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**Strategic Platform for Ameliorating Tunisian Higher Education on Food Sciences
and Technology**

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“ SPAAT4FOOD PROJECT”

**Kick Off Meeting Minutes
January 25-26, 2018
Douz, Tunisia**



Name and surname	PN	Acronym	Institution	Country
Mohamed Makni	1	US	University of Sfax	TN
Ali Bougatef	1	US	University of Sfax	TN
Zied Zarai	1	US	University of Sfax	TN
Kamel Maaloul	1	US	University of Sfax	TN
Fatma Ghorbel	1	US	University of Sfax	TN
Samira Mejdoub	1	US	University of Sfax	TN
Mourad Boughriba	1	US	University of Sfax	TN
Nacim Zouari	2	UG	University of Gabes	TN
Halima Elhatmi	2	UG	University of Gabes	TN
Nahed Fakhfekh	2	UG	University of Gabes	TN
Rafik Balti	3	UJ	University of Jendouba	TN
Hichem Sebai	3	UJ	University of Jendouba	TN
Lamjed Marzouki	3	UJ	University of Jendouba	TN
Ridha Ghali	4	UM	University of Manouba	TN
Paola Pittia	5	UT	University of Teramo	IT
Cristina Luisa Silva	6	CUP	Catholic University of Porto	PT
Ines Ramos	6	CUP	Catholic University of Porto	PT
Monica Mironescu	7	LBU	Lucian Blaga University	ROU
Ion Dan Mironescu	7	LBU	Lucian Blaga University	ROU
Ecaterina Lengyel	7	LBU	Lucian Blaga University	ROU
Cecilia Georgescu	7	LBU	Lucian Blaga University	ROU
Mohamed Mkaouer	-	-	Sfax University (vice rector)	TN

Opening and Welcome by Sfax University vice-rector, Mohamed Mkaouer

First of all, Dr. Mkaouer congratulated the SPAAT4FOOD team for the acceptance of their project and expressed warm wishes of success to all partners. He highlighted the commitment of the University of Sfax to international collaboration and the importance of the interaction between different universities in Tunisia and around the world including the adherence to capacity building



projects. Dr. Mkaouar also praised the Erasmus + program as an outstanding collaboration framework for the benefit of the contributing institutions.

**Session 1: Presentation of contributing universities, emphasizing services and experience relevant to Erasmus+ and SPAAT4FOOD projects:
Zied Zarai, Nassim Zouari, Rafik Balti, Ridha Ghali, Paola Pittia, Cristina Luisa Silva and Monica Mironescu**

Dr. Zied Zarai, The US Coordinator delivered a presentation about the University Sfax. He gave a historical overview of the creation and evolution of the University. He provided numerical details about the different institutions of this university, their activities, their capacity and their most important achievements.

Dr. Zarai also highlighted the importance of the food industrial network in Tunisia and in Sfax in particular. However, he also focused on the mismatch between this important tissue and the Higher education and research institutions that address food sciences and biotechnology.

Dr. Nassim Zouari, the UG coordinator presented the institutions that belong to the University of Gabes, their activities, and focused on the specificity of this University which encompasses all the higher education and research institutions of the South of Tunisia. Some of the institutions of the University are specific to the climate and lifestyle of the Arid Southern region.

The industrial activity in the South is not much developed, especially as regards the domain of food conditioning. However, food sciences and technologies are taught in more than one higher education institution, usually regardless of the needs and recommendations of the industrials, mainly due to the lack of communication and the scarcity of confidence building and collaboration frameworks.

Dr. Rafik Balti, Coordinator at the UJ, delivered a general overview of the university of Jendouba, and provided some statistics about the capacity and the achievements of the institutions that belong to this university. He stressed on the growing number of food Science and technology departments at this young university despite the lack of adequate tools and equipment that he deemed necessary for the academic, research and pedagogical activities relevant to this domain. Industry-university communication in the domain of food sciences and technology is still below the desired level that would guarantee adequate knowledge and skills to the graduates in order to better integrate the job market.



Dr. Ridha Ghali from the University of Manouba presented his university and provided some details about the capacity of this university as well as growth of Food Science and Technology departments and their achievements during the last period.

Pr. Paola Pittia, the Teramo University coordinator introduced the University of Teramo in Italy and provided numerical details about the different institutions that belong to the University of Teramo. She elucidated best practices of pedagogical activity and industry-oriented teaching experience supported by academicians and industrials in Italy. Dr Pittia explored the success of the Italian experience and the employability of the food sciences and technology graduates. She also expressed her enthusiasm about the collaboration with Tunisian actors and the benefit that all the partners would obtain by making the project successful despite the different Tunisian and Italian contexts.

The presentation delivered by Pr. Cristina Luisa Silva, coordinator of the Catholic University of Porto in Portugal, exposed the capacity, growth and achievements of her University. Pr. Silva highlighted the specificity of the domain of food sciences and technology and exhibited the pedagogical strategies currently being used in the institutions that teach this field at her university. Pr. Silva expressed the eagerness of her team to contribute to the diagnosis of the merits and problems of Tunisian higher education in this domain and to design a tailored training program to Tunisian teaching staff in order to build on their experience and overcome the pedagogical lacunae. She stressed the importance of the SPAAT4FOOD project to the Tunisian graduates in the domain of food sciences and technology and valued the opportunity to contribute to this project.

Dr. Monica Mironescu presented the Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, Romania, of which she is coordinator. A historical overview of the growth and development of this university was given and the scientific and academic endeavor of the corresponding institutions was presented especially in the field of Food sciences and technology. Dr. Mironescu also emphasized the sophisticated relationship between the industrial tissue and the academic institutions in Sibiu and offered to explain the basics and procedures of this relationship to the other partners in order to draw on the Romanian experience and build a stronger collaboration between industries and academies that brings benefits to both sides. Interestingly, Dr. Mironescu evoked the previous experience of her team with capacity



building projects relative to the Erasmus+ program and expressed their willingness to share the acquired know how with the partners in the SPAAT4FOOD project for more successfulness of the consortium.

Session 2: SPAAT4FOOD Project rationale and logical framework

by Mohamed Makni, Ali Bougatef, Fatma Ghorbel, Samira Mejdoub and Kamel Maaloul

Dr. Makni presented the SPAAT4FOOD project according to the following agenda:

- ✓ The agenda of the meeting (Annex I),
- ✓ Objectives of the Kick-Off Meeting,
- ✓ Project rationale and objectives,
- ✓ Expected impact,
- ✓ Partnership,
- ✓ Structure of the workplan,
- ✓ Timing,
- ✓ Roles of partners
- ✓ Immediate actions,
- ✓ Specific Issues and problems,
- ✓ Questions and answers.

Pr. Bougatef designated the specific objectives of the project as:

- Setting up a network of industrial and professional partners willing to implement a sustainable cooperation with institutions of higher education and scientific research;
- Improving the visibility of national and international communities of experts in food studies;
- Developing innovative teaching tools in food studies;
- Rinsing of student's internship quality;
- Developing a technology platform to ameliorate the cooperation and mobility between universities and food industries.

If successful, this project will contribute to improvements on many diverse issues, such as:

- Reinforcement of partnership between universities and food companies;
- Well educated FST graduates will be provided to the labour market by increased number of produced quickly employable graduates;
- Developed database information and expert networks will improve accessibility and visibility of all project staff at national and international levels;



- Partners P1 to P4 will strengthen: improve the staff expertise, expand universities capacities and training/consultancy services in /and outside the consortium.
- Introduction of several novel bi-directional features and benefits in the HE/industry collaboration.

This point was quickly followed by the Workplan structure explanation with particular attention to Tasks and Deliverables:

WP1: SETTING UP A FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

Lead partners will be P1 and P5

These activities aim to define the WTs staff in all partners and to implement the Website of the project.

Its consist in creating functional structures such as:

- Project steering committee
- University coordinators ensuring in each university the coordination of activities
- Lead partner of each WPs
- WT devoted to each WP

The results will serve to:

- Ensure impact and quality of outputs generated by each participant and by continuous monitoring of all activities and evaluation
- Ensure the dissemination of project results through Website
- Promote and guarantee the defined **SPAAT4FOOD** project goals

WP2: ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITIES / FOOD INDUSTRIES RELATION

Lead partners will be P1 and P5, with all partners being active

It consists in

- Preparing surveys
- Learning about market requirements
- Analyzing the universities/food industries relation

P1 to P4 will contribute to conducting the survey in their localities and to producing written reports. The results will serve to

- Analyse the current situation of cooperation between industrial and universities through survey results.
- Investigate the industrial needs and the gap between universities and industries



The outcomes of the survey will be presented at a Tunisian level meeting. WP1 activities will provide detailed directions for the further stages of the project.

WP3: INNOVATIVE TEACHING TOOLS

Lead partners will be P5 and P6, with all partners being active
It consists in

- Analysis of the current educational system and methodology
- Qualification of higher education teaching staff
- Design and development of prototype VL in all Tunisian partners

VL will allow users (students/teachers) via Website and scientific library to access to Newsletter, books and magazines in the field of FST; to Food info site which provide background information about FST; to computer-based simulation of laboratory experiments; to course module design; to database on FST competency and organizations; to database of laboratory and pilot plant equipment; to job and internship offer database

Activities will be distributed to dedicated task teams, whose progress and quality will be reported to Grant applicant, central project management, quality and dissemination teams. P5 and P6 partners will host staff of Tunisian partners for passing the FST expertise and show lab capacities/methods. P1 to P4 achieve a case study using novel teaching tools and meeting to disseminate how to use and practice the novel teaching tools in Tunisian universities.

Hopefully, all participating staff will interact on a less formal level as well, finding converging/complementary expertise/interests. This new networking is useful for many later activities. All of the above is planned to aid the core development activity-modernization of existing and production of new teaching materials and tools, for the target Tunisian groups.

WP4: RAISING THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS' INTERNSHIP IN INDUSTRIES

Lead partners will be P1 and P7 with Tunisian partners being active
It consists in

- Implementing a PIU in Tunisian partners universities
- Adapt a novel methodological approach to realise internship
- Learn new methodologies for students to research and apply for new jobs

The major objectives is creating PIU, which can organize the students' internship process, consultation, provision and respond to students' needs in order to improve the quality of students' internship

P7 will host staff Tunisian partners for passing the FST expertise and learn the student's internship process/methods. P1 to P4 disseminate how to use and practice the novel strategies and achieve a case study of internships student based on new strategies adopted. Student's can find internship opportunities using the VL services

WP5: CREATION OF FOOD TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM

Lead partners will be P1 and P5



It consists in

- Implementation of food technology platform
- Connecting FST university competencies and professionals
- Developing new competences required by the job market
- Bridges to innovation and student skills development

The objectives are the enhancing cooperation between industries and universities; the improving quality of education and teaching, by making them fit the changes of outside environment; the increasing of the alumni employability and creating of new jobs by increasing of competitiveness and innovativeness in socio-economic world.

P5 partner will host staff from P1, P2, P3 and P4 to interact with experienced food scientists and to build on specific knowledge related to FST. TN partners will integrate and apply knowledge about food equipments to extend the developments of food platform. P1 to P4 will purchase and install new technology platform with existing materials and organize workshops to learn about good practices for using the new technology platform.

WP6: DISSEMINATION OF THE PROJECT'S RESULTS

Lead partners will be P1 and P4 with Tunisian partners being active

It consists in

- Organizing meetings to disseminate the general content, project deliverable and the main results
- Favoring the discussion and needs emerging through VL and Website
- Promoting interaction with industries through technology platform and PIU

Informing target groups and university authorities about activities carried out, results and future activities of project

WP7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING

Lead partners will be P1 and P7

The project activities are assessed through an internal and external quality control.

We will benefit from inter-project coaching on quality procedures and a constructive feedback from a timely external quality assurance audit

WP8: MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT

Lead partners will be P1 and P3

Ensure an efficient program coordination of this project and to achieve the program objectives and goals, it's divided into the following sections:

- Administrative management
- Activity and financial reporting.



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Mrs Fatma Ghorbel, Administrative secretary of the SPAAT4FOOD project, explained the administrative procedure and the documents to be provided as proofs of any expenses or activities to check the validity of the different operations including travel, accommodation, subsistence, purchases, subcontracting training, meetings, deliverables ... She elucidated the Erasmus+ standards in this regard and provided samples of the eligible staff conventions, travel report and time sheets.

Mrs Samira, Financial secretary of the SPAAT4FOOD project, presented a detailed estimation of the budget and the maximum grant contribution in the different budget items (staff cost, travel cost, cost of stay, equipment and subcontracting). She also provided a financial grid including the Erasmus+ payment rate to each category and each country. Financial management was decided to be centralized at the University of Sfax for the Tunisian partners and decentralized for the European partners. She explained the payment procedure and gave some practical examples of the payment mode of different activities. She also explained the purchase and subcontracting procedure and required supporting documents.

Together, Mrs Ghorbel and Mrs Mejdoub answered the questions of the partners about the administrative and financial procedures and eligibility issues. The specificity of some Partner universities was evoked. They gave some tips to overcome the possible difficulties and surmount the administrative obstacles.

Kamel Maaloul, Technical secretary of the SPAAT4FOOD project, displayed the dissemination tools including the leaflet of the project. He also browsed the website pages and took note of the comments and recommendations of the partners for further improvement and practicality of the online content. The functionalities and contents of the website were examined and explained. The email platform was also displayed and the provisional logins and passwords were sent to all partners.

After discussing the significance of colors and shapes, the partners selected the following logo:





Session 3: Forming the SPAAT4FOOD committees:

Steering committee:

WP1:

Chair: P1/Dr. Zied Zarai

Co-chair: P5/ Pr. Paola Pittia

WP2:

Chair: P1/Pr. Ali Bougatef

Co-chair: P5/ Pr. Paola Pittia

WP3:

Chair: P5/ Pr. Paola Pittia

Co-chair: P6/Pr. Cristina Silva

WP4:

Chair: P1/Dr. Mohamed Makni

Co-chair: P7/Dr. Monica Mironescu

WP5:

Chair: P1/Pr. Ali Bougatef

Co-chair: P5/ Pr. Paola Pittia

WP6:

Chair: P1/Dr. Zied Zarai

Co-chairs: P4/ Pr. Nourhène Boudhrioua and P2/Pr. Nacim Zouari

WP7:

Chair: P1/Dr. Zied Zarai



Co-chair: P7/Dr. Monica Mironescu

WP8:

Chair: P1/Dr. Mohamed Makni, Pr. Ali Bougatef and Dr. Zied Zarai

Co-chair: P3/Dr. Rafik Balti

Quality committee:

Chair : P1/ Pr. Ali Bougatef

Co-chair: P7/Dr. Monica Mironescu

Members: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6

Dissemination and exploitation committee:

Chair: P1/Dr.Mohamed Makni

Co-chair: P4/ Pr. Nourhène Boudhrioua

Members: P1, P2, P3, P5, P6 and P7

The year 1 upcoming project activities were discussed by all project partners. The first upcoming activity being the analysis of universities / food industries relation, terminology was defined and “universities” in this context refers to higher education institutions that use pedagogical material to teach undergraduates Food Sciences and Technology in the 4 Tunisian partner universities. “Industries” designates all the Tunisian public and private institutions that belong to the target job market of the graduates that have studied Food Sciences and Technology, including food services, catering companies, small businesses ...

The exploration of the existing relationship between university and industry is decided to be based on surveys that were decided to address university teaching staff, students and heads of food industry plants. The universities involved in this WP were urged to prepare their draft of the above-mentioned surveys, so that, in the last week of February, a meeting will be held in order to prepare a final version of the three surveys.

The surveys will be conducted during a period of 3 months maximum and the results will be statistically interpreted to serve as a basis for the design of the training courses that will be organized by the partners from the University of Teramo and the Catholic University of Porto. The Porto team suggested to delay the training sessions to be scheduled in Portugal to the first week of May (or from 7 to 12) or to July (except the first week). Finally, everybody agreed that the most suitable date would



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be July 23rd – 27th. The Italian team suggested the second or third week of September.