ASKFOOD, "Alliance for Skills and Knowledge to Widen Food Sector-related Open Innovation, Optimization and Development"

Introduction

As a consequence of societal, environmental and economic factors, the job market in the food sector requires an increasing number of professionals and practitioners with new and entrepreneurial skills and a wider range of competences in food-related disciplines. In most cases, however, the current offer of higher education (HE) study programmes is unable to properly respond to the job market needs and required knowledge transfer. Even though there is an increase in the availability of modern tools, academically focussed new training methodologies and open access trainings, they still do not produce synergy between university and industry. This explains the need to update and upgrade the graduates' knowledge and competences in the food science and technology sectors by promoting disruptive approaches and methodologies.

The ASKFOOD project was launched to deal with the matter described above. It involves 12 partners from all over Europe and is coordinated by the University of Teramo within the framework of the ASKFOOD Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance. As an innovative and international educational environment, the ASKFOOD project consortium strives to create a permanent knowledge alliance between businesses and HE Institutions in the food related sectors.

Started in 2018, the project has been focusing on diverse activities and the following products have already been implemented or are currently in progress:

The Forecast Aggregator

To define future trends that influence knowledge skills in the food sector, the ASKFOOD consortium has identified eight ground-breaking forces that will shape the competitive scenario in the next years: Technology, Economics, Market habits, Policy and regulatory framework, Environment, Science, Transformative industry and Social dynamics (TEMPESTS). These forces will change the current reference points for the sector and the future for the demand of skills and jobs.

The Forecast Aggregator is designed to be an interactive library where these eight "TEMPESTS" are described and analysed. Regarding future developments, the Forecast Aggregator tries to

anticipate the resulting new skills and future professional profiles that emerge in the food sector and food related sectors if the trend in question continues.

This link directs you to the Forecast Aggregator: https://www.askfood.eu/tools/forecast/forecast/

The ASKFOOD Smart Atlas

In the age of shared knowledge and knowledge sharing, there are many open source resources that meet the emerging need for skills in the food sector. The ASKFOOD Smart Atlas activates and re-uses material from eight different types of resources: 1) massive open online courses (MOOCs); 2) training centres; 3) EU project results; 4) research centres; 5) acceleration programmes; 6) crowd funding/ crowd sourcing platforms; 7) start-ups and 8) innovation marketplaces.

The research, on which this Smart Atlas is based, did not intend it to be used for comparative or ranking purposes.

The Smart Atlas can be used as a source of inspiration or a platform for finding self-training tools to expand personal know-how. At the same time, it is also intended as a way to increase knowledge sharing in the food industry.

The following link directs you to the Smart Atlas: https://www.askfood.eu/tools/smart-atlas/maps/

The Training Gap Identifier

The Training Gap Identifier is set to be launched in the near future. This tool, also interactive, should measure the discrepancy between the current and the emerging skills that need to be acquired. The Training Gap Identifier takes the form of an online self-test based on 40 professional profiles. Depending on the achieved points and according to the strategy and position a company wants to achieve on the market, trainings will be proposed. In this way, training programmes can be individually adapted.

Innovative training activities

Within this work package, different target groups, *i.e.* MSc programmes, continuing professional development (CDP) in diverse food related sectors will work with the following approaches: gamification, reverse mentoring and personal learning. Learners and teachers will evaluate the methodology they used in the achieved aspects of competences and skills. As a result, a complete portfolio of innovative training concepts, methods and tools as well as a detailed guidance for renovating and adding value to internal training strategies will be available.

Reversed Incubator

The reversed incubator combines an innovative platform that supports the entrepreneurial spirit and new training models that encourage the participants to rethink how we do business. Here, alternative training methods are integrated. This tool aims to improve the industry-oriented professional skills of the students, teachers and industry professionals. Further, it favours the integration of science and technology skills into the industry by investing in an open ecosystem to connect and harness talents, ideas and entrepreneurial initiatives. As a result, this will enhance the value of the entire value chain of the food-related sectors, by connecting academia and business.

The following link directs you to the Reversed Incubator: https://www.askfood.eu/reversed-incubator-0

The ASKFOOD Permanent Observatory

The ASKFOOD Permanent Observatory on Innovative Training will monitor and analyse the latest innovation trends in terms of skills, knowledge and competences needs in the food and food-related sectors. The insights produced by the ASKFOOD Permanent Observatory will help members in a multi-sectorial, multidisciplinary environment, to develop innovative training schemes matching future innovation trends in the food sector and food-related sectors.

The Digital Business and Training Ecosystem

ASKFOOD is committed to set a Digital Business and Training Ecosystem (DBTE), an open and co-created platform to support the aggregation and interaction among partners and the wider community of the ASKFOOD stakeholders. Main interest is given to sector-specific clusters and for them the virtual platform will act as support to their training, innovation and networking needs. The DBTE will include also the Mobility and Talent Marketplace, a virtual permanent desk for collection of ideas and opportunities matchup. Overall, the DBTE is meant to be an information provider in its best possible way, contributing to business plannings of clusters which have a need for education.

In conclusion, the ASKFOOD project is designed to contribute to the creation of a new educational ecosystem by improving the academia-industry and stakeholders interplay in a Quintuple Helix innovation model.

Activities are funded by the ERASMUS+ Knowledge Alliance project ASKFOOD "Alliance for Skills and Knowledge to Widen Food Sector-related Open Innovation, Optimization

and Development" (Project N. 588375-EPP-1-2017-1-IT-EPPKA2-KA), and coordinated by the University of Teramo, Prof. Paola Pittia.

More info is available at www.askfood.eu

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Local contact: (partner information: please insert here your local contact details)