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“Valorisation of ancient farming techniques in resilient and sustainable agriculture”

Study Visits' report
[University of Thessaly]



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Introduction

In the frame of the WP3 of the project, five study visits were organized, to the scope of sharing a full, high level understanding of best practices in the project countries, compare farming techniques and develop common innovations and share knowledge, while allowing, at the same time, all high-level experts to confront peers dealing with similar/complementary issues in other European countries and cooperate together to identify innovations matching research with practice.

The study visits were organized by the project partners' staff from Greece (P2 – ONPMA), Italy (P1 – PNGSL), Romania (P5 – USV), Spain (P7 – CTFC), and Germany (P3 – NSWMN). During these study sessions, the partners' staff shared and discussed best practices and results achieved by each partner's organization in the project domain, identified best methodologies, and mutually gained knowledge from the other participants' expertise.

Unfortunately, due to restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the study visits were moved from "in presence" to "online", and were hosted using a video conferencing platform, with great attendance, reaching an average of 60 registered participants, most of which attended and followed every day's schedule.

1. The events

S.V.	Date	Partner		Location	Daily participations	Registered
1	June, 28-30, 2021	P2	ONPMA	Greece	50	118
2	July, 12-14, 2021	P1	PNGSL	Italy	45	65
3	Sept., 15-17, 2021	P5	USV	Romania	40	64
4	Sept., 28-30, 2021	P7	CTFC	Spain	45	75
5	Oct., 4-6, 2021	P3	NSWMN	Germany	42	60

1.1 The first study visit

The first online study visit, was held by the Olympus National Park Management Agency (ONPMA, Greece), on the 28th, 29th and 30th of June 2021, using the Zoom platform, in English with simultaneous translation into Italian. Triantafyllos Bitos was the coordinator of this event, which was entitled “Sustainable agriculture practices in the shadow of mountain Olympus, the house of gods”.

1.1.1 Participants

The event was attended by 58 participants on its first day (June 28th), 49 on the second (June 29th), and 42 on the third (June 30th).

1.1.2 Organization information

The event was based on the development of a local, national and regional information and knowledge sharing network on structuring a multifunctional framework leading to resilience and sustainability in agriculture. Towards this direction, the Study Visit supported expertise and experience exchange towards transferring and capitalizing new ideas and knowledge into best practices, through the involvement of all stakeholders (public institutions, research institutes, NGOs etc.). Moreover, representatives from different sectors (farmers, scientists, policy makers, key stakeholders and environmental experts) had the opportunity to share their knowledge and opinions on challenges and requirements of resilient and sustainable farming.

The first day of the event started with the discussion of some details regarding the organization, the venue, the day’s agenda and the translation, followed by the opening remarks by Mr. Aristidis Nikas, the president of the Olympus National Park Management Board Mrs. Evaggelia Mylona, the representative of the Regional Unit of Pieria – Bureau of Tourism, Mr. Dimitrios Patsiarikas, the vice mayor of the municipality of Dion-Olympus, and Mr. Georgios Karalis, the vice mayor of the municipality of Dion-

Olympus. After this, the representatives of each partner made the presentation of their national status and challenges in relation to objectives of the meeting. Next, 2 videos were presented about the "Landscape – Relief – Weather – Biodiversity of the Olympus National Park". A 3D presentation was also shown with key feature of the biological diversity of the area. The final video shown was a short historical documentary, a travelogue dedicated to the first conquering of Mt. Olympus' highest peak, where key features of the area were presented along with an introduction to the history and attributes of locals. Mrs. Jamie Giannakas introduced the basic monitoring program that the national Park is following and provided a detailed description of all species and habitats enclosed within the boundaries of the 5 "Natura 2000" sites protected by the National Park. Next, Mr. Triantafillos Bitos, a forester from ONPMA, gave a talk about all challenges that the Management body faces and the multiple dimensions of the societal, ecological, economic and environmental issues. After the coffee break, the project coordinator provided an overview of VALOR and its key objectives on supporting compatible education, offering training and management tools as the means to structure a multifunctional framework leading to resilience and sustainability in agriculture. The last hour of the first day was dedicated to the presentation of two very interesting topics; the first one was the progress of an Interreg project. The emblematic project was about the generation of new and radically different tourism offer based on the features of mountains and the development of an alternative to the traditional holiday on the beach. The presentation was given by Dr. Konstantinos Zapounidis, a senior project manager of the local development agency "Pieriki Anaptixiaki". The second talk was given by Dr. Evaggelia Mylona, business administrator representative of the regional unit of Pieria – Bureau of Tourism, who raised the issues, challenges and progress made by Regional Unit of Pieria (the regional unit that enclose the National Park) in the field of biosafety. It should be noted at this point that biosafety is going to be one of the key modules to be developed under the curriculum that are developed under VALOR. During the presentation participants, stakeholders from different sectors and countries had the chance to share opinions and raise questions, discuss and presented examples of alternative cases.

The second day of the workshop, 29th of July, has been attended by 49 participants. The day started with a video- short documentary that was produced for the needs of this workshop/study visit. It was about the Agricultural Cooperative of Rachi Pierias and had dealt with cherry cultivation, production, sorting, standardization and marketing, under the rules of integrated crop management. Next, Mrs. Calliope Ntourou a representative from the Agricultural Cooperative of Rachi Pierias gave a detailed presentation on the practices, products and challenges in cherry cultivation in the area. After a short coffee break Prof. Alexandros Theodoridis from the School of Veterinary Medicine, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, had a very interesting talk about future challenges and innovative solutions for the small ruminant sector. Next, Prof Nikolaos

Katsoulas, from the School of Agricultural Sciences, University of Thessaly presented to the partners the state of the art for circularity in greenhouse horticulture.

The last presentation of the day, was made by an invited scientist from Canada, Prof. Paschalis Giannoulis, visiting professor at Department of Natural Resource Sciences in Macdonald Campus of McGill University from Quebec, Canada, presented his view on Anthropocene and entrepreneurial evolution of environmental dualism: From ancient farming practices to immune and sustainably resilient agriculture. The study as most of the previous ones stimulated a discussion among the participants with many new ideas and scientific insights shared by Prof Giannoulis. At the day, one more video-short documentary on organic farming of vineyard and innovative vinification that takes place in the vicinity of the national park was presented. At the end of this session, were set the next steps and some key issues to be addressed by our project. Following a summary discussion, the meeting ended as was originally planned in the Agenda.

The third day of the study visit, the 30th of July, has been attended by 42 participants. The day started with a video on the 3rd best Practice, a virtual tour on Olive Oil Mills operating in the vicinity of the study area. Next, Dr. Athanasios Ragkos, Associate Researcher, Agricultural Economics Research Institute, ELGO – Demeter gave a very interesting and stimulating talk about the livelihoods of mountain livestock farming in Greece. A discussion among participants followed this talk, and actually continued during the coffee break. As the final video that was produced for the means of this virtual Study Visit participants had the chance to “visit” the Holy Monastery of Saint-Dionysios of Olympus, and discuss about pilgrimage tourism and self-sufficient rural economy. Next, Prof Nikolaos Monokrousos, from the Social Sciences and Economics at the International Hellenic University, presented his work on sustainable agricultural practices for improving crop production and soil fertility focusing on alternative methods that could be applied to increase resilience of agricultural systems but also productivity under a sustainable way. The final talk of the study visit was given by Antonios Mazaris who presented an ecological award that is under development and which considers as set of principles and criteria (ecological, environmental and social) that align those highlighted and followed in VALOR.

1.1.3 Materials used

The materials used before and during the Study Visit were invitations, the agenda, presentations, the participation list, videos, and the certificate of attendance.

The event was promoted by publishing a press release before the event. The press releases appeared on local and national media (i.e. online newspapers).

1.1.4 Achieved results

The event offered to its participants the opportunity to interact, discuss and learn about different aspects related to sustainable agriculture. Also, they shared fresh information regarding with the ancient farming, biosecurity issues, alternative forms of tourism, greenhouse horticulture, mountain livestock farming, agricultural practices for improving crop production and soil fertility, innovative solutions for the small ruminant sector and certification schemes of products and services. An important achievement was the fact that stakeholders wanted to be a part of the project and to contribute to its success but, also, that some key topics were raised and received the general attention of the participants.

1.1.5 Evaluation of the participants

The participants were delighted with the discussions and subjects approached during the study visit, but also with the interaction with the other participants. They liked how the topics have been approached, but also the method used to run the event.

1.1.6 Description of the impact of the study visits on the elaboration of the learning modules

The importance of capitalizing on the promising potential of agricultural cooperatives was highlighted to achieve a more substantial engagement with citizens and the whole of society, as the means to support biosecurity principles.

Based on the discussions it becomes apparent that in order to guide the development, setup, and operation of biosecurity infrastructure, we need to carefully account for the needs, perceptions, and motivations of involved parties, supporting the development of relationships based on trust and transparency.

It was clear that the ongoing development and expansion of the health issues in our society, combined with behavioral incentives for further uptake should be sealed with relevant and demand-driven institutional changes that will secure sustainability.

For modern and secure agriculture, we should engage and respond to needs for expertise and knowledge of all players involved in food chain (farmers, researchers, citizens, and civil society organizations, industry and government) via cooperative, active and responsible participation.

Based on the different presentations it became apparent that developing behaviorally informed incentives to motivate the support of biosecurity, will go beyond mere individual gains and encompass collective environmental, societal, and economic gains.

1.2 The second study visit

The second online study visit, was held by the "Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga" National Park (PNGSL, Italy), on the 12th, 13th and 14th of July 2021, using the Zoom platform, in Italian with simultaneous translation into English. Dr. Giorgio Davini was the coordinator of this event.

1.2.1 Participants

The event was attended by 65 participants.

1.2.2 Organization information

During all of the three days of the event, the schedule was followed without any exceptions, with the interventions of Dr. Giorgio Davini. The first day of the event started with a greeting of the president of PNGSL through a video, followed by another video with the greeting of the director. Later, Dr. Eleonora Cavallero Brambilla, Project Officer at the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, EACEA, took the floor for a greeting. After, a video presenting the "Natural biodiversity and human activities" was played, followed by the presentation of Dr. Stefano Canali "Agroecology meaning and definition" and the one of Tommaso Gaifami "Agroecology in practice experiences: mapping Agroecology by the Agroecology Europe Youth Network". The first day was closed with another video entitled "TRAVEL DIARIES IN RESILIENT AGRICULTURE": "Transhumance and today's cheeses" and a short Q&A session.

The second day, started with a welcome of the participants and introduction to the day's agenda, and included the presentation by Prof. Paolo Barberi (Sant' Anna School of Advanced Studies, Pisa) "The importance of agroecology for the development of mountain areas", the one of Dr. Giorgia Robbiati (EIP-AGRI Operational Group "Agroecology for Trentino") entitled "Project experience Inversion - Rural Development Programme, Autonomous Province of Trento, PEI measure" and a short Q&A session, before having a short break. The second day's schedule later on included a video presentation entitled "TRAVEL DIARIES IN RESILIENT AGRICULTURE": "Mountain and ancient wines" (Study cases with Farms: Alfonso D'Alfonso, Az. Agricola Terre del Tirino - Capestrano, AQ; Vincenzo Cioti, Az. Agricola Cioti - Campli TE; Mauro Scarpone, Az. Agricola Cornacchia – Torricella Sicura, TE), a presentation entitled "Best Agricultural Practices in NATURA 2000 sites" by Elena Del Toro (Expert Teacher of Agronomy and Agricultural Economics, in Higher Education Institutions), a short Q&A session and the video "TRAVEL DIARIES IN RESILIENT AGRICULTURE": "Green economy and agricultural tradition" (Study cases with Farms: Alfonso D'Alfonso, Az. Agricola Terre del Tirino - Capestrano, AQ).

On the third day, after the welcoming of the participants by the chairman Dr. Giorgio Davini, Dr. Antonio Felicioli (Agro-Environmental Researcher of "Dept. of Veterinary

sciences and Agro-Environmental Research Centre "Enrico Avanzi" CiRAA - University of Pisa") talked about "Pollination as a bridge between agriculture profitability and conservation of biodiversity: resilient farming within the one-health approach", Prof. Antonella Canini (University Tor Vergata Roma) presented "The National Park project on certified pollen chain" and Dr. Gabriele Di Marco (University Tor Vergata Roma) presented the topic "Bees as a quality environmental bioindicator: The National Park project of environmental biomonitoring". The second day's schedule was completed with the video "TRAVEL DIARIES IN RESILIENT AGRICULTURE": "From flower to honey jar" (a study case with beekeepers: Ernesto Iovenitti, Az. Apistica Iovenitti – Barisciano, AQ and Ferdinando Bilanzola, Apicoltura Acquaratola - S. Egidio alla Vibrata, TE)

1.2.3 Materials used

The materials used before and during the Study Visit were invitation flyers, social media posts, the agenda, presentations, the participation list, and videos.

The event was promoted by creating and sharing a post on Social Media platforms (such as Facebook), and publishing the event on the project's and PNGSL's websites.

1.2.4 Achieved results

The event offered to its participants the opportunity to interact, discuss and learn about different aspects related to sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, and agroecology. Also, they shared fresh information regarding with the ancient farming, horticulture, viticulture, cheese production and beekeeping.

1.2.5 Evaluation of the participants

The participants were very satisfied with the discussions and the subjects analyzed during the study visit, but also with the interaction with the other participants. Furthermore, it was very clear that the participants were totally satisfied with the arrangements of the event and the support from PNGSL staff, and located some interesting future perspectives concerning the subject of the event.

1.2.6 Description of the impact of the study visits on the elaboration of the learning modules

The Gran Sasso and Laga Mountain National Park is benefiting from the project as it has the opportunity to participate in a high-level exchange of experiences and practices with all partners and stakeholders.

PNGSL is:

- Developing and validating new methodologies for promoting sustainable agriculture practices that are populating our contexts.
 - Developing advanced curricula for managers and technicians to respond to the climate change velocity.
-

- Developing monitoring protocols e.g., on Biosecurity in agriculture or on the usage of traditional and resilient techniques
- Sharing and getting to know best practices in ancient agriculture in our country.
- Develop a comprehensive assessment of the importance of incorporating suitable agriculture into conservation planning.
- Apply the principles of sustainable development in parallel with the objectives of ecosystem management.
- Develop a standardized teaching protocol.

1.3 The third study visit

The third online study visit, was organized and held by the “University Ștefan cel Mare of Suceava” (USV, Romania), on the 15th, 16th and 17th of September 2021, using the Zoom platform, in English with simultaneous translation into Italian. Prof. Marian Dragoi, Cezar TOMESCU, and Ana-Maria COZGAREA were the hosts and moderators of this event, who have chosen to build the programme around different themes for each day: Synergies triggered by three Romanian protected areas, Sustainable and resilient agriculture in Romanian protected areas and Smaller is better: how to provide social resilience with a little bit of your heart.

1.3.1 Participants

Almost 60 people registered for the international event that gathered a daily average of 38-45 participants.

1.3.2 Organization information

The USV team had prepared debates together with their collaborators and guests: representatives of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania, Vânători Neamț Natural Park, Maramureșului Mountains Natural Park, Macinului Mountains National Park, Piatra Craiului National Park, Agricultural Directorate of Suceava County, University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, Romania, National Association for Mountain Rural Development - Romontana, Romania, and Local Farmers and Producers.

The three-day virtual visit in Romania was designed in order to convey the three important ideas behind the cooperation between farmers – more or less resilient – and protected areas, given the large share of Natura 2000 sites hosted by Romanian territory. The 3rd day of the workshop addressed practical issues of taking advantage of any patch of available land for small-scale agriculture, to better demonstrate social resilience built up near artisanal gardening. Therefore, we have scrutinized examples of good practices through our network of experts, and we have invited them to participate or recorded video interviews, directed by our colleague, Dr. Stefan Sfichi.

The first day was dedicated to synergies triggered by Romanian protected areas and the first guest was Mr. Sebastian Catanoiu, the director of the first nature park created in Romania after the communist collapse. Therefore, we have approached the protected area network as a first step towards a better understanding of the interconnections and intercorrelations between protected areas and resilient agriculture, even though much of the protected areas are placed into the forest fund, not on agriculture lands.

After an extended presentation of Vanatori Neamt Nature Park, including the rehabilitation of European Bison and the little known facts and figures about the second largest monachal community in Europe, after the Athos Mountain, we had an easy-going filmed dialogue with Mr. Oliviu Iorgu, the one who kicked-off the process of setting up Vanatori Nature Park, by the end of nineties, when the World Bank and GEF had been initiated a series of negotiations with Romanian Government in order to support biodiversity conservation.

This interconnection between protected areas and resilient agriculture was suggested for the first time by Mr. Viorel Rosca, the Manager of Muntii Maciului National Park, having biology as background, not forestry as the large majority of the National and Nature Park across Romania. Mr. Viorel Rosca had started in 2008 to convince and support local farmers to join the organic certification scheme, given the opportunities opened by the first CAP program Romania had taken advantage after joining the EU in 2007. Hence, he was invited to join the team of guests, and have a short presentation of Macin Mountains National Park, which is a small reassurance of biodiversity and one of the oldest pieces of Earth, as those mountains are relicts of the Hercynitic Orogenesis. Another Nature Park, quite different from Vanatori Neamt, is Maramures Mountains Nature Park, where a lot of forests have been chopped meanwhile, after being given in private ownership. The landscape of this park is characterized by some treasures of traditional woodcraft, including the highest wooden-made monasteries across Europe. The traditional folklore music also has illustrated the local touristy which, combined with natural heritage, has demonstrated a strong social resilience, rooted on a marvellous and diversified landscape.

Traditions and handcrafting were brought to light by Mrs. Ionela Lungu, the subject of a short movie about the local traditions nearby Vanatori Neamt. Mrs Lungu is probably one of the most attractive personalities of that area and, very important, one of the few artists able to convey traditional values without the slightest dash of kitsch.

The presentation of Mr. Mircea Veghelet, Challenges for Protected Areas in Romania, was oriented toward nature conservation. Mr. Mircea Veghelet is one of the most influential promoters in Romanian nature conservation. He is currently running an iconic national park in Romania, but, for a couple of years, he has coordinated the administrations of all protected areas managed by the National Forest Administration during the toughest period of nature protection in Romania, when the National Forest

Administration has taken over the leading position in nature conservation, in order to harmonize the Romanian legislation with the European one.

The first day was finalized with a very technical presentation produced by Mr. Liviu Nichiforel, associate professor with the Faculty of Forestry. He came up with a comparative study of forestland property rights across European countries, which explains many discrepancies between forest policy, nature conservation policies and property rights.

The second day was dedicated to various issues related to organic farming and agriculture policy. Not surprisingly, the first presentation was dedicated to Macin Mountains National Park, followed by another presentation delivered by Mr. Emil Sandulescu, the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture. He presented the payments for environmentally friendly forestry, addressed to small-scale forest owners. The director of the County Office of the National Agriculture Agency talked about the state-of-the-art of the policies addressed to local producers (Mrs. Claudia Gogu), followed by another provocative topic, namely farming in mountainous areas, presented by Mr. Andrei Coca, the executive director of Romontana, the association of farmers in Romanian mountain areas. Mr. Andrei Coca and his team alike, has a long experience in running different projects on rural development.

The last presentation drove the virtual visitors back to Maramureş, this time for touristy offer. Mr. Adrian Gavaller presented the situation of rural tourism in Maramures county, highlighting different issues the local people are facing the lack of proper infrastructure, poor connectivity with other focal points for tourism and so forth. On the other hand, this presentation came up with another perspective over some very attractive points, like the famous train used to collect the timber from the Vaser Valley, a lively piece of history.

The last day started with a presentation meant to shade more light on a bunch of terms and labels applied to different products, which could be either organic, ecologic or, not quite often, biodynamic. We invited Professor Mihai Gidea, from the Academy of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences of Bucharest, to offer some clarifications in this respect, since he has a long experience in teaching agriculture management and has tried, on his own, to apply the principles of biodynamic in his small farm.

The programme included a movie presenting some hints of what we call urban agriculture, on the outskirts of Suceava. This endeavor was meant to demonstrate how agriculture can be resilient in the proximity of large city, not necessarily in far-off villages. Two local farmers have demonstrated their capacity to produce vegetables for their own consumption and for friends.

Mr. Cezar Tomescu, Assistant professor with USV, has presented his own provisions for winter and next spring thanks in a movie having jars of gem, pickles, mushrooms, and various vegetable stews recipes as characters.

Mr. Vasile Matrasoiaie, well-known local farmer due to his achievements, has dedicated all his energy to testing different cultivars and vegetable species in his backyard, being

one of the very few local farmers who are hosting experimental plots for systematic research carried out by the National Institute of Agriculture Research.

Because truffle picking has already turned into a solid business in different parts of Romania, we have contacted the president of the county association of truffle pickers in order to come up with a short presentation of the topic: the market, the opportunities, and the appropriate cuisine.

Mr. Dragoi, professor with USV, came up with a short presentation of another ERASMUS+ project that focused on the creation of networks of non-wood forest products, including truffle picking and related legal and commercial arrangements. The main issue raised by the speaker was the insufficient legal framework, which makes room for a lot of near-legal or unlawful activities.

The last day of the event ended with a movie introducing a local artisanal bread-maker, Mrs. Mihaela Gheorghiu, who became famous for her leaven bread recipe. She shared her story and the challenges she had to face on her way to becoming a successful promoter of the traditional recipes, which is common to most local producers across Europe.

1.3.3 Materials used

The programme included recorded video interviews, short documentaries and live presentations, Q&A sessions and debates. Other materials used during the organization of the event were flyers, invitations to the event through posts on the project's Facebook page, registration form by Google Forms, a certificate of attendance, an evaluation questionnaire, and finally the registration/participants' list and screenshots during the event.

1.3.4 Achieved results

The event offered to its participants the opportunity to interact, discuss and learn about different aspects related to sustainable agriculture, protected areas, nature protection, biodynamic farming, rural tourism and agroecology. Also, they shared fresh information regarding with the ancient farming and other interesting topics.

1.3.5 Evaluation of the participants

USV has invited the participants to fill in an Evaluation Questionnaire.

[Study Visit Evaluation Questionnaire Link](#)

USV has collected the feedback provided by 21 participants by the 16th of November 2021. The overall satisfaction is excellent. There were suggestions of improvement of the technical support, which we expected since we worked with a lot of video recorded material.

1.3.6 Description of the impact of the study visits on the elaboration of the learning modules

The Romanian Study Visit was outbound oriented. Given the academic experience, the vision was widened towards a small city surroundings, like Suceava, where different stakeholders, interested in organic food and local recipes may interact with each other. Each day was oriented to a different scope: the first one explored the opportunities opened by nature conservation in Romanian forests. Hence, the nature parks involved in the project as partners, i.e., Vânători Neamț and Munții Maramureșului.

The second day was dedicated to what is going on near protected areas, on croplands. Organic farming, payments for ecosystem services and a lot of work carried out by the county offices of agriculture. Farming in mountainous areas and rural tourism were also approached.

The third day made the difference, being reserved for what can be considered the most important strain of social and food resilience: small green businesses near small cities. The presentations and discussions of the Romanian Study Visit, brought in the following conclusions:

- Local communities are concerned about nature conservation without knowing the insights of legal procedures and social fabric within.
- A fair involvement of public authorities in promoting local products is strongly needed.
- Street Market is an effective social institution even during crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemics.
- Good, reliable and long-lasting promotion of resilient farming depends on keeping alive small social networks on both sides of the boundary between protected and unprotected ecosystems.

1.4 The fourth study visit

The fourth online study visit, was organized and held by the “Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia” (CTFC, Spain) with the support of Parc Nacional d'Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici and Escola Agrària del Pallars., on the 28th, 29th and 30th of September 2021, using the Zoom platform, in Spanish with simultaneous translation into Italian and English. Rosa M. Ricart and Carles Lorca were the hosts of this event. The visit aimed to show the situation and challenges of the territory close to the national park. The professional discussions between speakers and the public were successful and rewarding.

During the event, 6 main topics were raised and discussed:

- Early detection of issues and facilitating technologies in traditional farming
 - Knowledge and approach of the high mountains' agriculture and farming
 - Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National Park territory reality
 - Facilitating technology for sustainable agriculture and farming & learning about Unesco Biosphere reserves
-

- Resilient ideas and examples of real cases of agroecology in the National Park territory and surroundings
- Management of synergetic fauna in protected areas

1.4.1 Participants

Each day, more than 40 people attended the event who established professional contacts integrated into the VALOR Alliance. The total number of registrations was 64.

1.4.2 Organization information

The visit started with the presentation of the CTFC and Silvipastoralism in the Pyrenees of the National Park territory. A case of the use of drones in vegetation studies by TERRADRON was presented. Participants learned about the UNESCO biosphere reserves through two presentations delivered by the International Center for the Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves UNESCOMED, and by the academic program EduBioMed. The second day focused on the management of protected areas. The visits began with a presentation of the Parc Nacional d'Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici, followed by the Ecomuseu and the Escola de Pastors and Obrador Xisqueta. The PyrosLife project showed the monitoring of bears and wildlife in the Pyrenees. The company Trosdesort presented their experience on the marketing of km 0 in times of pandemic in mountain areas, which allowed a fruitful debate. A case of sustainable high-altitude apple cultivation by Biolord was presented, which intelligently monitors irrigation and other parameters, allowing it to save water. The third day was dedicated to Resilient Agriculture in the Pyrenees and was led by The Escola Agrària del Pallars. The presentation of the Alba Association focused on Llavors d'Oportunitat project. The Associació de Productors d'Oli del Pallars presented the recovery of autochthonous varieties of olive trees and their production of high-quality extra virgin olive oil. Finally, the topic of the sustainable cultivation of medicinal herbs in the high mountains and protected areas, specifically arnica and Edelweiss was addressed by the company Taüllorganics. CTFC presented the projects carried out and in progress on medicinal plants.

The meeting has been held in CATALAN-SPANISH with simultaneous translation into ITALIAN and ENGLISH. The meeting has been held according to the daily agenda, except Biolord case that for personal reasons of the expert at the last minute has been moved to the second day.

Process

This study visit has been organized following 15 simple steps:

- 1- Think about the purpose and target audience we'd like to attract of the study visit. What do we want the study visit to achieve?
 - 2- Set/Check the study visit budget,
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- 3- Decide on the platform to use,
- 4- Decide on the date,
- 5- Consider and discuss the content and timings of the study visit with associated partners,
- 6- Contact and talk to speakers, translators, and coordinators for the use of zoom platform,
- 7- Test the zoom platform and share a list of rules-code of conduct for virtual events
- 8- Promote the study visit,
- 9- Monitor the registration to see how effective the promotion is,
- 10- Send reminders. Email participants with instructions on how to log into the platform, check in with translators to confirm timings, and ask speakers if they have any special requests,
- 11- Come up with a contingency plan in case a speaker cancels,
- 12- Double check platform settings, like which attendees or speakers can turn their mics on or off, for a more polished presentation,
- 13- Enjoy the day of the study visit
- 14- Work on post-event activities. Thank translators, speakers, participants...learn from their feedbacks. Prepare certificates for participants and speakers in case they ask,
- 15- Measure the success of the study visit to make the next event a greater success. Take note of key metrics as participant numbers, survey responses, feedbacks received on post-event activities and so on.

1.4.3 Materials used

The materials used during the study visit were the agenda, the flyer, posts on the project's Facebook page, and a registration form by Google Forms.

1.4.4 Achieved results

Concerning the organization

- 1 host organization – Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC)
 - 2 associated partners – Parc Nacional d'Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici and Escola Agrària del Pallars
 - 1 supporting organisation – National Park of Gran Sasso and Laga Mountains (Italy) (facilitating zoom platform + information and feedbacks)
 - 4 national meetings with associated partners to prepare the agenda and contact experts
 - 18 experts included in the agenda
-



1.4.5 Evaluation of the participants

The CTFC subsequently has send out a feedback sheet to all participants. A total of 13 participants has given their feedback (until 15.11.2021 at 14.00). The overall satisfaction level of the participants was very high, while the expectations of most of the participants were fulfilled.

1.4.6 Evaluation of the organizers

Satisfaction about the Info Session	Very satisfied
Rating of the following items in relation to our expectation:	-
Pre-meeting Information	Fulfilled our expectations
Documentation available	Fulfilled our expectations
Meeting arrangements:	Fulfilled our expectations
Support from CTFC Staff and coordinators-partnership	Exceeded our expectations
Welcome and opening statements, agenda	Fulfilled our expectations
DAY 1. FACILITATING TECHNOLOGIES IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & LEARNING ABOUT UNESCO BIOSPHERE RESERVES	Fulfilled our expectations
DAY 2. DIFFERENT WAYS OF MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREAS	Fulfilled our expectations
DAY 3. RESILIENT AGRICULTURE IN THE PYRENEES	Fulfilled our expectations
DEBATE – ROUND TABLE SESSIONS	Exceeded our expectations.
EXPERTS INVOLVED	Exceeded our expectations.

1.4.7 Description of the impact of the study visits on the elaboration of the learning modules

CTFC and its associated partners considering and discussing the content of the Spanish study visit have considered not only the purpose and the target audience, but also the vision that these presentations are key to be presented as case studies considered within the elaboration of the learning modules.

1.4.8 Description of the EU dimension of the study visit

The study visit:

- has implied a collaborative work in an international setting to promote mutual development and cross sectoral cooperation to build bridges and share knowledge among the industry, the experts and the different education and training,
- has allowed Catalan experts to promote and spread the benefits & obstacles of their experiences at EU dimension,
- in this postCovid-19 context, is contributing to have a strong first sector with an advanced degree of autonomy, and social, IT and economic, and environmental sustainability at EU Level,
- provides better understanding of the added value of cooperation at European level,

- provides better visibility and promotion of the activities of partner institutions and organizations and the skills of their staff. Use of the experience-knowledge VALOR partners to daily work life,
- in the Green deal context, is contributing to stop the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU through its protection, valorization and restoration.

1.5 The fifth study visit

The fifth online study visit, was organized and held by the "Black Forest Nature Park Central/North" (NSWMN, Germany), on the 4th, 5th and 6th of October 2021, using the Zoom platform, in German with simultaneous translation into Italian and English.

The participants were able to learn a lot of information from theory as well as from practice during the German study days. Starting with the presentation of the nature park Schwarzwald Mitte/Nord (P3) and its work as a protected area and a presentation of INTEGRA (P9) and its projects. In his lecture on the topic of regional products, Prof. Abele showed study results from different countries that are important for understanding marketing. The focus of the study visit was the presentation of key facts and best practice examples of the marketing of regional products for the preservation of the traditional cultural landscape, also depending on tourism and environmental education. Another topic was agricultural good practice in highly industrialized, densely populated areas and political dimension of resilient and sustainable agriculture. As the study visit was the fifth and last one, it was also possible to deepen topics and experiences that had already been addressed in the previous study visits. In addition, bilateral links between speakers and associated partners were established which resulted in added value to the European dimension of the VALOR project

1.5.1 Participants

Each day, approximately 43-48 people attended the daily schedule of the event. The total number of registrations was 75.

1.5.2 Main Topics

The main topics of the German study visit were:

- Introduction of Nature Park Schwarzwald Mitte/Nord and INTEGRA Filder e.V. (aims, themes, challenges);
 - Key facts and best practice examples of the marketing of regional products for the preservation of the traditional cultural landscape, also depending on tourism and environmental education;
 - Agricultural good practice in highly industrialized, densely populated areas and political dimension of resilient and sustainable agriculture.
-

1.5.3 Materials used

The materials used during the study visit were the agenda, the flyer, posts on the project's Facebook page, promotion of the event with posts on the German partner's [website](#), a press release (call for participation) and a registration form by Google Forms.

1.5.4 Achieved results

The partners were able to exchange ideas, impressions and ask questions with the experts during Q&A sessions. Participants learnt about best practices examples, could talk to experts and contributed with their experiences.

After the presentations and impulses, there was the opportunity to ask questions and exchange ideas with each other and with the respective experts.

This opportunity was actively used. It should be added that topics that had already been addressed in the previous study visits were reflected on again and considered from different perspectives. This shows that there are often very similar problems in the partner countries - also different approaches to solutions from which all partners can benefit at this European level of exchange.

The online conference offered participants a good opportunity to promote the exchange of experience and knowledge between the members of the Alliance. Another positive outcome of the study visit in Germany were new bilateral contacts between participants, associated partners, speakers and associations which were part of the study-visit's agenda. The "Genbänkle" initiative in Germany was able to implement direct contacts to a similar initiative in preservation of old seeds in Spain. Wine producers from Germany could directly relate to oenologists in Italy and new pathways for the promotion of resilient and sustainable agriculture in the field of agricultural marketing could be prepared between Germany, Italy and Spain. Through these new bi- and 6 multilateral contacts, the German study visits successfully contributed towards the creation of innovative added value to the European dimension of the VALOR project.

1.5.5 Evaluation of the participants

The naturpark subsequently sent out a feedback sheet to all participants. A total of 17 partners gave their feedback (until 21.10.2021). The overall satisfaction level of the participants was very high, while the expectations of most of the participants were fulfilled.

1.5.6 Description of the impact of the study visits on the elaboration of the learning modules

After the presentations and impulses, there was the opportunity to ask questions and exchange ideas with each other and with the respective experts. This opportunity was actively used. It should be added that topics that had already been addressed in the previous study visits were reflected on again and considered from different perspectives. This shows that there are often very similar problems in the partner countries - also different approaches to solutions from which all partners can benefit at this European level of exchange.

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The study visit to Germany - like all the other VALOR-study-visits - had an enriching impact on the development of the VALOR learning modules. Modules of P3, NSWMN, were enriched with the case-study videos produced for the study visit to Germany. Information on marketing for agricultural produce was further enriched. P9, INTEGRA, added slides on how the knowledge acquired through the modules can be broken down to the real needs of farmers to promote and enhance ecological and sustainable agriculture. Case studies were enriched with the content of the discussions and the outcome of the study visit.
