



Educational Erasmus Project: Land Degradation and Rehabilitation in Mediterranean Environments (LANDCARE)

Agustin Merino and the Agustin Merino

University of Santiago de Compostela, Escuela Politécnica Superior, Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Lugo, Spain
(agustin.merino@usc.es)

The Mediterranean region is vulnerable to land degradation, which affects important sectors of the economy (agriculture, fishing, tourism) and the supply of vital goods (water, food). Although “actions to restore ecosystems and biodiversity have significant potential to create new skills, jobs and business opportunities” ((ED 2011/2307(INI))), there is a considerable shortage of skilled workers in this field due to the lack of proper training. This is especially important in Southern Europe, where youth unemployment is extremely high.

Objective of the project

The overall objective of LANDCARE is to improve training capacities in relation to Land Degradation and Rehabilitation (LD&R) in Southern Europe, in order to fulfil the demands of an emerging labour market and contribute to the green economy.

LD&R is a field that requires training involving real study cases and hands-on experience. For this reason, the education path proposed in the project will combine short-term international mobility and innovative online learning (PLEs, SPOCs).

The project will try to recover unemployed skilled people who are useful to encourage employability in this sector. Employability skills will be enhanced by means of personalized training and hands-on practices. To increase the scope of this strategy, the project reinforces interactions between students, educators, researchers, companies/agencies/NGOs and decision-makers.

Number and profile of participants

The consortium consists of 8 partners from Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy. The four academic partners comprise educators/researchers with recognized expertise in LD&R and project management. They also show university entrepreneurship abilities. The four professional partners include SMEs, an NGO and decision-makers. The professional partners will complement the training and will also increase the scope of the project outcomes.

Description of activities

The main activities proposed focus on training both staff (from academic and professional partners) and students (HEI, company staff and selected unemployed people). The teacher training will include a) intensive training in innovative online learning tools (PLE, SPOCs) and b) short-term joint events to reinforce training capacities in LD&R.

The student training will be based on two types of blended mobility. The concepts of LD&R will be taught by means of an intensive study programme, involving mobility and flexible online training (PLE, SPOC). Practical experience and employment skills will be provided by means of an internship programme combined with solid online and personalised training on employment and entrepreneurship. The learners will be HEI students, staff of companies involved in LD&R and selected unemployed people.

Certain teaching outputs of the project will have a strong multiplier effects: the development of blended mobility to enhance the employability in the “Green Economy”, the publication of the first handbook linking Land Restoration and employability opportunities and the launch of a peer teaching network. The main multiplier social effect is the enhancing the green economy to generate job and development.