

ENTER, its history, present and challenges for future

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Introduction

The word is a synonym to „come in, welcome, join us“, which well conveys the title of a European organisation - a net connecting educational institutions in the field of teacher training for secondary and higher vocational schools of agriculture, forestry, horticulture and related subjects. ENTER is a relatively young organisation (network) which was founded on the basis of long-time working organisations. These used to work in various parts of Europe not knowing about each other's existence, so they could not cooperate as a consequence of the divided Europe of that time. REIFEA (Réseau Européen Interuniversitaire de Formation des Enseignants Agricoles) was an organisation that had its official organisational structure and associated institutions from North-Western and Southern Europe. It was an officially registered organisation with an Organisational Board that had an elected president at its head. In addition to its other activities, REIFEA organised regular seminars or workshops called Study days. It worked from 1990 when the first study days were held in Dion.

History of the network

In Central and Eastern Europe, teachers training future teachers of secondary schools also tried to cooperate on the international level which was not easy, but not impossible. It was rather an initiative of enthusiastic teachers and heads of Departments of Pedagogy who - within the former socialist block of countries - felt the need and importance of exchanging information and development in countries, where international exchange though limited only to so called “friendly countries“ was possible. From 1970 on, pedagogy colloquia started to be organised regularly every two years, taking part at the universities in Warsaw, Berlin, Budapest and Prague in turn and welcoming teachers from other countries of the East block. Year 1990 was a turning point because the colloquium began to be an occasion where „new“ colleagues from Germany, Switzerland and other countries behind the „Iron Curtain“ were appearing more and more. The 19th International Pedagogical Agricultural Colloquium in 2000 in Prague was historically important because it was also held as the 70th anniversary of establishing the State Pedagogical Seminar for the teaching candidates of agriculture schools in 1930 in Prague. Thus, an official stimulus was given to a systematic teacher training of vocational subjects at agriculture, forestry, horticulture and related schools in Czechoslovakia at that time. This is the background for the present Department of Pedagogy and the Institute of Education and Communication of the Czech University of Life Science in Prague. At the 2000 Colloquium, REIFEA representatives took part and it was then decided that both existing organisations would give up their status to establish a new organisation that would promote the interests and deal with needs of all member countries concerned. This act was a distinctive manifestation showing that there are no longer any differences between North and South, East and West, and Europe in the field of teacher training of vocational subjects at agriculture and related schools will take a common direction in future. That was a basis for a new organisation which can be described as a network for parties concerned and members from all European countries and whose name ENTER was chosen as symbolic for its English meaning with its significative synonyms. The first joint Study days were organized in Turku, Finland in 2002 and the audiences were participants, members from both formal existing networks and inviting guests.

ENTER - WHAT IS BEHIND nowadays?

ENTER was founded in 2002 as a result of a merger of REIFEA (Réseau Européen Interuniversitaire de Formation des Enseignants Agricoles) and IPAC (International Pedagogical Agricultural Colloquium).

The founding institutes have acknowledged the necessity of joining together on an international level in order to develop their scientific and pedagogical co-operation in initial and in-service teacher training and teaching in the fields of agriculture, forestry, environment, green systems and rural development. Therefore, they all have decided to create the **“European network for learning and teaching in agriculture and rural development”**

The network is an exchange platform for professional experience, knowledge, skills, methods and cultural diversion in green, rural, agricultural and forestry education and research. It aims at strengthening sustainable development and liveability in rural areas.

The main aims are:

- To support the improvement of teaching and learning processes in green, rural, agricultural education.
- To develop knowledge and understanding about educational agricultural systems within Europe.
- To share, develop and promote teaching methods and strategies through European teacher training.
- To impulse innovation in the agricultural training system in order to modernise curricular and extra-curricular activities, teaching objectives and contents according to the evolution of the context of rural development.
- To encourage and facilitate bilateral and multilateral exchanges of trainees, teachers and trainers.
- To facilitate projects’ development.

To achieve these aims, the network develops:

- Communication systems,
- Scientific and thematic study meetings,
- Educational experimentation,
- Action research,
- Trainee teachers’ and trainers’ exchanges,
- Common courses
- etc...

The members of the network can be: educational institutions, institutes supporting educational systems, professional rural structures and pedagogical research centres. The association integrates about 28 members institutions from 21 European but also non- European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland (3), France (4), Germany, Italy, Latvia, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway (2), Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain (2), Switzerland, Turkey.

Challenges for future

ENTER is currently an association with a well-established action principles and certainly its period of potential “teething troubles“ is over. It has its own formal structure with clear rules of functioning on the basis of European legislation. It follows the agreed by-law and is managed by the Board with a president as its head. The president is elected by General assembly for a two-year period and can hold the office for maximum two subsequent periods,

which fact guarantees a democratic management of the institution as well as a satisfactory renewal of creative powers at the top where the member base is very diverse not only in terms of geopolitical, but also social and cultural environment. This fact implies certain organisation and technical demands, but on the other hand brings great opportunities. The main aim is and must be for future for ENTER to be a “live organisation“, a living, well developing and working organism.

Conferences, symposia and workshops in the form of Study days will certainly be an essential and welcome activity which will strengthen the European dimension of teacher training of vocational subjects. They will enable professional and informal meetings of all involved in teacher training – teachers and students. That is surely an indisputable strength of these personal contacts even in the era of information and communication technology boom.

ENTER should be working not only during the preparation and realization of Study days, but also could offer expert service to new members in the fields where some experienced teachers and researchers have profound knowledge and long practical experience. The costs resulting from experts’ travels could be covered from financial resources of ENTER and the requesting host organisation should provide accommodation and stay.

ENTER could take part in the preparation and realization of common projects that should lead to extending the students’ mobilities more and at the final stage to creating common joint degree programmes. Thus, a European dimension of a qualified vocational subject teacher in agriculture and rural development would be fulfilled.

In any case, ENTER should keep its aims and intentions which there were at the beginning and thus contribute to building bridges of understanding across the European continent as well as help non-European countries. There is a hopeful promise for future in the fact that ENTER disposes of enthusiastic professional representatives from individual member institutions. Another significant fact is the dealing with ICA originally Interuniversity Consortium for Agricultural and related sciences in Europe from 2006 changed for Interuniversity Consortium for Applied Life Sciences in Europe, organisation which associates important international organisations and with whose representatives ENTER has already negotiated. Thus, ENTER would join the family of institutions of world-wide importance.