

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND ENHANCING PROSPERITY: THE OREN PROJECT'S INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO RURAL ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The prosperity of rural areas within the European Union (EU) is widely acknowledged, yet these regions grapple with challenges in an increasingly urbanized world. Despite diverse socio-economic performances, natural characteristics, and cultural heritage, many rural areas face intrinsic fragility in social, economic, and environmental aspects, resulting in common challenges and missed opportunities. This paper presents findings from the OREN project (E+ 2021-1-IT02-KA220-ADU-000033510), an Erasmus+ initiative designed to address these challenges. The project aims to bridge the rural-urban gap by developing an interactive learning platform offering sustainable business models, simulation tools, and managerial courses tailored to agricultural entrepreneurs. The platform seeks to equip participants with advanced managerial and business skills. The OREN partnership adopts a multi-echelon approach. It begins by collecting and analyzing best rural business practices, gathering data and key success/failure factors from diverse rural areas. Additionally, a repository of System Dynamics simulation models is developed, serving as both an interactive learning environment for rural entrepreneurs to test scenarios and a learning material to develop their own models. The culmination of the OREN project is a free course dedicated to rural entrepreneurs, leveraging insights from successful business models. The potential impact of OREN extends to rural entrepreneurs, enhancing their ability to analyze successful business scenarios and understand best practices. Moreover, the project serves as a non-traditional vocational training model, combining advanced simulation techniques with traditional business management lectures, offering a holistic and experiential learning approach beyond traditional education styles.

Keywords: rural entrepreneurship, vocational training, Erasmus project