

GI Learn

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

Lifelong Learning Programme

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Deliverable 4: WP3 – Training Needs Analysis – FINAL REPORT

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A few concluding suggestions

In order to briefly describe the results of the needs analysis and identify the critical points, we decided to take the last part of each National Report, dividing them by subject.

Current situation of both consumers and Regulatory PDO Boards (or other organizations that have been interviewed)

a. Perceptions and consumers' initial knowledge about PDO products

Spain

Whether or not we are talking about consumers with knowledge of PDO products, we can see that the criteria of taste and price are conditioning factors when purchasing food products. However, there are many differences regarding the other criteria that have been considered, depending on the consumer profile (with/without knowledge). It is noteworthy to mention that consumers with knowledge about PDO products tend to buy them regularly, whereas consumers with less knowledge do not look at this aspect, and if they buy a PDO product it is on an average of once a year.

This is why we must distinguish between one kind of consumer and the other when talking about the perceptions and knowledge of PDO products:

- Consumers with knowledge about PDO products: they also look at the ingredients and the origin of the products they buy, as well as taking into account the criteria of packaging, quantity, product format and expiration date. The criteria for choosing a PDO product are: flavour, quality-guaranteed, selecting the best product, artisanal production and national product. They always correlate a PDO product with an artisan product, which in turn implies a higher quality food without artificial additives.

- Consumers with little knowledge about PDO products: they also take into account the brand criterion, although they reiterate that price is the main choice criterion and the key factor when buying. The origin does not seem to determine whether they buy a product or not. For these consumers, a quality product is associated with a good flavour, nice texture and generated confidence (which may well be because of the overall appearance of the product or because of its brand). They claim to not regularly buy products with designations of origin, mainly due to their price. These consumers have some doubts as to the guarantees and compliance with regulations of PDO products; marks are not associated with value or real guarantee (they particularly drew attention to the forgeries of the ingredients they contain).

All of the consumers agree that a PDO product is a product from a particular geographical area, with specific organoleptic characteristics and with some criteria that have to be met in terms of processing and producing. The price, although high, is justified by the quality of the ingredients and the elaboration process.

Portugal

The participants demonstrated that they very much relate to traditional foods – PDO products – which for them mean a product from a defined region. The majority of consumers don't know about certification for these products or about what it implies. Participants were unaware of the PDO logo, certification steps, associated guarantees and benefits for producers. Most of them could recognise and associate the term "designation of origin" to a few products - mostly wine -

however, when buying products, none of them really check if a certain product is a certified PDO or not.

Participants recognise the quality of traditional products linked with a specific origin. They relate quality with the know-how of a specific region and believe that know-how is passed down through generations, which provides a sense of reliability and security. In general, these products are well known and acknowledged as differentiated products, regardless of the PDO designation.

During the Focus Groups (FG), the participants had to think about these aspects, and all of them appreciated the value of the PDO logo, seeing it as a way to protect national culture and national products. The participants, especially those with a low level of knowledge about PDOs, remained sceptical about the benefits of certification. This is because they fear that the mark is just another way of misleading consumers into buying expensive products with no real quality. These consumers would only recognise the value of certification if it was easily granted to small producers. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, they acknowledge that the protected designation is in fact protecting the genuinity of the products and assuring their quality.

The consumer's firmly believe in the idea that is it better to purchase these products directly in the production area. All of them would rather go to local regions, believing that traditional food is much cheaper and of better quality in the production area. Understanding the meaning of the controlled mark would change this way of thinking, because they would see that there is consistency in high quality and genuinity, no matter where the product is offered.

It was agreed that there is almost no information available about PDO products or the logo, and most consumers were not aware that such certification and processes existed.

On the other hand, the participants perceived that there has been an increase in the promotion and consumption of traditional food products with reference to a specific origin. The popularity of these products is increasing, mainly because they are associated with gourmet. Nowadays gourmet products are seen as fashionable products, which is very positive for traditional-PDO products.

Furthermore, the participants think that in general the Portuguese are becoming more nationalists and regionalists, appreciating national production more. Nevertheless, very little is known about the PDO mark, certification and controlled production.

The benefits and advantages for everyone involved in this process are clear and were understood; the participants believe that publicity must be carried out in order to inform consumers, otherwise the PDO mark will not have the desired impact or offer the associated benefits.

Italy

The methodological approach meant that there was already a difference between the consumers participating in the survey regarding knowledge about PDO products.

The first focus group was made up of carefully selected consumers that knew about the European PDO system. For this group, PDO is more synonymous with "trust" rather than "quality" or "local". PDO products are considered to be "guarantees" of a control process and unique taste, given to the distinctiveness of the process. The participants in focus group 1 retain that a PDO should be – or better still, should remain—a niche product and that it should also be distributed by sales outlets as such. They think of the expansion of the production area fora PDO or the potential increase in the number of consumers interested in purchasing PDO products, perhaps induced through training and information initiatives aimed at raising awareness on the products themselves, as being a potential threat to their status as an "expert" consumer.

A PDO product is therefore considered to be much more interesting and valuable when the production area is more limited and the target consumers more specific, as in "connoisseurs" that

are able to appreciate the special characteristics of these products. In reality, recognition of the PDO mark does not seem to be a principal factor for purchasing. Nobody says that they have tried a product that they weren't familiar with (including by hearsay) just because it was a PDO. On the contrary, sometimes they regularly buy a product without knowing that it is a PDO. This is also because the mark is not considered sufficiently recognisable.

The insufficient recognisability of the mark, therefore its inability to transmit the meaning of PDO, is the link to the second group of participants, who at the most remember seeing PDO written on the product labels in food display counters, but not of having seen the PDO logo on the packaging, or they only have a vague memory of it. For these consumers, the meaning of PDO is much more tied to the territory, therefore to the geographical origin of the product, and less to the existence of a well-defined production process that is specified in the PDO product specifications, a process that is then verified and subject to a control system. These consumers associate the concept of a "PDO" product more automatically with a local product, and as a result tend to think that any type of local product is the same as a PDO product. However, if they are asked what the PDO acronym means, they are able to answer correctly.

Only after the discussion on the significance of the control system do the consumers connect PDOs with the concept of "safety" and "healthiness", while other attributes, such as "quality" and "taste", are not necessarily considered to be associated with the meaning of PDO. As far as the sectors are concerned, almost all the known examples of PDO products given by the participants are from the meat-based products and cheese sectors, which result as being the most well-known of all the sectors that include PDO products, while the same cannot be said for olive oils or fruit and vegetables, which while having numerous PDO products that are nationally recognized by consumers, are not mentioned as being sectors that are part of the PDO basket.

Finland

In Finland, consumer knowledge on PDO products is very low. In favour of PDO products, consumers are driven by their pride in locally made produce, although the current economic situation in Europe has resulted in people not having enough money to spend on PDO products, which are usually more expensive than mass-produced products.

PDO products are however marginal products in Finland and more original Finnish PDO products are needed to change this.

The number of consumers who buy PDO products has increased in Finland. One of the reasons for this is that people are travelling in Europe more and tasting new food products. In this light, Finnish consumers are possibly the newest users of PDO products. There is a major gap in the amount of widespread information. The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has just one member of staff that can use about 10% of their working time for PDOs. More information is needed and this should be focused on schools and homes (children and their parents). Food associations (wine clubs etc.) and schools could diffuse information on PDO products if organised properly.

People with little knowledge about PDOs did not even know that they were eating PDO products, nor did they know the meaning of PDO and the PDO mark.

France

In France, PDOs are not very well known by consumers, regardless of initiatives. In fact, we can easily say that most consumers know the word without knowing exactly what it means. More seriously, people in the cheese sector, which is extremely protected, don't consider PDO cheeses to be that tasty, and prefer farm-produced cheese.

2 reasons can be given for this:

- the first is that many marks have been implemented in France. There are still the French marks in addition to the European marks (for example AOC, which became AOP, which means exactly the same thing; there is also the BIO mark for both France and Europe). It's totally confusing for consumers.

- the second reason is that professional consumers (like the interviewed artisans) are not in any way associated with the creation of a new PDO. The creation itself belongs to industrials: done by industrials and generally dedicated to industrials as producers. They don't feel that it concerns them.

For this target consumer quality is a very strong point, and in their opinion quality can be established through an artisan producer's experience and know-how, but not really by a brand mark. Furthermore, in France, the artisan food sector is still associated with quality, quality in both the process and the product.

b. Vision of the current situation in regulatory PDO Boards and in other stakeholders of the sector involved in the in-depth interviews.

Spain

The opinion of the interviewees from PDO Boards can be summarised in strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and identified threats for PDO products.

The strengths are the high quality organoleptic characteristics of PDO products, which are determined by the origin and the link with a territory, its climate, soil, characteristics, varieties, the physical and human factors, make these products unique. They are also specific characteristics about both the processing and packaging, i.e. the whole product process adheres to quality standards and product traceability is guaranteed.

The weak points are the lack of funding for informing the final consumers more about the quality and type of products, resulting in final consumers being misinformed about the significance of PDO products, their qualities and the counterfeiting of PDO products.

The opportunities are vast, because there is a lot of information that still hasn't been communicated to the final consumer; consumers show an interest in being informed about food and seek information through different channels (big boom of Internet and social networks). The main opportunities are: publicising the PDO marks and explaining the differentiating factors of these products by building on their strengths.

The main threats are fraud, forgery and the counterfeiting of all PDO products.

Portugal

From the sector's point of view, it has been clearly established that consumers are unaware of PDO certification, along with its guarantees and implications. Therefore, lack of information causes this mark to lose impact on the market; it has been noted that the number of certified products are decreasing in Portugal.

Nevertheless, the Portuguese consumers are very familiar with many products that have great notoriety due to their origin. Examples of recognizable products in Portugal are wine and cheeses from specific regions. Consumers know the different regions and the characteristics of the products, but have no idea that control and certification exist, nor do they know what they mean in terms of ingredients, production specifications and the characteristics of the final product itself.

One of the main identified threats was that producers are not seeing the benefits of producing a PDO product, as people tend to valorise the region rather than the mark. Therefore they can sell their product with the reference to origin, which is very important, but they do not feel the need to have the mark, as consumers don't know about, or valorise PDO products.

Production capacity is another difficulty for the sector. In most cases there is low-scale production and if products were requested then this might even be seen as an advantage, due to its exclusivity and uniqueness. However, there are other cases where the region has the potential to produce more of certain PDO product, but the producers choose not to – once again, because consumers do not demand the mark.

Another difficulty that has to be faced is the fact that genuine products are not readily available in large-scale retailing establishments. Given the character of small and exclusive production, the key would be for producers to find a way to reach consumers directly, without the intermediation of large-scale retailing.

Due to all of these aspects, experts in the sector stated that some PDO products, of high quality, are in danger of becoming extinct because they have no impact and are not requested. The most dangerous threat faced by the sector is the mark not having enough impact, meaning that it eventually it will be useless, even in cases of well-known products.

All of the interviewees believe that the loss of certification represents a huge loss in terms of culture and gastronomic heritage. Participants stated that many products have the potential to grow in domestic and international markets, if the appropriate marketing and publicity is used. Therefore, from the sectors point of view, the promotion of products and the PDO mark is a crucial aspect to be developed, in order to overcome all the difficulties the sector is facing.

Italy

For the PDO Regulatory Board interviewees, a PDO is associated to a specific origin, linked to a territory (climate, soil properties, varieties, physical factor and the human factor). They undergo a specific process, preparation, packaging and labelling are controlled, they are produced according to quality standards and product traceability is guaranteed.

However, these are only potentially important factors. Potentially because there is a lack of information for the end consumer on what PDO products are and "*lack of knowledge confuses consumers and can lead to them choosing so-called "Italian Sounding" products that have nothing to do with certified products*".

Another important weakness, linked to poor consumer perception and therefore their propensity to spend more for a PDO product, is related to the cost incurred by companies to stay within the PDO system. It is clear from this last point that the possibility of many companies preferring to leave the system because it is not worth their while, as highlighted by some of the interviewees, can be identified as a major threat to the PDO sector.

Another issue that is highlighted as being a threat is linked to the effects of the economic crisis, which could increase the purchase and use of *bad food*.

Obviously communication and information aimed at the consumer were indicated when asked what actions could be taken to prevent these threats, but that's not all. In fact, there is also a need to intervene in the way a product is presented and placed when distributed through large-scale retailing, with the arrangement of space and shelves devoted exclusively to PDOs. Furthermore, there should be stricter and more binding regulations for the indication of the origin of the raw materials used on the label, for example, in regard to extra virgin olive oil, the label should specify the countries of origin for the olives.

We end the discussion with opportunities for the PDO sector. The first, defined as *"huge, extraordinary, formidable"*, is Expo 2015. It would be a serious mistake to not take advantage of this showcase to explain Italian quality production and the meaning of PDOs. As we shall see, the Consortia are already working with this in mind.

Another opportunity to take advantage of is people's interest in cooking shows. According to some of the interviewees, it would be interesting to be able to use dedicated spaces, such as food columns, to give the consumer information on PDO products, at the same time contributing to spreading knowledge on the characteristics of PDO products and improving consumer awareness in respect to the issue of the quality of food products.

Finland

The limited knowledge about PDOs is due to: 1) Information on PDOs has been diffused by the government. 2) PDOs are not at the "top of the list" of government actions. 3) Information on PDOs has been the job of a "public officer" who can only dedicate about 10% of their working time on PDOs.

The future looks more promising. In Finland, the Helsinki University (MUC) has created a list of possible PDOs in Finland. There are at least 60 products that fulfil the application requirements for a PDO. It is extremely likely that the number of possible PDOs is much higher.

The 5 stakeholders that were interviewed can see that now is the time to act. They have created a small group that knows about PDOs and they want to create more publicity and spread information to food consumers. There will be a PDO workshop in Helsinki on May 22nd 2014, organized by GILearn.

France

As far as INAO is concerned, a PDO is more a question of administration. It proves that a product comes from a certain territory and that a sensory analysis has been implemented, available on INAO's website. But it's absolutely not a guarantee that one product is better than another similar one (as far as taste is concerned).

In regard to the position of organizations (for example, the one for Rigotte cheese), it seems that they consider having a product that is well-produced in terms of organoleptic characteristics, production process and permanent quality control, but nothing is said about the taste itself. What they actually need consists in selling more, promoting the product in association with other local products.

In order to also summarise the interviewed experts' point of view schematically, we decided to present a comprehensive SWOT analysis for all of the countries involved in the project.

Strengths	<p>Specific origin. There is a link with a territory (climate, soil properties, varieties, physical factor and the human factor). These are products with specific characteristics in both preparation and packaging, i.e. the entire product process will go through quality standards and the product traceability is guaranteed.</p> <p>This guaranteed origin, given through certification by the Regulatory PDO board, guarantees the safety and quality of the product the consumer is eating, representing the tradition and culture of that product.</p> <p>Sensory aspects are unparalleled, with strong character in regard to flavour, taste and smell. They differentiate themselves even when compared to similar products.</p> <p>Each and every PDO product is absolutely unique. Other non-PDO products may have similar final characteristics, but production control is reflected in the quality of the final product. Consequently, the PDO mark should always be seen as an advantage for consumers and producers.</p>
Weaknesses	<p>Lack of funding for communicating the quality and types of products to a greater degree.</p> <p>Lack of information for the end user to appreciate the qualities and guarantees of PDO products. Most consumers still don't recognize the true value of these products, due to lack of information.</p> <p>The PDO mark is not well known and sometimes it is not easy to find authentic products in large-scale retailing establishments, which is another barrier and difficulty that needs to be overcome.</p> <p>Sometimes products are more famous for their name rather than for the PDO mark. Therefore, people know the product but don't search for the specific mark, and some may not even comprehend that there is a difference.</p> <p>Low scale production</p> <p>Costs of certification. Producers are not always willing to benefit from a PDO registration, because a product specification could imply more expensive, traditional production methods and the use of modern processing equipment is not allowed</p> <p>Fraud, counterfeiting and forgery</p> <p>PDO products don't have enough foothold on the markets.</p> <p>Low value added compared to Organic products</p> <p>Some of the interviewed stakeholders think it is just a marketing ploy and that certification does not mean anything in terms of the quality of a product.</p>

Opportunities	<p>Trendy cooking shows are really helping to boost the importance of eating good products and the information provided by these "opinion leaders" is having a very positive effect on consumers.</p> <p>The product needs to become more available; people need to start recognising the symbol associated with certification.</p> <p>Potential of the production areas. Most of those regions are beautiful places that could be promoted alongside the PDO products. An idea that emerged was producers grouping together to develop tourism and especially gastronomical tourism.</p> <p>There is a growing amount of people that search for different, gourmet and traditional products.</p> <p>Expo 2015 is an important opportunity for the promotion of the EU quality system and for the valorisation of Geographical Indications.</p> <p>Promotion of youth entrepreneurship in agriculture, with investment and incentive measures that encourage young people to work in the agri-food sector</p>
Threats	<p>Loss of certification represents a huge loss in terms of culture and gastronomic heritage. PDO products in the dairy industry are decreasing and some may even be in danger of becoming extinct. There are many factors that could be developed. The sector faces a decreasing number of certificated products, and therefore a decrease in revenue and business.</p> <p>Low purchasing power, which leads consumers to not choose a differentiated, more expensive product.</p> <p>Maintaining a tight supply chain</p> <p>Large industries interested in local productions, which could put small producers out of business</p> <p>Import</p> <p>Concentrated retail trade.</p> <p>Consumer demand for "free from" products like fat-free, lactose-free, sugar-free etc.</p>

Indication of the 5 critical points to be considered for evaluation purposes, related to the national situation

Spain

- In regard to the final consumer, especially among consumers with little knowledge about PDO products:
 - It was observed that there is misinformation regarding all aspects of PDO products, requirements and regulations. It doesn't appear to be clear that the products must to comply with requirements nor do consumers understand what quality marks mean and what they entail.
 - This misinformation is observed not only in regard to consumer knowledge, but also in their lack of confidence in the authenticity of these products (imitations, counterfeits).
- Regarding consumers with knowledge about PDO products: they perceive the quality guarantee and that generates confidence, encourages purchase and consumption. They

- believe that the spreading of information on these products should be promoted, because they note that the public reacts to information concerning the characteristics and qualities of PDO products. It is the way move forward.
3. The interviewees claim that the Regulatory PDO Boards offer the end user a sense of safety and quality guarantee in the final product that they are consuming; however, this is not transmitted well to the general public. They are aware that there is lack of information on PDO products and consumers still don't appreciate and give value to the qualities of these products. This is due to a lack of communication campaigns aimed at end consumer.
 4. Regarding the interviewees of different Regulatory PDO Boards:
 - They want to inform the final consumer in a specific and clear way about what PDO products are and what they provide.
 - Improve publicity at an official level, working on campaigns to promote PDO products.
 - Promote the culture of PDO products in order to avoid the loss of producers in the short term.
 - Check forgery and imitation of products.
 5. Price is a determining factor in the purchasing of these products, and although everyone thinks that the quality/price ratio is fair, with Spain's current situation it is a decisive factor in deciding when and how often they buy them. Adjusting or justifying the prices of these products may help to increase sales a little. In many cases "it is not a question of not wanting to consume, but not consuming because they can't afford it".

Portugal

1. The main aspect to highlight is that in general the Portuguese don't know what a PDO product is and neither do they recognise the logo. Nevertheless they recognize many specific products from certain regions (traditional products). These traditional products are seen to be of high quality and unique. Consumers preferably buy these products in the place of origin or from producers they trust; this tendency is to ensure that they are purchasing an authentic product, at the same time helping small producers.
2. Currently producers have to think about why they should aim for certification, because the advantages are not immediately obvious. Producers can sell their products with a reference to origin without them being a PDO, as consumers are not aware of protected designations. The advantages need to be shown to consumers, so that they demand controlled products and consequently producers would have an advantage if their product was certified.
3. There is a gap in the information given to consumers about PDO certification, benefits and advantages. Both consumers and workers from within the industry believe that if the implementation and procedures at national level are going to be successful, it is crucial to inform the public. It is also important that communication on the explicit benefits for national economy and small producers is carried out in a simple and effective way. The Portuguese consumer is very sensitive to matters concerning the improvement of the national economy and the protection of less powerful producers.
4. It is the consumers and experts' point of view that traditional products could be very successful in national and international markets. However, in order to reach that goal it is imperative that more attention is given to publicity and the education of consumers.
5. Production capacity is another difficulty for the sector. In most cases there is low-scale production, although that aside, producers are losing the power and impetus to continue producing these products. Portugal is a relatively small country and yet traditional food

products are of high quality and always well received. The truly genuine products could easily become extinct due to lack of impact, which would be a great loss to the country's gastronomic heritage.

Italy

1. Information gap for PDOs (specification, control system, etc.)
2. Little recognised mark and not given much space in LRT; the denomination is bought independently of the fact that it has a PDO mark.
3. PDO recognised as “healthy”, in as much that it guarantees a control process starting from the raw materials (to which quality and restricted territoriality on a national level are given much importance), but not necessarily as synonymous with “excellent quality” or “tasty product”.
4. Added value of the denomination is not perceived by the consumer, although they are disposed, where the “differentiating factors” are made clear, to pay the premium price. However, this view is held only by “single” consumers, or at any rate without children, while those who shop for a family are only willing to spend extra for “special occasions”.
5. The sharing of sensory experiences is very important (disfavouring an on-line course).

Finland

1. PDO information to consumers
 - must increase
 - is “only” done when a new Finnish PDO product gets a mark
2. Government action on PDO information
 - must increase
 - more working time, more output from the government
3. Food business operators actions on PDO information
 - must increase
 - they need to realise that bulk production is not the only solution for inside-outside competition
4. Food associations etc.
 - They know about PDOs
 - They have the knowledge to get consumers to use the products
 - The need for PDO themes at Food Events
5. Schools
 - Finland schools already offer cooking lessons
 - PDO foods could “easily” be included in those
 - What you eat as a child, you also eat as an adult

France

1. Marks shouldn't be seen as the complete objective but as one point in the development of strategy tools
2. Artisan producers should be associated with the creation of new PDOs
3. It will be difficult to convince artisan producers about a course

4. Due to the fact that there is no link between a category of PDO products (for example, all the cheeses produced in France), it will be difficult to compare them with other European products

Indication of the 5 critical points to be considered for evaluation purposes

1. Information gap for PDOs (specification, control system, logo, etc.). This misinformation is observed not only in regard to consumer knowledge, but also in their lack of confidence in the authenticity of these products (imitations, counterfeits). Is important to improve publicity at an official level, working on campaigns to promote PDO products in order to avoid the loss of producers in the short term. Furthermore, it is a little recognised mark and not given much space in LRT
2. Consumers preferably buy these products in the place of origin or from producers they trust; this tendency is to ensure that they are purchasing an authentic product, at the same time helping small producers.
3. PDO recognised as “healthy”, in as much that it guarantees a control process starting from the raw materials (to which quality and restricted territoriality on a national level are given much importance), but not necessarily as synonymous with “excellent quality” or “tasty product”.
4. The sharing of sensory experiences is very important (disfavouring an on-line course).
5. Added value of the denomination is not perceived by the consumer, although they are disposed, where the “differentiating factors” are made clear, to pay the premium price. However, this view is held only by “single” consumers, or at any rate without children, while those who shop for a family are only willing to spend extra for “special occasions”.

Indication of other interesting elements and issues to be targeted in the Training Program: profile of trainees, contents for the training program, design of the modules, design of training interaction and visual elements, evaluation of training, etc.

Spain

From the consumer's perspective. A course on PDO products seems to be attractive to most of the participants. However, all of them consider it essential to have a practical and face-to-face part, with an in situ explanation about the product characteristics and the taste of the products, comparing them to products without a DO.

For all of the consumers an on-line course should be: attractive, interactive, contain explanatory videos and images, simple vocabulary and without the technical aspect. They should provide general information, including information on the production area, socio-cultural aspects.... Videos explaining the quality or characteristics of the products could be incorporated, but they would prefer actual lectures or material at home. They do not believe that information about organoleptic characteristics can be transmitted without tasting the product.

In all cases, a duration of 60 hours is considered excessive, as we are dealing with general information aimed at the end consumers. Consumers with knowledge of PDO products considered one month to be an appropriate length of time (without specifying the number of hours); probably because they are interested in learning about the products they buy. Consumers who know little about PDO products believe that it should be no more than 10 hours and

depending on personal criteria, there should be the possibility of accessing additional information modules that lengthen the duration. An introductory course with an overview of PDO products was considered interesting, with modules that give more information by product, geographical areas.

From the stakeholders perspective. Looking at the information sent to us by interviewees from the various Regulatory PDO Boards, we can see the same observations of those of the consumers: A strict on-line training programme on PDOs would not attract participants. It has to be accompanied by a face-to-face part with product tastings.

The on-line content should be general, informative, with a very visual and instructive design for the complete involvement of the consumer who is doing the course. It should discuss the origin of these types of products, the entire production process, the controls to which they are subject, and all the marks and guarantees that these products offer on the market.

The information could be modular: a short introductory course that gives them general information with a final classroom session, followed by a few modules or advanced modules where consumers can choose to expand on the information (by PDO product, by geographical area ...).

Portugal

In general, all the participants involved in this project believe that information on PDO products is crucial and a very important aspect to be developed.

Initially an on-line e-learning programme was not rated very highly; they said that the format would not offer interaction between products and people, rendering the course less appealing to general consumers. Nevertheless, they came up with many ideas:

- It was suggested that an e-learning programme is suitable for people who work within the food industry. They would be more curious about the subject and would certainly enjoy learning about it.
- More curious consumers could be interested in an e-learning experience on PDOs, but maybe not the average consumer.
- Furthermore, the programme could be more appealing to specific consumers if it was divided into categories – for example one course just about fruit or wine, cheese, etc.
- A video explaining PDOs designed for schools – aimed at small children and teenagers – could prove to be effective, considering that you can reach many young adults and children and consequently the next generation would be very informed and familiar with certification and PDO products.
- A short, dynamic and appealing video of a few minutes, explaining certification for on-line advertising was also mentioned. Given the dimension of Internet publicity today, it could have a strong impact on consumers.
- Another communication strategy was tasting sessions and information in sales outlets, because it would influence people directly at the moment of purchase.
- All participants believed that sensory evaluation is very important, as the flavour and taste of food products are of prime importance.
- One of the most interesting ideas suggested was creating a course with a challenge format. At the end participants would receive a prize, which could be a discount for a given PDO product; this would motivate participants to begin and finish the course.
- Another idea was field trips to production areas; or the course could even take place in the production area.

- The most appealing tools to use, regardless of the format, are videos, images and producer testimonials.

A vast range of ideas were provided, all of which have advantages and disadvantages, depending mainly on the target audience and the purpose of the programme. Regarding the duration, in general the participants felt that it should be a short course, depending on the target audience and aims.

Italy

As far as the course is concerned, the interviewees feel that it is important to know (or to explain to consumers) the following:

- the PDO system;
- the history of the product;
- the territory;
- the product specification;
- the processing stages;
- the control system for the process and raw materials;
- preservation methods;
- ways of eating and pairings.

The desired result is a more informed consumer who could be interested in "experiencing the territory" where the PDOs are produced.

All of them are in favour of a course that offers a programme which is divided into sectors, with explanations that mainly concentrate on the differences between PDO products and the corresponding generic products.

The proposed duration of 60 hours over two months is considered excessive by everybody.

The most appropriate tools for transmitting information are videos and tutorials, although it is important to provide a platform for sharing experiences with other participants.

Finland

Young vs. old

- The younger generation is familiar with all kinds information transmitted via internet, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Hashtag, Instagram etc.)
- The older generation is familiar with real social contact through different associations

Women vs. men

- Women are more social and like to learn in groups
- Men are less social and like to learn by themselves or in groups with their "wives"

Southern Europe vs. Northern Europe

- South Europeans are very aware of PDOs and consume them a lot
- North Europeans are not very aware of PDOs and consume them rarely

Different organisations for PDO information systems

- Southern Europe has PDO boards
- Northern Europe mainly has governmental authorities working on PDOs

Producers' interest in PDOs

- Southern Europeans are interested in PDOs
- Northern Europeans are less interested in PDOs

Trade and retail interest in PDOs

- Interest in PDOs
- Less interest in PDOs

France

In its role as the Chamber of Commerce, the CMA du Rhône has artisan businesses as its main interlocutors. These were used as the target audience for the Training Needs Analysis activities, in the role of potential “consumers” of PDO products and therefore as potential participants of an on-line training course⁶. In light of the specific composition of the recipient target groups, the easiest way to convince them about a course based on the artisan food sector would be to develop something quite widespread, which responds to the need for improving their ability to valorise and promote their own products.

The course should therefore be developed around a programme that focuses on the following main topics:

- Design / packaging
- Commercial improvement tools
- Potential and added value of quality brands, especially with regard to the PDO mark.

Common results and indications for designing an effective e-learning training programme:

Profile of trainees. The training needs analysis suggests that the target group of potential trainees be selected by aiming the training at consumers with a medium / high sensitivity level toward issues related to food quality and products associated with the territory, due to both simple personal interest and professional reasons (e.g. working in sectors that require skill growth in the course topics, such as specialised journalists, restaurateurs, tour operators, etc.). Concerning the age of participants, this aspect is not an essential criteria in itself. However, the distance learning tends to assume that the parties are familiar with the use of computer technology, which could deter the participation of people who could potentially be interested in the course topics but who fall in to a more advanced age group (over 45/50), thereby favouring the selection of a younger target group (under 45), which is better prepared for participating in a distance learning course.

Contents for the training programme and design of the modules. The programme of the e-learning course should include a theoretical part with general information about PDOs (what PDO means, how the PDO system works), the importance of the certification process, specific information about PDOs (link with territory, production method, nutritional aspects, way of eating and pairing) and a practical part with guided and blind tastings or perhaps trips to PDO production areas. Real tasting experiences are fundamental. Trainees should have the possibility to taste the PDO products and there should be explanations which mainly concentrate on the differences between PDO products and corresponding generic products.

Design of training interaction and visual elements. Videos, tutorials and images should be attractive and easy to use. It is fundamental that there be interactive tools such as forums, live chat and social media, so that experiences and opinions can be shared between the trainees themselves and between the trainees and teachers.

Duration. In regard to the duration, consumers during the focus groups expressed different opinions, but without an accurate indication about the number of hours. In general, the participants felt that it should be a short course, depending on the target audience and aims, and that is important not to have too many hours in a week (max 2 hours). In this sense, certainly 60 hours over 2 months is considered excessive. However, the choice of the duration is strictly linked

⁶ For more information in regard see the “methodology” paragraph.

to the definition of the programme and it could vary from 8 hours (that could be sufficient to be trained on technical background) to no more than 24 hours.

Evaluation of training. It is important to make the training stimulating and to encourage attendance by introducing self-assessment tools which facilitate the evaluation of obtained results and give trainees an incentive to finish the course. For this purpose it could be useful to design evaluation tests in the form of games, thereby enabling trainees to put themselves to the test as they move on to the following levels; there could also be an award or final recognition.