RURAL 3.0

SERVICE LEARNING
FOR THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Design of the RURASL Hub

This report was created for all stakeholders (project partner universities, other higher education (HE) institutions, public and private rural community organizations, LAGs and their users, national rural networks) that want to exchange and co-create knowledge in rural Service-Learning (SL) and rural Social Entrepreneurship (SE) across and beyond the EU. The report explains the purpose of the RURASL Hub and describes its content, as well as possibilities for all stakeholders to offer their expertise and promote rural SL and rural SE.

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About RURASL and Virtual Hub

What is RURASL?

RURASL: Service-Learning for the Rural Development is a Knowledge Alliance between eight higher education institutions and eight community organizations that have experience with Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship in rural areas. The Alliance aims to contribute to the development of rural areas, meeting their needs, and boosting innovation in these areas through an innovative methodology while creating community-university partnerships.

Higher Education Institutions in RURASL:

1. IPVC ESE (Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo – ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE EDUCAÇÃO), Portugal, Coordinator, http://www.ipvc.pt/escola-educacao
2. PhWien (Pädagogische Hochschule Wien), Austria, https://phwien.ac.at/en
3. FFZG (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb), Croatia,https://web2020.ffzg.unizg.hr/international/
4. RSM (Erasmus University Rotterdam Rotterdam School of Management), Netherlands, https://www.rsm.nl/
5. SCE (Strascheg Center for Entrepreneurship GmbH, Munich University for Applied Sciences), Germany, https://www.sce.de/en/home.html
6. UAM (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), Spain, http://www.uam.es/UAM/Home.htm?language=es
7. VMU (Vytautas Magnus University), Lithuania, https://www.vdu.lt/en/
8. UniBO (University of Bologna,) Italy, https://www.unibo.it/en/homepage

Community organizations in RURASL:

1. LAG5 (Local Action Group), Croatia, http://www.lag5.hr
2. LAG Ammersee (Local Action Group Ammersee), Germany, http://www.lagammersee.de/
3. LAG Kaunas (Local Action Group Kaunas), Lithuania, http://www.kaunorvvg.lt
4. LAG Galsinma (Local Action Group Galsinma), Spain, https://www.galsinma.org/
5. LAG AJD (Local Action Group AJDeão), Portugal, www.associacaodeao.wix.com/ajdeao

6. SSA (Stichting Schutsluis Alblasserdam), Netherlands, http://schutsluis-alblasserdam.nl/
7. Plenum (Gesellschaft für ganzheitlich nachhaltige entwicklung gmbh), Austria, http://www.plenum.at
8. LAG L'Altra Romagna (Local Action Group L'Altra Romagna), Italy, http://www.altraromagna.it/en/the-group/

The goals of the RURASL project are to:
● help develop the core skills and entrepreneurial capabilities of the rural community (for which such development is not easily accessible)
● improve the quality of education for sustainable development and promote university-community partnerships in the rural areas through the innovative service-learning methodology
● increase the relevance of universities as their students aim to fulfill a service that is in line with the demands of the rural businesses and social needs in rural areas
● establish a virtual Hub with a broad network of academic and rural stakeholders that will offer teaching and learning content (dedicated transnational academic module with courses on service-learning and social entrepreneurship, community training materials and digital collaborative & learning tools) and will promote interactions between universities and rural community stakeholders

The main benefits of the project are:
● creation of international university-rural community alliance that promotes education and entrepreneurship of people in rural areas, bringing HEIs and rural community enterprises together to work on the common issue - development of the necessary knowledge and skills needed to make a change in the rural communities
● strengthening the skills and the innovative capacity of adult rural social entrepreneurs (SE)
● providing practical Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship experiences to university students in the specific rural settings
● development of the core skills and rural SE amongst the high potential rural community in a sustainable, ecologically, and socially sound way

RURASL Virtual Hub

This report elaborates on the design of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub (Figure 1). The Hub aims to connect rural community organizations with higher education institutions to improve rural development0 through service learning and social entrepreneurship. The hub connects students, faculty and organizations from local rural communities interested in community-university partnerships.

RURASL Hub allows all registered users to list their needs, describe their projects for potential collaborators, and offer their expertise. They are able to browse the database of collaborators and the database of projects with a specific set of keywords. The content of the Hub will be dynamically updatable by partners and registered users.
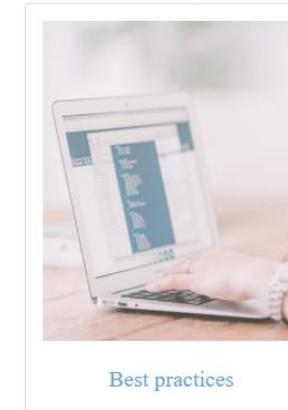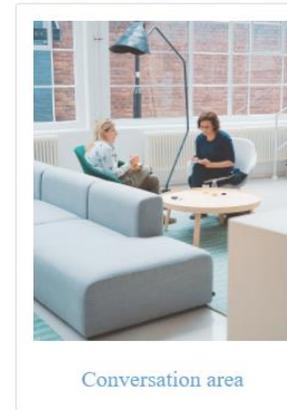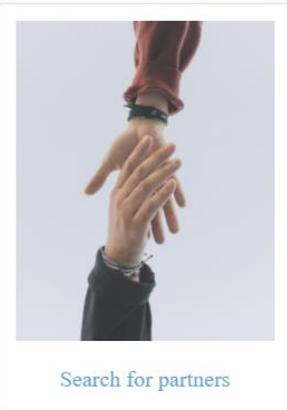
The backend of our Hub is implemented in the ASP.Net MVC technology and written in C# programming language. It uses SQL Server database and Entity Framework for its access.

Graphical user interface is rendered using Razor views and partially uses Boostrap, Jquery and Toastr frameworks.

It can be accessed on the following address: http://hub.rural.ffzg.hr/

The Hub contains several parts, which will be described in the following subsections:

1. Project area
2. Materials
3. Matchmaking domain
4. Database of Service-Learning Peer Mentors and Experts
5. Open conversation areas
6. Digital learning tools (World Café and MOOC)
7. Repository of best practices in rural Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship
8. Academic module (with training resources, lesson plans and curriculum materials

RURAL 3.0
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Contact   Project area   Materials   World Café ▾   ✴ Join us ▾   🇬🇧 ▾   Log in

Search for partners   MOOC   Conversation area   Best practices
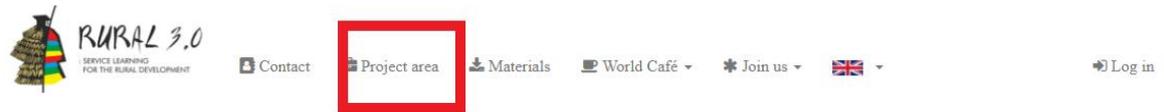
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Figure 1. Main page of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub
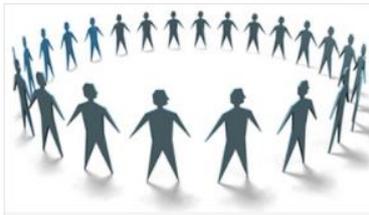
Project Area

Figure 2a. Link to the Project area of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub (red rectangle)

The part of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub named **Project area** (Figure 2a and 2b) presents information about the project and its progress. It contains basic information about partners, methodology and impact, useful and relevant links, as well as project mission and vision. It is regularly updated with project outputs and publications, as specified in the project application. The project area is also accessible directly on the following address: https://rural.ffzg.unizg.hr.

Partners   Mission and vision   Methodology   Impact   Output   Links   Publications   Join Us

Our alliance

Rural 3.0 is set as a knowledge alliances between different European Universities and rural partners, each with a different history, different experiences with rural social entrepreneurship and/or rural service learning (SL), different educational systems and community needs which are unique regarding the location, politics, and economics of different rural communities.

Our consortium

Despite these differences, while keeping them in mind by analyzing national similarities and differences, by teaming up our competences, Rural 3.0 consortium will create a rural service learning and teaching model that combines the strengths of SL strategy (teamwork, critical thinking, networking, initiative) with social entrepreneurship (SE) and that should be applicable to all partner countries.

Our development

The project will set up a common framework and online space at the European level to stimulate rural social entrepreneurship, the development of the core skills of the rural residents, and to make university students responsive to the needs of rural areas while working with the rural communities to develop sustainable economic, social and environmental solutions.

Figure 2b. Project area of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub

Materials

The part of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub named **Materials** (Figure 3) contains all materials (outputs) created and published during the course of the project that are made publicly available. The materials are organized by work packages 1 to 7.

Figure 3. Materials in the RURASL virtual collaborative hub

Matchmaking domain

The part of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub named **Matchmaking domain** (Figure 4a and 4b) serves as a place where rural community organizations can seek for solutions, knowledge, skills and collaboration opportunities with higher education institutions across different disciplines.
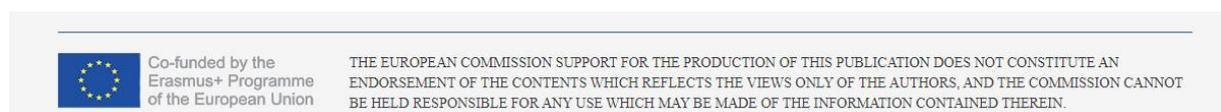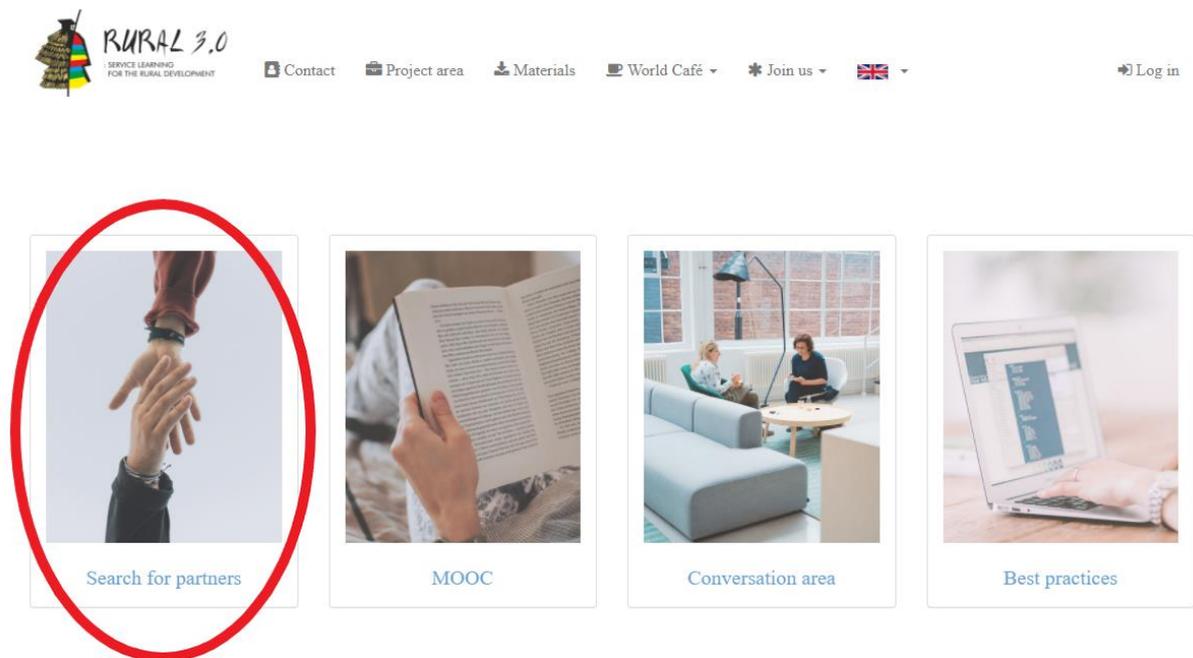

Figure 4a. Link to the Matchmaking domain of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub (red oval)

When a user clicks on **Search for partners** link on the main site (Figure 4a), he/she can login to find the potential collaborator (Figure 4b).

Figure 4b. Login to the Matchmaking domain of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub

If a user is not registered in the Hub, he/she can choose to register as an academic expert in service-learning or social entrepreneurship or as a rural organization to join the Database of Service-Learning Peer Mentors and Experts (Figure 4c). A user can also choose to register as a basic user who only gets access to the areas of the hub which do not require the complete profile.

Figure 4c. Registration to the Matchmaking domain of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub

Upon filling in the registration form, a user receives an email with the details of his/her user account for the hub and notification that a login to the hub allows him/her to search the database of rural organizations and academic experts, to access their profile and contact data and to freely access all materials available in the Hub.

Figure 4d. Matchmaking keywords of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub

Upon logging in, a user is provided with a set of **Keywords** for the matchmaking algorithm (Figure 4d). A user can also download the whole database of rural organizations and academic experts in this section of the hub.

As to keywords, a user can identify **Field(s) of education and training**, which is useful for community organizations to find the academic partner that could respond to their needs in the most professional way.

The following Erasmus+ ISCED fields of education can be used as matchmaking keywords:

Accounting and taxation

Architecture and town planning

Audio-visual techniques and media production

Biochemistry

Biology

Building and civil engineering

Business administration

Chemical engineering and processes

Chemistry

Community sanitation

Computer use

Crop and livestock production

Database and network design and administration

Dental studies

Domestic services

Earth sciences

Economics

Education science

Electricity and energy

Electronics and automation

Environmental protection technology

Environmental sciences

Fashion, interior, and industrial design

Finance, banking, and insurance

Fine arts

Fisheries

Food processing

Forestry

Hair and beauty services

Handicrafts

History and archaeology

Horticulture

Hotel, restaurants, and catering

Journalism and reporting

Language acquisition

Law

Library, information, and archival studies

Literature and linguistics

Management and administration

Marketing and advertising

Materials (glass, paper, plastic, and wood)

Mathematics

Mechanics and metal trades

Medical diagnostic and treatment technology

Medicine

Military and defense

Mining and extraction

Motor vehicles, ships, and aircraft

Music and performing arts

Natural environments and wildlife

Nursing and midwifery

Occupational health and safety

Pharmacy

Philosophy and ethics

Physics

Political sciences and civics

Protection of persons and property

Psychology

Religion and theology

Secretarial and office work

Sociology and cultural studies

Software & applications development and analysis

Sports

Statistics

Teacher training with subject specialization

Teacher training without subject specialization

Textiles (clothes, footwear, and leather)

Therapy and rehabilitation

Traditional & complementary medicine & therapy

Training for pre-school teachers

Transport services

Travel, tourism, and leisure

Veterinary

Wholesale and retail sales

Work skills

Furthermore, in the **Matchmaking domain** community organizations can use the following keywords that represent the **Focus area(s) of the rural development** that they would like to work on in rural service-learning. These areas are defined by the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD).

1A: Innovation & cooperation

1B: Links with research & innovation

1C: Lifelong learning & vocational training

2A: Farm's performance, restructuring & modernization

2B: Entry of skilled/younger farmers

3A: Agri-food chain integration & quality

4A: Biodiversity restoration, preservation & enhancement

4B: Water management

4C: Soil erosion & soil management

5A: Water use efficiency

5B: Energy use efficiency

5C: Renewable sources & waste management

5E: Carbon conservation & sequestration

6A: Diversification & job creation

6B: Local development

6C: Information & communication technologies (ICT)

Also, community organizations can make their search for partners more specific and use the following keywords that represent the **Rural development priorities (RDP)** defined by ENRD.

M01: Knowledge transfer and information actions

M02: Consultancy (Advisory services, farm management, and farm relief services)

M03: Quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

M04: Investments in physical assets

M05: Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and catastrophic events and introduction of appropriate prevention actions

M06: Farm and business development

M07: Basic services and village renewal in rural areas

M08: Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests

M09: Setting up of producer groups and organizations

M10: Agri-environment-climate

M11: Organic farming

M12: Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments

M13: Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints

M14: Animal welfare

M15: Forest-environmental and climatic services and forest conservation

M16: Co-operation

M17: Risk management

M18: Financing of complementary national direct payments

M19: Support for LEADER local development (CLLD – community-led local development)

M20: Technical assistance

Finally, community organizations can choose the following **Domain**(s) that they would like to contribute to through university-community collaboration.

Elderly

Market development

Migrants

Mountain area

Natural resource

Nature conservation

Networking

Organic farming

Producer groups

Product quality

Protected areas

Public goods

Renewable energy

Renewables

Risk management

Rural business

Rural proofing

Rural services

Rural SMEs

Short supply chains & local markets

Smart Villages

Social inclusion

Social services

Soil management

Stakeholder involvement

Sustainability

Tourism

Vocational training & skills acquisition

Water management

Women

Young farmers

Youth

RURASL virtual collaborative hub will remain open for registration during and after the project for both rural organizations and academic experts, who can join and collaborate, whether

offering their expertise to an existing project, browse the repository of best practices or find the expert in their field.

The matchmaking algorithm determines a set of common keywords between two parties, for example between an academic expert and a rural organisation member. If their intersection contains a requested keyword, the observed pair is considered for further evaluation, that includes matching based on their name or country. If both matchmaking steps are successful, the pair is added in a result set and returned to the user.

Database of Service-Learning Peer Mentors and Experts

This database is available to registered users only and represents the output T 1.2 of the WP1.

It contains the pool of rural community stakeholders (LAGs, NGOs, rural agencies and associations, etc.) as well as university stakeholders interested in community-university partnerships. The database can be downloaded as a whole from the link Download RURASL Database (Figure 4e) or can be browsed by country (a user can select "All countries" to get the list of all Service-Learning Peer Mentors and Experts or by a specific country) and by the criteria Rural organizations/Academic experts.

During the collection of the data for the database, trainers from the Europe Engage network database were contacted to spread the information about our rural community-university network.

Both the academic experts and rural community stakeholders can join the database and form the community-university partnerships. The aim of the database is to collect information on rural community organizations that work on rural development (but lack access to Service-Learning) and universities that aim to connect students, faculty, and the local community, but rarely address rural issues. Joining the database, the academic experts and rural community stakeholders can list their needs and offer their expertise.
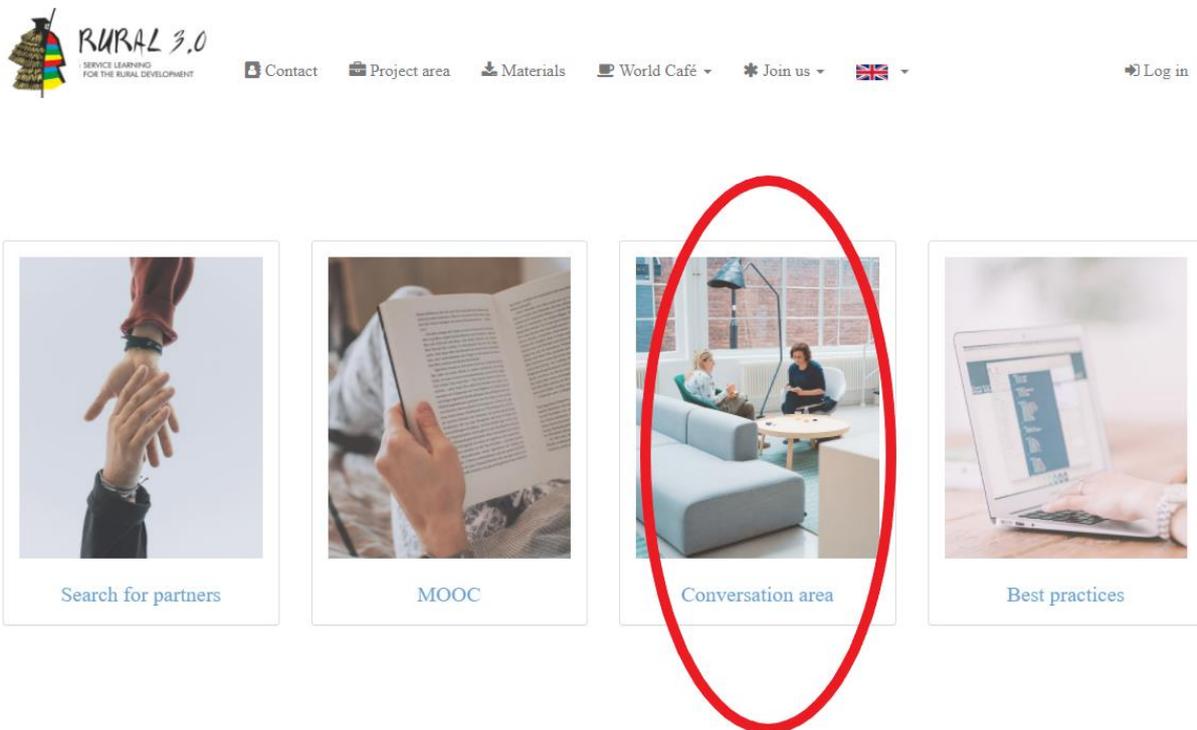
Figure 4e. Database of Service-Learning Peer Mentors and Experts in the RURASL virtual collaborative hub

Open conversation areas

The part of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub named **Conversation area** (Figure 5) serves as a place where members of rural community organizations and academic experts can participate in the real-time communication on social networks. All stakeholders can access the Facebook social media channel of RURASL (https://www.facebook.com/RURAL3.0/) to read news about the RURASL project, provide information about their own projects and expertise and communicate via social media.

Figure 5. Conversation area of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub (red oval)

Digital learning tools (World Café and MOOC)

Digital learning tools of the RURASL project are divided into two sections of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub, named **MOOC and World Café** (a red and a blue rectangle in the Figure 6).
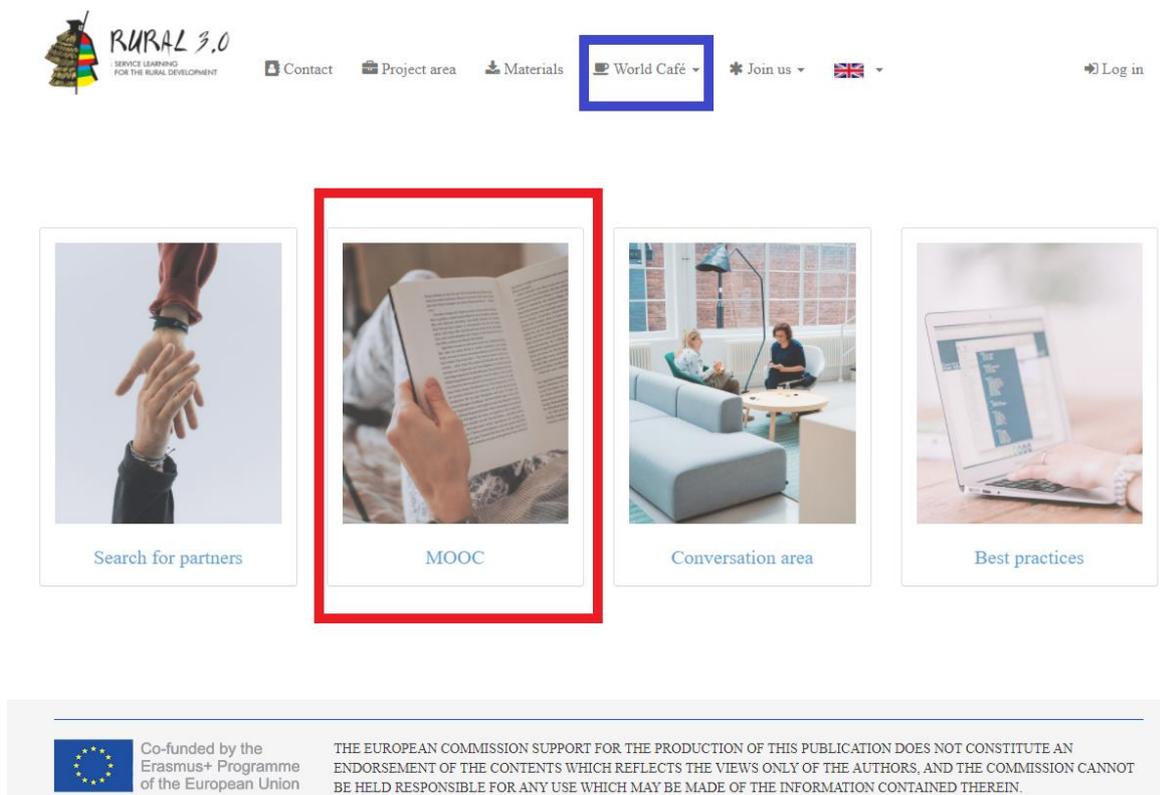

Figure 6. Digital learning tools of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub (red oval)

The **Massive open online course (MOOC) on rural service-learning for educators and rural entities** is created in Moodle Learning Management System (http://learn.rural.ffzg.hr:8080/login/index.php) and any user can access it as a guest without logging in (Figure 7).

The MOOC is based on the need assessment from 8 countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Croatia and Lithuania) and training materials developed by academic teachers and community organizations from these countries.

Participants in this MOOC, academic teachers and organizations either based in rural areas (like local action groups) or fulfilling needs of rural areas will learn key characteristics of rural service-

learning (SL), differences between urban and rural SL, examples of good practices from diverse study fields, curriculum design options, mentoring of students by rural organizations and student assessment design. They will also learn how to design their own rural SL course (teachers) and how to mentor and effectively utilize students in the community-university partnerships (rural organizations).
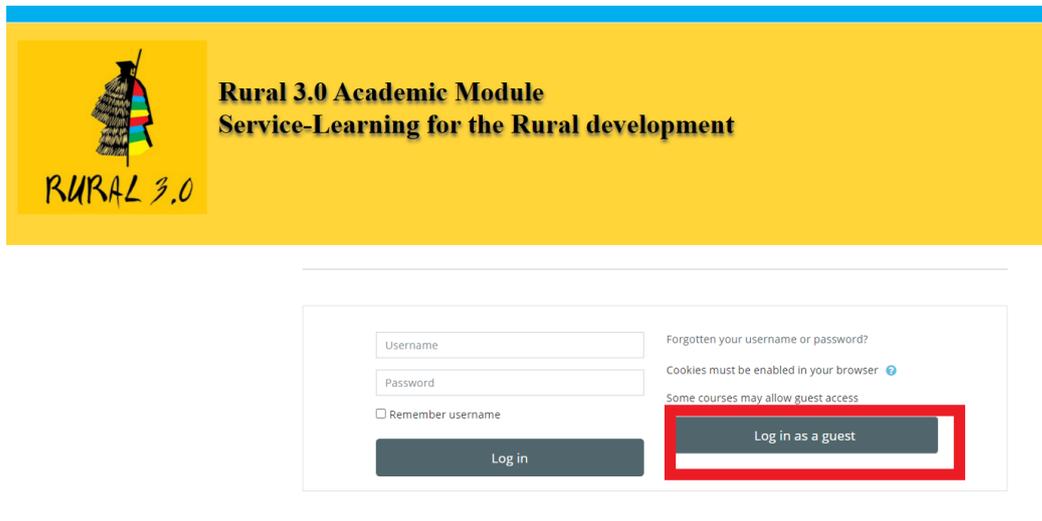

Figure 7. Login page of the Massive open online course (MOOC) on rural service-learning
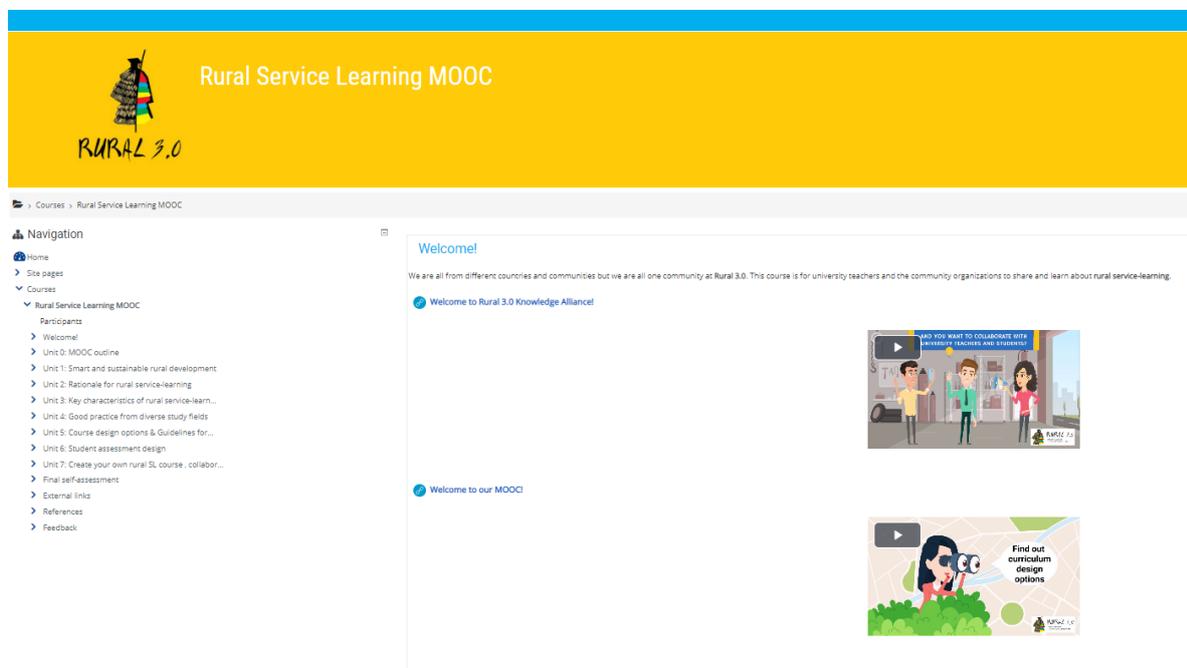
Figure 8. Overview of the Massive open online course (MOOC) on rural service-learning

RURASL massive open online course (MOOC) on rural service-learning for educators is divided into 8 main units (Figure 8):

Unit 1: Smart and sustainable rural development

Unit 2: Rationale for rural service-learning (SL)

Unit 3: Key characteristics of rural service-learning (SL)

Unit 4: Examples of good practices from diverse study fields

Unit 5: Course design options and Guidelines for mentors in community organizations

Unit 6: Student assessment design

Unit 7: Design of one's own rural SL course

Unit 8: Final self-assessment

The other digital learning tool of the RURASL project, **World Café** (Figure 9), encompasses these parts of the Hub:

a) the report describing the Methodology of the Online World Café for Rural Service-Learning: **https://rural.ffzg.unizg.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Methodology_ONLINE-WORLD-CAFE_-FINAL-VERSION.pdf**

b) the flyer summarizing the most important parts of the Online World Cafe for rural service-learning: https://rural.ffzg.unizg.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/webseiteOWC.pdf

c) a video recording of the World Cafe event of the project, designed based on the community training material, implemented online as a community training webinar and recorded for the future use by community organizations: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-zCHw3rlis&feature=youtu.be

Figure 9. Online World Café for Rural Service-Learning

Repository of best practices in rural Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship

The part of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub named **Best practices** (Figure 10) contains examples of rural service learning and rural social entrepreneurship from eight different EU countries: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Croatia and Lithuania.

Some of the represent a collaboration between a rural university and a rural organization, while some represent a collaboration between an urban university and a rural organization.

Furthermore, this section of the hub allows registered users to share their practices via online form (http://hub.rural.ffzg.hr/BestPractices/Create) and, consequently, promote the co-creation of knowledge among universities, rural citizens, public administration, rural businesses, rural community organizations and other stakeholders in different EU countries.
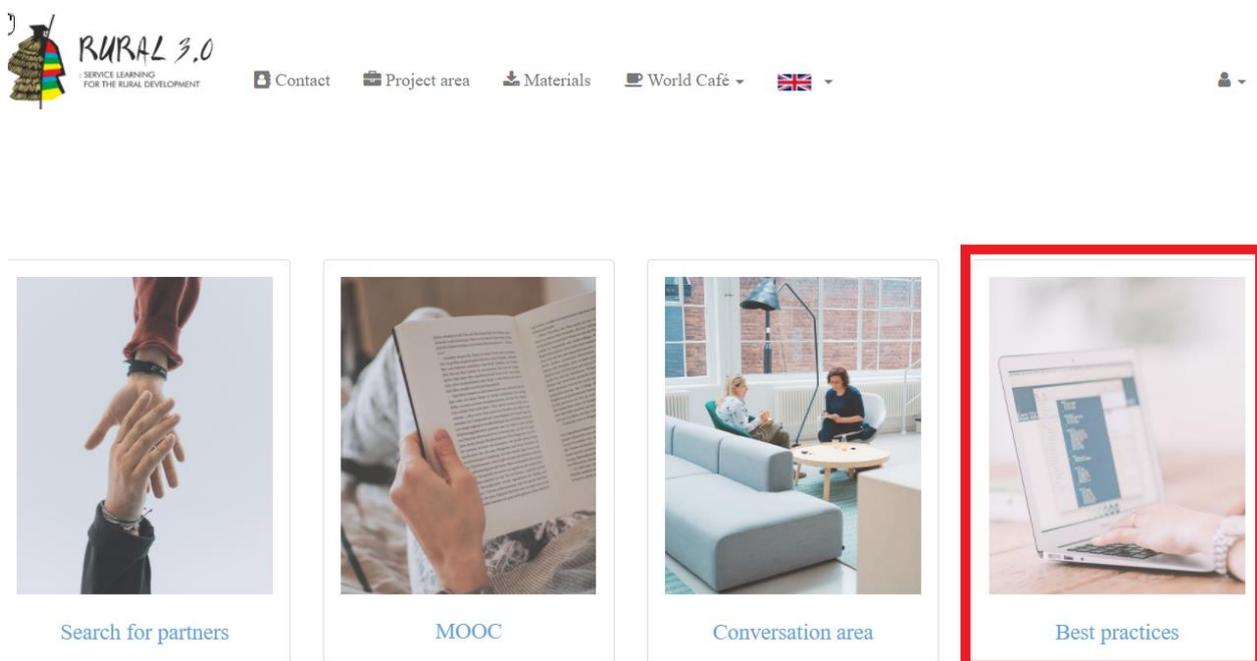

Figure 10. Repository of best practices of the RURASL virtual collaborative hub (red oval)

All examples from eight different EU countries are documented with testimonies from students, teachers, rural community organizations, and rural beneficiaries at our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEOwS_yvg6PiOoCb_6NLWhg/featured

Academic module (with training resources, lesson plans and curriculum materials

The Academic module *Service-Learning for the Rural Development* is accessed via the Materials section of the Hub (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Access to Academic module *Service-Learning for the Rural Development*

The academic module (Figure 12) contains 8 courses (6 courses on rural service learning and 2 courses on rural social entrepreneurship) developed in WP2. More precisely, it contains syllabi, learning outcomes, course objectives, course readings, assessment and evaluation methods for each of the courses (in eight European languages and in English) and is supplemented with videos.
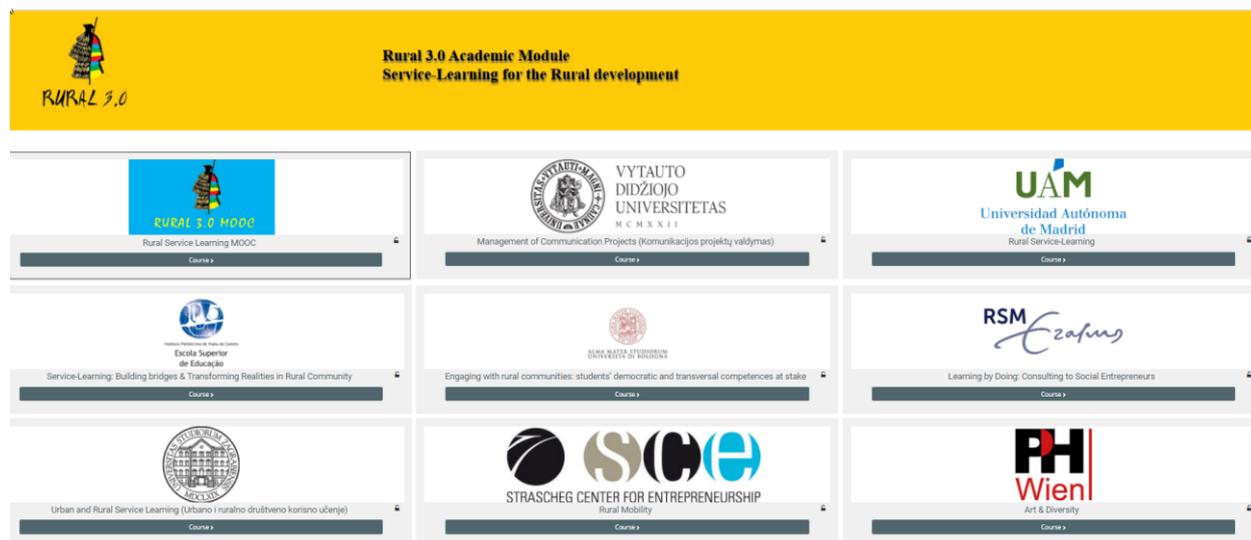

Figure 12. Academic module *Service-Learning for the Rural Development*

The following courses are available through open guest access in Moodle:

1. Management of Communication Projects (Lithuania)

Teachers: Auksė Balčytienė and Natalija Mažeikienė

2. Rural Service-Learning (Spain)

Teachers: Pilar Aramburuzabala, Charo Cerrillo and Paula Lázaro

3. Service-Learning: Building bridges & Transforming Realities in Rural Community (Portugal)

Teachers: Linda Saraiva, Anabela Moura, António Cardoso, Joana Padrão Almeida, Carlos Almeida and Manuela Cachadinha

4. Engaging with rural communities: students' democratic and transversal competences at stake (Italy

Teachers: Cinzia Albanesi, Irene Barbieri and Antonella Guarino

5. Learning by Doing: Consulting to Social Entrepreneurs (Netherlands)

Teachers: Lucas Meijs and Philine van Overbeeke

6. Urban and Rural Service Learning (Croatia)

Teacher: Nives Mikelić Preradović

7. Rural Mobility (Germany)

Teacher: Wolfgang Stark

8. Art & Diversity (Austria)

Teachers: Rolf Laven, Ingrid Salzmann-Pfleger, Alfred Strigl and Wolfgang Weinlich

Moodle is installed on the RURASL web server and can be accessed on the following address: http://learn.rural.ffzg.unizg.hr.

Conclusion

The Hub is currently in its beta phase and provides only a part of its target functionality. The *Database of Service-Learning Peer Mentors and Experts* is being regularly updated and expanded. The Hub is prepared to be fully translated to English and to languages of all project partners: German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Croatian, Lithuanian, Italian. It will fully integrate the project area web site and learning management system.

The functionality that must be implemented until the final phase includes:

- login and working with user accounts

- performance indicators: visit / hit/ download tracking & reporting

- matchmaking and search tools

- translations

- accessing system data

- survey for users to provide feedback on the materials and information available in the Hub

- survey for users to provide feedback whether they introduced/ participated in rural service-learning or social entrepreneurship during/after the project

- all project materials publicly available

The following performance indicators are to be measured starting from the implementation of the final version of the Hub every 3 months:

- PI1.3. Number of university and rural community members of the RURASL database

- PI2.2. Number of community members who downloaded the training materials from the Hub

- PI3.2. Number of educators participating in the rural service-learning MOOC developed during the project

- PI3.3. Number of users that registered in the Hub

- PI3.4. Number of visitors of the Hub

- PI3.5. Number of pages visited

- PI3.6. Number of resources uploaded to the Hub and downloaded from the Hub

- PI5.1. Number of logins and downloads from the RURASL Hub

- PI5.2. Number of non-partners HEIs introducing rural service-learning concept during and after the project

- PI5.3. Number of non-partner rural organizations collaborating with university students during and after the project

- PI6.1. Number of institutions exploiting the outputs developed in the RURASL

Finally, the other Quantitative indicators that will be measured starting from the implementation of the final version of the Hub every 3 months:

1. Number of downloads of the solutions and case-based learning materials

2. Number of users who registered in the Hub from partner countries

3. Number of downloads of the RURASL database

4. Average time of the visit

5. Percentage of increase in page visits

6. Increase in the use of RURASL database over time

7. Increase in use of OERs, database and open conversational areas

8. Access time by the single user

9. Ratio of universities (faculties, departments, chairs) / rural organizations in the database