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FORWARD

The European Seminar on Extension (and) Education (ESEE) is a biennial event organized in rotation by European countries, that is, universities and research centres involved in training and research on the agricultural and rural extension.

ESEEs have a substantial history and tradition which began in Helsinki, Finland, in 1973. The success of the first venture in 1973 led to a decision to meet again after two years in a different European country, and this practice has been continued. In the way, the use of European experience and expertise in other parts of the world has become an important issue, thus broadening the content of ESEEs. Overall, the main purpose of this Seminar traditionally is to share ideas and practices on agricultural extension/advisory work around the world, starting from Europe.

The 23rd Seminar, titled “Transformative learning: New directions in Agricultural Extension and Education”, was hosted in the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (MAICH), Crete, Greece, by the Lab. of Agricultural Extension, Rural Systems & Rural Sociology, Dept. of Agricultural Economics & Rural Development, Agricultural University of Athens (AUA).

In our times, based on a wide range of theoretical views on learning and change, new extension, education/ training and development approaches rooted in systems thinking and social learning perspectives have emerged; moreover, innovation is nowadays understood as a social as well as a technical process, as a nonlinear process, and as a process of interactive learning.

In this respect, further research addressing the improvement of the effectiveness of extension, including extension strategies and methods, extensionists’ key competencies and education/ training, as well as institutional settings/ governance structures (including financing mechanisms), is needed. Similar issues pertain the case of farmers’ (especially of young farmers’) education and training since the transmissive/ ‘instructive’ model still predominates over the transformative/ ‘constructive and participative’ one and disciplinary knowledge over transdisciplinarity.

These were major issues identified by the International Scientific Steering Committee and dealt with in the 23rd ESEE. The seminar programme comprised plenary and parallel working group sessions (in which 71 papers were presented), 4 roundtable discussions and a poster session (12 posters) (see <http://www.esee2017.gr/en/proceedings/forward>) along with technical tours and cultural activities. The conference provided an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences among university staff and researchers, professional personnel and others involved in Extension (and) Education.

The current special issue comprises 9 research papers on agricultural extension. I wish to thank the International Journal of Agricultural Extension (IJAE) for hosting the Special Issue and the authors for amending their original manuscripts presented in the ESEE following the discussions which took place during the Seminar.

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