

SUSPLUS Project:

Innovative Education towards Sustainable Food Systems

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07

Programme of Small Research Projects

Project timeframes: September 2016 – December 2018

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SUSPLUS O7 Intellectual Output comprises of a programme of the Students Small Research Projects, that have been organized in all SUSPLUS partner countries within the course of the project (between October 2017 and April 2018). SUSPLUS Small Research Projects involved students & stakeholders active in the area of the sustainable food systems in all 7 participating countries. Students (in most cases those participating in the SUSPLUS Intensive Study Programme + additionally enrolled students) cooperated with stakeholders representing sustainable food sector. Each team of 2 students was working with one stakeholder; physical & on-line meetings were organised. Students' task was to define the sustainability issues (including many perspectives), evaluate the system & identify space for improvement, find alternative solutions or best practice models. Students were supervised by lecturers from their home universities. In most participating Universities the Small Research Projects developed in SUSPLUS became a widely used learning tool, mostly incorporated in the existing courses.

Here we present the general programme of the SUSPLUS Small Research Projects (O7) describing background, content, aims, work modes and learning tools, cooperation between students and supervisors, time needed to conduct the course, assessment, credits, enrollment, number of participants, language of the course, target groups, and teachers.

This general programme, based very much on the previous experience of the project consortium, was individually modified/adjusted according to the specific situation, possibilities and needs of particular partner Universities, staying however in line with the objectives of this educational activity. Information about any such adjustments and detailed description of the activities carried out according to this programme, have been presented in the **O14 (Part 2) Intellectual Output** of the project (including the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of this teaching activity, allowing to develop recommendations on how to organise similar initiatives in the future) – the two outputs together (O7 & O14) show the complexity and innovativeness of the undertaken SUSPLUS Small Research Projects.

O7: SMALL RESEARCH PROJECTS (SRP) IN THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS - programme

GENERAL BACKGROUND: The SRP learning tool development was based on collaboration between eight European Universities: Warsaw University of Life Sciences, University of Kassel, University of Copenhagen, Technical University of Madrid, Munster University of Applied Sciences, University of Gastronomic Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, ISARA-Lyon, as a part of “Innovative Education towards Sustainable Food Systems” (SUSPLUS) project, which has the aim to develop, test and implement innovative educational materials and methods within the area of sustainable food systems.

This tool has a potential to be either an independent project, or a part of something bigger (bachelor/master thesis, university/classroom course etc.).

CONTENT: The learning tool is organised around work on real life cases that support development of the sustainable food sector. During the project, students co-operate with stakeholders active in the area of the sustainable food system. Students’ task is to: (a) Define the sustainability issues (including many perspectives), (b) Evaluate the system & identify space for improvement, (c) Find alternative solutions or best practice models, (d) Present ppt/report including photo. During the project, students are supervised by the experts in different fields related to sustainable food systems.

AIM: The Small Research Projects will allow students to:

- get a new perspective on the subject of sustainability of the food systems.
- apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems in a real life context
- carry out a small-scale project
- practice skills in oral and written presentations, and communicate in and with a group of experts
- strengthen team-working skills, ability to adapt to new situations, analytical and problem solving skills

WORK MODES AND LEARNING TOOLS: The project is carried out in mini-groups of two students. The project involves 2 such groups in each participating country. The activity consists of orientation meeting, and mid-project meeting/workshops either face-to-face or on-line, group work and visits to the chosen stakeholder organization. The supervisors help the students to choose the cases and assist in forming the groups around the cases & supervise them during the project. Project work involves interviews with stakeholders and also with other experts, and use of scientific literature, research and other source material. The groups present their findings as a report or other form of presentation.



COOPERATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS: In order to facilitate the project, the guidelines of the cooperation between the students and supervisors need to be created: (1) The project will last 8-16 weeks; (2) The meetings of the students with the supervisor will take place regularly; (3) Supervisors will provide the students with information about the project recommendations and additional literature.

The phases of the projects are as following: (1) Selection of the students – if too many students are interested to join the project, a supervisor selects best and most ambitious students; (2) Selection of the companies – a supervisor helps students to find stakeholders and to start cooperation; (4) The students start working on the projects (guided by supervisors); (5) The students present final outcomes of their work & get feedback.

DATES: The project lasts 8-16 weeks

ASSESSMENT: Each group of students produces a small report and/or presentation on their case according to the decision/circumstances of individual partner. The project can be graded or assessed as accepted/failed, depending on the project and the University. The groups receive feedback during the SRP, and also final feedback from the supervisors and if possible also stakeholders.

CREDITS: According to the workload (25-30 hours/1 ECTS).

ENROLLMENT: SUSPLUS contact person in each country is responsible for enrollment procedures.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 4 students from each Partner University

LANGUAGE: depending on the country (Polish, Italian, Spanish, Estonian, German, French, Danish)

TARGET GROUP: The project is targeted to students who study Agriculture, Human Nutrition, Food Science, Gastronomic Sciences, Environmental Sciences and related areas (life sciences).

TEACHERS: Teachers with ability to supervise the students in the projects within the topic of sustainable food systems.