OPTIMAL

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Optimised Training, Innovative Methods and tools for Acceptance of prior Learning in qualifications and workplace training.

Erasmus Pluss Project targeting the Blue Education Sector

ABOUT

The consortium brings together professionals from vocational education and training, industry experience though companies representing the blue production sector, social partners representing one teacher union organisation and the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP).

The partnership is going to investigate how delivery of VET to work based learners through the application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) methodologies and tools, allow teachers and instructors to optimise their training towards the most challenging topics and concepts with individuals or groups of learners.

BACKGROUND

The fish farming industry in Europe employs approximately 85,000 staff and a further 120,000 work in the support services. The EU seafood market sources 10% of its fish from EU fish farming, 25% from fisheries and 65% from imports. Norway, the largest producer, provides 36 million salmon meals daily.

Fish represent 50% of all consumed protein and levels are anticipated to rise to 65% by 2030, reflecting a growth rate globally of 6.6% per annum. Conversely, despite ambitious national growth targets the industry is stagnant. The lack of personnel with the correct skills and qualifications is becoming widely recognised as one of the main obstacles to sustainable growth in production. The industry is becoming increasingly sophisticated leading to specialisation within the workforce. However, the lack of accessible specialist training in operating the more advanced equipment and technologies has led to inefficiency and fish losses.

At the farm level, throughout Europe, workforce development challenges are exacerbated by the remote rural location of many facilities. Consequently, the reliance on local recruits is growing, many of whom have knowledge and skills gaps and remain unqualified following a significant period of initial employment. This is typified by Norway, where only 50% of their salmon husbandry staff has completed any relevant education leading to qualifications (2014). In some countries, such as Scotland and Norway, where migrant labor is prevalent, the language and culture barriers to learning are intensifying, necessitating a more individualised approach to learning.

PARTNERSHIP

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RESULTS

Evaluating alternative RPL processes and technology being applied within innovative VET delivery systems, identifying best practice for sharing.

Piloting new, cost effective and user friendly RPL methods and ICT tools that can determine and document evidence of a learners' existing knowledge and skills, for acceptance as formal competences within respected fish farming qualifications.

Evaluating the learners' experiences of the RPL process and the subsequent delivery of their individualised learning plan, to inform the development of improved RPL systems.

Developing new specifications for improved RPL methodologies and tools, informed by learner and employer feedback during the piloting and evaluation phase.

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