

Digital Transformation of Project-based Learning Guidance in Agri-Food Higher Education Institutions

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NEWSLETTER

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Presentation of DigiFoodEdu project

The partners

DigiFoodEdu is a 2 years European project started in April 2021, including 4 partners from 3 different countries:

- the **University of Ljubljana** (Slovenia),
- the **National Technical University of Athens** (Greece),
- the **National Institute of Technology for Life, Food and Environmental Sciences – AgroParisTech** (France)
- the **EEIG ECOTROPHELIA EUROPE**, a European Economic Interest Grouping that aims to unite stakeholders from different Member States (ANIA - France, CCIS-CAFE - Slovenia, FEVIA - Belgium, FIAB - Spain, FII - Iceland, LVA – Austria, SEVT - Greece and FoodDrinkEurope) together around a common objective, bringing together food industry actors from seven different countries to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the European food industry through the development and implementation of innovative programmes.

Context of the project

DigiFoodEdu is born with the **coronavirus crisis** when the pedagogical issues reveal. In fact, because of the sanitary situation, the teaching way changed suddenly **from face-to-face to distance learning**. The teachers and the students had to adapt themselves to new ways of distance teaching and learning and had to develop **new pedagogical practices based on digital practices**. Project-based learning approaches, and practical classes, that require more guidance and support from teachers and pedagogical staff, were particularly affected by this transition.

In agri-food related Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) European-wide, the effects of the pandemic were notably felt by the participants of ECOTROPHELIA competitions (a food innovation competition for higher education students for the development of eco-innovative food products). Since 2000, ECOTROPHELIA has been fostering creativity and entrepreneurship European-wide by promoting the national and European competitions that bring together HEIs and the agri-food sector to rethink the future of food. This initiative has led HEIs to adapt their curriculum to include new product development projects (from raw materials to market launch) promoting the application of the acquired scientific and technical competences, and the development of soft skills and project management. In 2020, the national and European competitions had to reinvent themselves to continue to provide students and HEIs a platform to showcase their talents. While the students participating were motivated and coached to develop their eco-innovative food products, the educators who guided their project-based learning were faced with new challenges to do so virtually.

Objectives

In this context, DigiFoodEdu aims to **foster the development of digital skills and exchange of good pedagogical practices in the digital era**, directed at the guidance of project-based learning approaches. This project intends to study the practices put in place during the pandemic, collect and analyse the experiences from different partners European-wide and **come up with a best practices guide for education improvement in the digital era**. Ultimately, the project will aim for the modernisation of the pedagogical practices used for coaching and supporting students during their project-based learning activities.

What have been done from now?

The first phase of the project started in April 2021 and will end in December 2021. It consists of the state-of-the-art put in place during the COVID-19 crisis. In that purpose, several studies have been launched among students, teachers and agri-food professionals with different goals.

The first things to do were to **identify and analyse the best pedagogical practices put in place by universities**, as well as **assess the needs in pedagogical practices in the digital era**. In that purpose, two different surveys have been developed and disseminated among teachers and students of the partner universities to answer these first questions as well as to complete the results obtained thanks to the questionnaires. Focus Groups have been realised with the two target groups: the teachers and the students. Results are being processed and will be available in the following months.

The second thing we wanted to **assess was the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the young graduated recruitment**. Then, we developed a third survey dedicated to Human Resources (HR) department of food industries and ECOTROPHELIA experts, members of the judging panels. We are also interviewing some experts of the target to complete the results obtained with the questionnaire.

This first phase is the most important phase of the project as it is thanks to the results obtained that we will be able to develop the second phase: Exchange, testing and transferability of the best identified Digital Pedagogical Practices.

This second phase will start in January, based on the first phase of the project.

Interview

We asked Françoise Gorga, innovation manager at ANIA (the French food industry association) in France, why this project is of interest for the food industry:

DigiFoodEdu project is focused on improving pedagogical practices in the digital era. What do you think about the project? Why is it important to innovate in pedagogical practices in the agri-food curriculums?

Human resources are the richness of a food company. This is why ANIA is so interested in projects like DigiFoodEdu that focus on the pedagogical practices. It is essential to keep the agri-food education in tune with the food companies' needs. We are living in a digital era, IT are fully developed and are part of our daily life. Then, it seems relevant to develop pedagogical practices to fit with the world of today. Also, projects like this should be always welcomed in curriculums to provide the best possible training for the young leaders of tomorrow.

What makes this project so significant?

As the pandemic surprised everyone, HEI were forced to adapt the way they teach very quickly. Traditionally, lectures were given face to face, in a classroom. But, the COVID-19 imposed lockdown and distancing that forced students and professors to do so differently, and innovate in pedagogical practices thanks to digital. It is important to study the pedagogical practices developed during this period and disseminate them, as it improves agri-food education. The goal is to constantly improve education to train future agri-food workers in the best possible way and this means innovating in pedagogical practices.

Our First Transnational Meeting in Slovenia

The project is including several partners from different countries: France, Greece and Slovenia. A few meetings are planning in the course of the project to visit each others and meet in real. These meetings act as a team building event and allow the partners to know each others. In fact, these few meetings are the only way for the partners to meet in real, exchange and know each other for a better team cohesion.

Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19, the kick-off meeting, planned in April 2021, could not happen in real.

The **second transnational meeting**, in October 2021, was a **hybrid event**, organised by the **University of Ljubljana**, in Slovenia. Still because of the COVID-19 restrictions, all the partners could not travel to Slovenia to attend the meeting. A hybrid event seemed to be the best for everyone.

It was a good time for everyone to record the different tasks to do and plan the future events.

The partners who were able to join the meeting in Ljubljana were very happy to meet in real!



Stay tune!

Future Events

Save the dates!

ALIMENTARIA
Barcelona (Spain)
April 2022

ECOTROPHELIA
Greece
July 2022

Website

Do not hesitate to visit our website!

You will find **dates about the future events** and **results of the project!**

The first results are coming soon!



Click on the picture or copy-paste the link: <https://digifoodedu.ecotrophelia.org/>

Want to stay updated on the project?

A newsletter will be disseminated regularly during the project.

If you are interested in having news about the project through the newsletters or future events,
enter your email address !!

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