



## **PROBLEM SOLVING PROJECT IN THE ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTION CHAIN – ERASMUS + EPOS PROJECT**

**GENERAL BACKGROUND:** The course is based on collaboration among seven European Universities: Warsaw University of Life Sciences, University of Kassel, University of Helsinki, Tuscia University, Technical University of Madrid, Estonian University of Life Sciences, and University of South Bohemia in Ceske Budejovice. It is part of “Innovative Education towards the Needs of the Organic Sector” (EPOS) -project, which has the aim to develop, test and implement innovative educational materials and methods addressing the needs of the labour market in organic sector and beyond.

**CONTENT:** The course will be organised around work on real life cases that support development of the organic sector. During the course, students carry out a problem-solving project in co-operation with stakeholders operating in the field of organic food production chain. The stakeholders will define a development challenge connected to their activities, and the students, working as a small group, will attempt to find a solution or solutions. During the project, students learn from the experts in such fields as organic food production, processing, retail, administration or research. More detailed description of the course tasks will be delivered to the enrolled students.

**AIM:** The course will allow successful students to:

- 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 TEACHING METHODS:** The project is carried out in mini-groups of three members. The course can take at most four such groups in each participating country. The course consists of orientation meeting, and mid-course meetings either face-to-face or in Moodle, group work and visits to the chosen stakeholder organization. The course leaders will choose the cases and assist in forming the groups around the cases. 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 TEACHERS:** In order to facilitate the problem solving course, the strict rules of the cooperation between the students and teachers needs to be created: (1) The course will last 16 weeks; (2) The regular meetings of the students with the leading teacher will take place every week; (3) A guide for the students will be prepared by teachers before the course with the description of the course, recommendations and additional literature.

The phases of the projects will be as following: (1) Selection of the students – if too many students are interested to join the project, a teacher selects best prepared and most ambitious students; (2) Selection of the companies – a teacher is using all possible contacts from the previous projects; (3) Matching the students and companies together – several meetings enable to create subgroups of the students in every project – mostly 2 and 3 persons in every subgroup; (4) The students start to prepare their projects – of course a teacher is always ready to give an advice and to help.

**DATES:** The project lasts 16 weeks (4 months)

**ASSESSMENT:** Each group produces a report or presentation on their case. The reports are assessed as accepted / failed. The groups receive feedback during the course, and also final oral feedback. The stakeholders are invited to the final evaluation event and give their opinions together with teachers.

**CREDITS:** 3 ECTS

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

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:** max 12 from each country

**LANGUAGE:** depending on the country (Polish, Czech, Finnish, Italian, Spanish, Estonian, German)

**TARGET GROUP:** The course is targeted to students who study Organic Agriculture and Food Systems, Human Nutrition, Food Science and related areas.

**TEACHERS:** The project is guided by Ewa Rembiałkowska and Dominika Średnicka-Tober (WULS, Poland), Ritva Mynttinen and Eeva Uusitalo from Ruralia Institute and Irina Herzon from the Department of Agricultural Sciences in the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry in the University of Helsinki (University of Helsinki, Finland), Peter von Fragstein und Niemsdorff (Kassel, Germany), Teresa Briz (Madrid, Spain), Roberto Mancinelli and Emanuele Radicetti (Tuscia, Italy), Jan Moudry and Petr Konvalina (Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic), Anne Luik (Estonian University of Life Sciences).