



4.1.1 – Regional Focus Group Discussion Report

France – CDE Petra Patrimonia

CLUSTER (C_A.3.1_0014)

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1. Summary

The main objective of the Focus Group was to review the training objectives of the CLUSTER project and, in particular, the curriculum models being developed. More precisely, the Focus Group had the specific objectives of:

- validating the relevance of the themes and curriculum models proposed by CLUSTER in relation to the policies of the organisations involved and in relation to the territorial context
- evaluating the anticipated contents of the curricula and their relevance to the needs of the target audiences
- identifying additional proposals from the stakeholders assembled

2. Methodology

Given the late arrival of the draft curricula and the subsequent organisation of the Focus Group, it was not possible to bring the contributors together physically at one specific time.

We therefore held three successive meetings:

- One online meeting via Zoom on the morning of 5 July, which brought together 15 people, including 5 representatives of CDE Petra Patrimonia
- Two complementary bilateral interviews:
 - 5 July at 2 pm at the Cité de l'Agriculture in Marseille (2 participants, including 1 participating in the zoom meeting)
 - 11 July at 10 am at the agricultural college in Aix-Valabre

The agenda and discussion followed the same structure in all three cases:

- General introduction of the participants.
- General presentation of the CLUSTER project and its links with the RESMYLE project (most of the people contacted are already stakeholders associated with the RESMYLE project).
- Reminder of the objectives of the meeting.
- Quick presentation of the 4 curricula envisaged + the "soft skills" curriculum issued from Maharat Med.
- Discussion with the partners on the proposed framework questionnaire.

The meetings were moderated by Matthieu Guary, European Project Manager for CDE Petra Patrimonia, with the help of Louis Casa, in charge of supporting the test entrepreneurs.

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3. Participant demographics

| Full Name | Affiliation | Role / function |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Courtois Marcos Anne | Métropole de Nice (Metropolitan area of Nice – local body) | Agricultural project manager |
| Porchier Charlotte | Métropole de Nice (Metropolitan area of Nice – local body) | Agricultural project manager |
| Bianchi Cécile | Communauté d'agglomération d'Ajaccio (union of municipalities in Corsica) | Agricultural project manager |
| Dubourg Régis | Assemblée Permanente des Chambres d'Agriculture (Technical professional organization) | Project manager |
| Cleenewerck Arnaud | La Cité de l'Agriculture (Social incubator in the field of urban agriculture) | Head of training activities |
| Schnarf Marion | La Cité de l'Agriculture (Social incubator in the field of urban agriculture) | Director |
| Banet Serge | Agricultural college of Aix en Provence (Academic and technical | Director |

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| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| | Training center in the field of agriculture) | |
| Garric Fanny | Agricultural college of Aix en Provence (Academic and technical Training center in the field of agriculture) | Vocational training – Head of department |
| Garraud Delphine | Agricultural college of Aix en Provence (Academic and technical Training center in the field of agriculture) | Trainer |
| Swoboda Emmanuelle | CFPPA Aix Valabre (Vocational training center in the field of agriculture) | |
| Devaux François | Coopérative d’Initiatives Jeunes (social incubator for young people) | Director |
| Pasqualini Charles | Sud Concept (training organization for low skilled people) | Development officer |
| Hakimian Lola | Young farmer starting a business in urban agriculture | |
| Casa Louis | CDE Petra Patrimonia | Project manager, in charge of training and coaching activities |

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4. Key findings

The main comments and recommendations of the Focus Group members are as follows:

- Concerning the situation in France and the challenges of green jobs for NEETS and women who are far from employment: **Agricultural issues are an interesting area of work to promote the professional integration of NEETS, but the number of jobs generated in the Southern Region will remain modest.** There are currently a large number of social inclusion associations working on professional integration in agriculture, and the results in terms of return to employment are moderate.

Less than 20% of beneficiaries who go through these organisations actually find a job in agriculture, either as an agricultural employee or as a farmer. There are **other sectors of activity that are more dynamic** in terms of training and job creation for people who are far from employment and have little training in the **circular economy and recycling sectors**: repair, reuse. The **renewable energy sector** (installation, repair and maintenance of equipment) is also a promising one.

Examples of recycling centres, solidarity garages, bicycle maintenance workshops, etc. that are supported by local authorities (in Corsica or in the Greater Nice city area) provide successful cases of professional integration.

In short, while far from insignificant, the **sustainable agriculture sector is however not the most promising in the Région Sud for job creation.**

- In the agricultural sector, the **business model based on the principles of sustainable agriculture is currently the most promising.** Since COVID19, there has been a significant increase in the number of **market gardening business ventures**, using permaculture or agro-ecological farming principles. These ventures are often led by young people undergoing professional reconversion (change of career paths, revision of life and personal development needs after COVID, etc.)

It is therefore logical to **strengthen the training and support offer in these areas.** The idea of also **integrating agricultural practices and food processing** into the same training course is sensible because more and more farmers who set up want to master the **processes of producing and selling** their products. For example, the agricultural high school in Aix Valabre is setting up a new training course on "market gardening on living soil", which will also include an aspect linked to the development of the products.

- Projects for setting up **urban or urban-fringe agriculture** are **increasing but still remain rather low.** For example, the Cité de l'agriculture launched a call for

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projects to welcome candidates in its "urban agriculture incubator" and only 5 candidates out of 8 available places responded. Most of these projects are still focused on "in-soil" productions. **Hydroponic and aquaponic projects are not very common, especially for people with little or no training, such as NEETS.** Aquaponics or hydroponics projects in the Région Sud are **more likely to be carried out by start-ups capable of mobilizing investment** (need for capital to invest in the equipment of an indoor aquaponics farm).

- Concerning the proposed training contents in the technical fields (agriculture, aquaponics, etc.): **The proposed content plans were deemed to be coherent.** The real issue is to **include practical activities and concrete content** in these processes. Many NEETS encounter problems in conventional learning methods (rejection from school, negative feedback from failing a test, etc.). It is vital to **keep theory-based learning to a minimum** and to limit this to what is strictly necessary for NEETS by instead **favouring the practical approach.** In addition, the training organisations that took part in the Focus Group (Lycée agricole d'Aix Valabre, Cité de l'agriculture) **questioned the added value of CLUSTER training content compared to the existing learning offer in the region.** There are several comparable curricula and given the relatively limited number of candidates in these professional sectors, **is it useful to create new resources?**

- All participants agreed on the importance of working on **soft skills and entrepreneurial abilities** of young people to facilitate their employability. **But here again, there are several resources already available.** The Maharat Med curriculum does not distinguish what is new in the training resources already available on these subjects. It will be necessary to justify in more detail the additional value the Cluster training content brings when is developed.

Again, the **emphasis should be on practical activities and simulations of professional situations.**

- The participants suggest **activating other training pathways related to the circular economy such as recycling and mechanical repair.** they also suggest **adding modules and activities related to the development of young people's eco-citizenship, to develop the environmental mindset of young people** and give more meaning to their professional orientation.

- **All expressed their doubts about the relevance of online training processes** on these subjects, **with NEETS-type audiences.** Lessons learned from recent experiences among the stakeholders has shown the limits of remote learning on vocational training audiences in general, and on NEETS in particular. **The project**

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must promote training in the field, with a maximum of exchanges with professionals and simulations. Academic training on agricultural subjects may not yield results in terms of return to employment for this type of public. Eventually, **online resources can complement face-to-face courses** with the help of videos (case studies, filmed feedback), slide shows, commented exercises, etc.

5. Conclusion or recommendations

1. **Promote face-to-face learning processes**, with a maximum of concrete field activities, exchanges with professionals
2. **Limit the theory in the modules** and actively encourage interaction with learners and the contribution of professional mentors
3. The **curricula contents focused on sustainable agriculture correspond to a real evolution of agriculture in the Region** but do not address the most promising sector in terms of job creation. Hydroponics and aquaponics are not very buoyant sectors for NEETS in the Région Sud.
4. **Other sectors linked to the circular economy could be developed**
5. Ensure the **complementarity** between CLUSTER training and existing training already in the Region

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