



Becoming European Guardians of Environment

**“GuardEn”: Guardians of Environment Framework:
An Integrated Approach of Strategies
for Prevention of Soil Pollution and Rehabilitation
of Harmed Territories”**

Duration of the project: 01/10/2012- 30/09/2014

**The GuardEn project is implemented under the South East Europe
Transnational Cooperation Programme (SEE)**

Programme is financed by ERDF & IPA
www.guarden.eu

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a) The South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme

The South East Europe programme is a unique instrument which, in the framework of the Regional Policy's Territorial Cooperation Objective, aims to improve integration and competitiveness in an area which is as complex as it is diverse.

The programme supports projects developed within four Priority Axes: Innovation, Environment, Accessibility, and Sustainable Growth Areas - in line with the Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities, and is also contributing to the integration process of the non-EU member states.

Jointly for our common future is the slogan chosen by the 16 participating countries in the programme to commence the work in the new programming period 2007-2013.

On 20 December 2007 the European Commission approved the Transnational Co-operation Programme "South-East Europe" for the period 2007-2013. The South East Europe programme is the transnational programme which gathers the biggest number of participating countries: 16 in total. As 8 of these are EU Member States, 6 are candidate and potential candidate countries and 2 are countries participating in the European Neighbourhood Policy, this is a highly complex programme which presents challenges such as ensuring good mechanisms to contract partners who receive funding from different instruments: ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) and potentially ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument).

b) The "GuardEn" project

The main objective of the project is the development of an integrated mechanism aimed to support rational design and effective implementation of local strategies for environmental risks' prevention and rehabilitation, specified for territories threatened by soil or water pollution.

The project's concept stands on the facts that:

- In most cases –especially in rural areas- the "Prime Pollutants" are companies of the primary (farms) and the secondary (local industries) sectors. Milk and dairy products plants, slaughterhouses and meatprocessing facilities and olive mills typically produce high BOD loads threatening primarily the water resources and the local soil balance.
- Existing legislation is –in most cases- adequate, however not effective, since: a) Enterprises may ignore the problem, preferring to pay any relevant penalties if and when they may be called upon to pay. b) The Authorities face problems enforcing the law onto large numbers of pollutants, thus their preventive role is considerably hindered.
- The rehabilitation of soil, is often an expensive, resource intensive process, that Authorities may not be able to realize, especially if the areas concerned are large; pollution prevention is a much more cost-efficient strategy.

The problem is "spirally recycled", with unavoidably destructive effects, such as:

- a) Destruction of natural heritage.
- b) Degradation of health, safety and -in general- quality of life of the local population (but also of citizens of other regions and countries/potential consumers of "polluted" products) either directly via the impact on water and the local products or indirectly via less severe annoyances, e.g. odours.
- c) Depreciation (in terms of quality-quantity-availability) of local "productive natural resources"(raw material, agricultural products, etc.), with destructive impact on the economy and the wider socio-economic development (e.g. quality and quantity restrictions of the local food products, elimination of the attractiveness of the territory for both inhabitants and potential visitors, reduction of the real estate value, etc.).

In this context, the GuardEn partnership claims that the “keys of the solution” could be in the hands of Pollutants (local enterprises) themselves: They need to be driven towards a Socially Responsible attitude and behavior, expressed through:

a) Self-Commitment regarding meeting and exceeding the requirements of relevant legislation or practices, by employing environmentally friendly production practices. Amongst others, this will not only include compliance with the law but also the application (permanent, systematic and effective) of environment-related Standards, such as ISO 14000, EMAS, etc.) or Corporate Social Responsibility models (e.g. ISO 26000), as well as more long-term strategies, such as adoption and application of “sustainable forms” of business activity (production/processing of organic or integrated cultivation’s food products, sustainable forms of tourism, investments for environment-friendly production, etc.).

b) Becoming “active and conscious” members of local collaborative platforms aimed at preventing pollution and undertaking rehabilitation actions:

- As for local companies (especially SMEs and Agricultural Cooperatives): Permanent-systematic participation in such kinds of synergetic action, placing at the disposal of the community available resources that could be valuable in confronting soil and water pollution and in designing and implementing rehabilitation schemes (e.g. competent staff, equipment, etc.), thus becoming “GuardEn” Entities (Guardians of Environment).

- As for larger Companies: They act -in most cases- as opinion leaders to local SMEs and as their main knowledge providers. They can directly influence smaller companies in their business chain towards a better environmental approach. Moreover, they possess know-how on such critical issues, whilst are often familiarized with the Corporate Social Responsibility concept and practices. In this sense, they could possibly act as motivators and mentors of SMEs in this field, as well as “expert assistants” of the local government, in designing and monitoring the application of corresponding strategies, policies and action plans.

The Framework introduced by the partnership responds to the aforementioned situation; it aims at developing Conscious, Socially Responsible Enterprises (especially of the Agro-Food and the “neighbor” sectors) which will on the one hand adopt and apply relevant “clean” standards, codes and practices in their own production processes, whilst on the other hand will volunteer for joining –in a coordinated and systematic way- local level collaborative strategies for preventive and corrective action against soil and water pollution (and, in general, against

natural disasters' prevention and rehabilitation. The partnership will take full advantage of its transnational composition, which will help identify best practices, available expertise and suitable case studies from regions of better environmental performance, to be used in motivating and facilitating an improvement of such performance in less performing regions.

In this context, the project's specific goals are summarized as following:

a) Formulation of the "GuardEn Model System":

- Definition of the Profile of the "GuardEn" Enterprise.
- Development of a set of Methodological Tools to support Enterprises to move towards the "GuardEn Status".

b) Development of a "Methodology for Rational Strategic Planning for Soil Pollution Prevention and Rehabilitation at the Local Level".

c) Design-Development of local Collaborative Patterns/Clusters for water and Soil Pollution Prevention and Rehabilitation, and of a supportive Transnational Expert Network, that shall carry a mandate for regular information provision, training and networking with other key actors towards tackling environmental performance challenges.

c) The GuardEn Partnership

The partnership comprises of significant Actors with exceptional know-how and experience and complementary fields of interest, regular activity, authority and expertise, satisfying required capacity and competences in all areas required by the concept and the content of the project.

The Lead Partner is the Regional Authority of Peloponnese, a territory with significant needs in regards to the problem in hand. It is the main policy-making and implementation entity in Peloponnese, and has a long experience of participating (and leading) projects and programmes of a local, national and transnational character.

Specifically, the GuardEn Partnership comprises of the following Partners:



Region of Peloponnese: The Peloponnese Region, based in Tripoli, is placed at the south part of Greece and includes the prefectures of Corinth, Argolida, Arcadia, Messinia and Lakonia.

covers the 11,7% out of the total area of the country and its population (578.000) represents the 5,3% of total population.

Primary sector covers the 30% of total employment, secondary the 19,3% and tertiary the 50,7%, while for Greece these rates are 11,5%, 22,5% and 66% respectively (data 2007).

The area is characterized by a great value and interesting cultural (archaeological sites, traditional villages, museums, Byzantine and modern history monuments) and valuable natural resources (agricultural and forestry land of high natural value).

<http://ppel.gov.gr>

THESSALONICA AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE:



AMERICAN
FARM SCHOOL
Thessaloniki Greece

The Thessalonica Agricultural and Industrial Institute (TAII) was founded in 1904 as an independent, not for profit educational institution to serve rural population in Greece and the Balkans. The has a 160 ha Educational Farm that is the living laboratory where students of all ages undertake practical training in plant production, animal husbandry, agribusiness, and natural resource management. Furthermore, it has a Soil Laboratory, a Precision Agriculture Laboratory and the relevant equipment to meet the goals of the project at identifying harmed territories and carrying out strategies for prevention and rehabilitation of land.

www.afs.edu.gr

BIC of Attika – Greece

The European Community Business and Innovation Centre (BIC) of Attika was established in 1995 as a non-profit organization. Its main mission is the support and development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and the promotion and implementation of relevant EU and National Policies in collaboration with local, national and EU authorities and other Actors. BIC of Attika is active and experienced in the issues of sustainable, socially responsible entrepreneurship. Except from business consulting support, guidance, training etc., BIC of Attika provides pre-incubation and incubation services to SMEs.

www.bicofattika.gr



Federation of Industries of Northern Greece



The Federation of Industries of Northern Greece (FING) was established in 1915. Since its foundation, it has been active in its efforts to promote not only industrial development, but also

economic and social progress in Northern Greece. It proposes and contributes to actions aimed at establishing and promoting the competitive advantages of Northern Greece, as well as to the promotion of the overall economic development of the region.

<http://www.sbbe.gr>

AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY – PLOVDIV



Ever since its establishment in 1945, the Agricultural University – Plovdiv has been spreading knowledge, treasuring and enriching the traditions of Bulgarian agriculture. It has strengthened its positions as a national centre of agricultural science and education in Bulgaria.

The training of all Bulgarian and foreign students takes place in four faculties: Faculty of Agronomy, Faculty of Viticulture and Horticulture, Faculty of Plant Protection and Agro-ecology and Faculty of Economics.

www.au-plovdiv.bg

BULGARIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The BCCI, being a major business representative organization, has strong relations to different national institutions, organizations, unions and other public and private structures. BCCI is a member of the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation (unions, employers and government) and one of the founders of the Association of the Organizations of the Bulgarian Employers. BCCI representatives participate in the work of over 200 committees, working and expert groups in various fields of the economy.

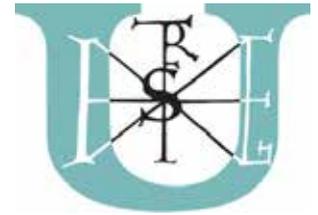
www.bcci.bg



SZENT ISTVÁN UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES, INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

The Institute is committed to undertake research related to agriculture and the environment considering rural resource management, rural development, land use, with the purpose of informing policy makers and the academic community about the scale, causes and consequences of problems facing rural areas, as well as policy options.

www.sziu.hu, www.kti.szie.hu



Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Handicraft and Agriculture of Potenza



The Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Handicraft and Agriculture of Potenza (CCIAA Potenza) is, as the other Italian Chambers of Commerce, an institution governed by public law, established by the Royal Decree of King Vittorio Emmanuelle II on October 5th 1862.

www.pz.camcom.it

VENETO AGRICOLTURA – REGIONAL AGENCY FOR AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND AGRI-FOOD SECTORS

Veneto Agricoltura is the Veneto Region Agency aimed at promoting and carrying out interventions for the modernisation of farms and agro-forestry soil conservation, as well as making the best effective use of agricultural land, the development of aquaculture and fisheries, in particular concerning research, experimental trials and support of the market (R. L. 35/97 - art. 2).



It organises and promotes food quality certification, supports applied research, experimental trials and agricultural training, encouraging a better use of environmental resources. Besides its head office in Legnaro, Veneto Agricoltura owns 3 experimental centres, 4 forestry centres, 4 demonstration farms, 3 fish experimentation centres, 1 agri-food quality institute, 1 training and information centre and 7 educational centres.

In the GuardEn project, Veneto Agricoltura through its experimental farms will provide its experience and facilities in conducting experimental trials and interventions aimed to prevent soil pollution and degradation.

www.venetoagricoltura.org

Irecoop Veneto - Italy

Irecoop Veneto is an organisation offering training and consulting services articulated on different levels:

- Analysis of the organising and training needs of the enterprises, analysis of the labour market, analysis of the training systems and models.
- Planning of vocational training projects and promotion of the generation turn-over in the SME; training and re-qualification of people already working in operating contexts.
- Business consulting on quality systems, processes' globalisation of the markets and internationalisation of the enterprises.
- Consulting, start-up and follow-up of new enterprises.

<http://www.irecoop.veneto.it/>



ARPAV – Regional Agency for Environmental Prevention and Protection of Veneto



ARPAV is a public body founded in 1996. ARPAV's mission is to carry out environmental protection and prevention measures in Veneto region. ARPAV, through the environmental control, monitoring and prevention activities, aims at ensuring both the safety of the territory and the people health.

<http://www.arpa.veneto.it>

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR FOOD BIORESOURCES – IBA BUCHAREST

The mission of the National R&D Institute for Food Bioresources IBA-Bucharest is to meet the societal challenges by elaboration, implementation and dissemination of knowledge through research, education and services in the agri-food field.

Research and innovation activities of IBA Bucharest have the main objective to increase the quality of life and wellbeing of people through offering healthy food and increasing the number of employees within Romanian agri-food industry.

www.bioresurse.ro



Chamber of agriculture and forestry of Slovenia – CAFS



The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia is a nongovernmental umbrella organisation of all natural persons and legal entities that work in the fields of agriculture, forestry and fishing in the Republic of Slovenia.

<http://www.kgzs.si>

Zadar County Development Agency Ltd ZADRA

The Zadar County Development Agency ZADRA Ltd was founded in 2006 by the Zadar County, the City of Zadar, and the Towns of Nin, Obrovac, Biograd na Moru and Pag. Developing programs aimed at stimulating regional development, creating positive investment climate and improving the well-being of Zadar County residents are the main tasks of ZADRA.

The primary objective of the Zadar County Development Agency Ltd ZADRA is to establish a system to design and coordinate the new development cycle within Zadar County.

The activities of ZADRA include supporting SMEs, coordinating the Zadar County Development Strategy, developing clusters, encouraging and supporting the development of business zones, offering the One Stop Service Centre services for potential investors in Zadar County, attracting domestic and foreign investments, educating entrepreneurs and public institutions' employees, supporting and implementing international cooperation, informing of - and securing financial support opportunities, providing expert assistance in the preparation of project documentation and implementation of EU projects.

www.zadra.hr



UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE – FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE



The activities of the Department are strictly involved in all state's investigation which deals with soil's ecological aspects. Also, besides Governmental projects, the Faculty is present in local communities as a respectful institution which solved a certain soils/plants heavy metals pollution problems. The Department of Agrochemistry and Plant Physiology runs two projects for Serbia's Ministry of Science, after the passage at an open competition for science and technology projects.

www.agrif.bg.ac.rs

d) The Project's Activities until today

GuardEn's 1st period of implementation started with carrying out Surveys of the "Diagnostic Stage" of the project, aimed in the identification-analysis of the existing status in relation to: a) Environmental Risks and Polluting Factors in the target regions, b) Actors/Potential Stakeholders comprising the Local Systems, c) Best Practice Analysis in Environmental Risks' Management. These surveys provide a global baseline analysis of all aspects that are critical to the project, while produced valuable data and information for other Activities to progress. Also, there has been satisfactory progress related to Activities aimed in the development of the methodological tools comprising the integrated "GuardEn Framework": the "GuardEn Model System" (a coherent set of tools facilitating the development of "Socially Responsible" business units, acting towards protection of environmental resources, not only through employing appropriate managerial and production methods and practices, and through respecting relevant law and regulations, but also by adopting an energetic philosophy and by activating on a volunteer basis towards contributing to the common effort for sustainable treatment of the environment and for prevention of environmental risks); a "Methodology for planning and implementing territorial strategies for environmental risks" management and pollution prevention"; the Organization and Operations System of Territorial Collaborative Patterns for Environmental Protection ("GuardEn Clusters") and of their Network. Preparatory work for organizing territorial level Awareness Raising Events addressed to local Stakeholders has been also undertaken, whilst they gradually started being implemented.

From the early stages of the project, the partners started carrying out **communication Activities** (publicity through the Mass Media and the Internet, development and operation of the GuardEn Website – www.guarden.eu -, etc.) based included in an intensive Communication Strategy which will be implemented throughout the project's lifespan.

Partnership meetings for proper launching, monitoring and coordination of the project took place during the period in question, among which a considerable number of transnational sessions:

Kick off Meeting, Tripolis - Greece, 26 and 27/11/2012



The GuardEn Kick off Meeting was organized on 26 and 27/11/2012 at Tripolis, with the participation of partners from all project's countries. The objectives, the work-plan and the roles were analysed and discussed, whilst the 1st period's tasks were defined.

Steering Committee Meeting, Padova - Italy, 14 and 15/03/2013

The 1st Steering Committee Meeting of the project took place in Padova, bringing together 25 representatives of the partners, organized by ARPAV, Irecoop and Veneto Agricoltura. In addition to progress monitoring and planning of future activities, the participants had an opportunity to visit a sustainable agricultural company that is one of good practices in the Veneto Region. The demonstrative pilot Farm of Vallevecchia lies along the Adriatic littoral zone between the resorts of Caorle and Bibione. Vallevecchia is identified both as a Special Protection area and a site of Community Importance of the EU Natura 2000 Network. In this agricultural company innovative, environment friendly cropping systems have been tested and experimented and knowledge transfer to other farms is encouraged. Due to the strong naturalistic characteristic of the territory where the agricultural activities are carried out, the main objective of the Vallevecchia Farm is to evaluate how an advanced sustainable and profitable agriculture may coexists with a highly qualified and diversified environment, such as the environmentally protected areas.

Steering Committee Meeting, Sofia - Bulgaria, 7-8/10/2013

From the 7th till the 8th of October 2013 the 2nd Meeting of the GuardEn Steering Committee was held in Sofia, organized by the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It was devoted in monitoring progressive and final results of concluded and running Activities, in the definition of the ways through which the relevant outcomes should be used, as well as in the planning of the next period's activities.

**Scientific and Technical Board Meeting – Technical Workshp,
Thessaloniki - Greece, 4/12/2013**

A plenary Session of the Scientific and Technical Board was organized in Thessaloniki by the Thessalonika Agricultural and Industrial Institute; it has been of an open and laboratorial character, since 22 experts participated, representing most of the Partners; the meeting focused on the assessment of the outcomes of the diagnostic stage and on identifying ways of potential enrichment, on the exhaustive discussion on issues related to the methodological tools comprising the "GuardEn Framework" (whose development is on a full process), as well as in outlining the activities concerning local and transnational networking and the pilot implementation process which will be carried out within 2014.