

NEWSLETTER 4

SmartAL

Master: European Innovations for a Sustainable Management of Albanian Territories, Rural Areas and Agriculture: Instruments, policies, strategies

**SMARTAL IS AN ERASMUS + CAPACITY BUILDING
IN HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT FOCUSING ON:**

- 1 Strengthening the linkages between universities and job providing institutions
- 2 Improving the theoretical and practical knowledge of students
- 3 Offering innovative teaching tools and methodologies
- 4 Consolidating synergy among Albanian universities
- 5 Creating 9 teaching modules at executive and professional master level

EDITO

A large number of activities and events have been performed since the previous newsletter, with a lot of satisfaction: finalisation of a large majority of the SmartAL curricula, meeting of the second steering committee of the SmartAL project at the European University of Tirana and organisation, last October, of a workshop on the issue of rural development in Albania, which gathered a wide range of public or private institutional participants.



Moreover, 10 Albanian lecturers successfully implemented 2-4 weeks mobilities in EU universities, which were used for co-developing the content of 8 modules and also for improving their theoretical knowledge in areas related to the specific module they will teach.

Finally, and after learning the good news of the publication of the application decree enabling the opening of the executive master in December 2019, the first months of the year were dedicated to the submission of several files aiming at obtaining the legal opening of the SmartAL master – an amazing job performed under the auspices of the Agricultural University of Tirana.

We recently received the report of the monitoring visit carried out in November 2019 by the National Erasmus+ office in Albania: the feedback has been highly positive, underlining the extremely good dynamics of the project, in the development of the master's modules as well as in the management aspects.

For the coming year, in spite of the uncertainties related to the unprecedented sanitary crisis we are facing, I have no doubt that the project will be implemented successfully, because of the tremendous adaptation capabilities of the consortium members.

May they all be thanked once again!

Magali Maire,

CIHEAM-IAMM, SmartAL Project coordinator

CO-BUILDING OF THE SMARTAL MASTER: CAPACITY BUILDING IN PAIRS WITH THE ALBANIAN AND EU TEACHERS

The modules co-conception process has activated a wonderful dynamic with the mobility of many Albanian partners to European universities during the last months. Among them:

International Mobility for Albanian Teachers to the University of Hohenheim, Germany, Oct. Nov. 2019

The University of Hohenheim welcomed two Albanian teachers within the framework of the SmartAL project:

- Dr. Dorjan Marku (University Fan S. Noli Korçë) joined the University of Hohenheim from October 9 to 23, for the second round of his module design on "Instruments and policy evaluation methods", with a close supervision from Prof. Dr. Manfred Zeller. Prof. Dr. Manfred Zeller is the Head of the Chair of Rural Development Policy and Theory and has a strong international expertise in rural development policies, quantitative methods in economics, farm and project evaluation methods, interdisciplinary aspects of food security.
- Prof. Dr. Ferdi Brahushi (Agricultural University of Tirana) joined the University of Hohenheim from October 30 to November 10, 2019, for the module "Rural development policies". Prof. Brahushi has worked closely with Prof. Dr. Reiner Doluschitz as well as with other colleagues who are working internationally on this field research such as: Dipl. Vw. Julia Reimers and Prof. Dr. Manfred Zeller.



Prof. Dr. Reiner Doluschitz (University of Hohenheim) and Prof. Dr. Ferdi Brahushi (Agricultural University of Tirana)



Dr. Dorjan Marku (University Fan S. Noli Korçë) and Prof. Dr. Manfred Zeller (University of Hohenheim)

WHO ARE THE PARTNERS?

Lead partner

International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies - Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier - CIHEAM-IAMM (France)



Partners

Fan S Noli University Korçë - UNKO (Albania)
University of Hohenheim - UHOH (Germany)
European University of Tirana - UET (Albania)
Agricultural University of Tirana - UBT (Albania)
Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences - UPSPS (Greece)
University Paul Valery Montpellier - UPV (France)

Associated partners:

Network for Rural Development (Albania)
Ministry of Education and Sports (Albania)
Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development And Water Administration (Albania)
Ministry of Urban development (Albania)
Korçë Regional Council (Albania)



Project duration: 2017-2020
Total EU Grant: 760 000 EUR



PROJECT MANAGEMENT KEY MEETINGS WITH THE PROJECT'S CONSORTIUM

2nd Steering Committee of the SmartAL project, October 7, 2019

The consortium of the SmartAL project gathered in Tirana (Albania), on October 7, 2019 at the European University of Tirana. Magali Maire, Centre International de Hautes Etudes Agronomiques Méditerranéennes-Institut Agronomique Méditerranéen de Montpellier (CIHEAM-IAMM), France, coordinator of the project, in collaboration with the consortium members — European University of Tirana (UET), Albania, Agricultural University of Tirana (UBT), Albania, University Fan S. Noli, Korçë (UNKO), Albania, University of Hohenheim (UHOH), Germany, Panteion University of Social Sciences (UPSPS), Greece, University Paul Valéry (UPV), France— took stock of the tasks performed and the upcoming tasks: among them, the quality process, the communication issues and the financial management.



From left to right:
Virginie Avignon, Magali Maire and Philippe Le Grusse, CIHEAM-IAMM,
Marc Dedeire, UPV, Elena Kokthi, UET



From left to right:
Ketrina Cabiri, UET, Sofia Nikolaidou, UPSPS, Dorjan Marku, UNKO, Reiner Doluschitz, UHOH, Olta Sokoli, UHOH, Pascal Chevalier, UPV, Magali Maire, CIHEAM-IAMM, Marc Dedeire, UPV, Ardian Cerava, UNKO, Ilir Sosoli, UNKO

4th Scientific Committee of the SmartAL project, October 7, 2019, European University of Tirana (Albania)

The pairs of Albanian and EU lecturers had technical and scientific discussions on the content of the 9 modules of the future Master in “European Innovations for a Sustainable Management of Albanian Territories, rural areas and agriculture: Instruments, policies, strategies”.

A large part of the debates was dedicated to the accreditation process as well as the detailed contents of each module and the mean to avoid potential overlapping between modules contents.



From left to right:
Fatmir Guri, UBT, Pascal Chevalier, UPV, Magali Maire, CIHEAM-IAMM,
Philippe Le Grusse, CIHEAM-IAMM, Marc Dedeire, UPV



From left to right:
Magali Maire, CIHEAM-IAMM, Philippe Le Grusse, CIHEAM-IAMM,
Marc Dedeire, UPV, Aldona Minga, UNKO, Etleva Dashi, UBT,
Elena Kokthi, UET, Elias Beriatos, University of Thessaly, Remzi Keco, UBT,
Ilir Sosoli, UNKO, Roland Marku, UPV, Elda Muço, CIHEAM-IAMM,
Elvin Toromani, UBT, Ani Mbrica, UET, Sofia Nikolaidou, UPSPS,
Dorjan Marku, UNKO, Reiner Doluschitz, UHOH, Olta Sokoli, UHOH,
Fatmir Guri, UBT

Meeting at the Erasmus+ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) office, in Brussels, October 17, 2020

Magali Maire, SmartAL project Coordinator (CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier), Virginie Avignon, SmartAL project Manager (CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier) and Fatmir Guri, SmartAL WP leader (Agricultural University of Tirana) were invited by Anila Troshani, head of office, Western Balkans Capacity Building projects and Inmaculada Rodriguez, project adviser.

The objective of this meeting was to take stock of the progress of the work and the deliverables completed, and of the main difficulty

encountered in the absence of an application decree of the Albanian law enabling the implementation of the executive master. The excellent momentum generated by the members of the consortium made it possible to complete all the tasks that could be. Nevertheless, the master could not be implemented in the Albanian universities because of legal obstacles. Given that situation, the Erasmus+ agency has agreed in principle to extend the project by a year in a view to test the SmartAL executive master *in situ*.

An Advisory Field Monitoring Visit of the National Erasmus+ Office Albania to the Albanian Smartal partners, November 20, 2019

Ms Elona Saraci and Ms Erida Curraj, National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) staff in Albania and Mr Oltion Pengu, Expert, met the Albanian project partners at the European University in Tirana and discussed the project implementation.

This monitoring visit was an opportunity for the Albanian members of the SmartAL project Consortium (European University of Tirana, Agricultural University of Tirana and University Fan S. Noli, Korçë) to present the deliverables achieved, the results obtained and the next steps to the future SmartAL Master.

The monitoring team found that the project was progressing towards achieving its goals and objectives.

Progress has been made in the development of the 9 teaching modules. Moreover, 10 Albanian lecturers successfully implemented 2-4 weeks mobilities in EU universities, which were used for co-developing the content of 8 modules and also for improving their theoretical knowledge in areas related to the specific module they will teach.

In December 2019, Albanian Universities were granted the possibility to develop and license 3rd cycle Executive Master Programmes and the Agricultural University of Tirana was finally able to submit the application for launching the Executive Master Programme in "Territorial management and European policies". The uncertain legal situation until then has caused notable delays in the implementation of many activities. The monitoring team expects that the application will be successful and the SmartAL project will be able to achieve all its objectives.

With regard to the implementation of teaching modules, the European University of Tirana revised the professional master in Territorial Administration (60 ECTS), to include the developed "Territorial Administration, Planning and Governance" module (6 ECTS) and "Territory actors and institutions" module (6 ECTS); and the University of Korçë also revised the professional master in "Integrated Rural Development" (60 ECTS) and included the "Territory innovation and actions" module (6 ECTS) and the

"Instruments and policy evaluation methods" module (6 ECTS). The revision of both programmes was approved by their management authorities and the new curricula were already provided to the 2019-20 students' cohorts.

The IT equipment was procured and installed by Albanian HEIs. Albanian HEIs provided a positive feedback on how the equipment had improved the working environment in their institutions.

The monitoring team found that there was a sound management of the project. The Manual of Good Administrative and Financial Practices is a well-designed tool for ensuring uniformity and quality in the contemplation and application of administrative and financial procedures within the project.

5th Scientific Committee of the SmartAL project, December 10, 2019

The consortium gathered in videoconference for a scientific committee. The conclusions of the meeting with the EACEA in Brussels and the monitoring visit performed by the National Erasmus+ office in Albania were presented.

Concerning the Master's curriculum, the content of the modules 3 and 9 was pending. The module 3 is nearly completed and the module 9 will be delivered later for organisational reasons. The content of the different other modules was validated.

Instructions for the case studies to be delivered by the students benefiting from mobilities in the framework of the project were shared by the UHOH. This document needs to be validated by the consortium.

An evaluation of courses template, to be used by students to evaluate courses, has been submitted by the UHOH. This form also needs to be revised/validated by partners.

LEGAL NEWS

On December 18, 2019, the Albanian Government released the bylaw which specifies the academic structure and the organisation of the Executive master in Albania. At the beginning of January, the procedure for the opening of new study programs was released by the ministry of education. It is organised in two steps i) first application with the proposal and its administrative evaluation, and ii) the evaluation of the application by a team of experts. In February, SmartAL project presented the application, and passed the first step of the opening process. In April, the SmartAL team of the Agricultural University of Tirana, in cooperation with the lecturers responsible for the modules, prepared the complete application file for the executive master. We are now expecting the experts' evaluation decision for the opening process.



From left to right:
Ms Elena Kokthi, UET, Ms Erida Curraj (National Erasmus+ Office in Albania), Mr Oltion Pengu, Expert,
Ms Ketrina Cabiri, UET, Ms Elona Saraci (National Erasmus+ Office in Albania) and Dr Fatmir Guri, UBT.

Operational Committee, March 12, 2020



The Consortium gathered in videoconference. The following points have been debated and validated:

- The update of the methodological note for the accreditation process of the Master taking into account the requirements of the recently published Albanian decree on Higher Education;
- The request of amendment of the Grant Agreement to be submitted to the EU Agency for an extension of the project until December 2021;
- The budget proposal for students' mobilities, as a consequence of the request expressed by the EACEA to schedule mobilities going from Albanian universities to European universities, contrary to what was originally planned;
- The EU teachers' mobility planning;
- The case studies of students that must be delivered this year as well as the organization of the collective field study in rural areas in Albania, in June 2020;
- The Internship Evaluation Guide (D5.2);
- The next steering committee scheduled for the fall 2020.

DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

Workshop "Thinking of rural development in Albania: How to improve the existing experiences?" October 8, 2019, European University of Tirana, Albania

This workshop was organised and facilitated by the CIHEAM-Montpellier in collaboration with the European University of Tirana, the Agricultural University of Tirana, the University Fan S. Noli, Korçë, in parallel with the Steering Committee of the SmartAL project.

Agenda:

- Opening Speech by Prof. Assoc.Dr. Selami Xhepa, President, European University of Tirana,
- Opening Speech by Ms Adelina Greca, General Director of the National Agency of Territory Planning,

How can a Master such as the SmartAL Executive Master meet the requirements of rural development in Albania?

- "New competences for new requirements: the SmartAL Erasmus+ capacity building project: an answer to the reinforcement of rural territories development in Albania" by Ms Magali Maire, Project coordinator, CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier,
- "100+ villages: an innovative instrument in Albanian rural areas" by Ms Fiona Mali, National Agency of Territory Planning, Director of the local planning,
- "Going further: territory diagnosis of rural areas, first step for local intervention" by Prof. Assoc. Dr. Fatmir Guri, Agricultural University of Tirana,
- "Villages identity card – A methodology to construct the basket of goods for the rural areas" by Ms Elena Kokthi, European University of Tirana,
- "First SmartAL example: Self-governance potential in rural areas" by Ms Elda Muço, Master student, CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier



From left to right:

Ms Adelina Greca, General Director of the National Agency of Territory Planning, Ms Magali Maire, Coordinator of the SmartAL project, CIHEAM-IAMM, Prof. Assoc. Dr. Fatmir Guri, Agricultural University of Tirana



Prof. Assoc.Dr. Selami Xhepa, President, European University of Tirana



Ms Adelina Greca, General Director of the National Agency of Territory Planning



Ms Magali Maire, Project coordinator, CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier



Ms Fiona Mali, National Agency of Territory Planning, Director of the local planning



Prof. Assoc. Dr. Fatmir Guri, Agricultural University of Tirana



Ms Elena Kokthi, European University of Tirana



Ms Elda Muço, Master student, CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier

Round table: One swallow does not make a summer – what to do next?

The point of view of local actors, donors, Albania partner countries (French Embassy, Greek Embassy), FAO, Municipality of Tirana was shared among participants: Crucial issues on rural development faced by Albania were discussed as well as the main ways to overcome them.



From left to right: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Fatmir Guri, Agricultural University of Tirana (facilitator), Mr Arben Kipi, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), H.E. Ms Christina Vasak, Ambassador of France in Albania, Mr Sarantis Moschovis, Greek Embassy in Albania, Ms Besmira Medolli, Municipality of Tirana

Regional Cluster Meeting on “CBHE projects’ impact in the Western Balkans”, October 22 and 23, 2019, Dürres, Albania

This cluster meeting, organised by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission, brought together CBHE projects implemented in the Western Balkans with the aim of exchanging practices, identifying success stories and assessing the impact and sustainability of the CBHE Programme. It was also an opportunity to identify constraints and difficulties linked to the implementation of international projects in the Western Balkans.

The SmartAL project was represented by Elena Kokthi, Lecturer/Researcher, and Ketrina Çabiri, Director of the Office for Project Development and Partnership, European University of Tirana.



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Elena Kokthi, Lecturer/Researcher and Ketrina Çabiri, Director of the Office for Project Development and Partnership, European University of Tirana

World Food Day Colloquium at the University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, October 16, 2019

Prof. Dr. Reiner Doluschitz, SmartAL project's partner for the University of Hohenheim, as the Director of the Food Security Center of the University of Hohenheim, hosted for the 10th year the World Food Day Colloquium on "Food security and trade in a period of change and innovation".

SmartAL was presented as one of Hohenheim's fruitful projects on territorial management and rural development.



Dr Dorjan Marku (University Fan S. Noli Korçë) presenting the SmartAL Project during the World Food Day Colloquium (University of Hohenheim)

SmartAL project on the national Albanian TV channel RTSH Radio Televizioni Shqiptar, on the occasion of the Erasmus+ National Information Day (Ditën Kombëtare Informuese Erasmus+):

SmartAL Master was invited as an example of best practices of Erasmus+ capacity building projects in higher education, December 12, 2019

Erida Curraj, Albanian Erasmus + Office detailed Erasmus+ funding in higher education. Fatmir Guri, Agricultural University of Tirana, presented the objectives of the SmartAL project and the future Master in "European Innovations for a Sustainable Management of Albanian Territories, rural areas and agriculture: Instruments, policies, strategies".



Prof. Assoc. Dr. Fatmir Guri (Agricultural University of Tirana)

INSTITUTIONAL MEETING

On February 6, 2020, Prof. Dr. Bari Musabelliu, Rector of the Agricultural University of Tirana (UBT) met Ms. Magali Maire, chargée de mission to the Director of the CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier. At the meeting Prof. Dr. Bari Musabelliu stressed the role and importance of the CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier as a historical and strategic partner of the UBT in the field of capacity building, sustainable cooperation and research and development projects.

Ms. Maire, on behalf of the Director of CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier, underlined the historical role played by the UBT among the strategic partners of this institute in the Mediterranean region. She stressed the importance of the UBT for higher education and agricultural research in the country.

This fruitful collaboration is expressed, among other things, with the latest project Erasmus+ Capacity Building SmartAL, which aims to build an executive master's degree in administration and territorial development at the UBT, which is coordinated by the CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier.

Finally, the two institutions applied under the Erasmus + KA1 program for funding in the field of student, pedagogical and administrative staff exchanges for the period 2020 - 2023.

In the framework of the institutionalization and deepening of cooperation between the UBT and the CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier, in the coming months, the heads of the two institutions will sign a new cooperation agreement on teachers, staff and students cooperation in the field of research and institutional development as well as in the design and implementation of joint projects.



From left to right: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Remzi Keco, Vice-rector of the Agricultural University of Tirana, Natasha Hodaj, Head of the Department Economy and Rural Development Policies, Faculty of Economy and Agribusiness, Agricultural University of Tirana, Prof. Dr. Bari Musabelliu, Rector of the Agricultural University of Tirana, Magali Maire, chargée de mission to the Director of the CIHEAM-IAM Montpellier, Ophélie Romignac, Master student, University Aix-Marseille, Prof. Assoc. Dr. Fatmir Guri, Agricultural University of Tirana

Website of the UBT:

<https://ubt.edu.al/sq/event/takim-i-prof-dr-bari-musabelliu-rektor-i-universitetit-bujq%26%20sor-t%26%20tiran%26%20s-me-znj-magali-maire-e-ngarkuar-me-pun%26%20pran%26%20drejtorit-t%26%20institutit-agronomik-mesdhetar-t/>

EVENTS SCHEDULED

Because of the uncertainty related to the covid19, our provisional agenda has undergone numerous changes. The following agenda may be modified because it is mostly based on international mobilities.

- July 2020:** Official amendment request of the SmartAL project to the Erasmus+ Agency;
Fall 2020: 3d Steering Committee of the SmartAL project;
November 2020: Launching of the SmartAL master and mobility of the EU teachers to Albania for the first implementation of the SmartAL master (or videoconference teaching).



SmartAL / MODULES OF THE FUTURE EXECUTIVE MASTER IN “EUROPEAN INNOVATIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF ALBANIAN TERRITORIES, RURAL AREAS AND AGRICULTURE: INSTRUMENTS, POLICIES, STRATEGIES”

MODULE 1

Management and territory administration policy

The module will provide information on theoretical issues on the spatial economics and regional economics, and the practical organisation of the territory administration as well as the existing policy instruments that are applied at local level.

MODULE 2

Natural Resources and environmental management

The module will cover the information on the economic evaluation of natural resources and environmental goods, the ecosystemic services on rural areas, the evaluation of the pollution and environmental public instruments to apply, waste and policy instruments to regulate the issue.

MODULE 3

Territory actors and institutions

The module will cover the following issues: the institutions on rural areas, the participatory process, the role of actors, leaders on rural areas, the decision making process, the collaboration among different actors, etc.

MODULE 4

Territory innovation and actions

The module will focus on the innovation process on rural areas aiming to identify the actors that may support and disseminate the innovative projects on rural areas, and instruments of smart specialisation of rural areas. The information should offer examples and instruments on how to set up innovative projects and to replicate them.

MODULE 5

Rural development Policies

The module will deal with the theoretical information of the sustainable rural development, an overview of the existing rural development policies in Albania, and in EU, their evolution and the critic analysis on their effects, as well as the possibility to replicate on middle income countries such as Albania.

MODULE 6

EU territory and cohesion policy

The module will provide information on the existing EU territory policy and cohesion policy. The information will deal with the philosophy of these policies as well as the practicalities of the application (eligibility, measures, application process, access to funds, administrative and financial issues etc.)

MODULE 7

Data Administration

The module will deal with the process of preparation of data collection, questionnaire preparation, database and data mining on existing database, adaption of databases to several uses, qualitative and quantitative methods of data elaboration, (e.g. geographic information system, spatial econometrics etc.)

MODULE 8

Project design Preparation and evaluation

The module will focus on all the phases of the project from the project idea to the design, implementation, evaluation etc. In each phase of the project the module will provide tools and instruments to select the best choice

MODULE 9

Instruments and policy evaluation methods

The module will focus on the public policy instruments, the identification of the policy answer to the issues on the rural and peri-urban areas, and the evaluation methods of the instruments.

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