



THE FormaTer PROGRAM, A MODEL OF EUROPEAN COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT:

This paper presents the way a Eastern European University can become, as a partner, involved in deploying an E.U. program, pursuing aspects which concern local development in various fields of activity.

The European program FormaTer attempts to create a resource centre for trainers and actors in the field of sustainable local development.

KEYWORDS:

European program, European integration, sustainable development, resource centre.

1. THE ROAD FROM IDEA TO EUROPEAN PROJECT

A European project represents the materialising of a philosophy. Let us elaborate on this assertion.

Philosophy should be understood in the following acceptance: in a larger framework (SOCRATES, LEONARDO DA VINCI, FP6), the European Union announces the major directions in view for directing the common effort of European development and cooperation. In fact, the EU's philosophy concerning Europe's common future, in various aspects).

Materialising means that, from within this framework, various promoters detail certain punctual themes, which they subject for approval to European organisms. The proposition should be complete: vision, modality of achievement, partners, necessary resources.

Whether approved, the proposition obtains financing and becomes a project. This paper presents the FormaTer project, in which the "Eftimie Murgu" University acts as a partner. The project's objective is creating of a resource centre for sustainable local development promoters.

2. PRESENTATION OF THE TERMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT

2.1 Local development. The key term of the FormaTER project is **local development**.

From the point of view of progress, probably the major difference between societies in a process of auto-structuring ('in transition') and the advanced ones is the speed the latter ones realise their problems, acknowledge them publicly and get involved in solving them.

The concept of local development is a concept arisen just in this idea, that of increasing the solving speed of problems, by transferring the decision, to an ever higher extent, in the hands of local communities. Simultaneously, another major preoccupation is the increase of the

population's degree of involvement in solving the problems of the local community.

2.2 Durability, Globalisation, Local Community. The approach through the concept of '**durability**' entails a permanent ability of pursuing and seizing of the long-term tendencies, from the local to the global level. **Globalisation**, paradoxically, contributes to enhancing of the local efforts. Apparently in a paradoxical way, it generates a re-enactment of the spirit of the local community, understood in a narrower or broader sense. The more globalisation proves more aggressive; **the local level** structures itself more intense and becomes more creative. The citizen tends to retake into possession the environment, to adapt his/her options, activity and competencies, with a view of granting balance, evolution and protection of his/her territory.

On the other hand, these concerns rapidly take an official and organised form of manifestation. France will soon have an organic law relative to experimentation within territorial communities, which will authorise local communities to issue exceptions from laws, as an experiment and within clear circumstances, in questions pertaining to their sphere of competence, for an interval of five years, extensible with two more years. The law will allow the applying of new provisions introduced into the Constitution. After the experimenting period, a report will be presented to the Government and to the Parliament, which will analyse them and will decide whether they will be continued, abandoned or generalised.

2.3 EU Projects. The European Union considers reducing the inequality between itself and the candidate countries as priority for the assimilation process.

Conceptually, unification (and, in the case of candidate countries, integration) is defined as a process of homogenising the concepts. In a broad social, economic and cultural context, homogenising the concepts is a difficult problem (inclusively at the level of the working groups involved in the Union's projects). This will probably be the touchstone of the achievement of a real united Europe.

On the other hand, following the problems of applicant communities to integration, a similarity of problems is to be noted. That is, problems for which no precedents in the history of the recent development of the European Union exist are actually few.

It thus appears the problem of transmitting information. Different studies elaborated by EU organisms have demonstrated that information concerning the projects of local actors – both at the level of elaborating the development project, and at that of the structure of preparation and complement – are not always known and, thus, cannot be exploited and transmitted to other promoters of individual or collective projects. It is seen on the other hand that their modality of valorisation does not allow in all cases a good assimilation by other actors at local level.

The same problem is repeated in the case of development agents, which can meet difficulties in finding information about experiences or

simply about the available programs offer in forming and training and which can be mobilised in order to meet the needs of local actors.

With these remarks, it appears as natural (and extremely important!) the concern for the transfer of experience.

FormaTer aims exactly at the achieving of an (electronic) centre of transfer of experience in problems concerning local development. In the official wording, a 'Centre de ressources pour les formateurs et les acteurs du développement durable des territoires'.

3. PARTNERS OF THE FORMATER PROJECT

FormaTer is built in each of the partner countries around a coordinating structure from agricultural and rural education or from that supporting local development.

3.1 France

Le Centre d'Expérimentation Pédagogique (The Centre of Pedagogical Experimenting) from Florac, la Bergerie nationale (The National Centre National of Ovines) from Rambouillet and Cempama from Fouesnant are, all, public national institutions, with a mission of support of the structures of public agricultural education.

They have coordinated and effectuated various activities, research and studies – actions connected to closer ties between the training system and the territory where the training takes place. They dispose of resource centres widely open to teachers, trainers, actors and local population.

3.2 Portugal

The "INDE" Cooperative (Intercooperação e Desenvolvimento) activates in various fields of development and cooperation. It was responsible with the animation of the Leader II program in Portugal and it participated at the European monitoring organism Leader. She brings in the project a solid experience in animating and sustaining local groups, especially in the field of associations.

3.3 Spain

IDES, The Institute of Development and Social Studies from Granada brings its experience in cooperation with the elected persons from local public administration, concretised in implementing, together with the Superior Institute of Studies on Enterprises, of a master's degree in local development.

The Centres for Agricultural Information and Formation CIFAs from Cordoba and Hinojosa del Duque have as a mission the training of farmers and employees from the agro-alimentary and para-agricultural sector. It takes an active part in the activities of local organisations and associations, collaborates to numerous cooperative and associative projects and is strongly anchored in the rural economic network.

3.4 Romania

The "Eftimie Murgu" University from Reșița has an economics faculty and is developing a series of international programs with other countries from Europe, especially France, Germany and Italy. It is constantly involved in debates and activities connected to urban and rural development, together with the County Council of Caraș-Severin. As an institution caught in the training and educational structures, it is an

essential partner of local development, and is supporting, through information and training, the projects initiated within the local community.

4. CARRYING OUT OF THE PROJECT

4.1 A few notes on the key-concepts

FormaTer has been developed using a “**study – action**” method that consists of developing an appropriate response to the needs arising from a given situation in a specific region, and engaging in a reflection on the pertinent actions that can be put into place taking these needs into account. This method allows the association of periods of “study” and periods of “action”. These different but complementary periods of activity result in a clearer understanding of the situation and enable an experimentation of elements that may facilitate a response.

The partners of FormaTer based the project on the knowledge they had of the needs of their respective users, coupled with the results of “study-actions” that recommended the construction of a resource centre for teachers and local development agents. Next, they carried out a series of interviews to confirm the validity of the project.

The interviews in turn resulted in a summary of the needs expressed, and the construction of the website FormaTer. The partners of the project then developed data-collecting tools which were submitted to local reflection groups for approval. A parallel activity was a collective reflection on the supports most likely to respond to the needs of the users whilst stimulating their involvement in the project.

The following glossary comprises the aspects considered most important, within the project, for the problems of local development:

Agribusiness (farm produce industry), Agriculture and forest, Animation, Arts and crafts, Citizenship, Club cooperative life, Communication, Consumption, Creation of an activity, Culture / Interculturality, Diversification, Economy, Education and training, Employment, Environment, Finances / Management, Fishing, Forestry, Health, Heritage, Human resources, Industry, Information et communication, Innovation, International cooperation, Local development, Local productions, Multi-functionality, N.I.C.T., Natural resources, New jobs and professions, Partnership, Periurban, Pluriactivity, Policies, Religion, Rural development, Services, Social and professional inclusion, Social organisation, Social values, Sport and leisure, Sustainable development, Territorial organisation, The Economy of Solidarity, The fight against poverty, Tourism, Trade, Transport, Urban politics. In the glossary on the site there is also a definition of the terms, specific to the project. Of course, the list is open for new terms, as well as for (re)defining of those already on the site.

4.2 The Actual Form of the Project

The project exists now as a complex site, with a great quantity of information, organised according to several criteria.

The basic unit of the working system is **the record**. The record contains highly synthesised information about one single event from the thematic; let us not forget that, thematic being large, the term ‘event’ too

should be understood in a large meaning: from an action of an ecological foundation to a modification of the legislation in the field. If the case is, at the basic presentation, (by necessity very synthetic!) the record has attached to it texts, documents, images, as its author considers appropriate; these could also be big-sized documents.

Records can be consulted directly, grouped according to several generic criteria: local development experiences, practices in educating (training) in connection with territory, methods and instruments, opinion articles, juridical and political framework, bibliography and internet support.

The second way of grouping is by **thematic dossiers**. If information associated to a topic is more abundant (for example, legislation specific to local development in EU) it can be grouped in thematic dossiers. For the user to find it in a more rapid way, within the dossiers information is organised by groups: specific instruments, points of view, reference texts, reference works, selection of web links, practices of training, experiences in local development.

Your itinerary as a user: in order to read the records, you don't need any special authorisation. You can also introduce your own records; nevertheless, in order to become visible on the net, they should be validated by one of the administrators. Also, if you wish that the record be also included in existent dossiers or to open a new dossier, you should contact one of the administrators.

4.3 Continuing the Project

After stabilising the site (at least in its first phase; the experience accumulated in a few years of activity will naturally lead to re-projecting the site) the first priority becomes its dissemination. That is, avoiding the situation in which FormaTer becomes one of the numerous sites that exist, but very few people frequents them (an electronic version of the dossier laying on the shelf!).

The FormaTer team has in view several directions of action.

'Physical' dissemination: Spanish, Portuguese and French partners have already co-workers networks, in countries having not been involved in the phase of the project development, and to whom they will present FormaTer. Spanish and Portuguese partners through their de co-workers networks from Latin America, and French partners in the former French colonies, which benefit now from special support programs for agriculture, from the French government.

Launching FormaTer on the market of training organisms. The first action was presenting FormaTer at the Second National Convention of Agents in local development, Lille, between the 25th and 28th of June 2003. The Presentation was the first from a series of similar actions.

The official Launch of FormaTer will take place on the 7th of October 2003, at Marly le Roy, next to Paris, in the presence of several personalities from the field of durable development belonging to the countries having worked together in this project.

At the level of project developers, **to connect FormaTer to other projects**, and to ensure the circulation of information from FormaTer to other projects and the other way round.

By means of the CEP Florac partnerships, to introduce FormaTer in Enter, the European network of the centres for training the trainers from the EU and the East-European countries.

'Electronic' dissemination: the second major direction of action, as important as the first: the opening of FormaTer towards all interested and, in time, emulating a FormaTer community.

FormaTer will soon offer the authors of records the possibility of creating their own personal web page and to promote their own actions of training and durable development. The site will host also a European experts' database, an interactive exchanges space and a link to catalogues of offers for initial and continuous training. FormaTer will regularly broadcast interviews with researchers and personalities from thematic fields connected to training and durable local development.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Speaking about an open project, we prefer that, instead of the habitual conclusions, to offer a last argumentation for joining us.

As developers or implementers of programs, in today's conditions, the training time has drastically reduced. Practically, one is often in the situation of learning on the fly. In which situation, a place where one can find useful information and connections to problems solving becomes extremely important.

More, the problems of local development are so diversified and often hard to anticipate, that those implied can frequently meet unexpected situations. Let us not forget the French law authorising exceptions from laws! Let us add that, in a short span of time, major legislation will be, in Romania too, compatible with the European one. Those who conceive projects for a longer period of time (durable development, ecology, etc) find here a presentation of the European way of approaching the problems.

In one word: Become members of the FormaTer community at www.formater.com

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