VET Trainer's Guide

EU Dare

Designing & promoting sustainable agriculture & food systems

contents

Designing & promoting sustainable agriculture & food systems

01

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

What is the EU Dare project about?

EU Dare is an Erasmus+ project that proposes to develop a highly practical training course to increase the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, specifically Agroecology. Agroecology is a holistic and integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agriculture and food systems. It seeks to **optimise the interactions between plants, animals, humans, and the environment while addressing the need for socially equitable food systems** within which people can exercise choice over what they eat and how and where it is produced.

It is no longer possible to look at food, livelihoods, health and natural resource management separately. Addressing these complex and interdependent challenges requires embracing systems thinking through holistic approaches. EU-DARE will bring together European directives on sustainable agriculture, from the Farm to Fork strategy to the 2030 biodiversity strategy for smallholder farmers in Europe's rural areas who are the backbone of European agriculture.

In the EU Dare training course, we propose the following topics to be delivered in training sessions or studied individually thanks to the interactive videos attached to each module on the EU Dare e-learning platform:

1. Macro area: Introduction to agroecology
Module 1: Introduction to agroecology
Module 2: Policies & frameworks associated with agroecology

2. Macro area: Link between Agroecology & Communities
Module 3: Building Bridges between agroecology and the community
Module 4: Impact of agroecology on the community

3. Macro: Practical agroecological systems
Module 5: Landscape ecology
Module 6: Water Resource Management
Module 7: Soil Health Management
Module 8: Biodiversity Conservation
Module 9: Crop Management
Module 10: Livestock Integration in Agroecology

Designing & promoting sustainable agriculture & food systems

MEET THE PARTNERS

UPWr

Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences (UPWr) is one of Poland's top specialized universities. It provides training and research in agricultural and natural sciences, as well as engineering and technology. For numerous years, the University has been ranked among the best universities in the world in the subjects of Food Science & Technology and Veterinary Science by the international Shanghai Ranking.

ARID

The Association of Regional Initiatives Development (ARID) was established in August 2009 in Kraków. Since its founding, the goal of the Association is to promote regional development of rural areas, including in particular the development of open attitudes towards knowledge and innovation, and dissemination of modern information technologies.

Meridaunia

Meridaunia, established in 1998, is a joint limited liability Consortium, with legal offices in Bovino (FG) in the Municipio Square, 2. It's formed of partners belonging to the public sector, including: 29 Municipalities of the Monti Dauni and the Municipality of Lucera, the University of Foggia, the Foggia Chamber of Commerce and private companies representing civil society and the world of local entrepreneurship.

APF CR

The Association of Private Farming of the Czech Republic (APF CR) is a major organization representing family farms and private farming in the country, with over 7.5 thousand members nationwide. The APF CR focuses on economic, social, and political interests that support family farms and private farming, based on the belief that family farms are the foundation of modern European agriculture and rural development.

SUA

Slovak University of Agriculture (SUA) in Nitra provides education in accredited study programs on bachelor, master and doctoral level of study as well as various programmes of lifelong learning. SUA has attained the position of one of Slovakia's leading universities since it was founded in 1952. The University is consistently rated in the top group for the high quality of its teaching and research in the Slovak Republic.

MOMENTUM

Momentum is an award-winning Irish educator focused on developing progressive learning programmes (course curriculum and content development) and platforms for education, with a special focus on adult – further education and digital skills. Our experienced team helps educators and SMEs respond to the dynamic and changing needs they experience and thus we aim to provide more sustainable employment and futures to adult learners.

VABCKJS-EU

Verein der Akademie für Bildung, Culture, Kunst, Jugend und Sport der Europäischen Union -European Union Education, Culture, Art, Youth and Sports Academy Association non-profit association founded in Vienna in April 2021. VABCKJS-EU is an Austrian Organisation with residence in Vienna, focused on training and educational development of people of all ages in various areas.

WHAT IS THIS GUIDE ABOUT?

We can assume with a high degree of probability that in the perspective of a dozen or so years, information technology will become an inseparable element of the private and professional life of most people in our civilisation circle. Without basic skills related to this technology, it will not be possible to perform most professions and to complement existing qualifications and acquire new ones. Obtaining, compiling, and using information will become part of typical private and professional activities. Also, in the education sector at all levels, and especially under the impact of the need during the COVID-19 pandemic, technology has developed rapidly and has been disseminated in schools, colleges, and other training centers. **This guide will therefore help you conduct training and show you the different pedagogical approaches involved in hybrid, blended, and face-to-face teaching**.

The role and expertise of the VET teacher is fundamental to the proper development of VET students. Unfortunately, it is very often underestimated and more than once its importance is overlooked, especially by policymakers.

It is worth noting that the type of work of a VET teacher is very diverse and has many sides and unveilings. Depending on the profession they teach, also the place, time and intensity of work can be very specific making this work very complex. VET teachers face various difficulties, financial constraints, ineffective recruitment, or lack of technical capabilities. With this guide, we want to introduce the work and possibilities of a VET teacher but also facilitate distance learning for both teacher and students. We give some examples and methods that can help implement the EU Dare training programme and open the mind of teachers and students to new educational opportunities that are in no way limited by time, finances or place.

The world of technology and opportunities is developing very rapidly and in virtually every sector. Therefore, the professional development of VET teachers is also essential for them to be able to pass on to their students the latest developments in their specific sectors. However still, the greatest need for VET teachers is pedagogical training. Most vocational teachers come from industry, where they did not have the opportunity to get training in issues of pedagogical methods. Thus, they are professionals in their field, often unable to transfer this knowledge effectively. Thus, there is a need to develop not only professional, digital or technical skills in specific sectors but also social-emotional skills.

In today's era, career development opportunities are endless with training on a variety of topics on e-learning platforms. In this guide, we provide many examples and advantages of such training. It's worth getting interested and taking up the challenges of online training.

02

ORGANISATION OF VET TRAININGS

ORGANISATION OF VET TRAININGS

There are many aspects to consider while you plan your VET training. Vocational training most importantly needs to have a practical and efficient approach. All students usually are already working or doing internships in the field of their study. Therefore, based on their knowledge, age, and skills, you need to set clear goals, which will be suitable for your specific target group. The most important aspects to consider are as follows:

Personalised training

At the beginning of every training, you need to do a thorough check or assessment of the skills, competences and knowledge of your students. Every student usually has already some practical experience. Therefore, your training schedule and content have to be tailored to the specific needs of your students. Transparent learning outcomes and clear goal setting should be the basis of all VET training.

Training venue

Geographical accessibility, technical possibilities, and enough space should be ensured at all times. In order to provide high-quality training, make sure, that you use available ICT and modern possibilities of distance and e-learning. More information about e-learning and self-learning methods for VET students is in a later section of this guide.

Age levels

Upper-secondary VET students are mostly between 16 and 25 years old. The training must be therefore adjusted to the age group and the number of training attendants.

Strategy

If you want your VET students to be successful in their training, you yourself must be prepared in your actions. This requires a concrete teaching strategy. The challenge can be in directly communicating the strategy to your students. Be transparent in all that you do, in order to gain authority. This way your students will know exactly what to expect from the training but also what you are expecting from them.

SAMPLE 5-DAY EU DARE COURSE TIMETABLE

Tips:

- Stick to the schedule – Try not to exceed the time proposed in the timetable.
- Make it interactive – You can embed the podcasts or interactive videos created by the EU Dare consortium in your training sessions.
- Make it fun – Gamification is also a great way to deliver knowledge in a fun way.
- Do your research – Be prepared for any additional questions your students may have.
- Don't forget to include breaks – Know the needs of your students.
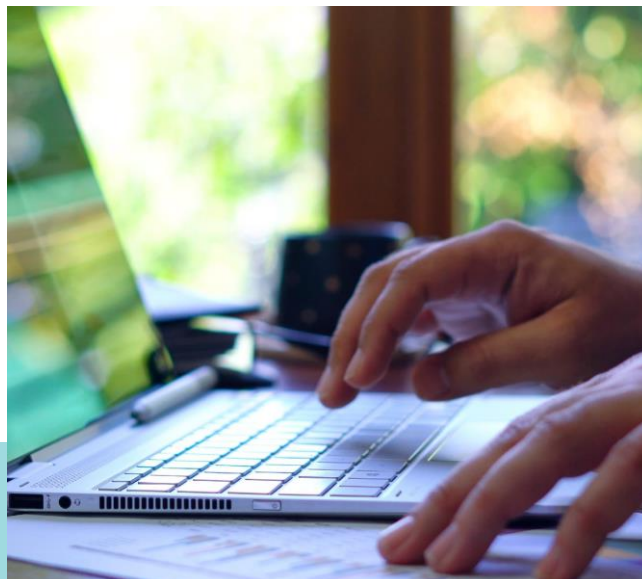
DAY	TRAINING CONTENT
1	09.00 – 12.00 Module 1 13.00 – 16.00 Module 2
2	09.00 – 12.00 Module 3 13.00 – 16.00 Module 4
3	09.00 – 12.00 Module 5 13.00 – 16.00 Module 6
4	09.00 – 12.00 Module 7 13.00 – 16.00 Module 8
5	09.00 - 12.00 Module 9 13.00 - 15.00 Module 10 15.00 - 16.00 Recap and feedback

03

PEDAGOGICAL METHODS FOR VET TRAINERS

PEDAGOGICAL METHODS FOR VET TRAINERS

E-learning has been a very popular phenomenon since the pandemic and is being introduced in the world of teaching with increasing frequency even though the pandemic is coming to an end. Many people in the scientific and professional world became convinced of e-learning methods somewhat under duress and the lack of any other educational option when all schools, universities and other institutions were closed. After learning about its methods and possibilities, e-learning has been in use to a much greater extent than it was before.

E-learning can be introduced in three different ways so let's see what are the forms of e-learning:

* **Synchronous**
* **Asynchronous**
* **Blended/hybrid**

The question arises which form is the best. Well, there is no best one - You need to adapt the way of teaching to the group and its needs and capabilities. For some, it will be more effective to have joint online meetings where you work through the material together, while another group will prefer to work through the material individually, each in their own time. So, as an educator, you need to recognize what will make the most sense for a given group and what will bring the greatest learning results.

On the following pages, you will find more information about the different forms of e-learning.

Synchronous Learning

In this form of remote learning, classes are held online on a specific communication platform and in a specific time slot. Students together with the educator learn the course content based on the textbook, materials, and presentations.

In this form, the educator has the freedom to prepare the classes in a more interactive way. This is because the transfer of knowledge can take place in a variety of ways using materials.

There are several activating methods, such as **brainstorming, panel discussion, case study, drama, simulation method, brain map, and didactic games**, which engage the student, making the knowledge better absorbed. It is the form that is most similar to classroom teaching and allows individual and group work, interaction between educator and students, better assessment of students' knowledge and monitoring of their work.

Unfortunately, it also has several downsides, which make communication and knowledge transfer more difficult. Technical difficulties with audio-visual equipment, lack of Internet connection, access restrictions, scheduling difficulties, and various other obstacles may prevent some students from participating in synchronous classes.

Asynchronous Learning

On the other hand, the form of asynchronous learning using the e-learning platform as the base for the training sessions is far more flexible and allows individualised learning to meet the specific needs and time capabilities of students.

The participant of the course can decide at what hours he/she sits down to study and in what time frame he/she will finish the course. Each participant has access to the materials on the platform 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and can access them when it is appropriate for him/her by following the educator's instructions. To support learning, the educator can pre-record lectures or training sessions with exercise instructions or explained theoretical material. Further, it is possible to contact the educator by email or phone if necessary. There is more freedom in this form in terms of time and methodology. The course participant decides for themselves what form of learning and what learning time is most appropriate, while remaining in constant contact with the educator.

The disadvantages of asynchronous teaching are the lack of direct interaction with the rest of the group, the lack of regular contact with the instructor, and the inability to verify and monitor the progress of learning during the course, which makes it difficult to help students individually. It also requires greater self-discipline on the part of students, which can be a challenge for many.

Blended Learning

The blended learning method is in fact a combination of advantages from both previously described forms of teaching.

It combines both direct contact on the communication platform with the educator and self-learning. The students have the chance to talk to the educator in real-time and work in groups, exchange ideas and afterward they can work on their own choosing the time and place of further study sessions according to their own needs while working on the e-learning platform.

It's a very good solution for bigger groups and the educator can address the needs of both types of learners. It's also more economical for both the educator and the trainee by reducing costs for travel or room rental.

BENEFITS OF E-LEARNING

The term e-learning has gained popularity in recent years as organisations and educational institutions have incorporated remote education via the Internet or intranet. E-learning is the delivery of education via computer or phone.

There are various advantages of studying individually using e-learning platforms. The most significant advantages include:

Saving time
By completing online courses on any global learning platform, either externally or within your company, saves you a lot of time for transport. Instead of attending lectures in an education centre, you can easily access the course from work or home.

Saving money
E-learning is often meant for self-learning, which saves expenses for organising face-2-face training, where the company needs to pay a trainer or to rent a room.

Flexibility
All Learning Management Systems (LMS) platforms can be accessed at any time of the day and save your progress when you leave the platform. This allows you to adjust your learning hours to your individual schedule.

Completing mandatory training
There are many high-quality trainings with officially accepted certificates, which are often used by managers to provide mandatory training for employees.

Good learning experience
This form of education is very convenient, and usually very well structured in learning modules with all the training materials in one place. There is no unnecessary paperwork since the registration process is quick and easy.

04

SELF-LEARNING

SELF-LEARNING TIPS FOR VET STUDENTS

The following list represents vocational training strategies that we feel are of substantial value. They are well-known and utilised in a variety of applications across the world. Most are essentially "learning by doing" or "experiential," with a handful including reflection, feedback, and theory.

Learning…

- by trial and error
- through feedback
- through conversation
- through virtual environments
- by problem-solving
- by watching
- by imitating
- by listening, transcribing and remembering
- simulation and role play
- through games
- by teaching
- by helping
- drafting and sketching
- by competing

The Importance of Self-Learning

Investing in personal growth, as well as professional skills and competences, ensures a brighter future for both ourselves and the organisation we work for. Many professional industries are becoming more competitive, making it critical for all organisations to have highly skilled staff.

Self-study is valuable for two reasons. It allows students to direct their own learning paths and personal growth without being instructed or influenced by others. It instills responsibility for one's own educational path and enhances not just skills and competences, but also the way one works and manages obligations.

Self-learning autonomy allows you to decide when, how, and where you learn. Employees who prioritise personal growth and self-education are more adaptable to new workplace problems or changes, as well as more flexible in their schedules. Someone who is always educating themselves on numerous elements of their career will be more innovative and driven at work. Such an attitude will undoubtedly boost the employee's job happiness, and hence that of the employer.

SELF-LEARNING TIPS FOR VET STUDENTS

When following a self-study path you must decide:
- What you want to learn;
- When you will learn;
- How you will check your progress.

What do you want to learn?

The most important step in self-learning is to set clear goals and ask yourself, "What do you want to learn?" The main goal should be divided into smaller intermediate goals or milestones.

To understand it better, let's focus on an example. The overall goal could be, for example, learning a language. The intermediate goals that will bring this overarching goal closer will be, e.g., learning 20 new words every day or 500 new words a month. Your goals should be easy to evaluate and check for yourself. This way, you will have control over your learning path and progress. Always remember to set realistic goals that you are able to achieve. That way, you won't lose the necessary motivation. On the contrary, setting goals like this increases motivation and verifies the acquired knowledge and learning progress.

Study time

School lessons are 45 minutes long and last from 8.00 to 12.30, college classes are 90 minutes every Wednesday between 8.00 and 20.00, and so on. Such a predetermined framework, on the one hand, puts reality in order, but on the other hand, many people are not comfortable with a strictly defined time and duration of classes.

We believe that it will be easier to gain knowledge at times that are set flexibly, based on daily, ongoing plans. This assumption will only be fulfilled by self-learning. Only with this method do you have the opportunity to determine when you will study. You can choose the times of day and week that are most effective for you. Each of us has an internal clock that tells us at what times the mind absorbs knowledge most quickly and, by learning at home, we can take advantage of this.

Unfortunately, choosing your own study time requires a great deal of self-discipline, which most of us lack. Adapting study time to one's personal capabilities is not at all easy for several reasons. In the first place, most people tend to put everything off until later. Secondly, everyone has many responsibilities in their everyday life apart from studying, so that studying often has to give way to farm-work, childcare or housework. Thus, independent learning becomes very inefficient.

Self-discipline and self-evaluation

Self-directed learning offers the learner many opportunities, but it is also extremely demanding. Those who are highly motivated and disciplined in their learning may achieve some success with this method, but they are in the minority in our society. Most of us feel much more comfortable under the guidance of a teacher or lecturer who directs our learning. Self-directed learning, on the other hand, will work very well as an additional option to support the school course.

MULTIMEDIA LEARNING in EU Dare

Before getting started, it's important for each individual to explore which way he or she learns the fastest, and which learning style or method works best.

There are four main learning styles:
- **Kinesthetic**
- **Reading/Writing**
- **Visual**
- **Auditory**

If you're kinesthetic, you learn better through experience and practical exercises. Theory alone, unfortunately, is not enough to remember what you learned in a module. Sensory learners are more sensitive to touch and physical experiences. They prefer to have a textbook in their hand, a concrete paper that they read or rewrite. Knowledge comes to them through reading and writing but also through face-to-face lessons where they interact with people and see facial expressions, gestures, and all non-verbal communication.

In the EU Dare project, these two learning styles are made possible by conducting group exercises with a VET teacher or by including hands-on activities.

For visual and auditory learners, we provide a solution by adapting the modules into a video format. People who learn best by what they see - that is, visual learners - can more easily absorb the content in this way, which is presented in a way that is pleasing to the eye. Auditory learners, on the other hand, need auditory stimuli. They remember best with the help of spoken language. A positive aspect of EU Dare's materials is that the training modules are also available in self-learning format as multimedia presentations with narration read by artificial intelligence.

If you prefer to listen to our modules while you're working, that is no problem - Each module is provided with an audio file on the EU Dare E-learning platform.

Those interested in vocational training on the project's topics and who are either visual or auditory learning types can also dive deeper into agroecology through additional resources such as supplemental videos and podcasts. All of these materials will be available in the multimedia learning section of the eu-dare.com website

Let's focus, therefore, on the advantages of learning through multimedia. Here are some of the benefits you will experience while using the multimedia resources of EU Dare:
- Easily adaptable to individual needs
- Interactive self-learning possibilities
- Easier complex learning by combining visual and auditory elements
- Enhanced memory stimulation
- No need to attend classes in person thanks to narrated learning material
- Improvement of digital skills

"

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Nelson Mandela

Dear VET trainers and students!

You will find all the necessary teaching materials and additional multimedia resources, podcasts and videos of the EU Dare training programme on our website. Dive into the world of agroecology with the EU Dare project!

Yours sincerely,

The EU Dare Consortium

www.**eu-dare**.com

follow your journey

Co-funded by the European Union