

EFFORTS IN ASSISTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY POST GRADUATE COURSES IN THE ALBANIAN AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACTS

In this paper a description of the Agricultural University level post undergraduate studies in Albania is presented at a glance. Next, the 'Alliance for Vocational Agricultural Training in the Albanian Region, a joint TEMPUS and INTEREG program, aiming to educate university educators in offering continuous education in agriculture is described. Second, the TEMPUS Project: 'Strengthening the Co-Operation between Higher Education and Rural Economy: Continuing Education and Integrated Extension-Curriculum Development in two Albanian Universities' is presented. Finally, the TEMPUS Project: the Master level post graduate course 'Graduate Studies in Agricultural Management and European Studies' is described. The procedure followed and the first results of the projects are discussed.

Keywords:

TEMPUS, Master level Studies, Agricultural Extension, Agricultural Education, European Studies, Teachers Training.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the Albanian political future, after the World War II, was to be decided by events taking place elsewhere. Thus, after the German forces withdrew in 1944 and their regime in Tirana collapsed, the National Liberation Movement (Communists) had little difficulty in establishing its ascendance [1]. By 1991, Albania, along with the other former Eastern bloc countries, had overthrown its totalitarian government and established multiparty democracy. The commend economy was over, and a market economy, including the prominent agricultural sector, had to replace it. Virtually, achievement had been to restore some links with the West. Although the liberty was sweet, the years of oppression and misrule had left their scars on this small Balkan country. The poverty enforced upon the people by the ancient regime will not disappear overnight. However now they have hope and freedom, denied to Albania for so long [2].

THE SITUATION OF AGRICULTURE IN ALBANIA

The decade of the transition highlighted significant changes to the sector of agriculture as in all the other economic sectors of Albania thanks to radical political,

social and economic reforms. Among the most significant reforms one can note the reform of the ground privatization. It gave a new concept to the owner's rights, as a consequence of the new visions for the market, prices, contracts, etc.

The agrarian sector is considered priority for the Albanian Economy. Despite the changes and the progress in some rural zones of the country thanks to the implementation of several projects, the start-up of the vulgarization, the insertion and the creation of various associations of the agribusiness, etc., the current agrarian situation remain vulnerable. Several problems are obvious. Initially, according to recent statistics there is a decline of the contribution (34%) of the sector to the level of GDP. The strong dependence on the imports as well as the fact that Albania became an OMC member and signed various conventions of free trade with other countries of the region poses more responsibility. The indicators of Albanian agriculture are lower compared to other countries of transition (low level of the production, etc.).

Currently, the agrarian exploitations continue to remain under conditions of land fragmentation resulting in production unable to produce more self-sufficiency: only 20-30% of the agrarian products and the animal production are destined for the market. On the other hand, the agro alimentary processing sector underwent more significant changes: more than 95% of the agro alimentary products and aquaculture are provided by the private sector. Part of the growth of this sector is realised by the development of the spirit of private initiative by training the new contractors. Another part belongs to the foreign investments (establishment of joint ventures, especially with investors from Italy, Greece, etc.).

INTEGRATED PROGRAMS TOWARDS GRADUATE COURSES IN AGRICULTURE

The new realities of the agrarian world in Albania, as previously presented at a glance, and its problems are analysed in two different axes: the opportunities and the barriers, influencing the reinforcement of higher education. Within this framework, the Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT) as the best representative of the preparation of the superior executives in agriculture followed a significant transformation to adapt to the radically changed situation of the sector. Similarly, the Fan S. Noli University of Korca has made its own

development. Within the framework of the reorganization during the years of the transition, several national, bilateral or international projects took place. In this paper is an effort to present those projects that are relevant to the topic of the conference and can be presented in it since the actors involved in these projects are holding first hand information and experience on the matter.

There are several graduate diplomas, besides doctoral degrees offered in Albania either by the Albanian Universities or by the native universities in cooperation with foreign ones. Furthermore, several private institutions from USA and Europe offer graduate courses and their students are granted Masters or equivalent at their studies completion. In the discipline of agriculture several efforts during the decade after Albanian liberation were paid.

There are continuous efforts at 'The Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki' in helping the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) to develop Agricultural Extension Service either directly or through the Agricultural Universities (AVATAR project, Advising MAF with a PHARE Program and several TEMPUS Projects coordinated by the first author of this paper. Thus, the following projects are to be mentioned based also on the authors' experience.

1. A.V.A.T.A.R. Project

To our knowledge, an outstanding example is the project called AVATAR (Alliance for Vocational Agricultural Training in the Albanian Region). Although the attendants were not granted a higher diploma¹ such as Masters it was a project financed and administered through the TEMPUS Program and for its innovativeness it is felt necessary to be mentioned in this paper.

From other countries the participation encountered

1. The American Farm School*² (AFS) of Thessaloniki, Greece (Project coordinator).
2. The Aristotle University* of Thessaloniki (GR).
3. The Technological Educational Institute* of Thessaloniki (GR).
4. SELETE (The Teachers Training School for Vocational Education) (GR).
5. The Queens University* of Belfast (UK).
6. The East European Partnership³ (UK).
7. VOCA (Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance) (USA).
8. The Oregon State University (USA).
9. The Agricultural University of Tirana.

The main objective of the project was to assist the Agricultural University of Tirana to start the Division of Professionals of Agricultural Education whose main purpose would be to train as teachers and extension agents the

existing employees of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) of Albania who, in their turn, would train the farmers and the farmers' youth either through the Extension Service or with the Agricultural Schools scattered all over Albania.

The major outputs of The AVATAR Project during 1993-1996 include:

1. The development of the Department of Vocational Agricultural Teachers and Extension Agents at the Agricultural University of Tirana,
2. The assistance in setting policy for vocational agricultural education in Albania,
3. The assistance to the agricultural sector of Albania to be reformulated according to the market economy rules.

The training of trainers from the faculty of several agricultural Departments of the Agricultural University of Tirana was the main objective. This department, in an effort to help them become acquainted with the applicable educational methods in order to train the extension and the agricultural school personnel. Intensive courses in agricultural education, extension research, and agricultural resource management took place in Greece.

Of the basic tenets all agreed upon in education are first that a program must be based upon the needs of the target group. Second, the experience planned for the participants should enable them to be more self reliant in their jobs or private lives as they work home, and third, any program considered should seek the active assistance and input from those for whom the program is being designed. From the very beginning the team of the above Institutions followed these basic tenets and set primary targets.

The AVATAR Project Target. The primary target of the AVATAR project was to 'serve the training needs of present and future skilled farmers and agribusiness employees in Albania'.

The components included: 'Curriculum Development', 'Transfer of Agricultural Technology', 'Transfer of Entrepreneurial Skills', 'Transfer of Practical Skills Training', 'Adult Farmer Training in Partnership with Agricultural Extension Service of Albania'.

Financial Assistance. Substantial financial assistance has been provided through a number of private and governmental agencies in Albania and abroad. Among the key contributors have been:

1. The Albanian Ministry of Education.
2. The Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Food (EC PICU/PHARE Funds).
3. TEMPUS (EU).
4. INTERREG (EU through GR).
5. PHARE (EU through AL).
6. Private Foundations:
 - a. The American Farm School (GR),
 - b. Latsis Foundation (GR),
 - c. World in Harmony (E),
 - d. Open Society Foundation (AL).
7. Private Business (GR).
8. Individuals.

¹ Virginia Tech, USA is giving credit to this program for continuing graduate studies.

² * indicates these institutions that are partners of the correspondent TEMPUS/ Project.

³ An initiative of VSO (volunteers in Service Overseas), is a UK-registered charity offering skilled and committed volunteers who work at local salaries on one-to-two year contracts with their East and Central European employers.

9. Volunteer Organisations:
 - a. VOCA (USA),
 - b. East European Partnership (UK).

Conducting the Program. To implement the program, the following specific steps were followed:

1. **English Teaching.** Special intensive English courses for approximately 30 teachers were held in Korca and Berat to prepare them for further instruction at the American Farm School in Greece and in the United States of America, as well as for special short courses in management and marketing in Albania.
2. **Curriculum Preparation.** Specialists from the Albanian Ministry of Education, the Agricultural University of Tirana and the American Farm School in Greece with the assistance of short term vocational agricultural educators from the United States of America prepared the curriculum for two-year vocational agricultural school and one-year courses and subsequently for the five-year agricultural school.
3. **Textbooks and lab manuals.** The above specialists guided the textbooks and the laboratory manuals preparation for the training of the students with particular emphasis on mechanical and agricultural skill training, which would be used in connection with the training at the Agricultural University of Tirana.
4. **Farm workshops.** Workshops were constructed at each of the two schools and the Agricultural University of Tirana for the practical training of students.
5. **University vocational agricultural management education.** The Agricultural University of Tirana organised a coordinating committee to operate the training among university level graduates and future university students and to secondary school graduates to become the trainers in the new farm workshops.
6. **American Farm School courses.** The AFS organised, under INTERREG II, one short course (four days) in November 1992 for 20 persons from the two agricultural schools at Berat and Korca including community leaders, as well as from the MoE, MAF, and the AUT to study ways in which cooperation between Greece and Albania can be further developed. A second course took place from May 15, 1993 to June 30, 1993 for the teaching staff of the two schools as well as trainers of trainers from the Agricultural University.
7. **American Farm School technical assistance.** Specialists from among the faculty or retirees from the American Farm School assisted in the preparation of curricula and the design of the workshops for approximately one week per month between November 1992 and March 1993.
8. **Peace Corps volunteers.** Two groups of Peace Corps Volunteers assisted in this program: two teachers of English assigned to Berat and Korca for the Agricultural Schools there and two volunteers with Future Farmers of America experience to assist in the farm and shop training.

9. **Private agribusiness management course.** Land-O-lakes provided one week course entitled "Introduction to Private Agribusiness management" for the teaching staff of the two schools to make them more capable teachers of management for students who will themselves be agribusiness farmers, cooperative managers, and entrepreneurs.

Evaluating the Program. It was difficult to believe for miracles when in 1992 the Albanian Government was only beginning to formulate a new policy on vocational agricultural education, or that no plan existed for the development of a Department for the Preparation of Vocational Agricultural Teachers at the Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT). In less than one year, through the combined efforts of the MoE, MAF, and AUT there are two Pilot Agricultural Schools at Korca and Berat with a combined first-year enrolment of 194 boys and girls, 20 additional schools in operation which will eventually be patterned after the two models, and a newly organised department for the Preparation of Agricultural Vocational Teachers and Staff of Agricultural Extension at the AUT which had to train the teachers for these schools as well as for the future extension programs of the MAF⁴ [3].

The evaluation of the program was a continuous process asking information formally and informally about the product and the process followed. The "product" of the evaluation refers, in this case, in the human and more specifically, the changes or improvements which took place in their behaviour as a result of their educational experience. The process aspect of evaluation consists of the procedures, ways and means which were used by those conducting the program and the target groups in learning, in conducting classroom and laboratory discussions as well as in conducting the whole program.

The positive evaluation had driven to the attempt to propose to European Union for a second face of the AVATAR program which was granted. A new contract was sign among the same Albanian Institutions and partners from abroad under the coordination of the American farm School.

Under this new agreement the project was to result in:

1. Professional Development of 15 teaching and administrative staff.
2. Equipping teaching laboratories.
3. Team-building among partners with rural area social partners (educators, extension agents, administrators, agricultural research staff, agribusiness men; and farmers).
4. Establishment of priority skills as targets for rural vocational education and extension.
5. Recommendations for national policy in rural vocational education and extension to relevant Albanian governing bodies (MoE; MAF; Ministry of Labour).

We complete this part of the presentation by quoting from Bruce Lansdale [4]. "The accomplishments of the

⁴ Little remains in action after the destruction of the country in 1998.

AVATAR Project in such a short time have been little short of phenomenal. At the same time, one is somewhat taken aback by the challenge of what has to be accomplished during the coming few years to live up to the expectations of everyone working on the program, but particularly the students of the schools and their parents. If the enthusiasm and zeal of the faculty of the schools of Korca and Berat and of the Department of the AUT is in any way an indicator, then surely all those associated with this project can look ahead filled with confidence and optimism".

2. TEMPUS PROJECT: UM_JEP-13456-98. "Continuing Education and Integrated Extension-Curriculum Development in two Albanian Universities"

This project is directly aimed towards developing and strengthening education at two universities and other partner institutions in Albania. This was to be done through staff development, curricula development and the provision of relevant and practical support materials. It has significantly strengthened the institutions to provide more appropriate education and training.

The project has created links with partners in different countries which will continue after the project ceases. With current levels of IT, it is now possible for continuing exchange of academic material and ideas. The partners from East and West have already collaborated in preparing and presenting a number of papers and this collaboration will continue.

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

1. Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki (Co-ordinator), Greece
2. Development Agency of Karditsa, Greece
3. University College Dublin, Ireland
4. Agricultural University of Tirana
5. "Fan S. Noli" University of Korca
6. Albanian Fertiliser and Agri-Business Dealers' Association (AFADA)/IFDC
7. Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Albania

Aims Agreed

1. Improving the responsiveness of undergraduate education to changing environments.
2. Equipping the graduates with competencies relevant to their placements in Public or Private Extension Services.
3. Contributing to life long learning of Albanian farmers.

Objectives Agreed

1. To develop agricultural extension curricula for undergraduate and continuing education.
2. To support the development of an extension laboratory in each of the two agricultural universities and to use these laboratories as information and extension centres.
3. To build a database named "Agroshqip" capturing information about agricultural events in Albania. (Available to all interested parties).
4. To produce a videotape on Albanian Agricultural Extension.

All objectives approved and supported financially were achieved.

Undergraduate: The two universities not only are in position to offer agricultural extension education as an undergraduate course but also have already started to do so. In order to make this possible, the two universities have made the reorganisation of their departments. Faculty members were appointed to undertake the teaching of the course. For this, three faculty members were appointed at the Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT). One of them was also the Dean of the Agricultural Faculty and the other two were hired recently to enable some of the material, as the curricula recommend, to be taught either in the laboratory by one of them or in classroom by the other one. At Fan S. Noli University of Korca there was appointed, right from the beginning of the TEMPUS project, one faculty member to teach the course. Later, for unexpected reasons, another one was appointed and he is already teaching the undergraduate course (theory and laboratory).

Both universities have decided to include the extension course in the outline of all agricultural departments. In most departments the course is compulsory and in other cases it is elective.

Continuing education: The faculties of both universities are prepared to provide continuing education to individuals sent by their employers to receive such training. In fact, already the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Albania had requested, from the beginning, the provision of such seminars. Of course, the staff working at each of the universities is not enough for providing all kinds of training as recommended in each module. But, as recommended in each module, additional staff can be employed mainly from other participating in the project institutions (MAF and IFDC). Furthermore, the two other participating institutions are prepared to provide such training to their staff in cases where the universities are not able due to financial or bureaucratic obstacles. Both IFDC and MAF have already provided such training as presented in the TEMPUS project modules.

The project has produced the set of curricula (undergraduate and continuing education) as described in the proposal. Furthermore, it was felt there was a need to produce for undergraduate courses not only theory curricula but also curricula for the extension laboratory. Thus, an additional practical lab based curriculum was prepared and it is applied in both universities.

2. Outputs and Activities

The ultimate outcomes of the project were to set up:

- a) One curriculum, printed in a book format, for the undergraduate courses offered by both beneficiary universities.
- b) Curricula, printed in a book format, for continuing education (ten modules) for offering extension seminars and courses (in-service training) for the MAF and for the AFADA extension staff and to any other agency interested to train its extension staff.

Thanks to the staff of MAF and IFDC/AFADA which were selected and participated in the project, the real needs of the extension people working in both institutions were identified and the modules created cover these needs.

c) Training of 15 Albanians in curriculum development, extension methodology and other relevant extension topics.

The Institutions where participants were from are:

- a) Agricultural University of Tirana (four persons),
 - b) "Fan S. Noli" University of Korca (three persons),
 - c) International Fertiliser Development Center, Albania (four persons),
 - d) Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Albania (four persons).
- d) Development of four laboratories in AUT, 'Fan S. Noli', MAF, and AFADA. The cost for the two laboratories of the universities was covered by the TEMPUS project and were in operation from the first year of the project. The other two of MAF and IFDC were updated. The cost was covered by them.
- e) The development of a Transfer Technology Unit. Provided by IFDC/AFADA's cost and it is offered for use to all extension units of the participating institutions for training students, extension staff and for the benefit of the Albanian farmer.
- f) 90' Video: Agricultural Extension in Albania.
- g) Information Center controlled by the Extension laboratories of each institution.

Teaching materials. The materials developed were of three kinds:

- a) Equipment for the two laboratories of extension developed (one in each University). This equipment included PCs, printers, projectors, photocopiers, Internet installation and multimedia projectors.
- b) A database developed by the participants in order to collect information about all the agricultural activities in Albania [5] [6].
- c) A video tape (about one and half hour long) describing the agricultural extension in Albania (history, objectives, methods etc.).

Activities during the two years.

- a) In Albania: Three one-week work-seminars and two evaluation meetings (end of each year).
- b) In Greece: Two one-week courses.
- c) In Ireland: Two one-week courses.
- d) In Hungary (Eger): Team members participated in the 'Conference on Central and Eastern European Agricultural Extension'.
- e) Coordination and Monitoring on: Curricula Development, Extension Lab development, 'Agroshqip' database formation & information input and Extension videotape production.

Communicating Efforts. Effort was put to inform on activities & products the:

- Authorities of receiving Institutions: Leading officials of MAF, Rectors of AUT and F.NOLI (Korca), IFDC Chief of Party.
- TEMPUS Authorities: Headquarters, Tirana, Athens.
- Local Community: Tirana activities, Korca activities.
- TEI of Thessaloniki president and faculty of School of Agricultural Technology.

This project had sustainability as a core focus from its inception. The partners in the project involve a mix of academic and more front line institutions/partners. As mentioned earlier the curricula are already being implemented as part of the ongoing work of the Albanian institutions which were involved in the project. These will continue to be further developed over time as new materials become available (which can be easily accessed via World Wide Web and through linking to partners' web sites which are now being developed. They can serve as models of best practice for other departments and faculties in the respective universities. The database has the possibility to develop into a very useful source of information on many aspects of agriculture and agricultural education. Individual academic friendships have been established through the training programmes which continue in existence and as mentioned earlier these friendships have already led to a number of joint publications from the partners.

Conclusions. For a TEMPUS project to be successful it requires a very significant input from the Western partner institutions. When courses are delivered they are often developed specifically for the partner institutions. If this does not happen then one is dealing with TEMPUS tourism and not real development/supportive projects. The East West mobility again involves significant time in arranging visas, writing invitation letters, booking accommodation etc. all of which takes considerable time. These efforts and inputs are not always appreciated by the programme as a considerable cost with little gain accrues to these institutions.

There should be a facility for follow up a year after the project has ceased to allow for reinforcement and evaluation of progress. This would also help to consolidate links between the institutions.

These projects play a very significant role in bringing East West institutions into closer co-operation. There is considerable exchange in information in both directions. It is this exchange of information that makes TEMPUS worthwhile.

The most important achievement of the project is the establishment of an interactive student centred approach to learning, with the emphasis placed on the student and not on the teacher/lecturer. This can only occur when people gain confidence in this method, which only comes with a well developed curriculum with well developed learning materials. The linking of universities with relevant non academic institutions is also a very important achievement.

3. TEMPUS PROJECT: CD_JEP-15061-2000.

“Graduate Studies in Agricultural Management and European Studies”

The Situation of Agriculture in Albania. Because of the importance of the mountainous zone, the forest and the natural pastures (76% of the total surface), the agricultural activity in Albania concentrates on the valleys located by the sea. If this country remains a rural country (2/3 of the population), it does not have an agricultural vocation in terms of exports (in value, those represent 12%, and the trade balance export/import is very unbalanced [7]. It is to ignore the contribution of agriculture, the animal production and the fishing in national self consuming.

The agrarian structure, resulting from the dismantling of the great structures, is based on the very small properties which due to lack of rational management is oriented towards productions of strong added value, but work force demanding (fruits, vegetables, tobacco) or on the contrary extensive (sheep, goat), even resulting from the collection (snail, fish, etc.).

This situation, a priori unfavourable, had however various recent successes, demonstrating the existence of agricultural potentialities which are based on various actions aiming at:

- Supporting the irrigation of vegetables, (IMF program and bilateral assistance),
- Stimulating the local livestock productions (project KONOCO, sheep/goat at Korce etc.),
- Supporting, in the technological plan and management, the agro nutritious companies (Afif/Caca project of milk transformation by IFDC),
- Better organizing the management of the farms and the agro industrial companies, the collection and the marketing of the agricultural products.

Despite the various difficulties, largely lying on the absence of democratic tradition since 1924 and the perversion of the financial field, there has been assistance for a slow increase in the productivity and the development of the agribusiness. It's not the first time that in a country without experience, nor references, the transition between a central economy and a market economy requires time, but especially the education of qualified executives.

In the agricultural, agro alimentary or environmental field, the granted experience in EU proves that it is preferable to educate engineers specialized in agriculture on agricultural management, considered in its broad sense, rather than economists who aren't actually aware of the agrarian field. The project is based on this report and uses a scheme which became traditional for training in agricultural management applied in the majority of the agronomic universities of the EU.

The Agricultural Higher Education and its Needs. The serious events of 1997 have destabilized the Albanian higher education by the destruction of the university infrastructures (for example, at the AUT, plundering of the library and the data-processing material, destruction of the equipment...) and the departure of teachers.

Target groups.

Initially, it appeared necessary to reform the competences of the educators, in particular in the abandoned field of economic sciences and management.

On a second stage, it was necessary to set up a post graduation level (3rd circle) in order to allow students to:

- Acquire a double competence, technical (initial training) and economic (3rd circle), enabling them to adapt to the labour market and to a rapidly changing socioeconomic field.
- Insert their activity in a Western European context, thanks to the knowledge of the territorial policies and legislations.

The analysis of the needs expressed by the agricultural universities. The analysis realized by AUT shows that the former TEMPUS programs that benefited the University were oriented towards:

- The adaptation of course in technological fields, in precise: production of wood (S-JEP 4959-92; S-JEP 09866-95), of olive (S-JEP 06123-93),
- The disciplinary reorganization and the creation of new departments: veterinary medicine (S-JEP 11034-96), agro zootechnology (S-JEP 04831-92), agro economy (S-JEP 6130-93), agro environment (AC-JEP 04881-99),
- University management (UM JEP 13100-98; S-JEP 6127-93).
- Despite the existence of post graduation schools (Veterinary Medicine, environment management, horticulture, wood production, manufacture and distribution channel, system of animal production), there isn't a 3rd circle in agricultural management that would include European studies.

Specific Objective. The project aims, in the short run, at five major objectives:

- To consolidate the third circle like a formula of education, for the integration of higher education of Albania in the organization that became traditional in the EU,
- Create a high level training formation, according to a European, Western, “model” taking advantage of the valuable support of EU partners (see members of the consortium),
- To give the educators of the Albanian Universities of Agriculture of Tirana and Korce with competences in agricultural management (exploitations, companies), in economic analysis and theory, European policies including territories. In any case, it acts as complementary expertise,
- To make students familiar with a double technological competence (initial education) and economic in management, allowing them a better professional insertion. Indeed, the current educational system, trains students in a narrow expertise ⁵, limiting his/her professional choice in

⁵ The case doesn't refer just to Albania but to Agricultural Universities in all the PECO countries in FYROM, BIH...

the event of economic change; a double competence allows greater flexibility,

- To prepare a more significant flow of student mobility (realization of thesis), by submitting for example a TEMPUS project for student mobility.
- A medium term (3-4 years) objective, under the prerequisite of verifying that the quality of the education is in compliance with that of the Western European standards would be to insert this 3rd circle in a European master.

Origin of the consortium. The Albanian consortium includes the sole two Agricultural Universities of Albania: Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT) and “Fan S. Noli” University of Korca. This consortium also includes the IFDC (International Fertilizer Development Center) which intervenes at the international level within the under development countries of the world (Asia, Africa, Latin America) and the new democracies of Eastern and Central Europe, Albania included. Among the development projects realized within this country, we refer the contribution to the distributors of entrants, to the agro alimentary companies, and more recently to its new program AAATA (Assistance with Albanian Associations of the Agricultural Trade).

The EU partners of the consortium, mainly selected for their geographic Mediterranean location or for their linguistic pairing (Italian), have for a long time cooperated in European programs: TEMPUS⁶ in PECO (BG, PL, FYROM, RO...), TACIS in Moldavia, ALFA I in Latin America. Several of these universities are members of the international master in rural development or of European masters.

Several of these universities have participated in TEMPUS projects with Albania: U degli studi di Firenze (S-JEP 4959-92); TEI of Thessaloniki (S-JEP 6127-93; UM JEP 13456-98); U de Cordoba, Agricultural University of Athens (S-JEP 06132-93).

The apparent great number of EU universities is explained:

- On one hand by their expertise in certain fields (territorial policy in I; economic analysis and theory F-B; agricultural management E-GR),
- On the other hand, so that the student mobility outlined in the project could be implemented in various countries and on various subjects.

There has also been an association with two PECO experts respectively from the USAMV Bucarest⁷ of the department of “Management Marketing and Rural Economic” and USAMVBT Timisoara (Faculty of

Economic Engineering), which has realized two TEMPUS projects on a relevant subject (S-JEP 12316-97 and S-JEP 12504-97). Independently of their competence, these two educators were able to certify the accomplished progress and the encountered difficulties in their country as regards agricultural management. Likewise, they were able to contribute to increase the students’ interest, to acquire a double competence.

Project’s Description

The project has a duration of two years, due to financial reasons and also because in several EU countries (B, F.) the duration of the post graduation covers one year. Prudence would have without doubt desired to submit a project of over 3 years, but one needed to rely on the dynamism of the AUT which has already implemented 11 TEMPUS projects (1992-1999) and knew the operation of the program well. In addition, it should be stressed that the preliminary year of the 3rd circle will be strongly enhanced by EU partners.

This joint project of both Agricultural Universities of Albania includes:

- A preparatory year of the 3rd circle, with common principal activities:
- Definite conception of the program of studies, its organization and its accreditation by the Ministry of Education and Science,
- The realization of preparatory activities for the establishment of the 3rd circle, such as:
 - Further training of Albanian educators in EU partner universities,
 - Complementary linguistic training (students, educators) and preparatory activities for mobility,
 - Before hand information of the students on the set up of this training and its prerequisites,
 - The sensitization of the professional environment and the civil society to the educational project,
 - Supply of pedagogic material and equipment for the benefit of the students, the creation of an Office of international relations,

The second year was concentrated on the education of the 3rd circle itself, uniting 20 to 25 selected students, to attend courses as follows:

- Six months of theoretical and practical teaching, realized in the same place (AUT) for all the students, whatever their origin university. The lessons were mainly carried out by EU partners (and PECO experts) of the consortium, with the contribution of the educators of the two Albanian universities.
- Six months of internship, realized in EU by 10 students, and the remaining to realize this service in Albania.
- It was scheduled to submit, in March 2001, a PEC project for student mobility within the framework of the consortium.

Implementation Period: 2000-2004

⁶ Projects TEMPUS PECO with EU partners quote: BG (S-Jep-0990595; M-JEP 11008-; CME 3106-97; AC-JEP 13168-98), PL (IP-JEP-14205-1999), FYROM (S-JEP 12127-97), RO (S-JEP-09187-95; CME 02050-96; S-JEP 11080-96; S JEP 12504-97; CME 3058-97), TACIS (CD-CP-20513-1999). ALFA Programs (n° ALR/B7-3011/94.04-1498 no4.01329).

⁷ USAMVB - University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest RO.
USAMVBT - University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat Timisoara (RO)

Partners

Albanian partners:

- Agricultural University of Tirana
- University “Fan Noli”, Korçe
- IFDC/AATA⁸, Tirana

Foreign partners:

- Agrena-ENSAR⁹; Portugal
- ENSAM¹⁰, Portugal
- Institut National Supérieur de Formation Agroalimentaire de Rennes, Portugal;
- Universiteit Race, Belgium;
- Università degli Studi di Perugia, Italy;
- Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy;
- Università degli Studi di Pissa, Italy;
- International Technical Assistance & Consulting Associates, Italy;
- Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece;
- Université de Tras os Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal.

Objectives. The principal objectives of the TEMPUS project aimed at:

- The development of the 3rd circle in “Agricultural Management and European Studies” to integrate Albanian higher education with that of the EU countries;
- The creation of a high level training in compliance with the Western standards;
- The training of the Albanian teachers with higher competences in agricultural management;
- To equip the Albanian students with a double competence, technological and economic;
- The preparation for the first time of the student mobility towards the countries of the partners of the project (thesis);
- The opportunity to integrate the 3rd circle in a European Master.

Follow-up information on the project’s objectives.

1. **The manpower of students:** Recruitment of 18 people out of 20 candidates established on criteria, with our agreement, by the AUT Tirana. Recruitment took place in January 2002. Formation started in March 2002 with one month of intensive courses of language (12 hours seminar – English and French).
2. **Master itself:**
 - A. Has free teaching (payment run by Tempus).
 - B. Duration: 18 months (22/04/2002 – at the end of June 2003).
 - C. Teaching by modules: 6 modules, on the whole 460 hours.
3. **Loads of teaching:** Almost the whole of the courses was covered by partners UE (B, F, GR., I) that is to say 14 teachers. Albanian has realised two courses on the whole for approximately 30 hours. Five Albanian

teachers were in further training in UE for 3 weeks after having 3 weeks among the partners in 2002.

4. **Report of end of studies.** Ten students have realised their training course in UE (2 B; M; 3 P; 3 F) of January has semi June 2003. Defence has the AUT June the 23, and 24 2003.
5. **Accreditation:** the master is accredited (at the end of December 2002) by decision of the Prime Minister after agreement of Senate of the AUT and the Ministry for Superior Teaching (Documents of the 07/01/2003).
6. **Durability:** the decision to open one second training in September 2003 has formally taken by Senate and the Rector of the AUT.

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⁸ Assistance to Albanian Agricultural Trade Associations

⁹ Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique de Rennes

¹⁰ Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique de Montpellier