tourism and other herbs-related business.

4.2 Marketing strategy elaboration and realization

5. Possibilities for alternative tourism based on herbs attraction in Bulgaria and Greece

5.1 Tourist entrepreneurship - elaboration of tourist products/ services plan and programs, financing, marketing, and outreach.

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Community based Entrepreneurship
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Conclusions from Quality Expert

This assessment highlights the quality and effectiveness of the training program, emphasizing its value in preparing entrepreneurs in agriculture for success in this dynamic and challenging field. The program's well-designed objectives, experiential methodology, comprehensive modules, and educational goals contribute to a rich learning experience. The emphasis on research-based learning ensures that participants gain knowledge rooted in industry best practices, making them well-equipped to make informed decisions in real-world ecotourism ventures.

The program's structure is well-organized, coherent, and aligned with industry best practices. It fosters a deeper understanding of agricultural and ecotourism entrepreneurship and prepares participants for success. Moreover, its alignment with the FLOREO Project's mission further underscores its importance in advancing cross-border entrepreneurship, sustainable business practices, and entrepreneurial culture.

Both the Greek and Bulgarian teams displayed unwavering dedication and relentless efforts to uphold the highest standards of educational quality throughout the development and execution of the training program. This commitment shone through in the exemplary deliverables that were meticulously crafted to ensure a comprehensive and immersive learning experience. The dedication to quality is further exemplified by the overwhelmingly positive feedback received from the participants who engaged with the program. The enthusiastic responses, valuable insights, and commendations from those who undertook the training stand as a resounding affirmation of the program's success in achieving its educational goals. Such positive feedback not only validates the diligence and hard work of the teams but also underscores the program's effectiveness in delivering valuable knowledge and skills to aspiring entrepreneurs. It is a testament to the collaborative spirit of the Greek and Bulgarian teams, who, through their joint efforts, have made a significant impact on education and the promotion of sustainable agriculture entrepreneurship and ecotourism in the Greece-Bulgaria cross-border region.