



**LIFE
SHEP FOR BIO**



EUROMONTANA

LIFE ShepForBio

1st meeting of the Discussion Forum with the Network of Pastoral Schools

Report



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1. Introduction

On the 28th of June 2022, the 1st Discussion Forum with European pastoral schools took place. The event started at 9.30 and ended at 13.00, and was held online via Zoom. The meeting was organised in English to make participants more comfortable with the language, with some translation in French of the key messages by Guillaume Corradino (Euromontana Director).

This event was the first of a series of meetings to connect pastoral schools and relevant actors/networks promoting pastoral practices across Europe. It was designed to foster the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and challenges among the attendants, and ultimately encourage dialogue between European pastoral schools. The meeting was structured around three sessions. The first session set the framework for participants, while during the second and third sessions pastoral schools and projects had the opportunity to present themselves, their activities, and the challenges they are facing. The detailed agenda can be found in Annex I. Before closing the event, participants had the opportunity to exchange and further discuss the topics that were covered during the sessions.

Presentations from participating schools largely focused on curricula and teaching methodologies to train new shepherds, as well as the main challenges they are facing. Moreover, attendees had the opportunities to learn about the ShepForBio project itself and to brainstorm on expectations and activities of the Discussion Forum in the future.

Participants

The event involved seven European pastoral schools:

- Tara Niño González - Escuela de Ganadería y Pastoreo (Canary Island)
- Maria Diaz - Escola de Pastors de Catalunya (Spain)
- Andrea Sulig - Agridea & Ecole d'agriculture du Valais (Switzerland)
- Laurent Frédéric - L' Institut Agro / Domaine et centre de formation du Merle (France)
- Barnabé ACHARD - C.F.P.P.A Ariège- Comminges (France)
- Michele Nori - SNAP- Scuola Nazionale di Pastorizia (Italy)

Moreover, representatives from the following projects were present:

- Marie Laure Girault - PastorEA
- Alessandro Dessì - PASTRES
- Manon Wallenberger - CIPRA International (proposal for an Erasmus + project)

Event organisers

- Elena Feo & Guillaume Corradino – Euromontana (Belgium)
- Tommaso Campedelli – D.R.E.A.M. (Italy)

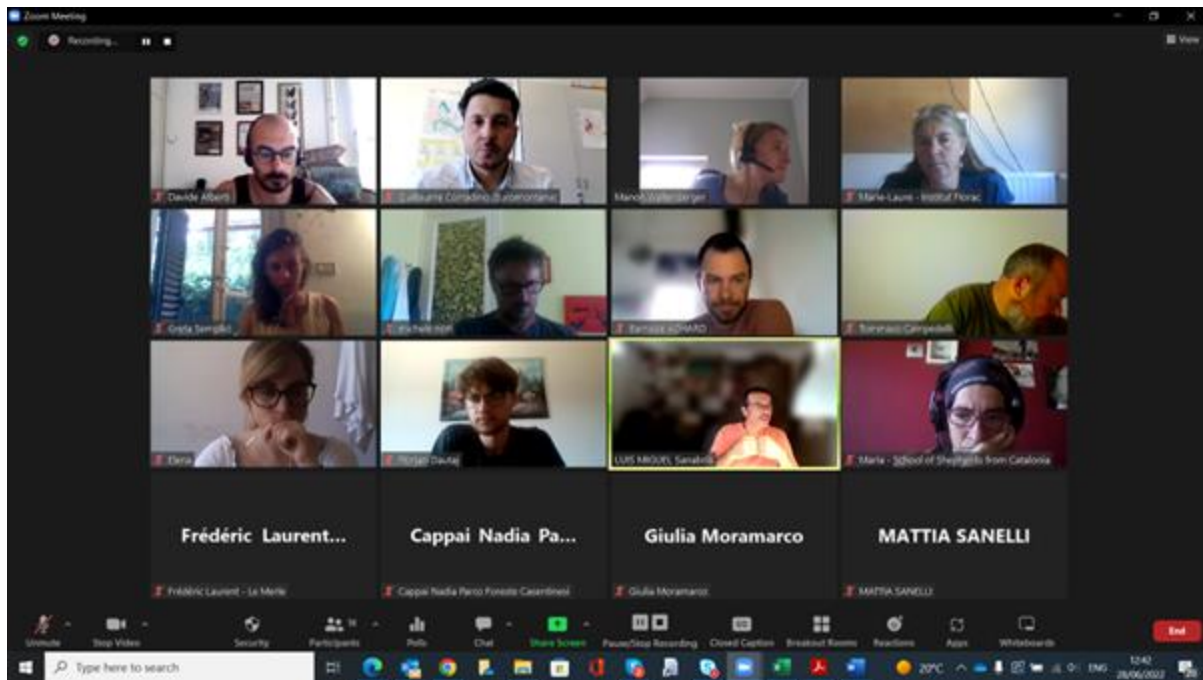


Figure 1: Screenshot of participants

2. Session 1: Setting the framework

During this first session, Euromontana welcomed the participants, explaining the purpose of the Discussion forum and reminding the agenda. To create an initial moment of interaction among the participants, a tour de table of presentations was made. Afterwards, Tommaso Campedelli, Coordinator of ShepForBio, presented the project.

3. Session 2: Learning from others' experiences: training the new generations of shepherds

During this session, the schools presented their activities and the challenges they are to facing. Andrea Sulig in charge of presenting "Agridea & Ecole d'agriculture du Valais (Switzerland)" had an unforeseen problem and could not take part in the discussion forum.

Escuela de Ganadería y Pastoreo from Canary Island

The first school that presented was the Escuela de Ganadería y Pastoreo from the Canary Islands. In the Canary Islands, the majority of livestock is under intensive production due to the lack of space and food available. As a result, hence the activities organized in the school are targeted to respond to the specific needs and reality of the islands (more training on livestock rather than grazing). However, due to the rising problems with fire, the school is pushing toward the increase of activities related to grazing management, starting several projects called "fire shepherds".

The school offers a teaching program of 510 hours (120 practical hours that include also the production of dairy products). At the end of the curriculum, a certificate of professionalism is awarded, which is recognized by the Ministry of Education in Spain. Currently, the school is finishing its fourth edition, with 36 graduated students (13 women and 24 people below 30 years old). 70 percent of the student are currently working in the sector and 8 of them are self-employed farmers.

After graduation, the school offers support to the students (e.g., support and advice while starting a new activity, the creation of a land bank where people can find information about the available land to use, creation of a job bank). During these four years of activity, the Escuela de Ganaderia y Pastoreo detected several challenges such as having a schedule that meets the need of the students (e.g., having lessons in the evening), finding prepared and accredited teachers. Additionally, administrative and bureaucracy issues and a reduced number of students may not guarantee the school to remain open.

Escola de Pastors de Catalunya (Spain)

The Escola de Pastors de Catalunya is located in northwest of Catalonia. The school is run and managed by a nonprofit organization. This represents an obstacle, as it does not provide stability to the school, but also it represents a positive aspect since it gives the freedom to organize their activity independently. The school is funded through a convention with the department of agriculture of Catalonia, grants, registration fees, and local administrations.

The school was born in 2009 and now it is in its 14th year, and it runs one course per year (2.5 months of theory and 4 months of practical activities). The number of students varies between 15 and 17. Recently the school started to provide courses in communication (e.g., conflict management) as it recognizes the importance of collaboration and synergies with people both inside and outside the school. The association that runs the school also runs a job bank throughout all the Pyrenees and across Spain. The bank not only offers job positions but also announcements of land availability. Moreover, the school provides mentoring to the students who want to start a farm.

Every year the school receives more applications than it can accommodate. 85% of the students finalize the training and 60 percent of the students remain working in the primary sector.

The strong point of the school is a passionate team and the high quality of the training that gives a certain degree of flexibility for the students. The contents of the training are under constant revision to provide the most updated information for the students that can express their opinion and suggest aspects for further improvement. Moreover, the students can benefit from mentoring after school is over.

The main difficulties are the economic instability, which makes it difficult to focus efforts on trainings only, as the school has to seek funds every year. The school has a limited budget and cannot afford to pay the farmers that host the students. The school also suffers from a lack of an adequate headquarter.

L' Institut Agro / Domaine et centre de formation du Merle (France)

The Centre de formation du Merle is part of the Agro Institute, a large agronomic school in France that includes multiple cities. Within the activities of the agronomic school, shepherd training is included since 1931. The school can benefit from a large pastoral land with 1500 sheep on the school domain.

The school looks at the job demand and only trains shepherds who can be employed. The training is 1 year based on the reproduction cycle of sheep. The course is both theoretical and practical and it is structured as follows: theory in the morning and in the afternoon the students can practice in the school domain. The school has a strong professional focus and involves a steering committee of professionals (shepherd's networks, local agencies, etc.) to ensure that the training follows the actual needs of professionals.

The training schedule foresees 840 hours of training in companies and 900+ hours in the classroom. Among many topics, the course focuses on feeding and grassland management, pastoralism, predators, shepherd dogs, reproduction, agroecology, and labour law. Theoretical lectures are interspersed with practical lessons and a 3 months internship. Because of the increasing problem with predators, most students choose to do the internship with another student (not alone). However, 9 out of 19 decided to go alone. The training is paid for by the Region, and students receive remuneration during training. This course attracts students from all over France and the accommodation is provided by the school.

Each year, there are about 20 students, with gender balance and a diversity of backgrounds.. Fortunately, the trend is that more and more young students are joining the school. In 2022 for example, 63% are less than 26 years old and the following year, the oldest will be 29. The rate of employment is high, with 90% of students finding a job right after the course, most of the times in a salaried position.

The main challenges that the school and the students have to face are the following:

- Predators. More shepherds are required
- Important turn-over of un-trained shepherds. The most trained they are, the more they remain in the job (1 in 4 shepherd change to another sector). Therefore, more funding is needed to try to train shepherds who are already active.
- Need to train more shepherds, but need more funds from the region, and need to find good candidates

C.F.P.P.A Ariège- Comminges (France)

CFPAA is a 20 years old education unit in the French Alps. The unit includes a pastoral school (sheep and cows) with a strong professional focus: it involves a steering committee of professionals (e.g., shepherd's networks, local agencies). This ensures that the training provided by the school follows the actual need of professionals. The duration of the training is 6 months and combines both theoretical and practical classes. Additionally, during the duration of the course, 8 to 10 weeks are dedicated to an internship in the mountains with professionals. The age of the students is between 19 and 55 with a good gender balance. Among many topics, the courses focus on feeding and grassland management, pastoralism, predators, dogs, reproduction, agroecology, and labor law.

Currently, C.F.P.P.A Ariège- Comminges is trying to create a partnership with the pastoral school of the Pyrenees. The aim is to standardize education between the Alps and the Pyrenees.

The main issue of the school is to recruit candidates that are motivated to complete the course. Other issues are related to finances, proof of the relevance of the diploma, keeping farms collaborating with the school, training dogs, improving job conditions for better attractiveness, strong professional demands, and finding enough students to work with milking cows.

Creation of pastoral schools' network on a European Mediterranean scale

To stimulate the connection between pastoral schools, the National Federation of Autochthonous Breeds of Portugal (FERA) organized a conference in Braga (Portugal, March 2022), where several pastoral schools were invited to share their training model of work and discuss common challenges. The conference brought out the willingness of creating a network of European Schools. The key elements were:

- The exchange of experiences between training models, sharing strengths and weaknesses.
- The design of a common pedagogical methodology (i.e. a minimum basic program) that helps improve the day-to-day running of schools or at the beginning of other new initiatives in other territories.
- The creation of a digital platform that helps share existing information (schools, programs, subjects, etc.) and other generated results (meetings, common projects, etc.).
- The design and implementation of an exchange program for students, teachers, and tutor farmers.
- An analysis and dissemination of good innovative practices for grazing and extensive livestock farming.
- The development of social communication mechanisms that help make practices visible and all the positive effects of extensive livestock farming and grazing.
- The improvement of the management and financing of European Pastoral schools and fostering of our active participation
- To improve the sustainable management of grazing resources and livestock

The key message was that it is essential to co-create the methodology for the training of livestock farms in the pastoralism of the future. Hence, finding synergies between initiatives coming from different organizations is fundamental

SNAP- Scuola Nazionale di Pastorizia (Italy)

In Italy, there are currently no pastoral schools in place, and the network of actors engaged with pastoral activities is coordinated by Rete Appia. Michele Nori brought up some policy paradoxes that he is experiencing within the Italian context. In fact, despite the fact that pastoralism in Europe is more and more appreciated (e.g., quality of products), pastoralism activities are decreasing due to the policy framework. Hence the need to create pastoral schools in Italy. This may address the problem of generational renewal present in Italy. Through Rete Appia Michele Nori aims to create a reality that is not as static as a school but is a dynamic reality according to different conditions and uncertainties. Currently, there are start-up experiences in Italy: Casentino, Piemonte, Lombardia, Sardinia, and Basilicata.

4. Session 3: how to better prepare shepherds' schools to current and future challenges?

During this session, the projects PastorEA and Pastres presented themselves, while the NGO CIPRA described an Erasmus + project proposal to submit by the end of the year.

How is Pastoralism organized and transmitted in sensitive contexts? PastorEA Project

The European project PastorEA on pastoralism brings together 3 agricultural education structures in France, Spain, and Slovenia enabling the exchange of issues, contexts, and practices in the transmission of knowledge for pastoralism. The objective is to promote and/or develop training in pastoralism to give it its rightful place in agricultural training and in a dynamic of agro-ecological transition.

The project, with the help of experts, aims to develop new training courses adapted to the current context and challenges of pastoralism.

The objectives of PastorEA are:

- Carrying out an inventory of the organization of training and knowledge transmission in pastoralism;
- Analyzing and comparing the training/transmission systems;
- Elaborating scenarios for the development of training in pastoralism based on the issues at stake in the field and identifying the relevant pedagogical elements with regard to these issues;
- Contributing to making pastoralism visible so that it is recognized for the important place it can have in the agroecological transition.

Pastoralism, Uncertainty and Resilience (PASTRES) Project

PASTRES (*Pastoralism, Uncertainty and Resilience: Global Lessons from the Margins*) is a research programme that aims to learn from pastoralists about responding to uncertainty and resilience, with lessons for global challenges.

Pastoralism is essential in many peoples' identity, livestock being part of our culture, with a key role in the economy of rural areas as well as in landscape, ecology, ecosystem services.

However, pastoral use of land often come to compete with other uses of the same resources, such as wildlife conservation, tourism, infrastructure, and the like. Challenges that pile on top of many other ones brought by the entire complex of environmental, market, governance, and policy-related difficulties faced by pastoralists.

All in all, we observe a decreasing number of pastoralists, often not wealthy and with negative generational turnover trends.

Pastoral schools, however, intercept and feed a target group of people ready to turn to pastoral life, for a total change and/or to innovate inherited family activities. They provide professional and vocational training and can become a reference for developing and teaching tools to address uncertainty.

Related to this purpose, PASTRES launched a survey (<https://forms.gle/2W4jqWQ5d2AsDjze9>). The aim is to share information on the pastoral schools and explore in which way they address uncertainty.

Michele Nori reminded the problem that he is experiencing at the political level. He advocates the need to establish something that goes beyond technical exchanges. He reminds the need for change and weighs the policy level on topics related to pastoralism. Knowledge exchange and pushing the political scenario should work in parallel. He suggests converting networks and platforms that are being created now into something that has political leverage in European, national and local policymaking.

In response to Michele Nori, Guillaume Corradino explained that Euromontana already has a mission of representing mountain communities, including shepherds, and is available to act as political interface. Euromontana would like to extract from this knowledge exchange some policy recommendations that we can bring to the EU. Euromontana welcomes the idea of helping to strengthen the network between pastoral schools. The next step with Shep4Bio is to co-develop a newsletter to keep the debate alive. Additionally, Guillaume Corradino encouraged people that are trying to build a formal or informal network to make an inventory of the resources (eg., mailing list), share surveys projects, and further discuss how to organize the next meetings. Ultimately there might be the creation of an EU network, but this should be built step by step.

Annex

28 June 2022 – 09.30-13:00

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89668717966?pwd=N0EzNkZ3MktOaFUxL3lTWVZsNlBqdz09>

Agenda

In the framework of the [LIFE ShepForBio](#) project - “Shepherds for Biodiversity in Mountain Marginal Areas”, Euromontana – in collaboration with D.R.E.A.M. Italia - organizes the [Discussion Forum](#): a series of meetings to connect pastoral schools and relevant actors/networks promoting pastoral practices across Europe. These meetings are designed to exchange knowledge, best practices and challenges among the attendants. The final aim is to create a European network of pastoral schools that can build on each other’s successes and difficulties and set up future collaborations.

The first meeting will be held on the 28th of June 2022. This meeting will particularly focus on **curricula and teaching methodologies** to train new shepherds, based on the experiences of participants and observers. Attendees will also have the opportunities to learn about the ShepForBio project and to brainstorm on expectations and activities of the Discussion Forum in the future.

Session 1: Setting the framework

- **09.30-09.40 Welcome** – Elena Feo, Project Manager at Euromontana
- **09.40-09.50 The ShepForBio project** – Tommaso Campedelli, Coordinator of ShepForBio at D.R.E.A.M. Italia
- **09.50-10.00 Virtual ice-breaking: getting to know each other** – All participants, facilitated by Euromontana
- **10.00-10.05 Introduction to the Discussion Forum: aims, expectations and activities** – Elena Feo, Project Manager at Euromontana

Session 2: Learning from others’ experiences: training the new generations of shepherds

- **10.05-10.15 Sharing experiences: Escuela de Ganadería y Pastoreo (Canary Island)** – Tara Niño González
- **10.15-10.25 Sharing experiences: Escola de Pastors de Catalunya (Spain)** – Maria Diaz
- **10.25-10.35 Sharing experiences: Agridea & Ecole d’agriculture du Valais (Switzerland)** – Andrea Sulig

- **10.35-10.45 Sharing experiences: L' Institut Agro / Domaine et centre de formation du Merle (France) – Frédéric Laurent**
- **10.45-10.55 Sharing experiences: C.F.P.P.A Ariège- Comminges (France) – Barnabé Achard**
- **10.55-11.05 Sharing experiences: Creation of pastoral schools' network on a European Mediterranean scale – Luis Miguel Sanabria**
- **11.05-11.15 Sharing experiences: SNAP- Scuola Nazionale di Pastorizia (Italy) – Michele Nori**
- **11.15-11.30 Break**

Session 3: how to better prepare shepherds' schools to current and future challenges?

- **11.30-11.45 How is Pastoralism organized and transmitted in sensitive contexts? PastorEA Project – Marie Laure Girault/ Florjan Dautaj**
- **11.45–12.00 Pastoralism, Uncertainty and Resilience (PASTRES) Project – Alessandro Dessì and Michele Nori, Coordinators**
- **12.00 – 12.15 CIPRA- International Commission for Protection of the Alps - Manon Wallenberger - Manon Wallenberger**
- **12.15- 12.50 Group discussion**
- **12.50 – 13.00 Wrap-up and next steps**