

**Strategy and Results for Life Long Learning
AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA**

**Dual Curricula –
Study and Work Practice
in Agriculture and Food Safety**

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Statement of originality:

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1. Executive Summary

This report addresses various aspects of reframing a lifelong learning development strategy and its implementation in the framework of DualAFS project, at the Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT).

The development of life-long-learning, extension services, knowledge & technology transfer at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albania represents the "Third mission" of modern universities. This mission involves the application of academic knowledge and research to serve the needs of society and of labor market, in the case of AUT, in the field of agriculture and live sciences.

The development of these functions is very important for enhancing the quality of the academic offer of universities, improving the theoretical education and practical skills of students, and increasing the level of teaching and research of universities. In this way, HEI-s can built important cooperation bridges with all the economic entities and public institutions, contributing to the development of the sectors of the economy that are critical to the Albanian society, such as agriculture, livestock, food quality and safety. Therefore, it is crucial that HEIs have the necessary resources, expertise, and infrastructure to carry out these functions effectively.

In the framework of DualAFS project, AUT is committed in addressing the development of life-long learning (LLL) as part of the capacity building element. In this context AUT is focused on:

- Widening the access of lifelong learning
- Adapting study programs to ensure that they are designed toward the needs of the labor market in the field of agriculture and food
- Providing appropriate guidance and counseling services
- Strengthening the relationship between research, teaching and innovation in a perspective of lifelong learning
- Developing partnerships at local, regional, national and international level to provide attractive and relevant programs

In terms of the LLL component, Agriculture Faculty is committed to offer future training courses according to the needs of the representatives from private sector and public institutions. Considering the ratio between the number of farms and the number of specialists that offer extension services and consulting, as part of public institutions, offering extension services to the above-mentioned groups of interest is a necessity.

2. Introduction

2.1. Objectives and activities related to Life-long Learning in DualAFS.

The overall goal defined in the DualAFS is: (i) strengthening practical skills of graduates through a better integration of theoretical and practical curricula of the university studies, (ii) earlier integration of the students into farm/agrifood work life, as well as (iii) the development of lifelong learning (LLL), extension and technology transfer mission ("Third mission") of universities toward agriculture, livestock and food.





The specific objectives of DualAFS are as follows, with the item mentioned under point "3", related to WP 6.2:

- 1) Two new piloted Bachelor curricula: -Dual Bachelor curricula on Livestock and Animal-source Product Safety (LAPS), at Department of Animal Science (DAS) of AUT; -Dual Bachelor curricula on Agribusiness, at UNIKO;
- 2) Strengthening of practical training in current BA curricula in agribusiness, animal production and food safety at UP and UMIB, respectively;
- 3) *Developed capacities and offers in departments and HEIs of Partner countries for Life-long Learning (LLL), resp. installed working units responsible for LLL, further training, extension and knowledge transfer;*
- 4) Developed e-learning tools for knowledge transfer.

The objectives of the project will be achieved through several key activities and outputs, three of which (identified by the letters "g", "h" and "i") described in the project description are related to WP 6.2:

- a) 2 new piloted Bachelor curricula in Agriculture (1 BA in LAPS at AUT, 1 Agribusiness at UNIKO);
- b) Strengthened practical training in current Bachelor curricula in Agriculture (Animal husbandry, Agribusiness) and animal-source food safety in all 4 HEIs of AL and XK;
- c) Upgraded/ trained teaching staff and the staff for practical training in the company for the implementation of Dual studies;
- d) Developed support measures (incentives) for better access of students from rural areas and farms to the Dual study;
- e) Upgraded teaching infrastructure (equipment for labs and e-learning, etc.) for the implementation of the Dual study curricula;
- f) Development of regulatory framework (university regulations, administrative orders, etc.) on cooperation between universities and WL partners in AL and XK for practical training part of Dual studies;
- g) *Development of Life Long Learning (LLL) in all 4 HEIs of AL and XK;*
- h) *Developed e-learning tools for knowledge transfer and for LLL;*
- i) *Development of regulatory framework proposals for the transfer of technology and knowledge and for the provision of consultancy/extension services from universities of AL and XK to the agricultural and food sector.*

Specific objectives defined in the project description related to LLL are following:

- a) To offer training courses in different forms, short courses, summer courses and long term courses, according to the request of the interested partner from private and public sector, i.e. public advisory service, private sector professionals, farmers and professionals of other companies involved in animal production (e.g. feed industry);
- b) Offering services in the form of extension service, consulting and other services such as feed analysis and ration calculation/optimization, etc., depending on the request of livestock farmers, other companies related to livestock production, and the public sector (extension service agencies, regional agricultural and food safety departments).





2.2. Status of the legal framework in relation to lifelong learning provision at AUT.

The Law on Higher Education (80/2015) defined in Article 25/9: „The department can provide services to third parties, as well as carry out other activities, according to the legislation in force and the rules set out in the statute and other acts of the higher education institution “.

Further Law on HE (80/2015) stipulates in Art. 81/1 and 2:

„1. Higher education institutions may offer continuing education study programs as a form of lifelong learning. These programs serve to supplement, deepen and consolidate knowledge and can be offered as qualification and retraining courses, summer schools and similar activities. Continuing education study programs help individuals increase their qualifications and professional skills.

2. The structure of these programs, their duration and credits are determined independently by each responsible basic unit, in cooperation with the line ministries, if they have competence, according to the legal framework for regulated professions, and are made public by the main unit. „

The Statute of AUT (Approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Sports, no. 279, date 28.7.2021) includes the „Third Mission“ as part of mission of AUT. defines the Mission of AUT as follow:

Specifically, the Statute defines the mission of AUT as follows:

”
1. The Agricultural University of Tirana has for mission:

a) To create, transmit, develop and protect knowledge through teaching, research and **services**, as well as to train experts and prepare young scientists in the field of agriculture, agricultural economics and rural development, environment and natural sciences, veterinary medicine, forestry, agricultural biotechnology and genetic resources;

c) To provide opportunities for society, to benefit from **lifelong education in its areas of expertise**;

2. In its long-term vision, the Agricultural University of Tirana at all three levels of higher education, aims to become the largest excellent center of university education, research and **training of professionals/experts in the field of agriculture, in terms of the development of modern agriculture and the guarantee of healthy and quality food.**

4. AUT is an institution of higher education, whose main goal is the advancement of science in the field of agriculture, agricultural technology and higher education through their coordination and a long-term vision. **AUT promotes and enhances its role in the development of agriculture, through the transfer of technologies, knowledge as well as through agricultural extension services. „**

Based on the Law on HE (80/2015) and the Statute of AUT, *the Department has the right to provide activities in the form of LLL and other services.*

Specifically, the Statute defines the mission of AUT as follows:

“Article 9:



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l. The department at AUT is the basic unit for the development of teaching and teaching-research work of the main unit and:

f) Can provide services to third parties, as well as carry out other activities in accordance with the legal framework in force and the rules set out in the AUT regulations.

k) The right arises to be organized in teaching groups and permanent or temporary groups of scientific-research character. These groups have at least five effective members as AUT academic staff.

2. The functioning of Department is defined in its regulation. „

All the explanations given above on the legal and sub-legal framework, show that *there is a complete legal basis for the provision of the third mission at the Department level, namely the provision of services to third parties, LLL and extension service.*

The performance of a university in fulfilling its mission and objectives according to law and statute, is periodically assessed through institutional accreditation. AUT has currently received institutional accreditation for a period of 5 years (2021-2026).



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Objectives:

The major objectives of the lifelong training strategy are:

- To define a regulatory framework for the provision of third party, LLL and consultancy services by the DAS alone or together with other departments of the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment (FAE) and other faculties of AUT, to the stakeholders involved in the agriculture and food sector, especially livestock sector, defined as “third parties”.
- Provide future services to third parties, as well as carry out LLL and consultancy services activities, in accordance with the legal framework.
- Promote and enhance the role of AUT in the region, in support of the development of livestock through knowledge transfer and extension services.
- Expand training for professionals and farmers in the livestock sector.

The contribution of DualAFS activities in the achievement of the objectives provided above consist on:

- Short term and long term mobilities of DAS/AUT teaching staff in European partner universities.
- Training of the academic staff on the development of e-skills from experienced teachers from European partner universities.
- Upgraded teaching infrastructure (installed e-learning equipment's & tools used for knowledge-transfer).
- Strengthening of the practical training in the reorganized Bachelor curricula in “Livestock and Animal Product safety (LAPS)”.

Goals:

The objective of this strategy stems from the goal defined in the Statute of AUT, which states that in its long-term vision, the Agricultural University of Tirana should become the largest centre of excellence in university education, research and training of professionals/experts in the field of agriculture at all three levels of higher education, with a view to developing modern agriculture and ensuring safe and quality food. AUT promotes and strengthens its role in the development of agriculture through the transfer of technologies and knowledge and agricultural extension services.

In the livestock field, this will be achieved through:

- Offering training courses, consulting and extension services, according to the request of the interested partners from private and public sector from the livestock sector.

Tasks:

The tasks related to lifelong learning are foreseen in the following activities described in the DualAFS project:

- 1) Adaptation of the necessary legal regulations;



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2) Learning from the experience of other countries, especially Finland and Germany, in this field;

3) Creation of the necessary infrastructure for the provision of services as well as the digital infrastructure for online training and counselling for the practice partners from the animal production sector;

4) Training of DAS lecturers to offer such activities;

5) Collaboration with the livestock farms and other enterprises as well as the public institutions that will be the future "beneficiaries" of these services offered by DAS and AUT. In practice, these will also be WLPs for the implementation of on-farm training of Dual Bachelor students in LAPS.

In order to identify the needs for all LLL-related activities in the livestock production sector in Albania, the following activities will be carried out:

- Baseline study among the potential private and public partners, especially those active in the livestock production sector;
- Focus group discussions with all stakeholders, such as youth from rural areas, students, agribusinesses, livestock and food processing companies, medium/large farms, NGOs, experts, agricultural vocational schools and academic staff.
- Workshops organized in the frame of the DualAFS project activities.



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3. Concept of Life Long Learning Unit / Activities and implementation

Activity 1: Adapting or creating the legal regulations.

As described in detail in the previous chapter "Introduction" (see chapter 2.2.), based on Article 81 of Law 80/2015, AUT regularly offers short-term training, vocational training courses and services to "third parties", through cooperation projects with public institutions and private sector partners. According to this article of the law and the above articles of the Statute, AUT, as a university, its faculties and departments, have the right to offer short-term training courses, the programs of which are approved by the department and the faculty and end with training certificates that are signed, according to occasionally, by the dean and / or rector of the university. In the case of long training courses, the approach unit, i.e. the department, faculty or university, approves a course program at the university and applies to the responsible ministry the relevant field for approval (in the case of AUT the ministries responsible for agriculture, food and environment). Regarding the services for "third parties" and consulting activities, departments and faculties of AUT, have the right to approach, with the approval of the bodies of AUT, respectively the Rectorate and the Administrative Board of AUT. Higher Education Law 80/2015 creates full space of financial autonomy, so that the university (in this case AUT) to provide such services at its own cost or with special projects, and use the income generated by these services, for the needs of the university development, to cover the necessary expenses as well as for the remuneration of the staff that participates in the realization of these services.

This legal provision is complete for the implementation.

This provision is also reflected in the DAS regulation and all modalities related to this activity of the DAS are explained in detail.

As part of the implementation of the AUT strategy and the new statute of the AUT, the academic units of the DAS were reorganised immediately after this project application was submitted and before the implementation of this project began. Taking into account also the submitted DualAFS application, a Unit of the Department. i.e. Teaching-Research Group on „**Animal Husbandry and Extension service in Animal Production**“ (*Grupi Mesimor-Kerkimor „Mbareshtrimi i kafsheve & Ekstensiononi ne blegtore*“) has been established. This unit will be responsible for coordination of all activities of the DAS and for the cooperation with the practice and public institutions described as the objectives "a" and "b" within the WP 6.2. Therefore, the activities of the DualAFS project will be used to develop the capacities of the DAS and, as a priority, those of the unit also responsible for lifelong learning and extension service namely the DAS Unit „**Animal Husbandry and Extension service in Animal Production**“.

Activity 2: Learning about the experiences of other countries, especially Finland and Germany, in this area.

The experiences of the partner universities, i.e. NGU and Savonia University of Applied Sciences, will be studied in more detail. In addition, all teachers will include this focus in their training plan and will be informed about it during the mobility activities at the partner universities.





Activity 3: Creating the necessary infrastructure to offer the services as well as digital infrastructure for online training, LLL, consulting, etc.

Under this project, the following capacities were created to support the implementation of WP 6.2. objectives at AUT, namely:

- a) Creation of a coherent digital infrastructure serving for on-site and online training;
- b) Creation of laboratory equipment, especially in the field of animal nutrition and feed evaluation (NIR instruments), which will serve for both training of professionals and provision of services to interested partners from private companies and governmental institutions in the field of animal production.

This laboratory and the digital infrastructure for DAS have already been installed.

Activity 4: Training of the lecturers of the DAS.

The training of the DAS lecturers planned within the framework of this project, is aimed both at increasing the level of teaching, especially the practical training of students in the new Dual Bachelor in LAPS, and at carrying out activities of all forms of LLL, counseling and also professional services for practitioners.

Activity 5: Cooperation with the practice companies and other companies and public institutions that will be the future "beneficiaries" of these services offered by DAS and AUT.

The implementation of the newly organized dual bachelor's degree program in LAPS has as its main focus the implementation of practical training of students, which requires as its main prerequisite close cooperation and direct participation of WLP from private companies and state institutions in the field of agriculture and animal production and food safety, in the realization of practical training of students. This close cooperation between the university and WLP should be a "win-win" cooperation. As a quid pro quo of the University for the contribution of the WLP to the practical training of students, the University's provision of LLL, consultancy, services and other similar services will be based on the needs and requests of private enterprises and governmental institutions in the field of agriculture, animal production and food safety.

Activity 6: Training of extension service professionals and farmers in the field of livestock.

The DAS, together with other departments of the AUT, has already started to implement projects in the field of training, consultancy and services for third partners from the animal production sector in 2022.

DAS, together with other departments of AUT, led by a Core Group, consisting of representatives of the Rectorate and the Faculties of Agriculture and Environment and Faculty of Agribusiness, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, conducted a needs assessment for the training of public extension service staff and regional agricultural extension departments, as well as farmers in the field of animal production. Based on this, a training projects were developed and applied for. The project was funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and managed by the Department for Project Management of AUT.





Field of training: Advanced technologies of livestock nutrition and husbandry, as well as application practice for financial support of agriculture by national and EU schemes (IPARD).

Timeline: The project was carried out in the period from September to December 2022.

Target group: About 400 extension workers and 600 farmers from 12 regional agricultural extension departments were trained.

Funding: Third-party funds from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Activity 7: Training, consultancy and other services for livestock farms 2023-2024

Based on the experience of two training projects conducted in 2022, the core group of AUT, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, developed and applied for a different training strategy /scheme for livestock farmers.

This scheme is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and aims to provide consultancy, services (esp. feed analysis and product analysis) and training for livestock farms through the application of new technologies in some livestock farms used as "model farms". The way the technologies are applied and their results serve as concrete models for the training of farmers using "Demonstration days" or "Field days" directly on selected farms. For the year 2023 - 2024, 7 livestock farms have been selected (4 cattle farms, 2 sheep and goats farms and 1 bee farms) that will serve as "model farms" where training demonstrations will be held for about 200 livestock farms in different regions of the country.

Field of training: Advanced technologies in livestock nutrition and husbandry, as well as application practice for financial support of agriculture by national and EU schemes (IPARD).

Timeline: The project will be implemented in the period from April 2023 to December 2024.

Target group: About 200 livestock farmers from 12 regions of the country.

Funding: Third-party funds from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.



4. Target groups

Table 1. Foreseen target groups for the implementation of LLL development.

Target Groups	Measured indicators
Private sector	
Small/medium/ large farms	Ca. 600 livestock farms and other subjects interested in livestock production
Processing companies	
NGOs, societal groups interested in sustainable agriculture/livestock production and agribusiness	
Public sector	
Municipality, Regional Council, Regional Directories	Ca, 400 experts/professionals
Teachers	
Professional and vocational schools with agriculture & economic profile	Ca. 50 teachers of VET schools

5. Dissemination of LLL and programme to recruit user

The dissemination of the services that will be provided by the Faculty of Agriculture are foreseen as stated in the table below. Hello Sara,

Please find attached the docs about LLL and also a short comment about the sustainability of the cooperation with the WLP.

Have a nice weekend,

Table 2. Communication channels for the development of LLL

Communication & dissemination tools	Private sector	Public sector	Professional schools	Students
Online tools				
University website	X	X	X	X
Social Media	X	X	X	X
Networking, meetings and events				
Networking	X	X	X	X
Presentations at local & national workshops/seminars	X	X	X	X
Site visits and face-to-face meeting	X	X	X	X
Knowledge Transfer activities	X	X		
Press and media work				
Articles in thematic magazines or general press	X	X	X	X
Local media	X	X	X	X

6. Financing of LLL Unit

The financial activity of the Life-Long-Learning Center is based on Law 80/2015, "For Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Republic of Albania", Article 109, Point 2, which is reflected in the financial regulation and the decision of the Board of Administration of



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AUT. Law 80/2015 specifies: “the Income derived from services, research-scientific activities, consultancies, where the academic staff is involved, is divided between the academic staff and HEI, according to the approved regulation from the Board of Administration.



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