

INCLUFAR – Inclusive Farming A new educational approach in Social Farming

THOMAS VAN ELSSEN¹, GERHARD HERZ², HARTWIG EHLERS³, WINFRIED SCHÄFER⁴, KLAUS MERCKENS⁵

Key words: Social Farming, Green Care, training, disability, inclusion.

Abstract

Social farming puts the multifunctionality of farming demanded by policy makers into practice. Across Europe social farms offer social services for different client groups. They integrate people with disabilities or offer Green Care services for disadvantaged people, but also for children or senior citizens. Three European projects – DIANA, MAIE and INCLUFAR – have been initiated to deal with training needs of professionals offering social services on farms. DIANA developed training tools for practitioners and MAIE elaborated a curriculum for training farmers basic knowledge to start social services on their farms. The INCLUFAR project focusses on transferring experiences from two already existing training programs – the German FAMIT and the Scandinavian "Baltic seminar" – into other target countries. These projects meet a demand for professionalization and quality insurance of social farming activities.

Introduction

"Social farming" and "Green Care" are being developed throughout Europe: farms which put the "multifunctionality" demanded by the policy makers into practice, contributing to the creation of jobs in rural areas through the creation of social services. Social farming includes agricultural enterprises and market gardens which integrate people with physical, mental or psychological disabilities; farms which provide opportunities for the socially disadvantaged, for young offenders, those with learning disabilities, addicts, the long-term unemployed and active senior citizens; school and kindergarten farms and much more besides. Social farming includes elements such as provision, inclusion, rehabilitation, training and a better quality of life (van Elsen & Finuola 2013). Starting with the European Community of Practice (CoP) Farming for Health (Hassink & van Dijk 2006), research activities were set up: the COST Action 866 Green Care in Agriculture (Braastad et al. 2007) and the EU research project SoFar (Di Iacovo & O'Connor 2009).

Which educational demands result out of the growth of Social Farming in Europe? Which training approaches ensure a professionalization and quality insurance of social farming activities? Three European projects have been carried out to elaborate training tools for practitioners.

Material and methods

Within two "Leonardo-Projects" supported by the European Lifelong Learning scheme educational needs were identified: The DIANA project (Disability in sustainable agriculture – a new approach for training of practitioners, www.projectdiana.eu) dealt with the demands of practitioners with different professional background working on social farms. The MAIE project (Multifunctional Agriculture in Europe - Social and Ecological Impacts on Organic Farms, www.maie-project.eu) developed a curriculum for farmers being interested to integrate social work into their farming concept. In both projects demands of practitioners were identified by interviews with experts first. In DIANA training tools were developed and tested as a piloting on social farms. In MAIE a curriculum for farmers has been developed based on experiences in countries with advanced Social Farming networks (especially The Netherlands and Italy).

¹ PETRARCA - Europäische Akademie für Landschaftskultur e.V., www.soziale-landwirtschaft.de, www.inclufar.eu, Thomas.vanElsen@petrarca.info

² Institut für Betriebliche Bildung und Unternehmenskultur - //IBU, Germany, www.ibuibu.com, www.inclufar.eu, info@ibuibu.com

³ Hofgemeinschaft Weide-Hardebek LBFgGmbH, Germany, www.weide-hardebek.de, www.inclufar.eu, ehlers@weide-hardebek.de

⁴ MTT Agrifood Research Finland, www.mtt.fi, www.inclufar.eu, winfried.schafer@mtt.fi

⁵ merckens development support gmbh, Germany, www.inclufar.eu, klaus@merckens.de

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

A next step is the new INCLUFAR project (2013-2015, www.inclufar.eu): The team of authors has applied successfully to run the project “Inclusive farming – transfer of concepts, experiences, skills and training tools for Social Farming and eco-social inclusion” within the “Leonardo da Vinci - Transfer of Innovation” scheme. Based on the experiences above and two 3-years curricula (FAMIT and BALTIC seminar) a participatory transfer to “target countries” in Eastern Europe is planned. In each of the target countries the demands will be identified and a strategy to implement a training course will be elaborated in a participatory process together with local stakeholders.

Demands and educational approaches in European Social Farming

The results of the MAIE-project have shown clearly that there is no European wide standard or curriculum available to qualify entrepreneurs and employees of organic green care farms working with disabled people.



Figure 1. DIANA project logo

The state of the art and the limitations of existing pedagogical materials in this area is documented in the executive summary of the DIANA project which aimed to fill a serious double gap: the lack of technical competencies of the trainers / tutors with psychological or educational background and the lack of educational and psychological competencies of agricultural technicians. To fill these gaps is extremely relevant because social farming has positive effects for social inclusion and protection of environment and already offers extraordinary possibilities of training and jobs for large groups of disadvantaged persons. DIANA developed an integrated and joint training programme for practitioners in order to make them able to face the complex reality of social farming. This approach to train workers with technical background and practitioners with socio - educational - psychological background together will be a basic approach of the INCLUFAR curriculum. To activate a proper training several requirements must be present:

- technical knowledge, ability to mix competences
- ability to tackle ecologic, social and economic questions simultaneously
- assessment of every individual
- activities, kind of training and contents must be at an high research level and specific to the staff
- experiences in co-operation.

Although green care enterprises started emerging and getting public awareness in the past decade there is a lack of qualified staff specialised on both agriculture and horticulture on one side and nursing related professions on the other side. The results of the past EU-funded green care projects SOFAR, DIANA, MAIE and others reflect this fact where - among other findings and objectives - development of appropriate VET curricula is a concern.

The approach of the INCLUFAR project

The INCLUFAR project is based on 30 to 40 years practical and conceptual experience of organic farms in different countries (e.g. DE, NL, AT, FIN) working with disabled people. Especially the combination of organic and bio-dynamic agriculture with its demand for a healthy soil and nature and an integrated social work is very effective and provides a positive impact on people, nature and landscape. These farms consider disabled people not as being ill, but as real co-workers with specific ranges of performance, able and willing to contribute to an added value of the society and the farm. It is obvious that this demanding issue needs specific education and skills. So the project focuses on the transfer of two innovative training concepts:

1. The 3-years curriculum for „Fachkraft für Milieubildung und Teilhabe – FAMIT“ which means „Expert for social farming and inclusion“. This training concept has been practiced for 12 years and is accredited by the government of Schleswig-Holstein equally with other social professions;
2. The 3-years curriculum of the BALTIC Seminar, which is a 3-years training course developed by experts working in the area of social farming targeted to trainees from Norway, Estonia, Finland and Russia.



Figure 2. Logo MAIE project

The project will merge these two concepts to the INCLUFAR curriculum and transfer these innovative products and adapt them systematically for the needs and the VET structures in the partner countries.



Figure 3. Logo Inclufar project

The new multilateral transfer of innovation project aims to meet the need for appropriate curricula suitable for entrepreneurs and staff of social farming and green care farms interested in inclusive training and participation of disabled co-workers in organic farming, food processing and craftsmanship.

The previous projects showed clearly that there is a crucial demand on curricula for social farming enterprises for both, staff and entrepreneurs. To address this demand, the project aims to transfer a well-established and approved curriculum and the

gathered experiences to green care enterprises which link both areas:

- a) inclusive care for individuals with special needs and
- b) inclusive work with nature in organically cultivated farm land

to ensure professional didactics, material and capacity resources in vocational education and training (VET).

The INCLUFAR curriculum will combine these two areas of work and life providing competencies to link social work and welfare within the rural areas. As a following emerge better labour opportunities fostering rural economic development. Exploiting the specific agricultural work/life-setting provides more and improved social welfare structure in rural locations where service coverage is traditionally weak. The training shall meet the demand for professionalization and quality insurance of social farming activities.

Objectives are:

- To meet the needs for well-established teaching methods in social farming enterprises making the innovative INCLUFAR curriculum available. This allows VET trainees to improve their skills while formally retaining their already existing professional capacities. Trainers shall find new professional resources to participate in and to carry out inclusive training.
- To improve the qualification and the quality of work for staff working at green care farms in Europe by introducing the curriculum on seminars and workshops to green care farms applying the inclusive approach.
- To compile an accessible, practically applicable occupational profile with the didactic material and human VET resources needed to implement it. The didactic content is based on experiences in the partner countries and the distinct pedagogic characteristics of the partner countries with the aim to balance knowledge acquisition and skills formation.
- To introduce both the occupational profile and the INCLUFAR curriculum to formal VET institutions in the agricultural sector and the social therapeutic sector in European countries by establishing contacts to municipalities and other authorities via green care competence centres like MTT.



Figure 4. Harvesting branches for winter fodder on a social farm in Germanv

Thus the multilateral transfer project prioritises the encouragement of cooperation between VET and the world of work by improving the supply of professional work in the area of agriculture and social work and the demand of the labour and employment market.

The INCLUFAR transfer strategy

The project aims to work across sectors as it address not only the agricultural VET training programs but at the same time VET in social care. Whereas well defined VET programs exist in each sector, a combined training strategy, functioning programs or best practice in VET covering both sectors are not available yet.

The INCLUFAR project will address this issue, and is adopting a transfer strategy based on two pillars:

- (1) Adaptation (linguistic, cultural, sectoral) of the existing training curricula to the needs expressed by “target partners”. The experiences and the achievements at green care centres involved as source partners in DE and NO will be combined, adapted to cover the demands and prepared for transfer focusing on:
 - (a) The rural development resp. farming sector
 - (b) The social care sector, focussing on care for people with special needs and elderly.
- (2) Participatory transfer to “target countries” where pilot organisations from the different sectors in Eastern and Southern European countries will participate. Based on their demands the transfer will be initiated through active learning experiences, a kind of “community of practice” approach.

The project will proceed through four methodological steps:

1. Assessment and definition of the transfer approach, analysis of existing needs and expressed demands from other previous projects will be reviewed, and the optimal transfer approach will be defined in consultation with the project partners.
2. Innovative curricula adaptation and combination. The existing FAMIT and Baltic Seminar curricula will be adapted, best elements selected, and lead to the INCLUFAR curriculum suitable for each partner organisation and country need.
3. Compiling of a structured handbook. The existing elements of social farming, green care and inclusive farming information will be collected, structured and made available to all stakeholders. The results will be focused in a curriculum and course content for in-service training
4. Transfer of the INCLUFAR curriculum. Through an innovative inclusive coaching approach the exporting partners transfer the handbook and the INCLUFAR-curriculum to the target partners.

The central work package of the project is the transfer through an innovative inclusive and participative approach based on coaching and mentoring elements which in turn base on the idea of forming in-service training and of learning. For this purpose eight task force teams from two partner countries each are selected to implement the transfer process

The implementation focus is the transfer of existing experiences from experienced partner enterprises to recently founded partner enterprises. First phase of this process is the assessment, revision and adaptation of existing curricular practice and tools and methodologies. A systematic transfer and coaching process during the initial implementation steps in the target countries forms the core activity of the INCLUFAR project. The methodology applies the principles of action research and participation with all partners involved. Inclusion and inclusive farming is not only the main topic of the INCLUFAR project, but will actively play a key role in all workshops and the transfer process implementation. An active, participative and inclusive approach builds the core element of the transfer process. The consortium will integrate in all steps the final beneficiaries. Actors with special care needs will pro-actively be integrated in the main project activities and work programs.



Figure 5. INCLUFAR kick off meeting on Hardebek Farm, Germany

References

- Braastad, B. O., Gallis, C., Sempik, J., Senni, S., van Elsen, T. (2007): COST Action 866 “Green Care in Agriculture” – a multi-disciplinary scientific network. – In: Gallis, C. (Hrsg., 2007): Green care in Agriculture: Health effects, Economics and Policies. 1st European COST Action 866 conference. Proceedings (Vienna, Austria), University Studio Press: 13-24, Thessaloniki.
- Di Iacovo, F.; O’Connor, D. (Hrsg.) (2009): Supporting Policies for Social Farming in Europe. Progressing Multifunctionality in Responsive Rural Areas. SoFar project: supporting EU agricultural policies. – Arsia, Florenz (Italien), 221 S.
- Hassink, J., van Dijk, M. (Ed.) (2006b): Farming for Health. Green-Care Farming across Europe and the United States of America. – Wageningen UR Frontis Series Vol. 13. Springer, 362 S.

van Elsen, T., Finuola, R. (2013): Policies and strategies of Green Care in Europe. – In: Gallis, C. (Ed.): Green Care for Human Therapy, Social innovation, Rural Economy and Education. Nova Science Publishers: 189-213, New York.

