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CultiVETing - Strengthening Links Between Vocational Education and Training and the Agri-Food Sector: Key to Future Skills and Entrepreneurship

Tirana, 10 November 2026

PRESS RELEASE

How can young people be better prepared for a rapidly changing agri-food sector? What skills does the labour market require, and how can vocational schools, businesses, universities and public institutions work more closely together? These were some of the key questions addressed at the Final Conference of the CultiVETing project - *Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the Agri-Food Sector through VET*, held on 10 November 2026 at the Agricultural University of Tirana.

Under the theme "From VET to Agri-Food Entrepreneurship: Skills, Innovation and Partnerships for the Future" the conference brought together representatives of public institutions, vocational education and training (VET) providers, universities, businesses, rural development organisations and project partners from Albania, Kosovo and EU countries. The event was organised by the Albanian Network for Rural Development and the Agricultural University of Tirana, in cooperation with all project partner organisations from Albania, Kosovo, Italy, Greece, Germany and Belgium.

Prof. Dr Erinda Lika, Vice-Rector for Science and Projects and Erasmus+ at the Agricultural University of Tirana, welcomed the participants and reaffirmed the University's readiness to contribute to strengthening cooperation between VET institutions, universities and the agri-food sector. Ms. Lika highlighted the importance of building lasting bridges between knowledge, practical skills and labour market needs, so that young people are better equipped to address future challenges and seize emerging opportunities.

The conference focused on one of the key challenges facing the future of the agri-food sector: bringing VET closer to the real needs of the labour market. This requires equipping young people not only with technical knowledge, but also with entrepreneurial, digital and green skills, while providing more opportunities for hands-on learning and practical experience in real working environments.

Market study: Young people are interested, but opportunities for practical training and entrepreneurship remain limited

One of the key moments of the conference was the presentation of the findings of the market study, "The Future of Work in the Agri-Food Sector: Current Situation, Gaps and Priorities for VET in Albania and Kosovo," by Prof. Dr Etleva Dashi of the Agricultural University of Tirana.

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Among the key findings, 44.2% of students expressed an interest or strong interest in starting a business in the agri-food sector, while only 16.4% had participated in entrepreneurship programmes. Meanwhile, around half of the students surveyed reported having few or no opportunities for work placements or practical training, highlighting the limited opportunities to learn through hands-on experience. The findings provide an indicative overview of the perceptions and experiences of the study participants and should not be interpreted as nationally representative statistics.

These findings underline the need for VET programmes that are more closely aligned with labour market demands, increased opportunities for practical training, stronger business skills development and more sustained cooperation between vocational schools and agri-food businesses. The study also highlights the importance of improving labour market information and mechanisms for anticipating skills needs in both countries.

CultiVETing in practice: Research, capacity building and partnerships

The project coordinator, Julian Francisco Juberias Olmos, from the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB), presented the project's main results and lessons learned throughout its implementation.

Key results include research on skills needs and the development of two national strategies, one for Albania and one for Kosovo; a 50-hour training programme comprising five courses; learning materials covering entrepreneurship and green and digital skills; as well as opportunities for dialogue, exchange of experience and international mobility for students and VET professionals.

Voices from the field: Connecting VET with labour market needs

The session "CultiVETing Voices" brought together experiences from students, teachers, host organisations and businesses, highlighting the value of international mobility, Training of Trainers activities and practical learning in preparing young people for the labour market.

The subsequent panel discussion, "From Classroom to Career: What Does the Agri-Food Sector Need from VET?", brought together representatives of VET institutions, businesses, public institutions, rural development networks and academia. The discussion highlighted the need for curricula that are more closely aligned with labour market needs, increased opportunities for practical training, more active business involvement and stronger cooperation between VET providers and the agri-food sector.

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The conference concluded with the main messages from the discussions and the identification of priorities for sustaining cooperation between VET providers and businesses, supporting entrepreneurship, strengthening career guidance and counselling, expanding practical learning opportunities and developing green and digital skills.

CultiVETing has established a shared foundation of knowledge, learning resources and collaborative experiences among VET and agri-food sector stakeholders. The challenge ahead is to build on this work by turning project results into lasting practices, partnerships into continued cooperation, and the skills developed into tangible opportunities for young people and the wider agri-food sector.

About the project
CultiVETing - Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the Agrifood Sector through VET (Project Number: 101129381) is an Erasmus+ Capacity Building project co-funded by the European Union and implemented by 13 partner organizations from Albania, Kosovo, Greece, Italy, Germany, and Belgium.

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