



**Project Title:** *Consumer learning to enhance the knowledge of products with geographical indications*

Progress Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

**GI Learn** - Consumer Learning to Enhance the Knowledge of Products with Geographical Indications - is a training project for adult learning in protected designations of origin (PDO) products: its main objective is that European adults gain the knowledge for the identification and valorisation of PDO products and specifically, their unique sensory characteristics.

Secondary objectives of **GI Learn** project are the promotion of PDO products and the preservation of traditional manufacture processes and the sustainable production. The foreseen methodology combines off-line and on-line approach. Training consists on an innovative concept of “guided tasting” of PDO products: participants will perform a real-time tasting while they can consult with guides and charts for a proper fulfilment. Furthermore, the on-line format provides a more attractive approach allowing participants to interact with other through the course platform.

Training on PDO products will provide participants with a multidisciplinary knowledge regarding areas of production and socioeconomic impact, manufacture and cultural aspects of products. But the innovative idea lies on the acquisition of sensory capacities by European citizens which will let them to appraise quality, value and diversity of food PDO products.

The consortium consists of a multidisciplinary group of partners, including partners with a strong background in the three pillars of the project: learning, PDO products and sensory analysis.

As future plans, it is foreseen to adapt the courses to different PDO products within the same country and even the transference of the course to different countries.

For more information:

[www.gilearn.eu](http://www.gilearn.eu)

The website is available in 6 different languages.

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# 1. Project Objectives

**GILearn project's main objective** is to develop an innovative e-learning program for improving the knowledge about PDO products by European consumers.

**The specific objectives of the project are:**

1. To provide European citizens with the necessary training in PDO products and particularly, in their sensory characteristics to help consumers to appraise those products.
2. To develop a new and mixed methodology combining an innovative ICT approach and real-life experience by "**guided tasting**".
3. To strength the relations among consumers, Regulatory PDO Boards and the partners to ensure a wider impact of the methodology developed and the effectiveness of the training.

## 2. Project Approach

The project includes the development of the following activities to assure the fulfilment of the defined objectives:



### 1. Training Needs Analysis

The first task is to analyze the current situation about “knowledge in PDO products” from a two-fold perspective: consumers and Regulatory PDO Boards. The methodology employed is the most appropriated to the different profile of participants, i.e. focus groups to approach consumers and surveys to approach professionals. This methodology is followed by each partner in each country, allowing the analysis in depth of the baseline to adapt and develop contents to fulfil the society needs relating with learning on PDO products.

### 2. Development of the courses

Based on the previous findings, this group of activities consists of the creation of contents and the e-learning interactive platform in local languages and in English.

The courses have a common structure:

### **1. General part: Introduction to PDOs**

The general part or the introduction to PDOs addresses the study of the PDO products in general terms. This part includes a general framework about food and its region of origin, policies and legislation in the EU, authenticity issues, the quality and the sensory evaluation of traditional food products.

### **2. Specific part**

The specific part is focus on a specific PDO product depending on the specific country. The topics within this part are specifications in general terms of the PDO product chosen per country and examples and the sensory evaluation of those products.

The more attractive element of the present course is the innovative concept of “**guided tasting**”. This methodology approaches participants to a real tasting in an online environment. Guidelines about how to proceed in a sensory testing are foreseen to be provided to participants assuring the perception of the sensory uniqueness of products.

**Moodle** is the platform in which the e-learning program will be developed.

### **3. Training program testing (piloting)**

In order to check if everything correctly works, the next step is the pilot of the course with a selected sample of participants in each country to improve the courses and detect potential difficulties in performing the courses. 30 different participants with a specific profile are taking part of the course: studying different topics, carrying out assignments and activities to evaluate their learning.

The **dissemination activities** are foreseen during the whole project lifetime. Dissemination activities are planned to spread the advances and results of the products to different targets, from consumers to PDO Regulatory Boards and the general public or the authorities. The activities for dissemination are as follows:

- Web for the project ([www.gilearn.eu](http://www.gilearn.eu))
- Newsletters releases
- Leaflets, posters and shopping bags
- Communication in European events
- Articles and press releases

As **exploitation activities** is foreseen to develop guidelines for the exploitation in each own country by each partner and in an extended manner to other European countries. The adaptation to different sectors and countries is a clear element for sustainability.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The **main result** of **GILearn project** will be the **6 validated courses about PDO products** with attractive and didactic contents for the European citizens to learn about the uniqueness and tipicity of PDO products.

In the first year of the project, **the main outcome** has been the **Training Needs Analysis report (TNA)**. The TNA aims were:

1. Illustrating how the PDO system is perceived by consumers and other stakeholders in the sector, in particular by Regulatory PDO Boards.
2. Defining the structure of the training programme, starting with a profile of the participants and content.
3. Identifying at least five critical factors to monitor in terms of evolution during and after the training course.

The **results**, described in the TNA report, represent the guidelines and reference elements for designing an effective e-learning training course. The activities carried out involved more than 80 consumers, consulted through 2 focus groups conducted in each partner country, and 28 subjects between Regulatory PDO Boards and other stakeholders in the sector, questioned through in-depth interviews carried out in each country. The TNA was an important first opportunity to present and introduce the project to primary target participants and to evaluate the level of interest in the proposal of a training course on Geographical Indications. Consumers revealed critical information about what they currently know concerning PDO products and how they expected about an e-learning course. They give us the clues for create an attractive and useful course on PDO products.

The **main conclusions/findings** emerged from the TNA are the following:

1. Gaps in information on the products.
2. Expert consumers prefer to buy PDO products directly from the place of production or from trusted producers.
3. Consumers often attribute partial value to the PDO mark.
4. The proposal of an on-line training course in the sensory analysis of PDO products is often met with scepticism, as sharing the experience of tasting, which has to be real and not virtual, is given great importance.
5. The added value of the denomination is not always clearly perceived by consumers.

This report covers **first and second objectives of the project**, as the course should be adapted to the European citizens' needs in order to get a successful learning.

Concerning the progress of the main outcome of the project, **the course itself**, the description of the program has been agreed by all partners in line with consumer requirements and guaranteeing the learning.

The course has been structured in a **general part**, for the introduction of the PDOs, addressing the general framework of those products, region of production, authenticity issues, quality, sensory characteristics, etc. As the project main aim is to raise awareness about the uniqueness of the sensory characteristics of PDO products, the sensory part is foreseen to have the tools for participants could acquire essential attitudes for the perception of sensory characteristics. Besides, this learning is crucial for the proper development of the second part, **specific part**, focus on a specific PDO product depending on the specific country.

Nowadays, the sensory profiles of PDO products are being developed. The aim is to obtain the charts of the sensory characteristics of PDO product in each country that will be used as a guide for the development of the second part (specific part of the course). This fact is connected with the innovation of the project that is the “**guided testing**” allowing participants to live the experience of a real tasting in an online environment.

Additionally, echoing the course requirements indicated by participants in the TNA, the consortium is evaluating the possibility of developing a complementary in class activity. The specifications for the activity are being defined by the consortium.

Regarding **dissemination**, the more visible element is the **website**. It has been translated to 6 different languages, corresponding to the partners’ own languages. The website acts displaying and spreading the knowledge about the project for all different target groups. The number of visitors till November is the 1.011, with a percentage of new visitors of 62.5. The website has *Documents* and *Agenda* sections which are permanently updated for following the project progress.

Other dissemination element already done is the **newsletter** distributed directly from the central system adopted and also through each partner specific newsletters. The first newsletter was released in August summarizing the first step of the project and the second one in November, focus on the TNA findings.

Nowadays, **dissemination materials**, leaflets, posters and shopping bags are almost finished. Materials have had a delay in their delivery as the process of design, definition of contents and the searching of providers has taken more time than expected. It is foreseen to have the definitive materials (printed and sent to all partners for their use) in December.

Other dissemination materials and initiatives were delivered: news in the partner’s websites, local newsletters; participation in fairs, local materials (rollups...).

Finally, a Management plan, a Quality Plan and a Dissemination Plan have been developed, discussed, delivered and implemented in order to assure the appropriate advance of the project.

All the public outcomes/results are available in the Documents website section.



## 4. Partnerships

In Europe the interests of consumers for tasting PDO products is unevenly distributed. In our continent traditional local food has certainly an appeal among the consumers, but they see the products in a different way according to the geographical areas. Many people talked about Northern European and Southern European food culture. In some southern countries interest in PDO/PGI is high whereas in some northern countries like Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Germany such interest is low. Therefore, a European approach seems to be much more appropriate to be addressed with training for different types of trainees. Benefits from cooperation at a European level are much important as they are supported at transnational level.

In that sense European cooperation could promote the regularization and homogenization of the sensory analysis for PDO products as there are many differences in the use of those analyses among countries for the accreditation process and for quality control purposes.

The cooperation within the multi-country partnership also allows the following aspects:

- Exchange of good practices among partners
- Learn new methodologies
- Learn about adult learning in other EU countries
- Learn from alternative dissemination procedures
- Participate in the European dialogue for exploring industry needs and providing solutions
- Promote culture exchange between partner countries

## 5. Plans for the Future

For the near future, the consortium has to face with the development of contents for the course. In that sense, a **chronogram** has been created to accomplish the entire task in time. Next three months are crucial for the proper execution of the project as the consortium has to develop the most important output of the project: the course itself.

The chronogram states dates for fulfil some key tasks. The accomplishment of those tasks let the execution of the following ones. All partners are aware of that and compromise to accomplish it. Moreover, in order to manage with dates and contents, responsible have been designated and video conferences planned to support.

Concerning the **recruitment** of consumers for the piloting a plan has been outlined. The idea is to have recruited the participants by mid February. The strategy for the recruitment is also being agreed with the partners.

The **launching of the course** is foreseen for the beginning of March and it is planned to have open it on the MOODLE during 3 consecutive months.

The **evaluation of the course** will be done with the feedback of participants in order to check the effectiveness of learning and eventually implementing suggested improvements.

### For **dissemination activities**:

- The agenda newsletter has been planned in order to propose and develop the 4 last newsletters foreseen in the project. For each of them, one responsible has been mentioned to pilot the redaction.
- Concerning the dissemination materials is planned to have all them finished (printed and sent to all partners for their use) in December.
- As dissemination activities, some EU events have been identified in order to spread the results i.e. AEPAS congress (Spain): poster or speech, a Seminar on PDO in Portugal, etc.

It is also foreseen to celebrate two **consortium meetings**, one in the beginning of February 2015 and the last, probably during October. Besides, Skype meetings are planned for December and January in order to raise difficulties or problems with the development of the course contents.

Finally, regarding the **exploitation** of the course, the project coordinator will identify the main aspects to take into account, once the course has been finished.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

Training on PDO products will provide trainees with a multidisciplinary knowledge regarding area of production, manufacture of products, the socio-economic impact derived in the area, the cultural characteristics of the products, as well as in depth knowledge on sensory characteristics of PDO products. Besides, they will have also the opportunity to learn about the cultural diversity of other EU countries.

In general, the project will help adults to acquire pathways to improve their knowledge and skills. On the other hand, the project also promotes innovation in adult learning, combining complementary online and offline activities, and the transfer even among different countries. The project addresses an innovative approach to food tasting training combined with real-life experience optimizing the skills acquisition.

On the other hand, the acquisition of that knowledge will have an immediate effect in the consumers' purchase behavior, given the opportunity of make informed choices to them. Their choices can boost local economies and define a healthier life. The interest of the learning program will be able to develop or improve adult skills with ICT as a complement to their lifelong learning experience.

