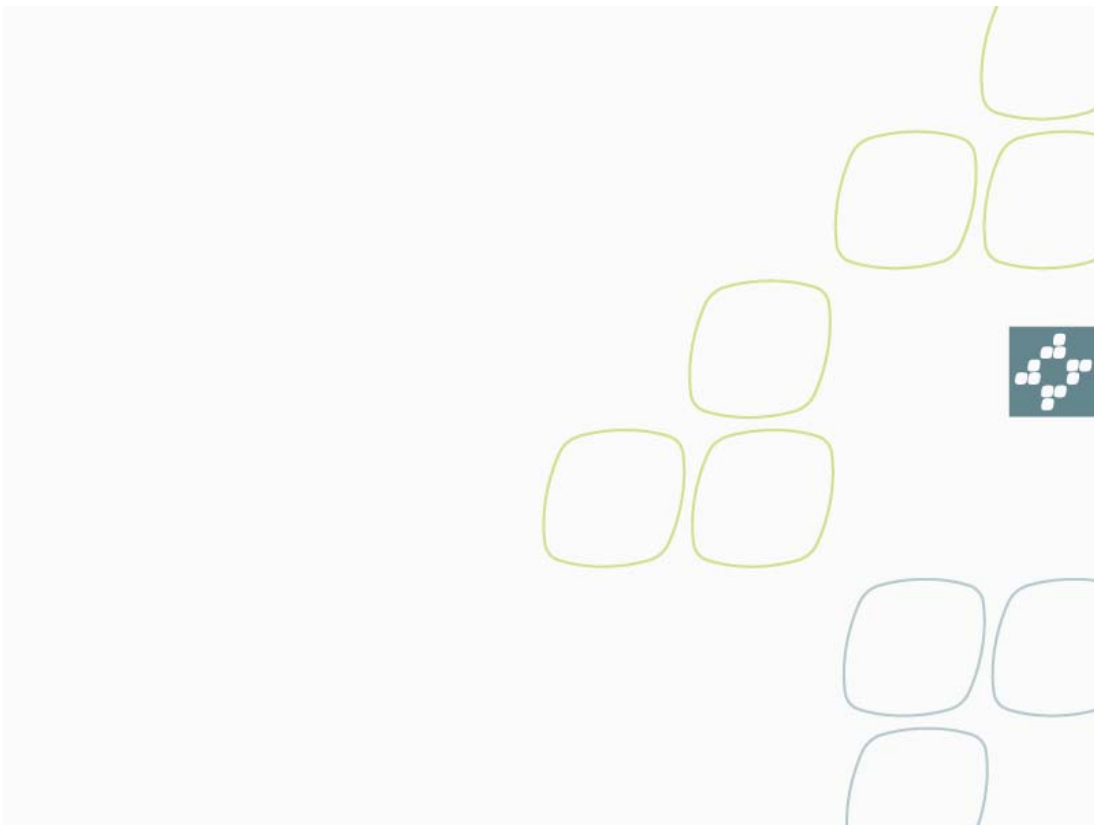


EVALUATION REPORT
The 2nd Euracademy Summer Academy
Ioannina, Greece
July 2003



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1 INTRODUCTION

"I wanted to gain greater perspectives in an international environment by which I could approach my work in a more creative al imaginative way. I have gathered a wealth of insights, opinions and shared experiences to enable me to do just that. Well done, Summer Academy!"

1.1 Background

This report presents the detailed findings of the evaluation of the 2.nd EURACADEMY Summer Academy and gives recommendations to the future work with the Euracademy idea.

The report is written to the project management of the Euracademy project according to the contract and the outlines presented in the proposal for monitoring and evaluation.

The findings in this report will be presented and discussed with the Euracademy partners at the meeting in November 2003.

1.2 Structure of the report

This section is the introduction, section 2 sums up the conclusions of the evaluation of the 2nd Euracademy Summer Academy and lines up some recommendations for the next, coming out of these conclusions.

In section 3 the detailed findings of the evaluation is presented. Section 4 shows the reflections of some of the students two months after they participated in the Euracademy.

The last section, section 5 recommendations for future Euracademy activities are drawn up and elaborated on.

2 CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, it is important to note that in general the participants were very satisfied with their Euracademy experience. Most of them felt that their expectations were fully or partly met, and that their participation in the Academy gave them many different outcomes. Several participants actually state, that the Summer Academy has been better and more useful than they have first expected.

*"I was a bit afraid that it would be too academic and difficult.
But so far I was wrong. It is far better than my expectations."*

Like last year there are some critical but yet constructive comments to take into consideration. Some comments have a new perspective, others comments repeat issues, which were present in the evaluation of the 1st summer academy.

This report raises the points where there is room for improvement and where lessons for future summer Academies can be found. In this section, the conclusions and recommendations coming out of all the evaluation activities are summarised. The conclusions fall into four sections:

- Practical issues
- Theoretical and methodological issues
- Exchange of experience
- Building networks

The last part of the section addresses some general conclusions about the summer academy idea including lessons from both the 1st and 2nd Summer Academy.

2.1 Practical issues

As it was the case with the first Summer Academy, the participants had very varied backgrounds. However, this year the group of participants differed from last year by in general being more educated and experienced and thereby more in line with the group of people that the Academy originally was designed for.

Most of the participants had solid academic backgrounds – from a BA degree or higher. All have decided themselves to join the Summer Academy in Greece and a third of them pay the tuition themselves whereas the rest have the tuition paid by their employers.

Despite the fact that the lack of information was an issue last year in the evaluation, this year the data shows that quite a lot of the participants still found the information about the programme and the other participants insufficient.

They would have preferred more information about the programme and detailed CVs of all the participants sent in advance together with a list of lecturers as well as facilitators with pictures.

As last year, several mention that they felt the programme was too intense and that they would have preferred more time for building network, time for sharing

new ideas and to show and discuss the cases. To sum it up there seems to be a need for more informal activities such as meetings, gatherings, spare time etc.

The time management is another of the aspects that a lot of participants have brought up in different ways. However, most of them have seen that it might be due to cultural differences and therefore not so much of a problem after all.

"Keep more strictly to the timetable with such a large group (although it added Greek charm)."

The length of the summer academy was also a reoccurring question. The participants found it very long - not in terms of the programme but it was seen as very long to be away from home or job. It is also important to keep in mind that some of the participants use their summer holiday on the event:

"(The) Academy should be shorter; to be away from your home and family during the best holiday season for 10 days + travel is absolutely too much"

It could be argued that the participants did participate and that this objection should therefore not be taken very seriously, nevertheless the early departure of a large part of the group was probably due to the length of the Academy, and it had as mentioned above a disruptive impact on the programme of the last day.

About the other practical issues: accommodation, cleaning etc. this could perhaps be solved if, in the information material, it was stressed that the level of accommodation reflects the total price of the course, so that the expectation of the participants were somewhat controlled.

Nevertheless, it is very evident that the participants have had the feeling that the commitment behind the Euracademy was something special, and although some very quite rigorous in their critique from time to time, there is also no doubt that this commitment added to the Euracademy experience.

2.2 Theoretical and methodological issues

The keynote sessions were in general positively evaluated in the questionnaires from the participants. There was, as could be expected some discrepancies in the evaluations of the individual presenters, and in how the weight the different aspects had in the programme, as well as the mixture of practical and theoretical input.

"I was disappointed about the fact that there were no real revolutionary new things being presented or talked about. I thought that I would get a better picture of what and how we, at home, in our organisation could do with our "maybe planned" web site. On the other hand, I've had a really interesting time, with interesting people and in the end I will have use of it. I'm not sure yet what I've learned, and there were no clear teaching methods being used during the academy but as a personal development it was good."

However, the presentations were to a higher degree than with the 1st Summer Academy seen as relevant, although especially the practitioner level could have been more visible:

"Would like to have had some a speaker from practitioner level and people carrying out rural development. Successfully with project ideas possible solutions – less theoretical."

The group discussions also seemed to function to people's satisfaction, some participants found that this was where their main outcome was, although this area also showed some individual differences.

"On the whole teaching team has been supportive and interactive. (there could be given) more attention to individual styles and group dynamics."

The teaching team in general gets the role of the facilitators and is still not 'crystal' clear, and the way of facilitating neither.

"I think they have done a great job although there have been some difficulties, but it has not been their fault. The main thing should be to have materials needed beforehand and keep better up with the schedules."

"Make sure that everybody in the staff is given enough information, and has the training (or practical experience and a good reputation) and confidence for their task. I know that, this is hard, especially when all the staff comes from different countries with different standards, opinions etc"

The case presentations remain a 'step-child' in the programme, being important to ensure the participation of the participants, but not having enough time in the already rather full programme to justify that people spend time preparing them.

The collection of the case stories on paper is a good idea, and may prove helpful to the participants at a later stage.

The study trip however, is for many of the participants seen as the main experience. This is where they really feel they learn something, and get the chance to network. Almost none of the participants commented on the difficulties that the different study tour groups had with cancellations, long trips etc. because the outcome outweighed the trouble.

"Meeting, speaking and listening to other experienced people experiences is educating in it self."

This, and networking is the point that the participants highlight the most, and also an area where they feel that their expectations are met to a large extent. The wish for more spare time should probably be seen in the light that the participants really WANT to talk to each other. Therefore, it became irritating not having that time, because all the time is scheduled.

The case presentations could help with this but as mentioned above the participants did not get the time or space needed for this activity. It should be discussed whether they are the best way of getting peoples experiences into the scene or whether alternative ways could do it more efficiently and productive.

Concerning getting more practical input in the programme the participants have different interesting and useful inputs to how the summer academy could be improved practical:

[...] "Also I think that more practical examples (case studies) could be presented by practitioners from the local level, as keynote speakers. There need to be a bottom up approach. Or let a researcher present a study from his/her point of view and let a person who was practically/locally involved in this research project, comment it and/or present the same case from his/her point of view and experience."

2.3 Building networks

Building networks is a main objective for the Euracademy project and for the Summer Academy as well. There is no doubt that the Summer Academy has really reached the objective of developing networks between the participants, however more allocated time for networking was desired from some participants.

"New friends; better English; better understanding of other nations (behaviour) – stronger Europe feeling; rising rural development network."

"Partly – in the way I have been able to network and discuss knowledge and obtain information on the conditions and comparisons of differences and similarities in other regions. Networking has been very successful. Ideas to explore back in my area have been found"

The webpage, that was finished already before most participants left Greece, was very good, and a good tool to help stimulate the network. There is some action, and from the follow-up evaluations it is visible that the Euracademy network is present in the minds of the people.

3 DETAILED FINDINGS - THE 2ND EURACADEMY SUMMER ACADEMY 2003

3.1 Methodology

The evaluation of the Summer Academy 2003 has been carried out on several levels, with the following groups:

- The participants; through two questionnaires
- The coordinators of the Summer Academy 2003; through interviews
- The partners present at the Summer Academy; through the point on the agenda, and informal discussions

Furthermore, the evaluation is based on:

- Informal talks with a number of participants,
- Observation in the groups and plenary sessions
- A final group discussion on one of the last days of the academy

The coordinators and partners have participated in a regularly discussions and evaluations.

Finally, all participants have been asked to give feedback two months after the Summer Academy following up on their experience and their personal outcomes of the Summer Academy in Ioannina, Greece.

In this section, the detailed findings of the questions asked will be presented. 36 participants answered the questionnaire at the summer Academy and Only the information coming out of the questionnaires is included.

3.2 Characteristics of the participants

The group of the participants in the 2nd Summer Academy consisted of 37 persons in total where 20 came from EU countries and 17 from countries outside the EU – accession countries and other eastern European countries.

This evaluation is based on the answers of 24 of the 37 participants. 14 from EU countries and 9 from non-EU countries.

In the report these answers are referred to if nothing else is mentioned.

Most of the respondents held an academic degree from a university on at least BA level. The degrees varied from economics, business administration, town planning, geography, agriculture and ICT.

About two thirds of the participants answered, that they are directly involved in rural development and information society on a regular basis. One third came

from planning organisations of different kinds or from the education and research sector. Only a few participants were students, unlike the 1st summer Academy.

In the group of respondents nearly all of the participants had practical experience from rural development and some had projects or activities within the framework of LEADER, and/ or experience with other EU programmes such as ADAPT, INTERREG and with national funding in the Eastern European Countries.

3.3 Information about the Summer Academy

3.3.1 From marketing to signing up

A little more than a third of the participants had heard about the Summer Academy through their network. Another third had received a letter directly from one of the partners and their university, and the remaining got the information through their University or other channels.

More than half of the participants state that they joined the summer academy because of the unique possibility of getting new contacts and building network. Another important motivation, which two thirds imply has been an important factor were the specific content of course. Finally, a third important factor was the possibility of exchanging experiences and ideas with colleagues from all over Europe

As main obstacles – although not obstacles that stopped them from attending, but might have stopped others, were:

“The price was very high” (7).

“It is a long time to be away from my work” (6)

“It was a long time to be away from home” (5).

More than half of the participants had the course funded by their employer, the projects they are partners in, their university or foundations of some kind.

The remaining participants were participating at their own private expenses, which is the same number of participants as last year.

3.3.2 Information before the Summer Academy 2003

Quite a lot of the participants found the information about the programme and the information about the other participants insufficient. They would have preferred more information about the programme and detailed CVs of all the participants sent in advance together with a list of lecturers as well as facilitators with pictures.

Compared to last year the respondents raised less practical issues. However, there were a number of negative comments mainly regarding the information level before the course – e.g. practical issues as accommodation, travel

information etc. which they would have preferred to receive a bit more in advance.

Remarks about the information before coming to Greece are mainly concerned with the information deficit: details that were missing – e.g. the address of the place where the academy was to take place, possibility to go on-line, and the things related to practical issues.

A more detailed programme, including how the study trips were supposed to take place and the fact that people would have to share rooms etc. would have been appreciated.

More information about the practical details was clearly indicated by the participants: that they needed to bring a small bag, towels, sheets, pillowcases etc. Accurate information about the accommodation and the distances in campus were also among the things that the respondents felt they lacked.

Especially the lack of information about where to meet, how to get from the airport to the Campus etc. caused the participants some trouble, and a feeling of unease from the beginning.

"Somebody should be on the bus station or airport when the participants are arriving, or at least mention to the ticket officer these will be some people who arrive, please show them the local bus or a taxi."

Actually, this is some of the only practical problems that the participants also raise in the evaluation made two months after the Summer Academy:

"The worst thing was my arrival: nobody was waiting for me and I had to find my way all by myself"

3.4 Management and structure

The management of the Summer Academy receive relatively positive feedback in the questionnaires, which is remarkable considering that the management group did not have the best working conditions.

"The management, generally speaking, was good. Some little mismanagement and misunderstanding were during the whole period, but these did not influence essentially the success of summer academy."

Some participants found it a bit difficult to find out, who were in charge of what, and this lead to some confusion, especially in the beginning.

"The planning and management was spread to too many places without clear agreement about the responsibilities. And the different parts were never really fitted together, so the result was too much ad hoc than it should have been."

Many participants would have liked to have more information in general.

"More detailed information as much and as soon as possible to both the participants and the staff. We need to know beforehand who will be the facilitators, what will be their role,

who is responsible of what, who will be the speakers, what will be the methods, how all this falls together."

A lot of this information was in the information package / student handbook given to the participant upon arrival, but apparently, they did not find the time to read this, which could lead to the conclusion that they should have had the information earlier.

But there was also a feeling that the commitment behind the Euracademy was something special, and although there are some quite rigorous criticism from some participants, there is at the same time no doubt that this commitment added to the Euracademy experience.

"I strongly believe that the organizers here in Ioannina gave the best of their selves, they gave their 'soul' to achieve the success, and they were fighting for all this time".

The cultural differences were very visible, and this added to the experience as the quote below illustrates:

"A complete disaster (from my perspective), thousands of things could have been prepared before 11 July, nothing was. On the other hand: I got into the Greek way of thinking/managing things and I found this very interesting, learned a lot and built up multicultural competence. in fact, I had great fun, so I should not complain"

3.4.1 Time

The time issue has two different aspects: One is the tight schedule, leaving no time for other things and the other is time management as mentioned above.

"I joined the Euracademy with the expectation to meet and network with others I gained that – but could have done better if there was more time in the programme for networking"

In the evaluation questionnaires several mention that they felt the programme was to intense and that they would have preferred more time for building network, time for sharing new ideas and to show and discuss the cases. To sum it up there seems to be a need for more informal activities such as meetings, gatherings, spare time etc.

"The scheme was quite intense. When there are a lot of people, you kind of would have liked to get a chance to discuss with more people."

"(We need) more free time – it's not good to bee together in 14 hours during a day (we need time: looking for new words in the dictionary; processing the new things, expertises; just relax."

About time management, this really divided the group, along cultural lines, leaving the northwestern Europeans (in general) frustrated and the southern Europeans taking everything in their stride.

There are quite a few comments regarding the structure of the sessions mainly concentrated around issues such as keeping the time, which quite a few mentioned as a very annoying and disturbing factor.

"Some kind of problem was, that we were always behind the schedule so for some things there was not enough time. Starting times for lectures should be start at 8:30 not 9:00 or later."

In general, a majority expresses that participants were contributing to the whole experience some stress though, that they wish there had been more planned time for both case presentations and networking.

3.4.2 Language

Most participants did not experience problems with language in the 2nd Summer Academy. The language barrier did not seem to have been as present as last year, maybe because the participants were older, more experienced and more homogeneous.

However, it was not totally problem free learning, discussing and networking in, what for the majority of the participants, was a foreign language. Several of the participants stated, that they did not realise that the language skills would be that important.

3.4.3 Other practical issues

The accommodation is one area where people in general are not satisfied. The lack of cleaning, the condition of the room etc. has given rise to quite a few negative comments.

Most of the participants were, in general satisfied with the conference facilities, the dining hall and the food and drink..

"I would have taken my lap top if I had known, that there "here internet connection in the rooms."

3.5 Participant preparation

Before the start of the Summer Academy the participants received the Thematic Guide (TG)., the main textbook with the introduction to the central themes this year - Information Society and Sustainable Rural Development.

All participants were supposed to prepare themselves before the start of the Summer Academy by reading the (TG). This was stated in the information package, which they received after signing up.

The majority of the participants are very content with the content of the (TG) and emphasised that it was a very useful tool when it comes to their preparation for the Summer Academy.

"It contains a wealth of useful information, well organized and categorized; an overall supporting document for the Summer Academy proceedings."

Most of those who have read it are positive concerning the (TG) and did not seem to find it too difficult to read and understand

"It was well written and a compact package of the theme of the Summer Academy. It also contained many interesting cases related to the subject."

A large part of the participants accentuate, that especially the described cases were very educational. The way the (TG) and the lectures interacted is described later in this report.

"Collecting cases must be organised and this year we did a quite good work. But maybe the cases and CVs should be asked for to be sent beforehand. That just requires enough time for the participants to prepare them."

Over half of the respondents indicate that they have also prepared a case to present as requested in the invitation.

3.6 The first days

Most of the participants feel that the first days of the Summer Academy in general were to their satisfaction. Some participants mention, that it would have been helpful to receive more practical information in the beginning regarding 'when', 'where' and 'how'.

For some the start was also a bit abrupt:

"We could have been eased into the Summer School business more gently. It started at full speed and was a little bit of a challenge after long travelling hours etc."

More than half of the group express, that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the introduction to the team and structure of the Summer Academy. Nearly all were very positive about the first sessions: Getting to know each other in small groups, the Open Space discussion and the international dinner.

"Small groups = OK but you learn only to know the people from that group. Would it be possible to have a list of participants (and short CVs) before each participant's presentation? Then one could remember names etc. easier."

3.7 Objectives and expectations

In the evaluation questionnaire, the participants were asked to list their objectives for their participation: the factors that made them decide to join the Summer Academy.

The findings show that the main objectives fall into the three same categories as last year:

- Network
- Knowledge
- Inspiration

Of these 'network' seems to be the most important:

The data shows that a large part of the participants have joined the Summer Academy to have an opportunity to create or expand their **network activities** in Europe, within the specific field of information society and rural development. Overall, they were quite satisfied:

"I believe, networking given the participants being in Ioannina, was rather good."

A number of them have networking as their main priority also during the Summer Academy, and consequently have some remarks about the available time for this. Especially that the networking session planned was placed late in the programme, was seen as a problem, but perhaps more so because some participants found it difficult to find the time outside the planned activities:

The Networking session being one of the last one and many participants travelling home this session cannot reach everybody.

Some of the participants express that the changes of the schedule during the academy had some influence on how successful the networking could have been. The fact that the programme changed quite frequently made it more difficult for the participants to establish their own initiated network activities.

3.8 The Euracademy programme

The theoretical programme of the Summer Academy consisted of 5 sessions each represented by a chapter in the Thematic Guide, introduction by a lecturer, small group discussions or some other kind of group session and a plenary part in the end. The participants have given their evaluation of these elements and they will be summarised below:

3.8.1 The 5 keynote session – introduction and themes

During the Summer Academy 2003, there have been five keynotes sessions where experts have lectured about themes and subjects concerning: Information Society and rural development.

Overall, the participants were satisfied with the sessions. They were also in general positive towards the form of teaching and the way that the programme shifted between presentations and group work / discussions.

"Please keep the system as it is. Different personalities and approaches make it more interesting. Specially the group sessions. Very good in general."

The majority found especially the lectures and cases about e-learning and e-business very interesting and useful.

"The choices were very good, the experts are excellent. The themes were well focused and the facilitators were mainly OK, some of them were really good, well prepared - the exercises were inspiring."

However, apart from this, the evaluations of the sessions mirror the different interests and profiles of the participants.

"Small group discussions, plenary discussions and study tour I did find most interesting. Most interesting was to hear different lectures, the theoretical things about Information society in rural development."

The participants evaluated different parts of the programme positively due to their different interests.

"(The Euracademy should address)..The huge difference/gap between European countries regarding to 'rural area'. What are the common problems, what should be the solutions."

The one lecturer who received the worst feed back did so, not due to his knowledge of the subject that he lectured on, but because he showed a lack of engagement with the Euracademy group, and a limited understanding for the transnational characteristics of the group.

Nevertheless, in general, the level of satisfaction was high and there was also a feeling of coherence in the programme:

"Quite interesting, especially entrepreneur part and e-learning where very interesting and the experts were great."

There were also wishes for more depth in certain areas, but again these wishes reflect the different interests of the participants, and are not possible to satisfy. Some would have liked and expected to learn more about ICT, software and hardware solutions etc. whereas others would have liked to learn more about more traditional themes within the sustainable rural development area.

Some of the remarks, however, have to do with the mix of theory and practise, and – like with the 1st Summer Academy – there is a feeling that the practical aspects should have been more visible – more examples.

"They were too abstract, all of them! It should have been more balanced with concrete practical things."

It could be argued, that this is why the study tour is included in the programme and the study trip is the element that satisfies most of the participants. This will be described later in this section.

Others indicated that some of the lectures were not successful, because the speaker spoke too slow, too fast or not loud enough. Some point to the fact, that if the speakers handed out their power point copies before the presentation it would help the understanding, which many also stress in the evaluation questionnaires.

The criticism raised is targeted at the depth in which it is possible to come in the programme: It voices that the themes and therefore the lectures were too common and familiar and that it would have been more interesting to cut down on the lecture time and use the time on plenary discussions, group work, networking etc.

Concerning the use of the TG as the underlying literature the answers echo the answers from the 1st Summer Academy.

Most participants are quite satisfied with the Thematic Guide in general. And although a few respondents mention that they find the content too theoretical, most stress that the TG provides a good collection of examples about Information Society and Rural Development. Many also mention the structure as a force in the Guide.

Only a few of the participants thought the Guide was very difficult to read.

In these answers the different starting point and different profiles of the participants comes out very clearly.

However, there is an agreement between the participants that it is strange, that the TG was not used more actively in the Summer Academy, as was the case.

"The Thematic Guide should have been 'used' and referred to more during the course. We never once opened the book and went through the chapters or used the chapters as a support or background for discussions. This may not have been necessary, but I found it a little strange."

3.8.2 Group discussions

Group discussions is an essential part of the pedagogical approach of the Euracademy because of its potential of being a forum for involvement of the participants and where the exchange of experience and expertise.

Therefore, all sessions were followed by some sort of group discussion. The participants were asked how they evaluated the method and the working of the group discussions.

"In the small groups, we can share experience and more deeply discuss the problem, everybody participating and have to be active."

Nearly all involved participants state that they have been very active or active in the different group discussions.

"It (group discussions) was the best part of the Summer Academy. I enjoyed it very much. I participated in the work very actively, the facilitators and native speakers helped us a lot to succeed our exercise."

Some feel that their personal output might have been larger if the groups had changed more often, providing possibilities for expanding network activities and exchange of experiences.

The group work was evaluated very differently from group to group, and from session to session, underlining the importance of facilitators in the way that the group work was planned.

"Interesting, to listen to other peoples stories but at times they became unclear and the purpose of the discussion became unclear"

3.8.3 Case presentations by participants

As with the group discussions, the case presentations are considered an important aspect in the pedagogical approach. This was one of the areas where last years evaluation had pointed out some weaknesses. However, there were still some criticism of the way that the case presentations were handled and how much time they were given in the programme.

The case studies we prepared were not worked with during the Summer School, which I found not very polite and without respect for us who had put the time and effort into to produce. They were printed out and pinned on a board in one of the rooms where probably no one read them because there was no time to do so and too much other stuff to read

3.8.4 The Study tour

"Hectic, interesting, stimulating, enlightening, challenging of preconceptions and attitudes, personally rewarding, hard work, good fun..."

Nearly all of the participants stress that the Study Tours serves a very important role during the Summer Academy. First of all everyone gets a chance to get to know the local people and nature. The majority of the participants stress the unique opportunity to experience the Greek rural life, the nature and culture and especially to meet and exchange views with the Greek population in their natural environment.

"Ours was a fantastic tour to a truly beautiful area: great nature, ecological and cultural wealth and awareness, warm and friendly people, very good gastronomy"

Secondly, the tour was seen as a pleasant and interesting break with and supplement to the previous Summer Academy activities

"Very interesting. Not too many places for appointed visits and all were in a very small area, so we had time to explore the surroundings more by ourselves. The group was well balanced and ambitious and serious enough with their mission. But not without the sense of humour! For us everything worked"

Not all the groups worked well, but that is difficult to prevent when people are put together and have to work, sleep etc. together without knowing each other.

Most of the participants expresses that they think the Study tour was very interesting and useful. The visits were good and inspiring:

"The places we visited were all quite interesting and useful. They helped a lot to understand the current situation in the rural areas in Greece. The innovative farmer was most interesting case."

But a large part of the participants felt they missed information about the Study Tour in general, before going away to Greece, and also while being in Ioannina, before going on the tour:

"(We should have had)...More information about the study tours. E.g. information about the fact that we should have our driving licences with us".

And some also questions the planning – especially groups who had cancellations or mistakes in the planning:

"Only 4 from 7 appointments were successful – no examples of the agriculture area, statistic information from 1991."

"Lack of information regarding the Study Tour – people have a need for information especially concerning a long an intense course like this. The activities has to be arranged and settled before the start of the course"

Finally. the reporting procedure and especially the level of reporting is questioned by the participants. There is a feeling that there was too much emphasis on output, and that it was not clear what this output should be, creating situations where some participants were more ambitious than others – something that clear guide lines could have remedied.

"The report-making was too hard because of too ambitions participants. The task should be a bit more closely targeted to prevent this tendency."

This quote shows the essence of which challenges, there comes with planning a Study Tour for a diverse group of participants.

(it is) "almost impossible to make arrangements which would suit the expectations and cultural norms of so many different people. If there were behind the scenes problems, they were not very visible to the participants and that must be a reason for congratulations. I heard very minor comments but nothing major enough to list here. I do think that an open mind is an essential piece of luggage to bring to such events and the critical comments I was aware of could easily be attributed to lack of flexibility or a not quite open enough mind"

3.9 The facilitators and the teaching team

3.9.1 Facilitators

The facilitators and their role were discussed after the first Summer Academy. It was decided to keep the facilitators but to reformulate slightly their role. The evaluation questionnaires put the question about how the facilitators were seen this year.

In the answers, it is not easy to find a general view because the opinions differed considerably.

By some, the facilitators were considered as very important and they did a tremendously good job with the group discussions.

They (the facilitators) helped me a lot in a small group work, as a good referee of the football game or as a catalyst. Our contact with them was very immediate, because they spent a lot of time in our company.

Others mention that each facilitator did things differently and that this was quite confusing. There was no clear picture of what the role of the facilitator was, and how this role was to be filled.

Facilitators did not always facilitate. Facilitators need to be well trained and experienced for these kinds of groups – people with many skills.”

An impression was that facilitators were not facilitating in a sufficient way in the group sessions when it came to providing the right motivation and expertise especially during the Study Tours.

“Some of facilitators had too little experiences. At the study tour I could not feel a support or leading of facilitator.”

The facilitators could have had a stronger role in the teaching or together as this quote illustrates:

“The facilitators didn’t use a lot of different methods; they didn’t motivate the participators to be active. In my opinion, some of the facilitators wasn’t creative and didn’t used any instruments to work with group. It would be very useful to demonstrate new instruments, tools, games for working with rural communities and so on.”

The issue of the facilitators was also one of the things that stood out very clearly from the evaluation by the coordinators of the Summer Academy, and especially by the main person in charge of the teaching who felt that there had simply not been enough time to instruct the facilitators because some of the practical things took up very much of the time the days before the participants arrived.

“Because I didn’t have a clear picture in my head, I couldn’t give it to the facilitators”

3.9.2 The teaching team

The teaching team included all the persons involved in the running of the Euracademy Summer Academy. It was headed by representatives of the Euracademy partnership, and had the overall responsibility for the programme and the other activities.

The remarks about time management etc. above, also reflects some of the difficulties that the participant have found concerning the teaching team:

The teaching team are high qualified and wonderful persons with proper experience. But the "team-work" did not function so well. It missed a strong captain.

This remark was also reflected by the partners present at the 2nd Summer Academy. Whereas there had been two persons in charge in Gotland, - which had not been enough because there was a problem with the practical things there too, in Ioannina the responsibility of the teaching and the flow was actually only on one person, for whom the pressure was very big.

The practical things were handled by the local team but the communication and the local team had very hard working conditions due to factors outside the Euracademy.

The work and general contribution of the teaching team was, by many of the participant influenced by the constant changes in the schedule. Several participants accentuate this as an obstacle during the whole course.

"I got also an impression that they couldn't concentrate fully on their work, because of the constant changes in the schedule."

Several state though, that besides the fact of constant changes, they were very content with the effort from both the teaching team and facilitators.

I found (...) that everybody was approachable and open to both serious discussion and/or fun. A good mix of people with very different personalities, it would be interesting to hear the view from the other side of the hill.

4 RETROSPECT EVALUATION

In this section the answers of the participants and some of the facilitators to an e-mail survey about their outcomes of the Euracademy two months after having returned to their home are summarised. The small survey has been done by e-mail, and 40% of the participants replied.

The questions they were asked, were

1. How do you now evaluate your outcome of the Euracademy Summer Academy in Greece? Was it worth going there, give examples of what you feel you have gained.
2. Have you used some of the things that you learned, some of the contacts or other aspects from Greece in your daily work since coming back home. And in which way?
3. What aspects do you emphasise, when you tell your colleges or friends about the academy to others?
4. What were the best things and the worst things of the summer academy when you look back?
5. Would you consider participating in other Euracademy activities in the future? (Yes / No – please comment).

All, but one of the participants responding to these questions answered that they felt it had been worthwhile participating in the 2nd Euracademy Summer Academy in Greece. The participants have forgotten the difficulties but they see very clearly that the Summer Academy has given them knowledge and insight into another country and through the discussions with the other participants – knowledge about other countries as well.

The answers show that the participants are still relatively positive in their evaluation of the outcomes, some even more so, than they were immediately after the Euracademy.

Networking and the things relating to networking are stressed as the main outcome and the thing that they emphasise.

They see the Euracademy group as a network that they can make projects with, or discuss with, and some have started this work already. All the participants answering the questions said that they were interested in participating in other Euracademy activities, next years summer academy or other things.

The network is exactly what is being the one single most mentioned outcome of the Euracademy seen in retrospect. All mention that they enjoyed this very much and that it now is a basis from where they can draw when they need an expert for something, partners for projects or just to have informal contacts to newly found friends.

Whereas the use of contacts and the network is quite tangible there are also quite a few of the group that mentions that they have used the more tangible parts of what they have been getting from the Euracademy.

Just as last year, some use the material in their own teaching, or some of the working methods. The cases are mentioned as well as usable material for people in different positions. The rest of the participants are a little more hesitant, they do not feel that they have started using any of the things yet, but still hope that they will.

The things that are emphasised by the participants, and that they tell about are the networking things: meeting people, sharing an experience and Greece. Theoretical input is not mentioned at all by any of the participants.

That the human aspects are most important to the participants can be found in the answers to what they found was the best. Networks, new contacts, a broader perception of rural development are things that stand out.

The worst things however are for those that still mention it practical things as the standard of accommodation, cleaning and the very crammed programme.

All of the respondents want to take part in other Euracademy activities, but some of them link it to the above mentioned remarks about accommodation, time management etc. and other to the length of the Summer Academy, which is seen as an important barrier.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for the next Summer Academies build on the experience from both 1st and 2nd Summer Academy. In the following some of the recommendations from last year are repeated, because they still need to be considered.

5.1 Information: Repeat, repeat and repeat

The first repetition from the recommendations for the 1st summer Academy has to do with information. There can not be enough information. The fact that the group is multilingual, multicultural and has very different backgrounds – more so first year than this, means that they read and interpret the information differently.

The information was clearer this year, but the participants still felt that there was not enough information neither before nor at the summer academy. So the recommendation to REPEAT, REPEAT and REPEAT is still valid, and should be considered for the future Academies.

Information is very well suited to shape the expectations of the participants about for instance the standard of the accommodation and the way the study trips were going to take place.

Of course it is impossible to inform about all the details especially if they are not ready at the time of the information, but it could be something that is aimed at. And actually most of the information that the participants ask for is in the Student Handbook, but apparently they do not take the trouble to read this and the information need to be presented in different ways as well.

A last recommendation about information is regarding the information that is presented to the outside world. This point was raised by the partners who questioned the fact that the Euracademy Summer Academy was not very visible to those who were not a part of it.

There has to be some kind of signposting of the event, this and the future events, to create an image and disseminate knowledge about what is going on.

5.2 Facilitators or not

The role of the facilitators was still not clear. However, this is something that the management of the future summer academies would have to address and it might have to change from year to year depending on the way of organising the Academy and the subject.

However, it is important that the facilitators, no matter what role they are going to have, get a good introduction to what they are expected to do, and how they should go about their role. There is still some work to be done on this, the two summer academies have had different approaches, and different conditions, but

from 2004 it will presumably be up to the country/ organisation organising the Academy and therefore not so easy to control.

The material produced in the project about teaching methods is very good and could be used as a starting point, but the most important thing is that the involved persons get a chance to create a common understanding. This needs time, and should be included in the budgeting and the planning for future Summer Academies.

5.3 The balance between “serious” and “exhausting”

One of the recurrent themes last year as well as this has been the lack of time, that the programme was too intensive etc. In changing this it is important to consider that the programme still has to look full. It was apparent from the planning of the 2nd Summer Academy that the partners have some ideas about the balance between theory and practice, and about the length of the Academy that is not, and perhaps should not be influenced by the evaluations of the participants. The partners are ambitious and they want the Euracademy Summer Academy to be ambitious too, challenging the participants and giving them more than they pay for.

However, the programme can also be too full – and the programme of the 2nd Summer Academy was for many of the participants too full, not allowing time to reflect, talk and experience the surroundings. It could be argued that the last point was special to Ioannina and Greece, but on the other hand it is probably natural that people when they are away from home wants to investigate a little.

The areas that the participants have found most interesting have been the discussions and the study trips, both years, and this is something that needs enough time in the programme, suggesting that more emphasis could perhaps be put on this more than on presentations.

5.4 Strengthen the network even more

In the planning of the 2nd Summer Academy it was considered how to make the network strong from the out set, and how to support the networking.

The participants participate in the Summer Academy to expand their professional and personal network and to do so they need time. This year there were more planned activities for networking – including a networking session – but unfortunately, this did suffer from the early departure of a large group of the participants.

However, what people might really need to get the network up and running earlier is “free” time – time where they can talk to each other and find the “like minds” or the unlike minds that can be of benefit.

The cases – as mentioned above they still have a step-child status, could perhaps be another way of getting the network off the ground faster. If the cases were sent in beforehand and distributed for instance, or summaries of them only, this could perhaps lead to more initial contact between participants on the basis of the cases.

The situation after the first Summer Academy where the webpage and the material took long time to materialise has been improved considerably in the 2nd Summer Academy. The webpage was up and running already before the end of the event, which meant that it could be introduced and some people could use it practically before going home, enhancing the chance that they will keep on doing so.

However, it is important that the webpage is constantly kept up-to-date, and that somebody takes responsibility for creating some activities there. This is important for the network, and the future association to take on board. "Activity breeds activity" - this is even more true for networks in the virtual world.

5.5 The spirit is growing

Most of the participants in Gotland and in Ioannina left the Summer Academies with a feeling of having had a wonderful time, met some nice new people, and made new friends and contacts. They had gotten a glimpse of a new, and to most of them very different place and they had seen practical examples on the study trip. They were full of good intentions to develop projects together and keeping the network alive.

As mentioned above, the webpage that was finished already before most participants left Greece was very good, and a good tool to help stimulate the network. There is some action, and from the follow-up evaluations it is visible that the Euracademy network is present in the minds of the people.

The Association will be another chance of keeping the spirit alive. But to do so it is essential that there is something for all the different types of participants: the practitioners and those who come from a teaching or planning perspective. The summer academies have shown that what all participants really treasure is to see or hear about practical examples, and thereby get closer to the themes, the subjects and the problems.

The following quote illustrates this very well and is a good closing remark for the Summer Academy evaluation:

(...) Certainly masses of new information, opportunities to meet people and network, all the early expectations were met. In relation to the study tour which was the core of the experience for me – I had not defined any expectations or goals other than a very general one to take as much from the visits as possible. Again the early expectations were met but in a different way – from a 'real' perspective and understanding the issues as they daily impacted on".

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