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RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

Table of content

1	Introduction – Objectives and evaluation methodology	3
2	Main results of the final questionnaires	4
2.1	Questionnaires targeting TDU Directors	4
2.2	Questionnaires targeting TSMs	6
3	Conclusions and recommendations	9

1 Introduction – Objectives and evaluation methodology

This document is a follow-up to the 1st evaluation of the training programme targeting TSMs – TDUs staff established at the SPES members. The 1st evaluation was conducted at the end of the training programme to verify the learning outcomes. This 2nd evaluation was conducted after more than one year of dissemination and training activities managed by the TSMs to assess how the training activities of the project first phase have improved the work of TSMs. More generally, this evaluation focuses on the impact of project capacity building activities on the ability of TDUs and SPES National Federations to cope with their tasks.

Agriconsulting S.p.A (Italy) carried out the evaluation exercise and drafted this report. The partner Nofima Mat (Norway) provided inputs for the development of the methodology. The WP8 leader SPES GEIE provided advice during the research and design phases.

These internal evaluations are in itself a key component of the project implementation because they allow to assess the results and to provide inputs for future activities. This 2nd evaluation involved all Techno-Scientific Mediators from the 11 Training and Dissemination Units (TDUs) established at SPES GEIE National Federations and their Executive Directors:

- TDU ANIA (France)
- TDU FEDERALIMENTARE (Italy)
- TDU FEVIA (Belgium)
- TDU FFDI (Czech Republic)
- TDU FHFI (Hungary)
- TDU FI (Denmark)
- TDU FIAA/LVA (Austria)
- TDU FIAB (Spain)
- TDU FIPA (Portugal)
- TDU SETBIR (Turkey)
- TDU SEVT (Greece)

The main focus of this evaluation is the long-term impact of the training programme that took place during the 1st phase of the project (months 1 – 18) aiming at enhancing SPES capacities and generating a core group of TSMs able to assist the transfer of new knowledge on food safety and food quality from the RTD WPs to the TFP SMEs. After the completion of the first phase the strong network of TSMs started to work closely with the TRUEFOOD research partners to implement technology transfer activities in 11 SPES members' countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey). Some technology transfer activities also took place in other 4 countries (UK, Germany, Slovenia and Poland) to ensure a broader dissemination of knowledge to the SMEs in the European area.

The 2nd evaluation was carried out during months 32 – 36 (December 2008 – April 2009) including the following phases: (a) research and design; (b) evaluation and analysis of key issues raised; and (c) report writing.

The methodology for the internal evaluation included:

- 1) The analysis of existing documentation on training events targeting TSMs:
 - Reports of the 12 training courses and the 6 visits to local factories and research centres;

- WP8 deliverables including information on the training programme (i.e., D 8.1.2 “Training materials for TSMs” dated October 2007 and D 8.1.4 “Final evaluation of the training programme” dated February 2008);
 - WP8 Logical Framework;
 - WP8 Gantt chart and Detailed Implementation Plan.
- 2) The analysis of evaluation questionnaires filled in by TSMs and TDU Directors.
 - 3) Discussions with the WP8 Leader SPES.

The research and design phase began in December 2008 with the review of relevant documents by the WP8 Leader SPES (Mr Daniele Rossi) and Agriconsulting staff (Mr Giovanni Scola Gagliardi and Ms Maria Cecilia Chiapero – Training and Dissemination Manager). During the meeting the methodology for the internal evaluation exercise was discussed. Furthermore, the Training and Dissemination Manager had the chance to meet Nofima/Mat (Ms Gunhild Drablos) in Oslo on 10 December 2008 and to discuss the evaluation methodology. Subsequently, two different questionnaires were developed: one targeting TSMs and the other targeting TDU Directors. The answers were collected and discussed with the WP8 Leader. Finally, in April 2009 an analysis of data was conducted and the major findings and key issues were summarized in this report.

2 Main results of the final questionnaires

Agriconsulting S.p.A. developed the evaluation questionnaires in cooperation with Nofima/Mat in December 2008. The answers were collected and analyzed by April 2009.

The questionnaires were semi-structured and organized in 2 main sections:

- Section 1 was devoted to analyze the **impact of the training programme on the TSMs work performance**. The aim was assess how the TSMs, in the year following the training programme, have been able to take advantage of the acquired knowledge. The TSMs were requested to reflect on their role and work performance. The TDU Directors were asked to provide information and their views on TSMs improvements.
- Section 2 was aimed at analyzing the **impact on the SPES National Federations**, i.e., how much the human resource development through the training programme had an effect on the internal organization and the overall activities of the SPES National Federations. Also for this section the interviewees were the TSMs and the TDU Directors.

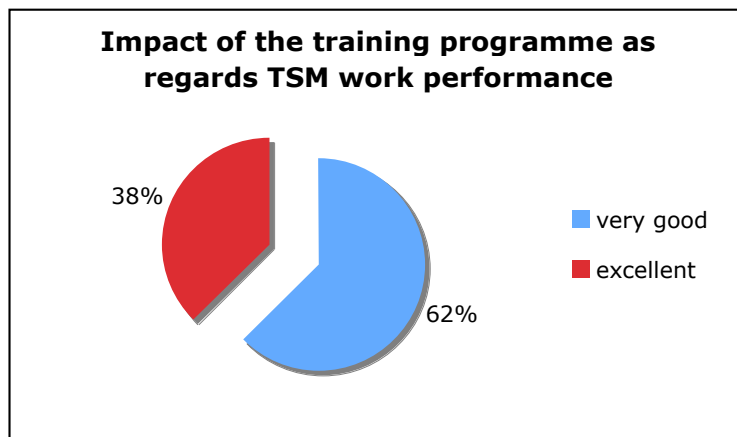
The TSMs and TDU Directors were asked to give a value to each question using the following scale: 1 = insufficient; 2 = sufficient; 3 = good; 4 = very good and 5 = excellent. They were also asked to express freely their observations and provide comments if necessary.

2.1 Questionnaires targeting TDU Directors

The following part presents an analysis of the point of views of TDU Directors on the two sections of the questionnaire:

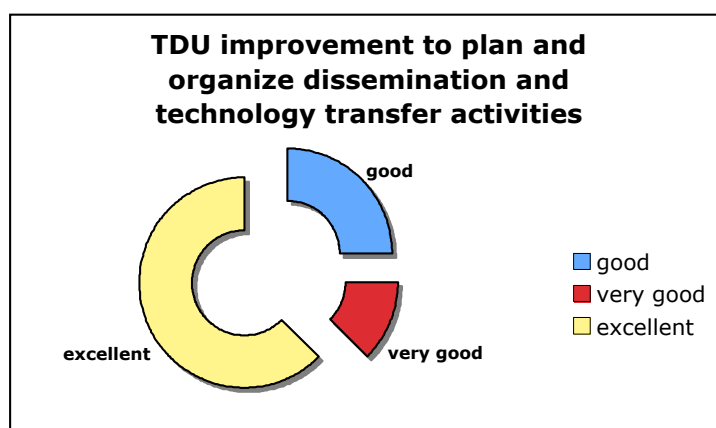
Section 1: Impact of the training programme on the TSMs/TDU work performance – Changes in behaviors and capability improvement of TSM.

To the question “*In your view, after more than 1 year since the completion of the training programme targeting TDUs, how do you rate the impact of the training programme in regard to the work performance of TSM?*” the TDU Directors rated 62% “very good” and 38% “excellent”.



The TDU Directors expressed that as a result of the training programme the TSMs are much more able to give direct technical and scientific support to the SMEs and their branch associations. The training programme was very useful and profitable and provided TSMs with updated information. The new role of the TSMs was recognized as an important added value by the SPES National Federations since this is the 1st time that all SPES members give support to SMEs on innovation issues. Thanks to the new role of TSMs, the SPES members are more pro-active and SMEs-needs oriented.

To the question “*Since TDUs have started implementing technology transfer activities do you think that your TDU has improved skills/capacities to plan and organize dissemination/technology transfer activities?*” the majority of TDU Directors rated “excellent”.



All the TDU Directors expressed that the TDUs improved their skills and capacities to plan and organize dissemination and technology transfer activities; in particular, TDUs gained higher capacity in the following main aspects:

- Project management / organizational skills
- Communication skills
- Communication with SMEs: better ways to disseminate knowledge
- Design and implementation of training programmes

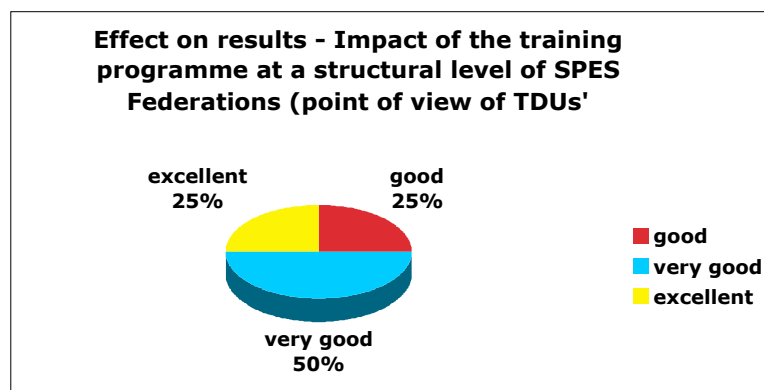
The TDU Directors reported that the most positive aspects that helped to improve the work of TDUs were the interaction and exchange of views with other SPES members / TDUs as well as the direct contacts with SMEs.

Regarding to the main difficulties and problems encountered by the TDUs the Directors reported:

- The crisis makes most of the SMEs less sensible to training issues;
- The lack of trust of SMEs on R&D institutions;
- The poor request of SMEs on innovation issues;
- The very specific needs on technical know how by SMEs;
- The wide territory to cover by the TDUs.

Section 2: Effect on results – Impact of the training programme at a structural level on the SPES Federations / TDUs

TDU Directors reported that the learning results at TDUs level were very positive. In fact, after the implementation of the training programme, structural changes in the TDUs took place: higher participation of TDUs in research projects, higher participation in actions organized by SMEs, more cooperation agreements between SMEs and TDUs, more possibilities facilitate cooperation activities between R&D institutions and SMEs . The following chart shows that structural changes at SPES Federations / TDUs level were identified very positively:



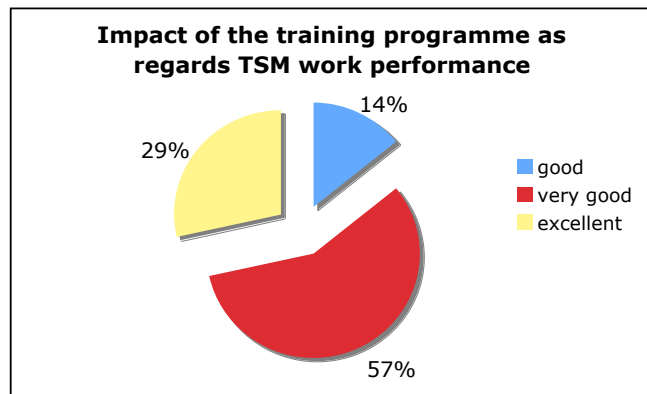
All the TDU Directors expressed that new activities should be implemented in the future to improve the impact of the work performance of TDUs. These activities could regard: events on communication and cooperation issues, management skills, face-to-face meetings with SMEs, clear communication on research results of the project and their relevance for the innovation of TFP SMEs.

2.2 Questionnaires targeting TSMs

In the following an analysis of the point of views of the TSMs on the two sections of the questionnaire is presented:

Section 1: Impact of the training programme on the TSMs/TDU work performance – Changes in behaviors and capability improvement of TSM.

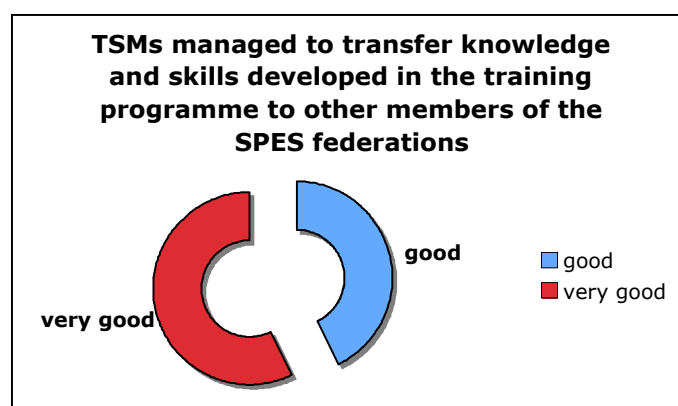
To the question “In your view, after more than 1 year since the completion of the training programme targeting TDUs, how do you rate the impact of the training programme in regard to the work performance of TSM?” the TSMs rated 14% “good”, 57% “very good” and 29% “excellent”.



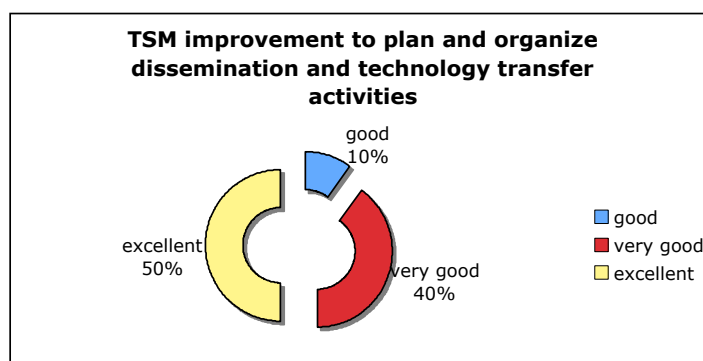
After 1 year since the completion of the training programme the TSMs are still persuaded that this training was very useful to gain knowledge on food issues, to be updated on the current trends of innovation for TPF SMEs, to meet and visit research partners institutions and to establish strong bounds with other TSMs of SPES National Federations. The TSMs still believe that this training programme allowed them to be better prepared for the implementation of dissemination and technology transfer activities.

All TSMs expressed that the new skills / knowledge acquired are being used in their everyday environment. In particular the following skills are being used: communication and management skills, legislation issues, food safety and food quality, design of training programmes, etc.

The training programme targeting TSMs was sustainable in view of the fact that the majority of TSMs managed to transfer knowledge and skills developed in the training to other members of the Federations. TSMs rated with “good” and “very good” how much they managed to transfer the new knowledge to the work environment.



To the question “Since the TDUs have started implementing technology transfer activities have you improved your skills / capacities to plan and organize dissemination/technology transfer activities” the majority responded by rating “very good” to “excellent”. The following chart provides an overview:



All the TSMs expressed that since the TDUs have started implementing technology transfer activities they consider themselves more skilled / better communicators and better “mediators”. They feel that now it is easier to communicate with SMEs and to understand SMEs needs and priorities. The majority of TSMs rated the impact in this regard as “very good”.

Furthermore, TSMs have a better understanding of their role. TSMs reported that the work as “mediator” is of vital importance for the SPES National Federations. The answer to this question by the TSMs was “very good” (40%) and “excellent” (60%).

The majority of TSMs interviewed rated with “excellent” their pro-active role, meaning that the TSMs are better able to take the initiative. After the implementation of the training programme more ideas and opportunities are shared and created among the TSMs, and also among the TDUs, the research institutions and the National Technology Platforms (NTP) “Food for Life” established at almost all SPES members countries.

All the TSMs believe that the communication with SMEs have improved. In addition, TSMs consciousness about the tools to be used in different situations while communicating with SMEs has now increased.

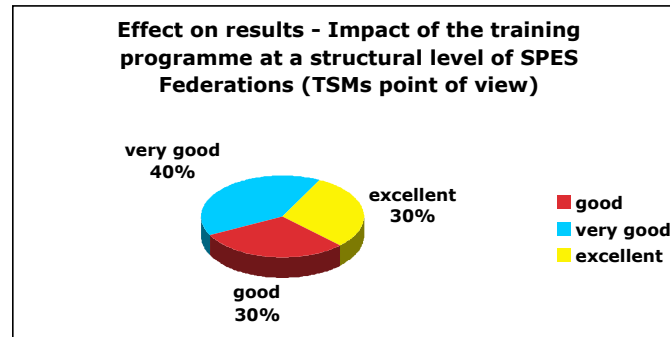
The positive changes in behaviour and improvement of the work performance of the TSMs are a result both of the implementation of the training programme and the increased experience as TSMs. Among the most positive aspects that helped TSMs to improve their work, the interviewees reported: the network at national and European level (i.e., TDUs SPES network, the NTP and ETP “Food for Life” network), the sharing of experiences among the TSMs from different countries, the cooperation with the research partners of the project, the daily dealing with R&D institutions and SMEs. The TSMs also identified some “barriers” for a further improvement of their work: the reluctance of SMEs to innovate and participate in research projects; the lack of willingness of SMEs to share information and needs; the actual economic situation does not help TSMs in persuading SMEs on the importance of innovation; and in some cases the insufficient information on the TSMs function.

Section 2: Effect on results – Impact of the training programme at a structural level of the SPES Federations / TDUs

The TSMs believe that the learning results at the TDUs level were very positive. Some structural changes in the TDUs have taken place. The majority of TSMs reported that they have an increased involvement in the Federations’ decision-making process and some TSMs have new tasks within the Federations (e.g., new mandate to act as the contact person for the NTP, new mandate as

responsible person for the SMEs information on funding opportunities for research and cooperation issues).

The following chart shows that structural changes at SPES Federations / TDUs level were rated by TSMs very positively:



All the TSMs expressed that new activities should be implemented in the future to improve the impact of their work performance. These activities could regard: workshops with research partners, on-line help desk, visits to SMEs, exchange of information among TSMs from different countries, new training courses on project management to help SMEs start new projects and on funding opportunities to help SMEs funding their innovation ideas.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

Main conclusions

After one year since the implementation of the training programme both the TSMs and the TDU Directors reported a significant and positive impact. It seems that the TDUs are now better able to perform their duties and to reach out to the SMEs. The TSMs indicate to be more confident in their role and more pro-active. It appears that the training programme had a long-term impact on the TDUs as it resulted in a relevant human resource development for the TDUs and more broadly for the SPES members. In turn, the training and dissemination activities performed by the TSMs as a result of the new knowledge acquired during the project first phase have further developed the TSMs skills (i.e., learning by doing). While the positive assessment of the training programme contained in the 1st evaluation (conducted by Agriconsulting one year ago, see WP8 Deliverable 8.1.4 “Final evaluation of the training programme”) is confirmed, it emerges that the TDUs have now further developed their competences. The existence of a strong TDUs network, and the links established with the research partners, continues to contribute positively to the TDUs activities.

Besides and beyond the impact on the TDUs work, it appears that the training programme also had a positive impact on the SPES National Federations in terms of capacity building and structural changes. The TSMs are now often able to assume new and wider responsibilities within their respective Federations, and the Federations themselves have more instruments to support the SMEs. On the negative side, a number of obstacles (“barriers”) preventing the TDUs from further expanding their work and better disseminating the project results are identified. Many of these obstacles are related to SMEs reluctance in connecting with research institutions, sharing sensitive information and investing in new technologies. These obstacles have become even more evident with the current economic crisis, which induces the SMEs to try saving costs and not to invest in new projects and activities. This is a major challenge for the work of the TDUs in the final year of the project.

Recommendations

This 2nd internal evaluation confirms the positive impact of the training programme implemented during the first phase. The work of TDUs and SPES National Federations have been strengthened and expanded. In the final year of the project the TDUs should continue to reach out to the SMEs with training and dissemination activities taking stock from the positive experiences achieved so far. However, this evaluation identified a number of obstacles for the TDUs activities related to the reluctance of many SMEs to provide information, to cooperate with other partners and to invest in new technologies and activities. These obstacles are further enhanced by the current economic crisis. The TDUs will have to address these difficulties enhancing the dialogue with the SMEs, trying to build trust, and suggesting that crises periods are those in which innovation is particularly important to manage to remain in the market. In this regard, the TRUEFOOD project should be seen by the SMEs as a very important opportunity since it is able to provide training and services covered by the European Commission – DG Research.