

Project Agreement No: *KA226-04117F21*

IO1: EcoOils Learning Model



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1. About the project

The consortium is formed by:



- CDE Petra Patrimonia, France
- Université Européenne des Saveurs et Senteurs, France
- UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA, Spain
- Molise verso il 2000 scrl, Italy
- AVA Creations Foundation, Bulgaria
- MCE Mesogeiaiko Kentro Perivallontos, Greece

ECOOILS's ultimate aim is to develop a multidisciplinary, interactive & comprehensive training programme in the production and marketing of aromatic plant and essential oils. It goes a step further to ensure that more is done in terms of promoting aromatic plants and essential oils as part of the intangible cultural heritage of the European Union.

Over the past decade, lavender production has doubled, to about 65 tons a year. Between 2011 and 2019, the imports of essential oils increased by almost 68% in terms and 22% in terms of volume of value in EU. In global competition, the maintenance and competitiveness of the European aromatic plant production and processing sector requires strengthening of quality approaches, and in particular towards organic and natural labels which meet the growing demands of consumers, contribute to the preservation of the environment, and are more profitable.

In adopting a blended learning approach, the ECOOILS partnership expects to develop a tailored training programme that is suitable to anyone who does not have the time or the possibility to attend formal academic courses, which are generally of a longer duration.

ECOOILS will be executed transnationally in order to develop a comprehensive product that is applicable to current aromatic plants and eco oils producers that want to switch in organic production or improve their organic productions technique, on an EU level.

2. Learning model

ECOOILS learning model provides the didactic methodology for the training course and the Manual for trainers. The model combines all pedagogical methods derived from partners' theoretical backgrounds and practical experiences that are applicable and relevant to the project topic and the target group of aromatic plant and essential oils producers. It defines and describes the base for the content development of the course & manual as well as the structure of the technical implementation of the web-platform.

2.1 Learning model objectives

- To create a pedagogical framework, derived from the eLearning approach;
- To define an “instructional design” (character, scope, order and depth of teaching material) addressing the specific needs of aromatic plant and essential oil producers;
- To integrate clear pedagogical approach that stimulates the active, inclusive and experiential learning into the ECOOILS learning environment using collaborative and individual learning processes for aromatic plant and essential oil producers and their employees;

2.2 Key components of the ECOOILS learning model

- Structure of the units including online and with possibilities of on-site components;
- Synchronous and asynchronous communication;
- Individual and collaborative learning plans;
- Educators' facilitation and enquiry pedagogy;
- Community learning, virtual study groups etc. (learning and social development work with individuals and groups using a range of informal methods with activities developed in dialogue with participants; both in site and online model);
- Application of web-resources for collaboration (material available for self-study);
- Additional trainings (provided if necessary, according to the participant needs);
- Good practices and the partners' experience in the development of e-learning and on-site training based on the information on the needs of the aromatic plants and essential oils producers and on the results from the discussions with the key-players.

Asynchronous activities allow participants to connect according to their own needs and schedules, in a way that participants exchange ideas or information independently of the participation of other participants.

Synchronous activities enable real-time communication, i.e. they are based on the principle of "same time, different place", as opposed to asynchronous activities which are based on the principle of "different place, different time". Synchronous communication allows the participants to connect and exchange information at the same time; with one or more participants.

3. Methodology

To collect data on the proposed goals in creation the learning model, following tools were developed and used:

1. Online survey design for trainers, experts, consumers, producers and potential participants of the envisioned training course;
2. Focus group discussion with producers of aromatic plant and essential oil;
3. Desk research on project documents, didactic methodology and learning models' structure;

3.1 Online survey

Description:	The survey is being used to gather information about the experiences, learning needs and preferable approaches which will support further creation of ECOOILS Learning Model. ECOOILS learning model will provide the didactic methodology for future training course and development of manual for trainers.
Locations & Partners:	Survey was implemented online involving all countries where the project has been implemented. Overall, 66 respondents completed the survey, out of planned 60 (12 per partner organization) which were defined as sample.
Means of Verification:	Dataset generated based on the received responses to designed online survey.
Sources of data:	Producers of Aromatic Plant Producers (39%), Essential Oil producers (14%) trainers/experts (20%), consumers (16%), aspiring producers (10%) and other individuals interested in the project implementation.
Frequency of data collection:	One-time data collection, responses received in the period from November 15 th 2021 to March 15 th , 2022.

3.2 Focus group

Description:	Focus group discussion was held with producer of aromatic plants and essential oils and experts' agronomists in order to collect their best practice examples and recommendations when it comes to ECOOILS learning model development.
Locations & Partners:	Focus group sessions were organized in all five participating countries by all partner organizations.
Means of Verification:	Partner reports and minutes
Sources of data:	Producers of aromatic plants and essentials oil, experts in agronomy, trainers, educators, consumers, interested training participants, etc.
Frequency of data collection:	One-time data collection from November to March 2022.

As far as data collection tools were concerned, the conduction of the research involved the use of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was used as a focus group guide for the

interviewers. Most of the questions were prepared, so as for the interviewers to guide the focus groups towards the satisfaction of research objectives. Nonetheless, the interviewers were allowed to ask additional questions related to their local/national context during their focus group sessions.

The questions that were included in the semi-structured questionnaire and used in the focus group sessions were the following:

Focus group: participant profiles (affiliation, experience, expectations)
1. In your opinion, what are the key learning needs of future participants regarding Production of Organic Aromatic Plants and their transformation in Organic Essential Oils ? Any results/best practice examples related to this topic that would be useful for the rest of partners.
2. In your opinion, what are the key learning needs of future participants regarding Marketing of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils ? Any results/best practice examples related to this topic that would be useful for the rest of partners.
3. In your opinion, what are the key learning needs of future participants regarding Digital technology in the practice of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils professionals ? Any results/best practice examples related to this topic that would be useful for the rest of partners.
4. In your opinion, what are key learning needs of the future participants regarding Relationship of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils with Agritourism, rural area accommodation and Tourism diversification ? Any results/best practice examples related to this topic that would be useful for the rest of partners.
5. In your opinion, how should the learning processes and experiences be structured? Which on-site (if possible) and e-learning components are the most feasible for you in a blended learning setting? Do you have any preferences, regarding the learning process?
6. In your opinion, what kind of learning support to participants is essential? E.g. Individual and collaborative learning plans, mentoring, peer-to-peer support, additional courses, best practice examples, online study visits, etc. In terms of content, how much and what should be available for self-studying on the platform and in general? (e.g. repository of materials, video tutorials, live sessions with experts, etc.) What should be the role and place of the trainer during the training course? How should the trainers organize and facilitate the learning process? (scope, objectives, milestones, tools).
7. How would you engage participants to share their expertise/practice in the field of aromatic plant and essential oils production?
8. In your opinion, what is the best way to empower local actors to collaborate and thus improve their businesses in the sector? In your opinion, who are the key stakeholders in your local communities?
9. How do you envision boosting links between the local stakeholders? Can you share some examples of good practices that may be replicated or that may provide a framework for community learning? (e.g. learning and social development work with individuals and groups using a range of informal methods with activities developed in dialogue with participants);
10. How much and what type of content should be available for additional research and study on the respective topic?

11. How should the final assessment be organized and what kind and type of tests/tasks should be asked/assigned? (e.g. evaluation form, pre/post course testing to measure individual improvements in competences, impact self-assessment 6 months after training course completion, etc.)
12. Following successful training completion, what would be the most suitable follow-up session for participants, in your opinion? (e.g. mentoring one-on-one session, study visits, post course check in on progress, impact assessment, monthly educational meetings, feedback sessions based on covered topics, etc.)
13. Further questions and/or suggestions

The questions that were included in the online survey were the following:

1. Please select country of your current residence	a) France b) Greece c) Italy d) Spain e) Bulgaria
2. Please specify your age range	a) 18-24 b) 25-39 c) 40-64 d) 65+
3. When it comes to aromatic plant and essential oils producers, do you identify yourself primarily as	a) Producer b) Trainer/Expert c) Consumer d) Aspiring producer/trainer e) Other (please specify)
4. Would you be willing to participate in a training course that tackles topics regarding aromatic plant and essential oils producers?	A) Yes B) No C) Maybe (please elaborate your answer)
5. If answer on the previous question was maybe, could you please elaborate further on this.	
6. What level of intensity of the training course you would find most beneficial?	a) Intensive (completed within a week) b) Less intensive (one session per week) c) Self-paced (readily available training content to be accessed on demand)

<p>7. What do you expect from a trainer in an online and semi-autonomous process?</p> <p>Please rank the following aspects of support based on their importance to you on the scale from 1 to 4 (where 1 is the least important and 4 the most important)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Only a precise agenda and topics' descriptions b) Assessment of your learning needs. c) Info packs with more details on project and training, further elaboration on topics that will be covered and short bio from trainers d) Preliminary reading materials (published materials, manuals, guidebooks, etc.)
<p>8. If you are planning to – or already - run a business that operates in the sector of aromatic plant and essential oils producers, which of the following topics would be of most interest to you?</p> <p>Please rank the following topics based on their importance to you on the scale from 1 to 6 (where 1 is the least important and 6 the most important)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Production of Organic Aromatic Plants and their transformation in Organic Essential Oils. b) Marketing and communication c) Digital technology in the practice of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils professionals. d) Relationship of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils with Agritourism, rural area accommodation and Tourism diversification. e) Certification process in Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils. f) Agronomic knowledge related to the cultivation of organic aromatic plants. g) Relationship between the farm and the transformation process and its environment (example: impact of the cultivation of organic aromatic plants on biodiversity, the landscape; impact of the essential oil transformation process on water, waste management)
<p>9. If there is any other topic that hasn't been on the previous list and you think it should be covered, please specify here.</p>	<p>Short answer</p>
<p>10. How would you like to have your chosen topics presented?</p> <p>Please rank the following methods based on your preferences and learning style on the scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is the least important and 5 the most important)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Presentation with expert input b) Short video tutorials c) Online panel discussions d) Written manuals and guidebooks e) Cases of best practices, as told by producers operating in the sector

11. If there is any other method that hasn't been on the previous list and you think it should be used, please specify here.	Short answer
12. Following successful training completion, what would be your ideal follow-up session in order to support your learning path?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Mentoring, one-on-one sessions b) Study visits to local aromatic plant and essential oil producers c) Seasonal educational seminars d) Other (please specify)
13. If you chose other in the previous question, could you please elaborate further on this.	Short answer
14. How would you like this training to be evaluated? (possible to select more answers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Written and oral evaluation b) Pre/post course testing to measure individual improvements in competences c) Impact self-assessment (e.g. six months after training course completion)
15. This project has envisioned a learning platform creation. Please rank the following tools based on their importance for further support of your learning path on the scale from 1 to 4 (where 4 is the most important and 1 the least important)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Repository of best practices b) Peer-to-peer connections with other aromatic plant and essential oils producers c) Guest posts/blogs by other aromatic plant and essential oils producers d) Production guide, tools and templates
16. Would you like to add any further comments or suggestions?	(Long answer)

4. Key findings on ECOOILS learning model

This report will provide key findings summarizing conducted research that includes both online survey and focus group sessions implemented by all partners organizations. These findings aim to support the creation of a unique ECOOILS learning model that provides the didactic methodology for the training course and the Manual for trainers.

4.1 Key objectives from the training course

Based on the received responses and the discussion during the focus group session, it is evident that there is an interest amongst the respondents and focus group experts on this

growing field of knowledge aromatic plant and essential oil producers. All partners have identified similar fields for capacity building when it comes to aromatic plant and essential oils business.

Key objectives of the upcoming training course should be related to:

1. Improving skills and competencies of aromatic plant and essential oils producers from production to digital marketing and develop network among local and European producers.
2. Educating aromatic plants producers and essential oil producers to improve skills in organic production and transformation of aromatic plants, course target AOP e EOE producers, that already know the key knowledge.
3. Building capacities of trainees regarding key elements in a business start-up such as business strategy, marketing and communication, finance and administration, digital, technology and equipment, and operations;
4. Improve and create partnership among producers of aromatic plant and essential oils. Networking work as a boost to attract more potential consumers and increase interest in the theme both locally and internationally.
5. Emphasize the importance of organic productions for aromatic plants and essential oils to promote this technique of cultivation among producers and public.

4.2 Preferable learning styles and methods

Mostly respondents have opted for an online course that could include possibilities on-site experience and tutor/mentoring sessions.

More than 50% of respondents among all partners, is interested in a self-placed training course or, if the training is not self-paced, a less intensive course with up to one session per week. They've argued that an interesting, user-friendly and well-structured online course, that will contain video tutorial with experts, presentation of success story and case studies together with an adequate repository of print-ready materials available on demand, would be the best way to attract course participants. Ensuring direct contact aromatic plant and essential oils producers either online or on-site has been underpinned many times. Having a series of tutorials regarding key aspects of setting up organic aromatic plants and essential oils production businesses has been mentioned as a highly effective approach.

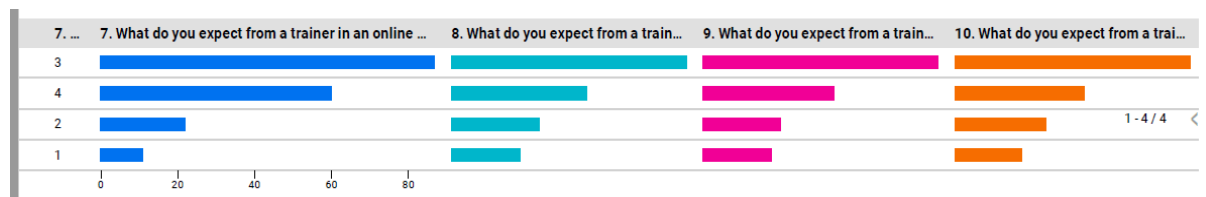
4.3 Role of trainer/expert

Regarding preparatory work and role of trainers, respondents in the survey mostly reflected on short guide with more details on the project and training as something absolutely necessary together with assessment of participants' learning needs.

There was consensus that a trainer should provide expected input during the ECOILS training programme. Trainers and experts should consider their input as crucial and the learning model, the consortium will provide a digital translation of experts and trainers input

producing video and collecting good practices, and provide digital space as only forum and panel to create opportunity for mostly requested aspects of the upcoming training course (e.g. peer-to-peer support, face-to-face interaction, and on-the-job type of experience).

Preliminary reading materials and precise topics' description have also seen as important part of this phase in the training implementation process. In addition, the role of trainers has been seen also to provide important guidance in the learning process and in the process of acquiring information from external sources.

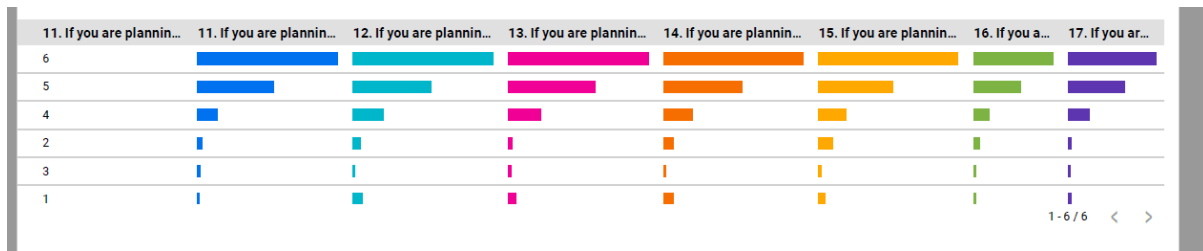


- Only a precise agenda and topics' descriptions
- Assessment of your learning needs.
- Info packs with more details on project and training, further elaboration on topics that will be covered and short bio from trainers
- Preliminary reading materials (published materials, manuals, guidebooks, etc.)

5. Capacity building

5.1 Key capacity building topics

A list of key capacity building topics was discussed during the focus group sessions in all project countries but this question was also given to respondents of the online survey. A series of seven topics has been suggested (Production of Organic Aromatic Plants and their transformation in Organic Essential Oils, Marketing of Aromatic Plant and Essential Oils, Digital technology in the practice of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils professionals, Relationship of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils with Agritourism, rural area accommodation and Tourism diversification, Certification process in Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils, Agronomic knowledge related to the cultivation of organic aromatic plants, Relationship between the farm and the transformation process and its environment (example: impact of the cultivation of organic aromatic plants on biodiversity, the landscape; impact of the essential oil transformation process on water, waste management)). The interviewees and respondents have shared their understanding of these topics but they could also suggest other priority themes for the upcoming training course.



Production of Organic Aromatic Plants and their transformation in Organic Essential Oils:

All the producers of Aromatic Plants and Essential Oils agree to the needs of improve technique in organic aromatics plant and essential oils producers. Among respondents there is the need of improve technique of fertilizations, pests and weed control that which do not involve the use of chemicals (fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides). Agronomic knowledge related to the cultivation of organic aromatic plants should be the focus of eco oils course along with the presentation of organic technique for the storage and distillations of aromatic plants and essentials oils.

In all countries, producers are already trying to switch to organic production, given the advantages for product quality and for maintaining soil and biodiversity. In the focus groups there is great interest in acquiring new information and techniques on organic production.

Marketing of Aromatic Plant and Essential Oils:

The marketing of essential oils and aromatic plants was a very important topic among the focus group participants. Local producers of aromatic plants need to improve their skills on product marketing, starting from brand creation, product identification, rule for organic labelling and recognition to aspects of product promotion. For promotion and marketing, there is great interest in learning more about the functioning of digital platforms and e-commerce to acquire competencies in territorial marketing implementation strategies.

Stakeholders emphasized the need, in the context of product marketing, to improve their understanding of the economic niche market for essential oils and aromatic plants, to learn about new business models and organization of human resources and to be informed about funding opportunities at European level.

Digital technology in the practice of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils professionals:

There are two main points of interest on digital technologies: digital tools and channels for marketing and the use of 4.0 technologies for production and quality control. For digital marketing: the focus group showed the interest and the need to learn new skills in the use of social media, digital communication and new ecommerce models applied to the production of essential oils and aromatic plants. Both at local and national level. For 4.0 technologies, small producers reported difficulties in accessing production control techniques, because they are expensive, but showed interest in tools for analyzing product quality.

Relationship of Organic Aromatic Plants & Organic Essential Oils with Agritourism, rural area accommodation and Tourism diversification:

The analysis of the results of the focus group and questionnaire revealed the crucial importance of the relationship between the producers of essential oils and aromatic plants and the territory. This issue is a characteristic point of the production closely linked to its territory. Several stakeholders already implement workshops, guided tours in their companies, shops dedicated to the topic and links with local farmhouses. The possibility of improving the relationship between producers and local tourism actors can be an important vehicle for local business development.

Furthermore, according to the answers to the questionnaire and focus groups, it is important to link the production, marketing, and tourism diversification process to the territory, to the material and immaterial culture of the production areas and to its natural ecosystem. The production of essential oils and aromatic plants is often associated with established production traditions and changes in the rural landscape.

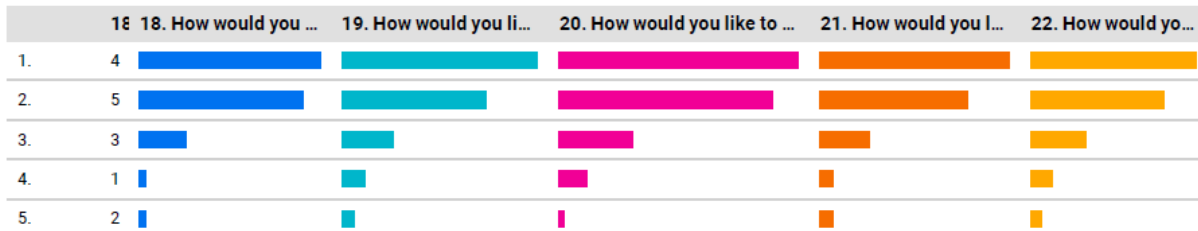
5.1 Additional topics of interest the respondents suggested included:

- Information to create a community of producers
- Information on network to reduce cost of production
- Funding opportunities
- Sustainability i.e. sustainable farming and business methods
- Knowledge on the product itself (educational marketing)

5.2 Preferable methods and approaches in presenting these topics

Respondents mostly opted for best practice examples sharing and presentations with expert input as the most preferable methods and approaches in acquiring expected competences in organic plant and essential oil production.

Short video tutorials were the most requested way to presents experts input in the context of an online learning among the focus group sessions as user-friendly approach particularly within self-paced online learning course. Together with video tutorials, the best activities and resources to be presented are case studies of best practices. The respondents also requested during the focus groups to have an online panel discussion, both for educational and networking reasons.



- a) Presentation with expert input
- b) Short video tutorials
- c) Online panel discussions
- d) Written manuals and guidebooks
- e) Cases of best practices, as told by producers operating in the sector

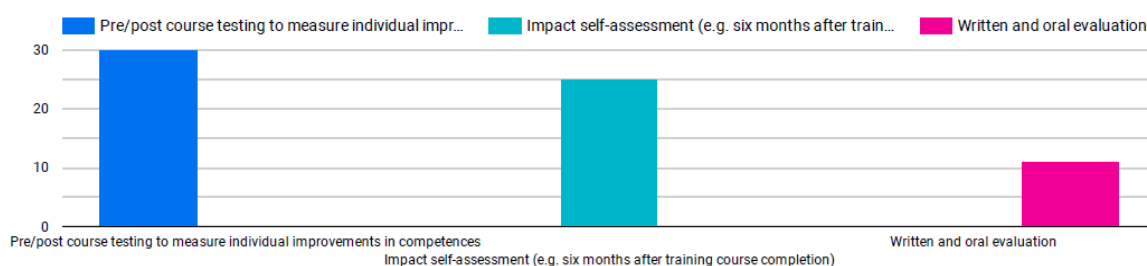
6. Evaluation and follow up

6.1 Evaluation and measuring individual improvements

Formal training evaluation should be considered very seriously in all stages of the project implementation. Trainees should then be made to feel comfortable in communicating any feedback directly to the partner organizations via the project website/platform or directly to partners' representatives.

For measuring achieved level of competences and newly gained knowledge, some respondents have agreed that the best to evaluate the training would be to have one general test in the beginning of the training (prior to taking the course) and one detailed test after the course.

Similarly, the respondents in online survey also suggested pre/post course testing to track individual improvements in competences. Also impact self-assessment has seen as useful tool to measure achieved impact once the training is being completed. In that case it would be possible to measure real impact that the participants have made once the training programme is being done.



6.2 Final assessment

The final assessment will be given by the results of the evaluation of all modules of the course. When all evaluation questionnaires regarding each module are completed, final assessment will appear to the learner. The participants were keen on keeping assessment activities as simple as possible. Interim assessment will compose final assessment.

The final assessment should include questions from all modules and should be done online via the learning platform. Besides, some of the participants proposed to include a final reflection session with a trainer (once all modules & face-to-face sessions are performed) to discuss the entire course and what the trainees have learned during the course.

Some participants thought that it could be interesting to provide quizzes during the course and thus make a kind of mid-term assessments after each of the module is being completed.

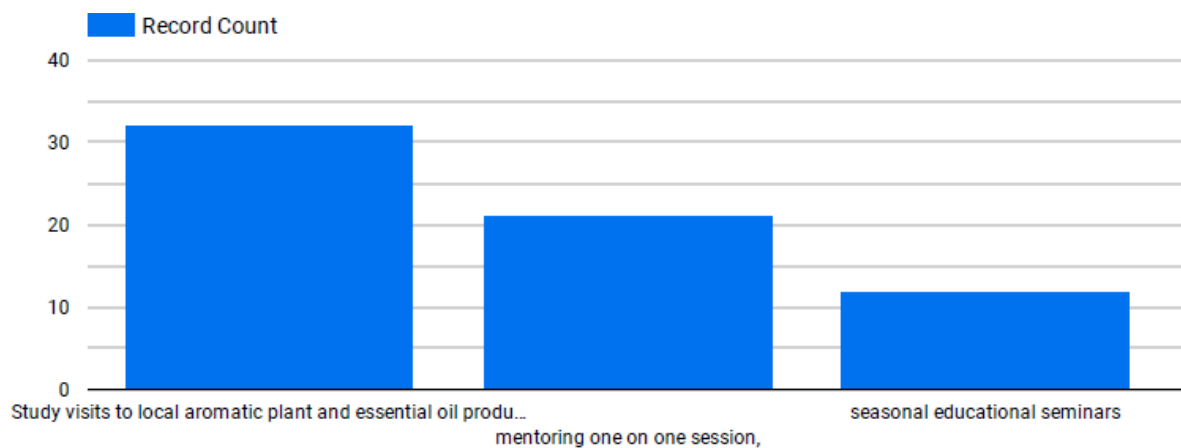
It would be good to provide a certificate of attendance/completion with the content of the course once the course is completed. The certificate should bear the logos & signatures of all partners to give more credibility.

7. Community of practice

One of the objectives of the training course is defined as creating partnerships with other stakeholders and distribution chains to further develop production and promote local products and aromatic plant and essential oil productions and thus establish a sustainable community of practice. The training attendees should be a key part of this newly established community of practice so it's important to define simple and effective communication and follow up mechanisms.

Given the current situation and the fact that the professionals in organic aromatic plant and essential oils are quite busy keeping up with daily operational challenges, the participants agreed that the best option is to provide online content and share what takes place in practice via virtual means. Participants also suggested hosting one-day seminars or study visits which interested trainees could participate in.

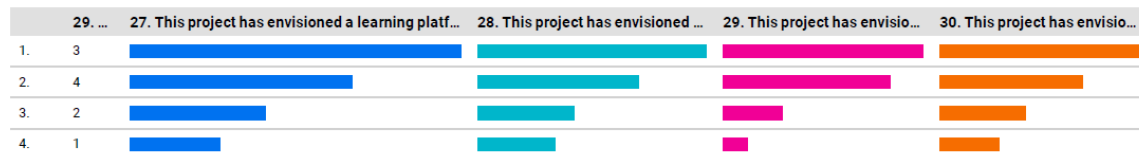
The most respondents in online survey have emphasized study visit to local aromatic plant and essential oils producers and mentoring through one-on-one sessions as the most preferable follow up of the carried-out training course. Sharing best practice examples through interactive sessions was also mentioned frequently as a desirable follow up.



Participants however agreed that more collaboration could potentially lead to a growth in domestic aromatic plant and essential oils productions. By coming together and joining forces, local producers would be promoting the locally made product and in turn encourage consumers to choose domestic aromatic plants and essential oils rather than foreign or imported aromatic plants and essential oils. ECOOILS would be the right direction to empower local actors by having more trained individuals.

7.1 Learning platform and follow up

Definitely the online survey respondents have emphasized the creation of a best practice repository together with enhancing peer-to-peer connections among aromatic plant and essential oil producers as key elements of the future learning platform.



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- Repository of best practices
- Peer-to-peer connections with other aromatic plant and essential oils producers
- Guest posts/blogs by other aromatic plant and essential oils producers
- Production guide, tools and templates

Through focus group sessions it was mentioned - particularly - that educating the public about the subject matter of aromatic plant and essential oils must be the first point of departure. Tools for further support in this field could be provided by showcasing educational videos on social media platforms on aromatic plant and essential oils producers. Given that the target audience and market profile for organic aromatic plants and essential oils mainly revolves around young professionals, social media (e.g. YouTube, Instagram, etc.) would be the best medium to do this.

To inspire and try to make a more sustainable impact, the learning platform should produce a suitable template via which interested participants could present their plans to promote newly developed products or present their product recipe. Also, the platform could serve to provide relevant feedback to participants on their developed plans and other project deliverables.

7.2 Additional research and study on respective topics

An adequate mix of the following content should be available for additional research on the respective topics once the training course is being implemented:

- Best practices, success stories and testimonials from professionals in the aromatic plant and essential oils production;
- Links to useful resources (to be provided by the trainers, project partners and other relevant stakeholders)
- YouTube clips and video tutorials from different trainers & presenters which were used throughout the training course.

8. Proposal for IO 2 Structure

In accordance with the analysis we presented before, the partnership decided to structure the Learning Content with the following chapter and module as follows:

Chapter 1 - Producing and transforming Aromatic Plants in Organic Agriculture

Module 1: Plant management Land preparation - Planting Irrigation - Pruning – Fertilization

Module 2: The plant and its environment Manage weeds - Prevent diseases and pests

Module 3: Harvesting – transforming – Conservation and storage Harvesting – Distillation – Other types of processing - Labeling rules - Preservation techniques compatible with organic certification

Chapter 2 - How to market OAP & OEO

Module 4: Customer profiles - Approach to the European market

Module 5: The principles of marketing applied to the OAP/OEO sector and their application

Chapter 3 - Digital technology in the practice of OAP/OEO professionals today

Module 6: Essentials of digital marketing and E-business

Module 7: Digital communication in rural areas - Technical solutions and network security
Learning Outcomes

Chapter 4 - Territorial impact of OAP/OEO production

Module 8: Economical diversification and rural tourism

Module 9: Aromatic plants and heritage: natural, cultural and landscape heritage

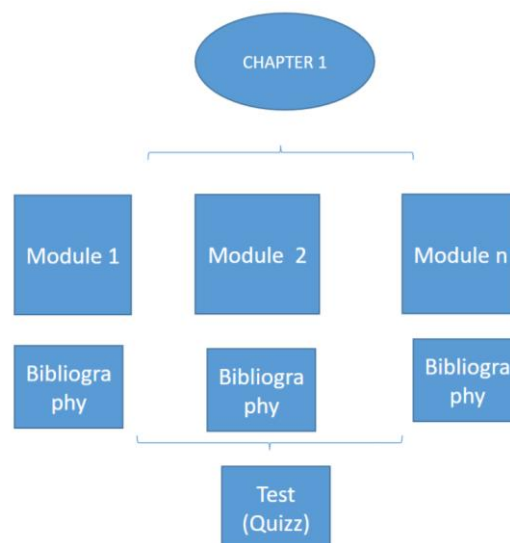
Chapter 5 – Economical issues and business model for OAP/OEO

Module 10: Economical specificities and business models of the OAP/OEO

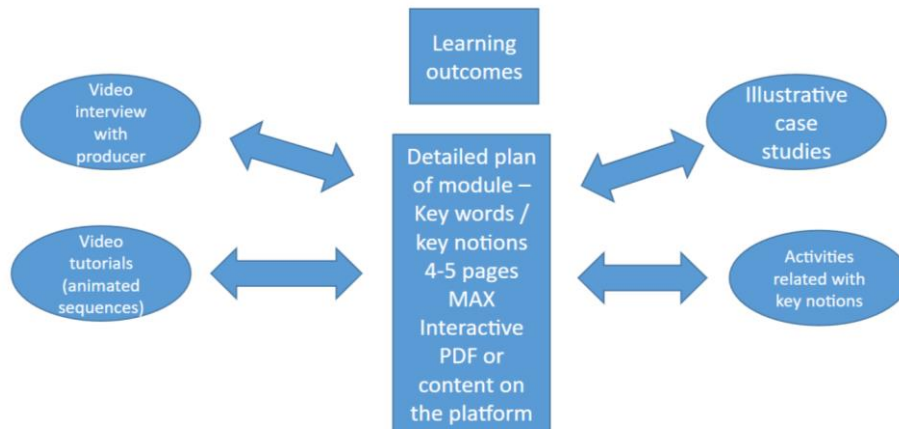
Module 11: Legislation regarding OAP/OEO Organic regulation - REACH regulation and chemical

Module 12: Financial opportunities for OAP/OEO producers

Every chapter will be the same structure:



The structure of the model is based on the centrality of multimedia resource to develop the e-learning course of Eco Oils stimulating the learner through different kinds of media.



Along with the main content, that will be 4-5 page in length, the content will be developed through:

- Video Interview with producers
- Video Tutorial (with animated sequences)
- Illustrative case studies
- Practical Activities related with key notions

9. Final conclusions and recommendations

This consortium is comprised of various partner organizations that are coming from countries with different level of aromatic plant and essential oils tradition. However, in all territories, both those where it is easier to find existing producer networks and educational material in the national language, there was a general demand to convert production of aromatic plants and essential oils to organic or to improve their organic production. Therefore, it would be necessary to develop a kind of training programme that will take into account the need to develop organic cultivations, certification labels, marketing of product and rural cultural heritage disseminations.

Most respondents have opted for a self-paced training course or if the training is not self-paced then to be less intensive with up to one session per week due to their engagements in the production of essential oils and aromatic plants.

For the most part, respondents have asked for a blended course as the best option. Many have shared that there is no proper replacement for on-site experiences so in these

circumstances a blended learning setting that includes on-site experience would be the most ideal. Ensuring a direct contact with aromatic plant and essential oil producers either online or on-site has been underpinned many times. A series of tutorials regarding key aspects of setting up organic essentials' oils and aromatic plants production business have been mentioned as the most effective approach.

Great interest was shown in having expert input, best practice examples and personal testimonials from producers and experts in the sector that already run organic aromatic plants and essential oils enterprises. That could also bring an additional challenge regarding having experts acting as trainers that are equipped with necessary competences in the field but possibly lacking the expertise in setting proper objectives and learning methods, creating adequate curriculums and developing suitable impact measurements instruments.

The organizers should be aware of this while selecting trainers for the upcoming educational programme. This could be solved by hiring experts that also have experience in delivering training sessions (particularly online) or by hiring an educational coordinator that will be in charge to identify participants' learning needs, develop adequate curriculums and support experts in selecting proper methods and approaches. Future trainers also need to set common ground for developing individual and collaborative learning plans in coordination with participants and their sending organizations.

Facilitation of envisioned training course should be designed in participatory and learner-centric manner. The working methods during the training should be based on principles of non-formal education, which means they are interactive, inclusive and tailored to meet defined objectives of the training sessions but also group learning needs. The working methods should aim to support participatory process where each expert or participant is empowered to take an active role in every discussion and create a space for mutual understanding and learning.

For measuring achieved level of competences including newly gained knowledge, mostly respondents have agreed that the best approach in evaluating the training would be to have one general questionnaire in the beginning of the training (prior to taking the course) and one detailed questionnaire after the course and thus to measure achieved progress in the gained competences. Also, a focus group session with the participants of the carried-out training could also serve to assess achieved level of competences and validate defined recommendations and conclusions.

Creation of best practice repository together with enhancing peer-to-peer connections among aromatic plant and essential oils producers as key elements of future learning platform. Apart to that also highly ranked was the option of sharing best practice study case and guide to perform the module of training course within the platform. As self-paced online course, it will provide a series of materials (e.g. presentations, activities, videos, etc.) for participants' self-study.

One of the key purposes of the project is to enhance community learning which means learning and social development work with individuals and groups using a range of informal methods with activities developed in dialogue with participants both in site and online model. The most respondents in online survey have emphasized additional study visits to local aromatic plant and essential oils producers and mentoring one-on-one sessions as the most preferable follow up of the carried-out training course. Sharing best practice examples through interactive sessions was also mentioned frequently as desirable follow up. All of these aspects could further empower community of practice creation and thus provide sustainable and efficient mechanisms for mutual learning along with an online discussion panel.

A repository on practices on the envisioned learning platform should be provided (e.g. best practices, described business failures and success stories, personal testimonials from professionals in the aromatic plants and essential oil production, links to useful resources, YouTube clips and video tutorials from different trainers & presenters which were used throughout the training course, etc.).