

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

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**Abstract.** ENTER (European Network of Learning and Teaching in Agriculture and Rural Development) is a European association of educational institutions in the field of teacher training for secondary and higher vocational schools in agriculture, forestry, horticulture and related subjects.

ENTER was founded in 2002 as a result of a merger of REIFEA and IPAC, the former Western and Eastern networks in agricultural pedagogical education.

*Keywords:* ENTER, education, association, agriculture, forestry, horticulture

The founding institutes have decided to join on an international level in order to develop their scientific and pedagogical cooperation in initial and in-service vocational teacher training.

### **The main aims of ENTER are:**

- To support the improvement of teaching and learning processes in agricultural, rural, and environmental education;
- To develop knowledge and understanding about educational, agricultural systems within Europe;
- To share, develop, and promote teaching methods and strategies through European teacher training;
- To impulse innovation in the agricultural training system in order to modernize curricular and extracurricular activities, teaching objectives, and contents in the context of rural development;
- To encourage and facilitate bilateral and multilateral exchanges of trainees, teachers and trainers;
- To facilitate projects' development.

The Agricultural University – Plovdiv is a founding member of ENTER and it has been a constant participant in the institution's international events for 13

years now. Vocational High Schools “Tsaritsa Yoanna” – Pazardjik, ‘Vasil Levski’-Parvomay, “Stefan Tsanov” – Kneja, and High School of Veterinary Medicine, Kostinbrod joined the partnership later on.

For the last few years, the Bulgarian members of the consortium have been among the most active in the activities organised by ENTER:

In 2012, the Agricultural University hosted the ENTER study days event under the slogan „*The Creative Teacher, Lecturer and Trainer as Main Actors of Dynamic Learning*”.

Three parallel sessions determined the main areas of study during the event:

1. Examples of Creative Practice
2. Creative Continuing Education
3. Creative Teachers and Pedagogical Leadership

In 2013, the Centre for Continuing Education of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv organised the ENTER expert training for teachers in service, students, assistants from different universities.

University lecturers, headmasters of agricultural schools, teachers, and students all take part in the activities.

The training is headed by Jan-Willem Noom, an expert from STOAS (Vilentum–Wageningen, The Netherlands), and Beate Kralicek – from University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy – Vienna, Austria.

Participation of the organisation’s Bulgarian members in ENTER Study Days in Wageningen, the Netherlands, 2014

*Topic: Environment and Innovation or How to use the Environment to achieve innovative competences*

9 participants take place in the event (secondary school teachers and lecturers from the Agricultural University – Plovdiv) with 5 papers. All materials have been published in Proceedings from ENTER Study days and can be read on ENTER’s website.

In 2014, the Agricultural University was again a host, this time for an expert training by Netherlands lecturers from STOAS – The Netherlands in the following fields:

- *didactics of practical instruction / behaviourism;*
- *interview method for problem solving issues;*
- *behaviour indicators of a ‘good teacher’ (observation and reflection);*
- *Socratic dialogue;*
- *active learning part 2;*
- *learning preferences;*
- *counselling skills / conversation techniques.*

Interesting activities are planned for 2016 as well:

The event ENTER International Project Week on the subject of “Entrepreneurship in Land-Based Education” took place between 6 and 13 March 2016 in Vienna, Austria. The project’s main goals are:

- To support the improvement of teaching and learning processes in agricultural, rural, and environmental education
- To develop knowledge and understanding about educational, agricultural systems within Europe
- To share, develop, and promote teaching methods and strategies through European teacher training
- To encourage innovation in the agricultural training system in order to modernize curricular and extra-curricular activities, teaching objectives and contents in the context of rural development
- To encourage and facilitate bilateral and multilateral exchanges of trainees, teachers, and trainers
- To facilitate projects’ development.

Representing the Agricultural University were Dr. Nedyalka Palagacheva, Assist. Prof., and Dr. Daniela Atanasova, Assist. Prof., from the Department of Entomology.

### **ENTER Study Days 2016 in Prague**

The main subjects are Interdisciplinary Approaches in Agricultural and Environmental Education.

Host and organiser of the event is the Czech University of Life Sciences - Prague, Institute of Education and Communication.

The chosen subject is described as follows:

„To achieve challenging and distant targets it is essential to acquire knowledge that crosses the boundaries of disciplines and the capacity of the mind of an average person. Landing a spacecraft on the Moon would not succeed without the involvement of top experts from engineering, natural sciences and humanities.

We can expect two possible directions of development in disciplines of human knowledge and therefore in learning. On the one hand differentiation and specialization will continue, science themes will remain narrow and focused on very specific knowledge. At the end of this process, there stand specialists, experts or workers replaceable with difficulty. On the other hand there is an increasingly expected growth in demand for the ability to communicate and collaborate interdisciplinary. This trend can already be observed also in vocational training for rural areas.

The conference seeks to answer the question of what interdisciplinary cooperation means in vocational education and how it can be developed in school

practice. Specifically, it is our hope that participants from abroad and from the Czech Republic will share their experience and discuss how curricula of vocational education mingle and inspire each other. We are also interested in how teachers of individual subjects can work together, how interdisciplinary cooperation is manifested in specific forms and methods of teaching and what competences students should get to be able to navigate themselves and to succeed in today's complex and highly interconnected world. We also focus on environmental issues and the importance of the phenomenon of globalization in vocational education."

The conference is open to all teachers especially teachers of vocational schools within agricultural, forestry and related fields, teacher trainees, teacher trainers, school management representatives, representatives of government, workers of organizations active in rural areas and nature protection, and other interested parties.

The study days offer:

- Interesting lectures, workshops, excursions to vocational schools;
- Exchange of pedagogical experience and teaching examples from the Czech Republic and abroad;
- Space for creating new contacts and strengthening the previous ones;
- The possibility of launching new collaborations and new projects;
- The outcome of the conference will be the printed proceedings, including a list of participants;

Participants may present their own paper presentation which will be published in the Conference Proceedings.

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