NEOLAiA Focus Academy

Course Syllabus

Certify Your Food Roots

Instructors

To be defined

Overview and general data

Provide a brief overview of the course, highlighting its relevance to the NEOLAiA Pillars and the collaborative nature of the course development process.

First NEOLAiA pillar – Digital transformation – includes the sustainable connectivity and socio-economic development at a regional scale. Focus Academy course *Cerify Your Food Roots* tackles a particular aspect of a lot of local/regional economies, i.e. using local resources to enhance local development through a better promotion designed on scientific base. Traditional food products are part of culture and history of each region, but also are resources for some business areas as food production and tourism. European food and drink reflect the continent's cultural diversity and rich lands. The European Certification Scheme for food traditional products aims to protect specific know how, authenticity, agro-environmental conditions, and preserve authenticity.
The participants in this Focus Academy course will have the opportunity to enlarge their knowledge about certification process, its application for traditional food, promotion tools and strategies adapted for traditional food products, and successful stories in transforming local/regional traditional food and beverages in well-known products at European level, able to bring high incomes. Also, the participants will be taught to fill in the application for registering a food traditional products with one of the three European labeles.
The digitalization process and access to data bases gives the tools to compare, analyse, and underpinning certain decisions regarding application for an European label for traditional food product. At the same time, the diversity of participants in term of fields of education, level of studies and countries of orign will lead to a fruitfull experencial share of knowledge and practices with positive impact on their professional background, European integration, team working and innovative ideas creation.

Objectives

Clearly define the objective(s) of the course (at least five).

The course ***Certify Your Food Roots*** aims to:

1. Introduce students to the European certification schemes for traditional and regional food products and explain their role in protecting local food heritage.
2. Help students understand the main steps and requirements involved in obtaining European quality labels.
3. Explore how traditional food products can contribute to local economies, support small businesses and encourage tourism.
4. Develop students' ability to identify traditional food products with potential for European certification.
5. Familiarise students with digital tools and databases used to research, compare and promote traditional food products.
6. Encourage students from different countries and academic backgrounds to exchange experiences and explore new ways of promoting local food traditions.

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Learning outcomes and competencies

Outline the specific learning outcomes and competencies that students are expected to acquire upon completion of the course, aligning with the duration and ECTS requirements.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand European food certification schemes and explain the differences between Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG).
2. Identify and assess traditional food products from their own regions, taking into account their origin, production methods, local traditions and potential for certification.
3. Apply basic knowledge of certification procedures by preparing the main elements of an application for a European quality label.
4. Use relevant digital resources to find information about registered products, certification requirements and examples of successful European food products.
5. Suggest practical ways to promote traditional food products, considering their cultural value, market opportunities and contribution to regional development.
6. Work effectively in international teams, share ideas and experiences, and present the results of a joint project focused on a traditional food product.
7. Students will also develop analytical skills, intercultural communication, teamwork and a better understanding of the relationship between local traditions, European policies and regional economic development.

Contents

Define the scope and content of the course, including key topics, themes, and concepts to be covered.

The course introduces students to the European certification system for traditional food products and explores how local food traditions can contribute to regional development. Alongside the theoretical aspects, students will work with practical examples, discuss experiences from different European countries and learn how to prepare a certification application.
The course will cover the following topics:

1. Traditional food and local identity. The importance of traditional food products for local communities, their connection with cultural heritage and their role in regional economies.
2. European quality schemes. An introduction to the three European quality labels: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG). Students will learn what makes these schemes different and examine examples from several European countries.
3. How to certify a traditional food product. The main steps involved in obtaining a European quality label, the eligibility requirements and the documents needed for an application.
4. Digital resources and databases. How to use European databases, particularly eAmbrosia, to find information about registered products and understand their certification specifications.
5. Traditional food and regional development. How traditional products can support local businesses, create economic opportunities, encourage tourism and help preserve local traditions.
6. Promoting traditional food products. Marketing approaches, branding, digital communication and ways of bringing certified traditional products closer to consumers.
7. Practical examples and group projects. Students will examine successful examples of certified products and work together on a certification proposal for a traditional food product of their choice.

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Number of students, profile, selection process, and registration

Specify the number of students to be enrolled in the course, along with their desired recommended profile and suggestions for the selection criteria (they have to be homogeneous to be applied by each institution sending students). Provide guidance on the registration process for students from participating universities.

The course is intended for a group of around 15–20 students from NEOLAiA partner universities. The final number will depend on the available places and the arrangements made by the participating universities.
Students from different fields of study are welcome to apply. The course may be particularly interesting for students studying **economics, business, tourism, agriculture, food sciences, food engineering or regional development**. However, no previous knowledge of food certification is required.
As the course will be taught in English, participants should be able to follow lectures, take part in discussions and work with students from other countries.
Each partner university will be responsible for selecting its participants, based on common criteria agreed upon by the participating institutions. Selection should take into account students' motivation, their interest in the topic, their English language skills and their availability to attend the planned activities.
The selection process should also aim to bring together students from different countries and academic backgrounds, allowing them to exchange ideas and learn from each other's experiences.
Registration will follow the procedures established by each participating university. Students who are selected will receive information about the course schedule, online meetings, travel arrangements and assignments.

Activities

Design a variety of synchronous and asynchronous activities to engage students in both large cohorts and small groups. Indicate which activities will be open to the wider community and to which sectors (students; staff; faculty; wider society). Incorporate opportunities for collaborative learning, discussions, and hands-on exercises.

The course will include lectures, workshops, practical exercises and group activities. The aim is to give students a good understanding of European food certification while allowing them to apply what they learned.
The activities will include:

- Online meetings before the physical mobility, where students will be introduced to the course, its main topics and the European food certification system.
- Lectures and discussions about traditional food products, European quality labels and the importance of food traditions for local communities.
- Case studies of traditional food products that have already received European certification, looking at their background, certification process and promotion.
- Practical exercises using European databases, where students will search for certified products and examine the information available about them.
- Group activities in which students from different countries will work together to identify a traditional food product and prepare a basic certification proposal.
- Meetings with local producers and other people involved in the traditional food sector, depending on their availability.
- Visits to local producers or food-related businesses in the Suceava region, where possible, to help students better understand how traditional products are made and promoted.
- Final presentations, where each group will share its work and discuss the results with the other participants.

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The synchronous activities will be organized in 3 sesions of 2 hours each. At these meetings are invited all students enrolled at the Focus Academy course *Cerify Your Food Roots*; during the online sessions will be organized short groups activities with the participants divided in 3-4 discussions groups, unsing the facilities of Teams platform. All the synchronous activities will followed by the asynchronous session of individual study for a deeper understanding of the concepts and for preparation the face-to-face component.
During the phisycal component of the course, the students will have activites all together (the whole cohort enrolled in the course) and in working teams. One working team should include students from all universities participating in the course.
Some activities, particularly meetings with local producers and presentations of practical examples, may also be open to university staff, local businesses and other interested members of the community. Students will also be expected to spend some time on individual reading, research and preparation for the group project.
The results of the course and an abstract of each project elaborated by the students teams participating at the on-site activities will be disseminated among the students from all NEOLAiA partners via one online session and among local food producers through the local professional associations: *Produs in Bucovina* (Produced in Bucovina) and *Gusta din Bucovina* (Taste from Bucovina).

Calendar/program

Develop a detailed calendar or program outlining the schedule of activities, including virtual sessions, physical mobility periods, and individual work assignments. Indicate which activities will be open to the wider community and to which sectors (students; staff; faculty; wider society).

The course will combine online activities with a period of physical mobility at Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava.
The proposed programme includes three main stages.

1. Online component
The online component will cover a total of 45 hours organized in synchronous and asynchronous activities. There will organized 3 online meetings , followed by individual study and preparation the on-site component.

<u>First meeting: Kick-off meeting and the general prsentation of the certification concept</u>

- Welcome & introduction to the Focus Academy Program (objectives, timeline, expectations)
- Presentation of Partner Universities & Lecturers
- General topic: Certification concept
- General topic: Food roots/heritage
- Team working: creativity, adaptability, collaboration

<u>Second meeting: Certification of food products</u>

- Traditional vs Industrial
- Particular aspects of the certification for food products (added value, positive impact on business development, and on local/regional/national recognition)
- Traditional food products
- European scheme for certification of traditional food products
- Team formation: dividing the students into at least 3 multinational teams
- Wrap-up and reflection

<u>Third meeting: Challanges and ideas</u>

- Can we certify this products? Using certification of traditional food products from enhancing local production and local tourism

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- Ideation workshop: Promotion the certified traditional food products - the story behind the product
- Certified traditional food products – Image ambassadors and regional promoters
- Presentation of learning materials and preparation the face-to-face component
- Wrap-up & motivational closing

The period proposed for the online component is March 22 - April 9 2027

2. Physical mobility in Suceava

A 5-days component (30 hours) will be hosted by „Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava for the students and professors enrolled at the Focus Academy course ***Certify Your Food Roots.***

Day 0

- Arrival of participants, organising their reception.

Day 1

- Festive opening of the Focus Academy course;
- Introduction of the universities and participants at the course
- Presentation of the objectives for the on-site phase;
- Presentation of the tools and working methods;
- Presentation of the requirements for the group projects to be developed by each team;
- Team-building with the 3 or 4 teams formed during the online component, depending on the number of participants.

Day 2

- Themed excursion to the North-East region to visit producers of traditional local products that are certified under one of the European labels, are in the process of being certified, or have the potential to be certified (2–3 producers)
- Gathering information from each producer visited regarding traditional products, in line with the working materials received for the on-site activities

Day 3 and Day 4

- Teams develop group projects on the theme '*From Grandma's Recipe to the European Market*'
- On the afternoon of Day 4 – a cooking session featuring traditional specialities from the countries participating in the course, followed by a tasting session of the prepared dishes

Day 5

- Presentation of the projects developed by each team to a jury comprising lecturers involved in the course and other academic staff from the participating universities
- Official conclusion of the activities

The course will conclude with a discussion about the main lessons learned and how students might use this knowledge in their future studies or professional activities.

The proposed period for the phisycal component is the 19-23 of April 2027.

3. Final individual work

After the physical mobility, students will prepare a short individual assignment reflecting on what they have learned during the course. They will be encouraged to consider how European certification could benefit a traditional food product from their own region. These final works will be uploaded on the platform that hostes the online component and the materials, hand-outs, working documents, and final projects.

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Assessment

Define the assessment methods and criteria used to evaluate student performance, ensuring alignment with the learning outcomes and competencies. Consider a mix of formative and summative assessments to provide holistic feedback to students.

Performance assessment (grading) has two components: the evaluation of the students works during the online synchronous and asynchronous activities (uploaded on the course platform) and the assessment of the final projects. The criteria for the final projects will be agreed by the jury's members and communicated to the students during the first day of the phisycal meeting in Suceava.

Additional comments

This section is to provide any other relevant information that does not fit within the previous sections.

The course offers students the opportunity to discover traditional food products from different European countries and to better understand their cultural and economic importance.
By bringing together students with different academic backgrounds and experiences, the course also creates a good environment for exchanging ideas and learning from one another.
An important part of the course will be the connection between what students learn in class and what happens in practice. For this reason, examples from the food industry, meetings with producers and discussions about real certification cases will be encouraged.
The Suceava region, particularly Bucovina, offers a useful setting for the course because of its rich food traditions and the importance of local products for tourism and regional identity.
Students will have the opportunity to become familiar with some of these traditions while comparing them with similar examples from their home countries.
The final programme may be adjusted depending on the number of participants, the availability of local partners and the practical arrangements for the mobility period.

References

Add relevant references, the reading list, and other learning resources.

1. European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2024). *Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products.*
2. European Commission. *Geographical Indications and Quality Schemes Explained.* https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes
3. European Commission. *eAmbrosia – The EU Geographical Indications Register.* https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eambrosia/
4. European Commission. *Geographical Indications Registers.* https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-registers_en
5. European Commission. *Regulations on Geographical Indications and Quality Schemes.* https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/regulations-gis_en

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