

## Newsletter N°1– May 2015

### Table of content

- THE PROJECT: ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS
- THE CONTEXT
- WHAT IS WATER FOOTPRINT AND THE STATE OF SME'S AWARENESS
- PROJECT'S UPDATES
- THE CONSORTIUM PARTNERS

### The project: activities and outputs

The main aim of the project is to help SMEs (mostly southern Europe ones) to reduce their water footprint related to their production process, by providing them new and innovative learning materials like guides, manuals and other tools, reporting examples of good practices and approaches already followed or to implement, to attain the aim of the efficient use of water in production processes. This includes not only the company's direct operations, but mostly, the indirect water footprint, i.e. the water used in the supply chain.

The primary target group of the project are SMEs managers, who could learn more about water use associated to producing process, putting in place all the necessary actions to reduce it, making more efficient and sustainable friendly the whole production process.



For this category of target group, the recognition and the validation of the acquired skills and competences will be assured by the ECVET tool, which will allow them to complete their curriculum adding the credits corresponding to new obtained capabilities.

The instrument of ECVET will assure at the same time the transferability and the adaptability of the course, that will be available and useful (thanks to an online training platform) for all managers who want to improve their job culture and knowledge about the topic.

## The context

Human activities consume and pollute a lot of water, most of which is used in agricultural production, but also in industrial and domestic sectors.

There is a lack of awareness about the fact that the organization and characteristics of production and supply chain strongly influence the volumes (and temporal and spatial distribution) of water consumption and pollution that can be associated with a final consumer product. Analysing the water footprint of enterprises in Europe can contribute to a transparent and multidisciplinary framework for informing and optimising water policy decisions, contributing at the same time to the implementation of Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the Community action in the field of water policy, that provides at art.11, the adoption, by EU members, of operational programmes and measures starting in 2012 and already gradually adopted by large EU enterprises.



## What is a water footprint and the state of SME's awareness in partners' countries

The water footprint was first defined by Hoekstra & Chapagain (2008). It represents a consumption-based indicator of water use and if we refer to SMEs' activities, we can consider it as the total volume of freshwater that is used to produce the goods and services they provide. The water footprint of a product is expressed as the volume of fresh water used per unit of product. The project's state of the art analysis has been carried out by partners' organization to achieve the following objectives:

- Find out whether the European SMEs in partners' regions/ countries make use of water footprint reduction tools;
- Compare SMEs from different EU countries on their understanding of water footprint issues;
- Identify reasons why the target group is/is not able to implement effective water footprint reduction strategies;
- Evaluate the level of cooperation among SMEs' actors
- Identify, classify and compare water footprint reduction methods or tools that SMEs in different partners' regions use and/ or would like to learn about;
- Identify companies with an interest in participation in the project and pilot training;
- Determine how any potential training should be delivered.

Survey results show that there is a generalized lack of understanding and knowledge about water footprint amongst interviewed SMEs in partners' countries. Even with a high percentage of participants claiming they are acquainted with the term, the companies do not know the water footprint of their direct operations and do not require information from their suppliers.

Water footprint is a concept that needs further sensitization and improved actions, toward its reduction, especially in those sectors that register the strongest impact, such as agriculture and heavy industry.

We can affirm that most of the consortium countries experienced a strong economic downturn in recent years, therefore were more committed in trying to solve financial issues before others. But water management can represent for them another saving item if addressed in sustainable and efficient manners.

For these reasons, companies, showed a high interest in acquiring further knowledge at the management level, but also for their employees.

## Project's updates

The project kick-off took place last 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014 in Enschede, in the Netherlands, hosted by the partner Water Footprint Network. Since then partners have worked for the realization of the State of the Art analysis, conducting a survey in their respective countries. Through the survey consortium partners interviewed a total of 300 SMEs in the field of Food and Beverage, Textile and Mechanics. After that partners drafted a comprehensive report on the State of the Art. From the results of the activities carried out so far, the consortium will be able to develop the next project steps:

- Training model aiming to fill the SMEs' education gaps in terms of reduction of water footprint
- ECVET model for the recognition and transferability of the learning outcomes acquired through the training
- A platform for the delivery of the training material, open to all and translated in all partners languages.



# SAVEH2O



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