EVALUATION REPORT
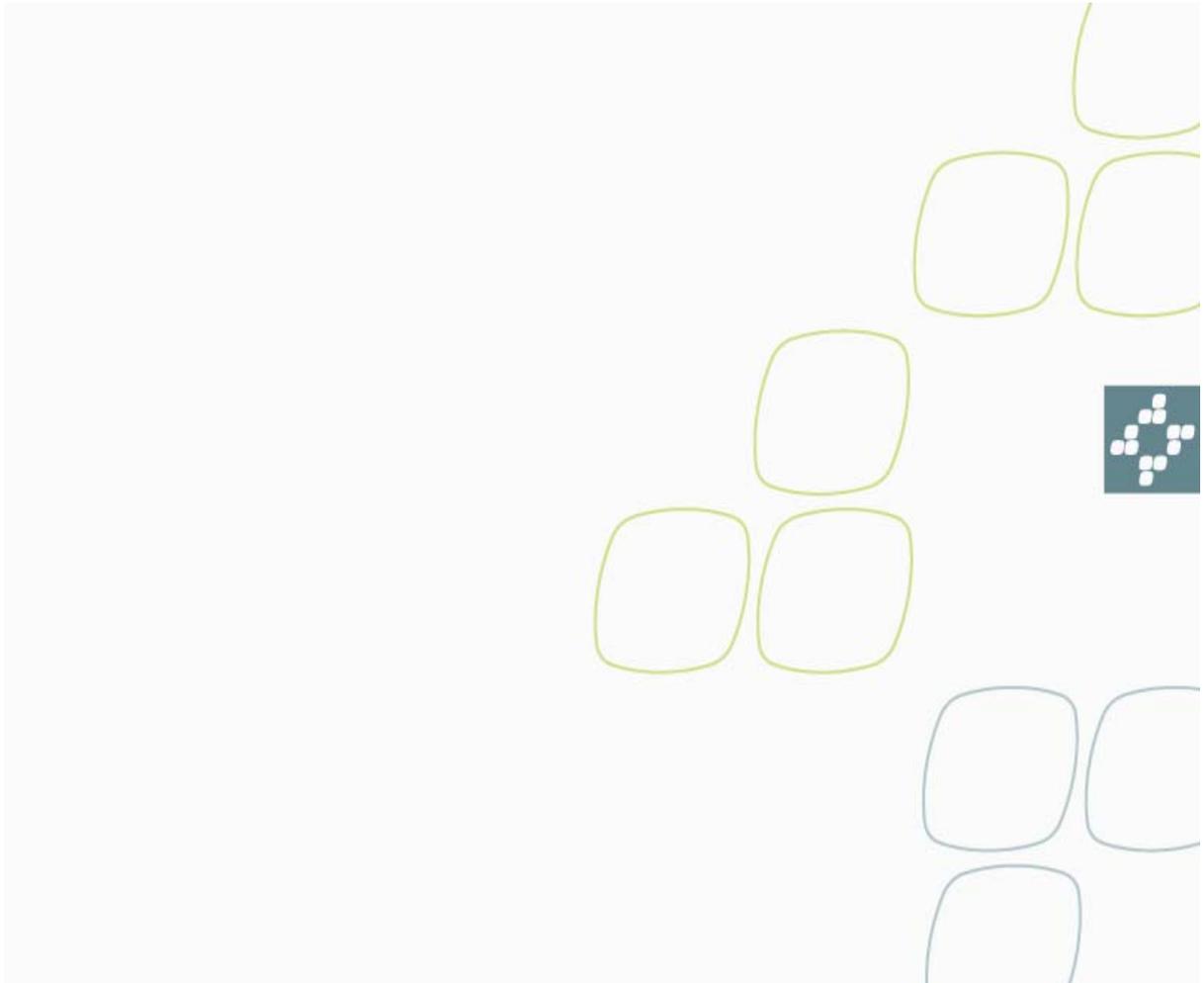**1st Euracademy Summer Academy**
Gotland, Sweden
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Index

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This report presents the detailed findings of the evaluation activities concerning the 1.st Euracademy Summer School (The Euracademy) and gives recommendations to the future work in the Euracademy project.

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. According to this the monitoring and evaluation has the following objectives:

> *"…to be able to draw conclusions, evaluate progress made, analyse difficulties encountered and solutions implemented at all stages in the project, for all partners and all types of activities"*

The findings of this report will be presented and discussed with the partners at the meeting in Valencia in November 2002.

1.2 Structure of the report

This is the introduction, section 2 sums up the conclusions of the evaluation of the 1st Euracademy and lines up some recommendations for the next, coming out of these conclusions. In section 3 the methodology and general approach is summarised especially to those outside the project who might be interested in reading it.

In section 4 the participant evaluations are presented in detail. Section 5 covers the evaluation by the facilitators and section 6 shows the reflections of some of the students two months after they participated in the Euracademy.

These last three sections 4-6 are based on the evaluation activities carried out during and after the event among participants, facilitators, teachers and other implicated persons. The chapter includes the main findings in detail, with citations to show the different opinions. The citations are shown in the report exactly as the participants have written in the questionnaires.

In section 7 some recommendations for the 2nd Summer Academy are drawn up and elaborated on.

2 CONCLUSIONS – THE 1ST SUMMER EURACADEMY

The participants of the Euracademy consisted of a mixture of young, relatively newly educated people with no or little practical experience in rural tourism, but with an eagerness to learn and a smaller group of people that are slightly older and who have the practical background for which the Euracademy was originally planned to target. There was also a small group of people working in education and training – and a number of people with a more political or planning perspective.

The whole group was characterised by having solid academic backgrounds on Bachelor level or higher. They have decided themselves to join the Euracademy but in general the cost is paid by their employer.

They have been relatively satisfied with the information received before coming to Gotland, although some misunderstandings and confusions about practical details could have been avoided. It is important that the information is as clear as possible, repeating the messages a couple of times to be sure that they are understood. The language has to be very serious, not colloquial or joking, because it may distract some people and make them misunderstand or overlook the message. It is also important that it is sent out well in advance because the summer is a busy time, and national holiday seasons vary.

In general, the participants have been positive to the experience of the Euracademy. They feel that they have had their objectives fulfilled: building network, getting specific and general knowledge and inspiration.

Perhaps the structure could have been more accommodating – it is mentioned that there should be more time for networking, more spare time for reflection and free discussions with the other participants, and also more emphasis put on the social aspects, facilitating the process of getting the participants to get to know each other. These viewpoints are supported by facilitators and partners as well.

There are, however, a number of critical, constructive comments and lessons to be learned from the evaluation forms, some of them have already been discussed in the partners meeting in Gotland, but others stand out after reading through all the evaluation material.

The different starting point and different profile of the participants are decisive in their evaluation of the Euracademy. The people with an academic focus and a very strong academic background have other interests than the practioners, and the planners have a different interest than the researchers. This is an important issue to consider, and also an issue that cannot be totally solved no matter what and how a summer academy is planned and organised.

Some prefer more theoretical lectures and fewer group discussions, others the other way around. One thing, however, that everyone seems to agree upon is that the lectureres should not repeat the text in the Thematic Guide, but instead use this text as a starting platform illuminating the theory with cases of different kinds.

In the answers concerning the lessons and the lecturers there is a clear tendency showing that the talks given by people in the Euracademy group, those who had been involved in writing the guide and in planning the summer school,

and those who had been present for some or the whole academy were evaluated higher than the ones by people arriving to do the talk and leaving immediately after. The Euracademians – partners or closely involved persons seemed better equipped to present the texts and the themes and making it relevant to the participants.

The way the teaching was planned, as expressed in the Students Handbook was seen as an interesting feature of the Euracademy, and seen as a part of the teaching as well as the method of teaching. This should be emphasised.

There was a general positive feeling regarding the changes in teaching methods and structure of the sessions. As an example, most of the participants express their satisfaction with the role play sessions and with the different methods and subjects introduced in the Animators Tools-sessions.

The group work was to a large extent influenced by the facilitators and their way of conducting the sessions. This puts the focus on the different ways of being facilitator and subsequently on the responsibility of the participants themselves in getting the process going. This was done in many different ways, and the facilitators themselves felt it a bit frustrating to do the task after only little preparation.

About the forming of groups there is a widespread feeling that even though the participant learned a lot from the diversity, this was also a barrier when it came to discussions about problems encountered and solutions applied, i.e. when the exchange of experience really was supposed to take off.

Some would have preferred to change discussion groups more often.

The need for facilitators is not evident when the evaluations are closely analysed. If the groups are formed in a more conscious way, the facilitation could be done by the group members themselves.

The facilitators express that the Euracademy for them was a big experience. They have learned a lot, about the subject, facilitating and about different cultures and the interaction in groups.

There is however a sort of confusion or frustration to be tracked from the facilitators evaluations. They felt that their role was unclear and the expectations to them seemed to change during the course of the summer academy. This, combined with an unclear feeling of leadership, and a very pressed programme, not allowing enough time for reflection seemed unsatisfactory.

It is important in the preparations for next years Euracademy to take these things into consideration and being more precise in the division of roles and tasks as well as in the formulation of leadership during the running of the academy.

These issues about leadership also come out clearly in the evaluations by the two coordinators: Cecilia and Thomas. They had divided the work between them: Thomas being responsible for the practical things and Cecilia for the teaching issues. Both of them did a fantastic job, but the team was probably too small considering the size of the group and the wide range of things that needed to be done, and also because the camp area in Fårösund did not have very good support structures, like for instance would have been the case in a conference centre a hotel or on a campus.

The most visible result of this was that there was sometimes an "information deficit" in the whole group: "What are we supposed to do now?" Whom are we waiting for?" etc. which was most of the time filled in a good way by other key persons, but who could have been avoided if the two main coordinators had had some practical help.

However, all involved, coordinators, facilitators and participants speak about their Euracademy experience in positive or even very positive phrases, and this gives raise to high expectations for the next summer academy in Ionnina, Greece in July 2003.

3   DETAILED FINDINGS - THE 1ST EURACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL

3.1 Methodology

The evaluation of the summer academy has been carried out on several levels, with the following groups:

- the participants
- the tutors
- The coordinators of the Academy: Thomas and Cecilia.
- The partners present at the Euracademy

With the participants and the tutors the evaluation was carried out during the school through:

- two questionnaires
- informal talks with a number of participants,
- observation in the groups and plenary sessions
- And a final individual and group reflection and discussion session the last day of the school.

Furthermore, the participants have been asked to give response to a few questions reflecting how they feel about their Euracademy experience, the outcomes etc. now that some time has gone.

The two coordinators have been interviewed about their perception of and experience with having the role that they have had.

In this section the detailed findings of the questions asked will be presented. The answers are taken from the questionnaires of which there have been 32 for the first questionnaire – 26 the second and 29 the last thematic – individual and group session.

Only the information coming out of the questionnaires is included.

3.2 Characteristics of the participants

22 of the participants answering the questionnaire came from Eastern Europe and 9 from Western Europe

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

One third of the participants answering the questions were directly involved in rural development and / or rural tourism on a day-to-day basis.

One third came from planning organisations of different kinds or from education and research.

The last third were either just finishing their studies or just started working within this field, and they were interested in getting a more practical approach

and input for their future work. This group had only the academic background and not a practical background in rural development/tourism.

The group with practical experience from rural tourism had a variety of projects going, some within the framework of LEADER, and experience with other EU programmes such as ADAPT, INTERREG and with national funding in the Eastern European Countries.

Summing up it is important to note that the participants were different than the planned target group. There was an overrepresentation of people from North and Eastern Europe and not so many from the west and south as the project partners had planned and wished for. There were also more people with no practical background in rural development and tourism, students that had just graduated from university.

> *"More people from EU (member states). Less people from same countries"*

In general a majority expresses that participants were contributing to the whole experience. Some of the participants would have preferred a more homogeneous target group.

> *"Try to create a more homogeneous target group for this school"*

Interesting enough some of the participants ask for more diversity in the group others would prefer less diversity.

> *Keep mix of people with different backgrounds (farmers, entrepreneurs, researchers, tourist workers). Important for a real life experience*

Some of the participants voice that the lack of experience, especially among the younger participants was a problem in the discussions, whereas others point to the mix as one of positive things:

> *"Participants should be with experience"*

and

> *"Diversity among participants in age and profession is positive"*

4   THE PARTICIPANTS

4.1 From marketing to signing up

Half of the participants had heard about the Euracademy through their network 30 % had received a letter directly from one of the partners university, and the rest had gotten the information through their University.

Most of them came because they wanted to, it was their decision and something that they have made possible. Only one had been ordered to take part, whereas a few others had been recommended it.

Two thirds of the participants mention the network building and getting new contacts as the main reason for wanting to join.

As main obstacles – although not obstacles that hindered them in joining the participants are divided on the following three: the price was very high (9) I am very busy in my job this time of the year (8) and It was a long time to be away from home (6)

More than half of the participants have their stay funded by their employer. 8 had found other sources of funding: a project they are partners in, their university or foundations of some kind. And the rest - 7 participants were participating at their own private cost.

4.2 After signing up - information

The participants were in general satisfied with the first information material that they received about the Euracademy (27) and most of them were equally satisfied with the material they received after signing up (22).

To sum up the practical issues there are both positive and less positive opinions. Many of the participants would have liked to receive more information about the accommodation in advance. Some of the participants are not satisfied with the accommodation as a whole. Others are perfectly satisfied and compliment the organization crew for their role in the Summer Academy.

Some would also have preferred to have a list off all the participants together with the programme in advance, and perhaps a list of lecturers and facilitators with pictures.

The remarks about the information before coming to Sweden are mainly concerned with details that were missing, address of the place where the academy was to take place, and the things related to practical issues – sheets etc. And also a little more detailed programme, including how the study trips were supposed to take place, that people would have to share rooms etc.

This point seems to be important because it is something that they keep coming back to also in the final thematic evaluation.

4.3 Participant preparation

Before the arrival at the Euracademy the participants received the Thematic Guide and the Student Handbook. The Thematic Guide was the main textbook with the introduction to the central themes in the subject Rural Development through tourism.

The participants were asked to prepare themselves before the start of the Euracademy by reading the Thematic Guide and the Participant Handbook. This was stated in the information package that they received after signing up.

In the first part of the evaluation they were asked about this preparation.

Of the participants answering the questionnaire 10 had read all of the Thematic Guide, 17 some of it and 5 answer that they had not read it at all.

Most of those who have read it or in it are positive towards this – reading before arriving, and most of them did not seem to find it difficult to read, the language

not being too difficult. The way the Thematic Guide and the lectures interacted will be dealt with below.

This positive attitude is also to be found in the answers to the question about what they thought of the way the structure of the Euracademy was described in the Participant's Handbook. To this question 80% answer that they found it interesting or very interesting.

> *"This handbook put me into the centre of the problem and methods. It is a good guide for others too"*

Some of the good advice for the improvement of the Participant Handbook includes a list of participants with small descriptions, and pictures and presentations of the lecturers and facilitators.

To include more practical information in the Participant Handbook could perhaps make it more important to the Participants while they are at the Euracademy:

> *"I didn't use it here but it was useful at home"*

One third felt however that they received the Thematic Guide and the rest of the material a little bit too late, and this might have had an impact on how many had read the Thematic Guide before arriving.

26 of them answer that they brought a case to present as requested.

4.4 The first days

Most of the participants feel that the arrival and the first days went to their general satisfaction. 23 express that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the introduction to the team and structure of the Euracademy.

Some mention that more information about when, where and how would have been helpful. A thorough presentation of the programme, the methods and the lay out of the venue of the Euracademy could have remedied this.

The timing of individual presentations and the way to exhibit the material that they brought along should also have been made clearer at the same time as it should have been clearer what to do with the diskettes containing the cases and the CV's of the participants that they had been asked to bring.

A map to be used to show the different areas would be helpful.

At the same time there is also a call for more time to get to know one another, the schedule did not allow for time to socialise in a more structured way. This could have been done through games or other social happenings in line with the dinner on the first night.

> *"The first dinner with national food and drinks was the best. This event should start earlier and to add thematic short presentations by slides or whatever"*

The frames for the social activities got quite a few comments, especially at Fårösund at the military base where people were dispersed and there was no organised meeting place. The social programme should perhaps be more organised the first days to allow people to get to know each other:

> *"At the military base I missed a place to socialize. But it was good to be isolated, to focus on the Summer School during these days"*

The trip to the Medieval Festival is highlighted as a very good start, allowing people to talk in small groups, and at the same time being connected to the theme of the Euracademy.

The Open Space session is also very positively evaluated, like the different other alternative ways of teaching or working together:

> *"I think I could use some of the methods. Thank you. They were nice and alternative"*

4.5 Objectives of the participants

The participants were in the first questionnaire asked to list their objectives for participating in the Euracademy. The findings show that the main objectives fall into three categories:

- Network (hereunder marketing)
- Knowledge
- Inspiration

The objectives of most of the participants are a mixture of these three objectives where the individual puts more or less emphasis on the one or the other.

Network

Most of the participants answer that they have decided to takes part in the academy to build up, or broaden their **network** in Europe, within the field of rural development and tourism, and in general. A number of them mention directly that they want to find partners for a project or customers, and that they have a marketing agenda as well, whereas it for the majority is more a question of simply enlarging the international web of contacts.

The objectives concerning knowledge can be divided into two sub-categories:

general knowledge – a wish for more knowledge on rural development, rural tourism in general, what it is all about, what is the theory underlying, how the concepts can be understood and developed etc.

Specific knowledge: For some their objective is to get more specific information – knowledge that will answer some of the questions that they face in their daily work

Finally a large group of participants mention that their objectives of participating in the Euracademy is to get some general **inspiration** – ideas for future work, and products or services that can be copied in the participant's local area.

4.6 Evaluation of the sessions

The theoretical programme of the Euracademy consisted of 8 sessions with 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 concerning the sessions: the lecture or introduction and the group discussion.

4.6.1 The 8 sessions – introduction and themes

Generally the participants are quite satisfied with the Thematic Guide. Some though ask for more models and figures with can supplement the text, others are inspired by the theoretical content.

Some stress that the Thematic Guide provides a good collection of examples about rural tourism. Many also mention the structure as a force in the Guide. A few of the participants thinks the Guide is very difficult to read, to theoretical and long difficult sentences.

In these answers the different starting point and different profiles of the participants comes out very clearly, and makes it difficult to solve to everyone's satisfaction. The people with an academic focus have other interests than the practioners and the planners have a different interest than the researchers.

The subjects of the 8 lectures are seen as good and pertinent, although the starting text in the Thematic Guide for some of the participants held ad very little new knowledge.

The models and theoretical diagrams on the other hand, seem to add to the understanding of the theory behind, and a number of participants ask for more of these tools.

> *"Very useful, but there should be more models and figures. Not only text"*

The theoretical level of the Thematic Guide and the lectures is not evaluated as being too high, but not exactly too low either. For half of the participants most of the theory or background knowledge of the Thematic Guide and the lectures was known to some extent. This is mainly due to the fact that they are relatively well-educated as mentioned above.

The case examples in the Thematic Guide are criticised for being too positive. There should also be non-successful examples, and they should be more adapted to get inspiration from, or be able to duplicate:

> *"It is a good approach and well structured. The case studies can not help us to develop similar products, because they are presented as a marketing piece"*

The lectures connected to each session are evaluated differently. A few get relatively bad critique and in general there is a tendency towards the sessions that were run by presenters present at the Euracademy or closely connected to it, are getting better evaluations by the participants.

The different language skills and accents of the presenters made it either easy for the participants, or it created a barrier for understanding and a general more negative impression of the lecture.

This could be remedied by handing out notes or slides before the lecture, as one of the participants suggest:

> "I'd suggest providing the slides or information before the lecture (handout) because sometimes it was difficult to follow the language and not all lecture use native English speak"

Some participants point to the fact that it was not good when the lecture was too close to the text in the Thematic Guide, that they were supposed to have read before coming to the Euracademy. This makes it feel that the preparation was worthless.

> It was ok, but I think that lectures should not tell the same during the theoretic session. The Thematic Guide should be like introducer to the theme and lecture should go deeper to the problem and not repeat

The lectureres that involved cases, pictures, stories from their own practise are also getting the more positive evaluations by the participants. The concrete examples like for instance in Dan Carlson or Thomas Bergenfeldt' presentations are brought forward as good, because of the practical input they gave.

4.6.2 Group discussions

Group discussions were from the organisers seen as a central element, the forum for involvement of the participants and where the exchange of experience and expertise could evolve. This and the case presentations were therefore important elements.

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.

In general the participants were positive towards the main idea of the group discussions, that they should be involving, translating the theory into understanding on a more practical level and acting as a forum for the exchange of experience.

When the discussions took off, they were very good:

> "the lesson and group work were excellent – based on a real life experiences, group work excellent run by the facilitator – developing a great discussion with some new ideas and a conclusion at the end" (session 3)

But it seemed that this was difficult due to differences in knowledge, experience, language skills and to some extent also differences in understanding of the task.

> It's better to participate each time in different groups with different facilitators

A general picture forms among the participants regarding the facilitators and that is the very different level of experience, methods and skills. It all depended on which group you ended up in, the composition of the group and the facilitator.

> *Very varied and the quality of facilitator determined the quality of the discussion. Suggest all Swedish*

Some of the participants were content, others dissatisfied, and a lot of things influence this: expectations of the role of a facilitator, cultural differences etc.

> *"(they did a…) good job, but I think that they had a lot of trouble to manage many different cultures. The first day I was a bit surprised with that attitude but often everything was ok. They need more information on way of life because of Nordic people don't see the life in the same way that we do in South, east or western Europe"*

To create a more equal standard and methodology is necessary if the facilitators are to play the facilitation role in a more homogenous way. In this respect many of the participants point to the fact that the facilitators should have been better prepared and have a more homogenous style and approach to the facilitation, and some also mention that it would be an advantage if the facilitators knew the subject in question.

4.6.3 Case presentations by participants

The case presentations were a part of the group work, and the cases were prepared and presented under one of the six theme headings.

A majority of the participants thinks that cases were a very good method to learn new knowledge and the case presentations were a positive element when they provoked discussion and led to a broadened understanding of the theme.

Some stress that there often was not enough time to discuss the different case stories in depth. It would be a good idea to give all the participants a description or a short summary of each case in advance.

About the case presentations in the groups the participants have the following comments:

> *A good way to learn, maybe they could have been used ever more – real problem solving sessions*

However, there was often was not enough time to discuss the different case stories in depth. It would be a good idea to give all the participants a description of each case.

> *Interesting, but there was usually not enough time to discuss them – e.g. more specified problems and solutions needed*

Again the composition of groups and facilitation seems to have made a difference:

> *Was not good prepared (in groups where I participated). I think that organizers should look at the cases and only then*

present those which is about the theme because some of the cases was not about the theme and it was a waste of time

A few participants are really unhappy with the case presentations because they had done a lot of work on it before coming and felt that this work was not really valuated in the way that the presentations were made. They would have liked to present the case to the whole group, because they also see it as a chance of showing their area and their products.

4.7 Language

In general, the language barrier seems to have been existent both in the lectures and in the group discussions, posing a varying amount of trouble for about half of the group.

"I did not understand all the words but the general meaning of the presentations"

is the most dominant answer. But at the same time they point to different ways of how the introducers, the team members or the facilitators could help with the language barrier in general: These suggestions show that the language barrier is perhaps bigger than people want to let on:

"speak slowly and clearly and show text that you are using. Keep discussions simple"

or

"To work in group with someone from you own country who better knows language in order to translated help to participants"

Quite a few of the participants had some language problems, which comes out in the answers to the open questions. It was also an issue for some the lecturers and facilitators. One suggests that a vocabulary with the most used and important words should be available for the participants in advance, perhaps as a supplement in the Thematic Guide.

"First step – explain basic expressions. Not because of me, but not everybody is familiar with these themes in English"

"One page summary to be distributed with key-words/ ideas before the presentation. More schemes (tables), pictures whatever to follow the presentation logic, it's easier".

Focus should be on getting people to speak regardless and in this respect the composition of groups, the lifetime of groups and the facilitation again becomes central questions:

Some people were afraid to speak; they were holding back in the discussions or depend very much on people from the same countries. There should be a good way to encourage them to speak some more

The language of the facilitators and the lecturers are seen as a very important factor. They have to have a good command of English so that they can explain the things that the participants might not have understood in the lecture:

> *"A problem of language among participants is not that important, but among some facilitators and introducers should be better – as they are part of "main leading" team. It can effect the quality of lessons & group work more on a positive or negative way"*

The native English speakers or those who speak English very well should be aware that this can also be a problem, and they should all the time think of their audience and make the necessary adjustments.

4.8 Study tour

Most of the participants expresses that they think the Study Trip was very interesting and useful, and that this is were they feel they have really gotten a good network.

The visits were good and inspiring:

> *We really met some inspiring entrepreneurs*

Additionally, it also gave a good change of rhythm from the activities in the sessions and the groups. The planning of it was to everyone's full satisfaction although the programme was perhaps a bit too crammed.

This was were they got the good relations build up with other participants, but for many it was a bit too intensive, especially because there was a report to be written and presentations to the other study groups:

> *Very good experience meeting local people. The only problem – we had not enough time to prepare good reports and reflection of the study tour*

Some however express that they would have liked to have one more day of study trip, because the real life experiences felt more useful than the theoretical input.

> *"It was first experience for me. It was very useful from different point of views. To know the reality, to work in teams with personal responsibility"*

The team building in the study tour groups was very evident especially the last two days in Visby. The presentations of the study tours got very positive feedback:

> *"Superb although too little time to work on the reports – still the presentation of the study trip were fun and innovative"*

4.9   Final Evaluation session – general outcomes

In the final evaluation session on the last day of the Euracademy the participants were asked to think back on the whole experience and write about their feelings and to what extent their expectations had been fulfilled.

In short, the objective of the summer academy was to give a theoretical and methodological input, and to get people to exchange experience and learn from each other therefore these issues are treated separately below:

4.9.1 Theoretical and methodological input

The theoretical starting point of the participants was perhaps higher than expected in the planning process and therefore this is not where most of the people have learned many new things. On the other hand there were fewer practioners.

The Thematic Guide and the teaching methodology was prepared with the practioners in mind, and this is an important lesson for the next summer academy that these things have to re-thought when there is a clear indication that the target group is changing.

However, the structured way of presenting the themes and the way these themes have been linked and illustrated by practical examples have added to the general understanding, and for some of the participants this is where they have gained the most. This is mainly the case for the practioners, who might have an academic background, but who have it in other subjects or for whom the academic training has taken place some years back.

The whole group – practioners and non-practioners, experienced in rural development and tourism, and non-experienced, have all to a varying degree been inspired by the teaching methods such as open space method, group discussions etc which increases their creativity.

That the teaching methods changed during the sessions has not been seen as a bad thing by the participant, on the contrary, more of them points to the fact that the changes made it more interesting.

4.9.2 Exchange of experience

The planned exchange of experience should take place in the group work, and this has also to some extent been the case. After the group work was changed from focusing on the Thematic Guide, seeking answers to complement this, the groups could take up any issue relating to the presented themes that they found interesting, and discuss that including their own situation.

In the participants' reaction this succeeded to a varying degree, depending on the mix of the group, the number of people who wanted to say something, and could do it on a sufficiently level of English and the facilitator. These issues are dealt with in more detail above.

Another subject is the lack of time for the group processes. Many experienced that there wasn't enough time to present their cases and get the necessary

feedback from the group members. Some of the participants think the cases were too much about problem solving and not about exchanging experiences. Others feel that they met colleagues who are working in the same field and had a lot to share. A few thinks that the best exchange of experience they got on the Study Tours. There is one common factor and that is lack of time to the discussions in the groups.

> *"More experiences could have been exchanged if group discussions were not about presenting areas into details, but just summaries, to have time to discuss"*

It is important to consider these issues and perhaps organise some of the groups taking peoples experience and daily work into consideration.

4.9.3 Building the network for future use

There is no doubt that the participants feel that they have obtained a network for future use through the Euracademy. This is expressed by the partners at the final evaluation, but more interestingly it comes out in the feed back that they have send after some months (October 2002)

In these answers it is clear to see that some of them have really started working together, in new projects that have been written and sent in to the EU, and in more day to day collaboration, using each other to find information about specific things.

But it could have been supported more by the programme. As one of the participants put it:

> *"…Only ever found out what 5 other people did on a formal basis (workshop). Should have had more time to go into other peoples groups, especially as the thematic guide themes were ambiguous which led to confusion"*

Most of the participants would have preferred more spare time to relax and reflect but also to exchange information and experience and really to get to know each other but the breaks were to short.

Some of the participants suggest that the networking could have grown out of more outdoor activities such as sport or a certain place to be in the evenings, a café with music and or games. The parties that were arranged, and the trip to the beach with the sand castle building, were all very positively evaluated. All the participants enjoyed the welcome party, and some stress that this could have developed further making everybody introduce themselves in more detail.

> *"If people are active the programme is active"*

5 THE FACILITATORS

The group of facilitators where put together by the partners, involving project partners and other people from the partner organisations, or related persons. The group of facilitators consisted of people from Finland, Hungary, Greece, Spain, the UK, Poland and Sweden.

The facilitators were asked to fill out the same questionnaire as the participants, and on the last day a special evaluation session was held with facilitators only. The answers below summarises the input from all sources, and the citation here sums the role of the facilitator up in few words:

> *"Full, productive and interesting with lot responsibilities, exhausting"*

On questions related to organisation and management the opinions of the facilitators vary: Some of the facilitators were very satisfied with the organisation whereas others were not that impressed. In the following their evaluations are summarised.

5.1 Before the start of the Euracademy

The facilitator's day before the Euracademy started is very positively evaluated. The facilitators found it useful to have the day, but would have liked to have more time to discuss methods, and perception of the methods. In the programme for that day the time was also too short, and it collapsed leaving the focus to be on communication and organisation and not so much on the teaching methodology described in advance. The team building necessary to work as a team and to find a more or less common facilitator role was something that would have needed more time.

The Participant Handbook served as an important tool for the facilitators, as it had a description of how the teaching methods were planned etc.

> *Easy to understand, well written accurate pedagogical theories, big variety of methods, need for improvement, open for discussion*

This tool is seen as a good and helpful tool for the participants and also serving its purpose as an introduction to the methods, which was supposed to be discussed at the facilitator's day. It looks however as reading and talking about the methods is not sufficient to have the methods internalised, and to solve this it would perhaps have been a good idea if the facilitators had been involved in writing the Participant Handbook.

The Thematic Guide was the main text for the lectures from which the discussions took off, and the facilitators had all read it before coming.

They had different opinions about its purpose. Some thought that it was useful and that it offered new and interesting approaches to the themes of rural development.

> *Easy to understand, rich content, open for discussion and improvement, a valuable "initial" guide for further research, if there were references*

Others had the opinion that it was either: too theoretical, containing too many cases or being too general, i.e. there was not really agreement in the facilitators team on how the Thematic Guide should have been, if it should have been different, which again reflects the differences in background and focus of the members of the team.

5.2 Sessions and group discussions

The critique is mainly targeted at the way that the intensive programme for the participants was even more intensive because the facilitators also had meetings in the evening, and during lunch.

> *"We used too much time in the facilitators meetings talking about irrelevant issues".*

When the summer academy started the facilitators found it rather tiring that all their time was occupied. Some stress that there should have been more time scheduled for facilitator meetings instead of having the meeting during dinner or other activities.

> *"Too heavy programme. My suggestion is: No meetings during the meals, one meeting per day, not to complicated day"*

There are very different opinions among the facilitators concerning the length and depth of the lectures and group discussions. Some enhance that the lectures should be longer and go more into the depth of the problem, others seeks more time for the following discussions in the groups.

But again the opinions are very varied. Some facilitators express that the strength lies in the variation of the methods practiced on the Summer school others think that the reflection and depth vanished a little in the process. Some expresses the need for more supervision before the group discussions others enjoyed the improvisation.

> *"Variation is important. We should have been prepared for this variation in advance, so we could have created some kind of continuous flow"*

The cases that the participants had prepared to present were an element in the group work.

> *"Interesting tool of work for sessions and the students"*

In general the facilitators thought that the cases were an interesting tool and that there were a lot of different and interesting cases. Some of them emphasises that it is more interesting to discus a real case than going through heavy theory.

> *"(there were) lots of interesting cases. Sometimes participants had difficulties in deciding in which theme they belong. We didn't use the cases as much as we should have"*

This last citation echoes how some of the participants evaluated the use of cases. They felt that the participants who had prepared a case, presented it at the seminar did not get the sufficient feed back from the other participants:

> *"It is not enough to put up the problems form each issue. Participant wanted to show their results"*

Some facilitators also mention that some of the cases weren't very well prepared

> *"Interesting, but not pointed to the theme. And presentations were not prepared properly. Not enough time to discuss them properly and lead them towards the particular theme".*

Finally the facilitators address that there was not enough feedback on the facilitators' role during the course.

> *It was a good idea to be together in the first day. Until the study tour there were very few time for relaxation for the facilitators, however it is important the everyday feedback of the process*

Some feel furthermore, that there was a lack of support concerning the facilitators, and that the way their role was debated was making it difficult to know what to do and how to act. Their role of being a collecting aspect, with knowledge of the programme etc. was not easy to have as the things changed, adding to the dissatisfaction and frustration of the facilitators:

> *"People did not know, what will happen in the next day"*

To improve this there should have been at least a fixed time table one day in advance making it possible to get the necessary "big picture" and thereby be able to take on the role that the facilitators got – of being more teachers in a school sense of the word.

This school feeling was more dominant because the target group was different than what had been envisaged, and the younger group was more used to being guided through, not totally taking the responsibility for their learning situation themselves.

5.3 Balance between planned and free time

Just like the participants, the facilitators would have liked to have more time for relaxation, reflection, exchange of experience, and social interaction. They echo the participants in mentioning that the programme was too crammed, as mentioned above.

Many of the facilitators mention the Middle Age Feast and the first dinner as an enjoyable event.

> *"Music, dance, folklore is basic for understanding between countries, not enough good distribution of timetable"*

One of the facilitator points to this as being the optimal day programme:

> *"Half a day lectures, half a day free time, exercises, free group discussions, time for sport activity and for reflection"*

5.4 About participants

As discussed above the target group was slightly different from what the project group had planned for in the preparation of the Euracademy. They were closer to the academic world, with not so much practical experience and younger than it had been foreseen.

This had an impact on the discussions, and this was also a subject for the facilitators to deal with in the evaluation.

> "(the group was…) Very varied in experience - some found it difficult to participate in groups"

In general most facilitators found the variety in the group of participants between nationalities and skills useful and interesting. They emphasise, however, that it is important to look at participant's experiences and skills when the groups are composed. It is important to take into account age, experience and skills, criteria of choices, same level of understanding and perhaps avoid undergraduates in general.

A few thought that it was a problem, but the majority thought the language diversity was not such a big problem. There seemed to be a general level of understanding.

However, the facilitators highlight that the teachers and facilitators have to be aware of how they communicate themselves; they must speak more slowly and clearly and code their student's level of understanding.

6 RETROSPECT EVALUATION

In this section there is an overview of how some of the participants and some facilitators evaluate the Euracademy two - three months after they have returned to their home. The small survey has been done on e-mail, and I have received answers from about 30% of the participants.

The questions they were asked were

1. How do you now evaluate your outcome of the Euracademy Summer School

2. Have you used some of the things that you learned, some of the contacts or other things from Gotland in your daily work since coming back home? In which way?

3. What do you emphasise when you tell your colleges or friends about the school?

4. what were the best things and the worst things of the summer academy seen in retrospect

5. The next summer academy will take place in Greece in July 2003 – will you attend? (why/why not?)

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

"One of the best work experiences I have ever had".

A few say that they find it hard to hold on to the outcomes once they are home and they question the relevance of spending the number of days for the building up of the network, which they see as the main outcome. These answers seem to come from participants who had some very well defined objectives of participating in the Academy.

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.

Presumably, the network is both formal and informal. Some mention that they have e-mailed, spoken on the phone or visited contacts from the Euracademy, and a few mentions that they have developed or are developing new initiatives together: courses and projects etc.

One tells the story of succeeding to find a person in Hungary working with ballet, just by putting out the question to the network and letting it work.

A few of the participants especially points to the fact that the Euracademy Summer Academy gave a very good opportunity to meet people from the pre-accession countries, which was very interesting for the EU members who have not yet have collaboration with partners outside the EU region, and the other way around. This is emphasised as being important for the following years of development in rural development projects, and initiatives.

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.

The Thematic Guide is used directly by two of those who have answered the questions, one on college level and the other on University level. Others mention that they use the cases from the Thematic Guide in their teaching or as references. The different methods have also been put to use in the setting of the participants.

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 being on Gotland, Secondly, comes the talk of learning new things, enlarging the knowledge of rural development and tourism. A number of the participants say that they tell their colleges about the professional and flexible way the Euracademy was organised.

That the human aspects are most important to the participants can be found in the answers to what they found was the best. Again the "meeting people" and "good atmosphere" are the statements.

The worst thing however, is not as unambiguous. The practical things: place and standard of accommodation and food comes out, as mentioned above and the crammed programme leaving no free time and not enough time for the reflection and self-evaluation.

In connection to this some of the Euracamidians also express their fear of what this will lead to. They call for addresses, texts and in general some action that they felt was promised at the Euracademy final session in Gotland. This have not taken a permanent shape yet, but will probably have to do so fast, if the participants are not to be totally disillusioned and all the euphoria of the Euracademy feeling should evaporate.

About half of those who have answered these questions would like to participate in next years summer Academy. The other half find that the subject is too far away from their working field, but some might work to send other participants from their organisation.

Linked to this, the question of timing and length of the Summer Academy pops up again. A couple of the participants suggest that the Summer Academy should be shorter, and a couple also mention that July is a very difficult month to do something like this in, because of holidays in the North of Europe and work in the South. The funding also still pays a role; most of them need to convince their employer about the value of a Summer Academy, and the need for them to finance it

7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2ND SUMMER ACADEMY

7.1 Information: Repeat, repeat and repeat

For a group with the language skills as the group this year, some signing up early and some very late etc. it is important that the communication is clear and based on one of the key concepts of mass communication: REPEAT, REPEAT and REPEAT.

In the mails and letters this year there was a lot of information but it was to some extent disguised in the text. This led to a number of irritating practical things like the problem with sheets, and to some expectations that were not met completely when it came to the accommodation in the camp and on the study trip. This could easily be avoided by adding some lists and perhaps also use the website or e-mail for this.

7.2 Strengthen the network even more

The network is one of the key reasons for people to come. They want to enlarge their professional and personal network and to do so they need time. This networking could at least from the outset of the Summer Academy be done

more deliberately, for instance by having time for short presentation in plenary by all, or other "ice breaker" activities.

The group work in the 1st Euracademy was dedicated mainly to discussion of the Thematic Guide, and presentation of cases and that leaves not much time for the socialising part. Perhaps groups could continue together in the evening being responsible for some kind of entertainment or arranging a sports event, thereby keeping the group together for a little longer with a more informal task and more time.

Small reflection teams could also be an idea, matching people in smaller teams to reflect and evaluate.

Finally the documentation of the other participants – the participants list could be used for this. Prepare a list with a short summary on all. Name, country, work field and interests so that it can be used already from day one to seek out the ones that you have interests in common with.

7.3 Hang on to the diversity but plan to accommodate all needs

The diverse range of participants seems to be something that most people have seen as a plus in the 1st Summer Academy. They have seen the mix of "young and energetic" and "older and wiser" as interesting and challenging, but to ensure that the group work and the exchange of experience gets the depth and is really pertinent to the participants the groups and activities should take the diversity into consideration.

Some group works should be done in groups with people who are more homogenous for instance teachers or other of the groups that will emerge in the next summer Academy

7.4 Flexibility and change is seen as a strength

There is no doubt that the flexibility of the programme, the methods of group work etc. that were done in Gotland was seen by most people as good, and a strength by the coordinators. However it might be a good idea to have this change of methods and flexibility planned a little more in advance so that it is not happening as a result of some feeling of dissatisfaction, but actually happening because it is planned that way.

The recommendation stemming from this must be that it is a very good idea to have different working forms, this is also something that the participants learn from, and it might be used even more actively if the mix of participants is a bit like this year because they see a need for tools, and see the introduction to new methods as a tool in its own right.

7.5 The balance between serious and exhausting

One of the recurrent themes 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.

Make sure that the programme looks very intensive from the outside to make sure that potential participants and their bosses take it seriously – but not too crammed when people are there, allowing people to reflect, network and relax.

The networking should then be a planned point on the programme.

It would be a good idea to ´plan for a "rethinking" of the whole programme just before the summer academy when you know how the group of participants is composed. In that way it is possible to make the necessary adjustments to the size of team and the different methods, linking to the project coordinators.

7.6 More academy - less school

It is important to remember that the target group for the Euracademy Summer Academy consists of adults. They might not, in the case of the 1st Summer Academy be exactly the mid-career professionals that was hoped to attend, but they are well educated and to some degree experienced people who ought to be able to take the responsibility for their own learning process.

For the next Academy in Ionnina this could be emphasised to a larger extent by having more seminars, optional workshops along the lines of "animator's tools" and give the individual choice more free range. This could also solve the problem of having a too intense a programme, with too many "obligatory" elements.

7.7 Facilitators or not

From the evaluations it is not clear at all that the facilitators are needed in the group process. Many of the participants were skilled group workers, and the biggest challenge was to get people involved in the discussions, which not all facilitators had the skills to do anyway.

If a facilitator team is needed they should however be appointed early in the preparation so that they could be involved in the planning of the programme and in the discussion of the teaching methods and the role of the facilitators. One day of doing so is not sufficient to give a joint approach, and that is to some extent needed to avoid too much confusion among the participants.

7.8 Getting the whole of Europe to Ionnina

A Summer Academy takes place in the summer, that is evident, but the summer is also the time for holidays. For the Northern European countries July is not a good time for a course because many people take their holidays in that month. For the Southern countries it is different. This seems like an insolvable problem.

The partners have decided to place the 2nd Euracademy Summer Academy in Ionnina in Greece in July. This suggests that the southern European, who were

almost non existent at Gotland will be more interested in joining, but it might also result in a lack of applicants from the northern European countries.

One way of attracting northern Europeans could be to make it much more visible that it is possible to bring a spouse or the whole family, and to make it also economically interesting.

7.9 Keep the spirit alive

Most of the participants in Gotland left with a feeling of having had a wonderful time, met some nice new people, and made new friends and contacts and having seen an interesting island and good examples of rural tourism and learned some things they could use at home. They were full of good intentions to develop projects together and keeping the network alive.

Now three months after the spirit is still there, but not burning high. Among those who answered the questions on e-mail it is clear that some are a little frustrated that the website is not up and running, that there is nowhere they can find the details on the other participants, or find information on the cases etc.

This is important to get running fast, otherwise the memory of the Euracademy spirit will fade, and other experiences and networks will take its place.