

MODERN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL AREAS

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At the beginning of February, a discussion was prepared at the Naklo Biotechnical Centre on the topic of modern development of occupations for rural areas as part of the AgriNext project, which aims to create a learning environment that meets the demand for qualifications in the labour market in the field of multifunctional agriculture.

The aim of the event was to present the responsiveness of the school system to the changes in multifunctional agriculture and to formulate recommendations for a flexible system of vocational and technical education in the field of multifunctional agriculture. Through mutual learning and knowledge exchange, the participants looked for opportunities for the modern development of professions for rural areas.

The director of the Biotechnical Centre Naklo (BCN), Marijan Pogačnik, emphasised in his speech that the school's current programmes, which were developed between 2004 and 2006 together with the Centre for Vocational Education of the Republic of Slovenia and other partners, are very modern. "Even then, we were already thinking about sustainable development. Now we have a new renovation ahead of us, and the conclusions from the discussion will certainly be welcome when designing the content of the renovated programmes." At the same time, he emphasised the importance of practical on-the-job training in addition to theoretical knowledge, as other skills are also very important for employers in addition to specialist knowledge.

Jerneja Rozman from BCN then presented the AgriNext project, in which they are working with partners from Ireland, Spain and Croatia to share skills and experiences internationally to achieve excellence in rural areas through innovative pedagogical approaches, lifelong learning and continuous professional development for teachers or mentors. As part of the project, says Jerneja Rozman, they have also developed a model proposal for a flexible system of vocational education and training that allows individuals to move between education, training and employment. "This means that students - students, adults, students with special needs and others - can adapt their educational path to their interests and abilities, both during their secondary education and later, when they have already entered the world of work."

The participants then sought solutions for adapting and modernising educational programmes and teaching methods within the existing model for a flexible system of vocational and professional education and training. Key points that emerged from the discussion included the need for individualisation and the need for collaboration with other stakeholders. "We need more communication and long-term collaboration; the employer needs to be involved in the pedagogical process and students should have the opportunity to choose an internship according to their interests." They suggested the establishment of master farms. They also emphasised the importance of raising awareness of the importance of the professions in the future while creating a good learning environment with a focus on individualisation and good technical equipment in schools. The focus should also be on developing a sense of responsibility, emotional intelligence and the critical evaluation of information.