

FARCURA NEWSLETTER No. 1

Welcome to the FARCURA project

FARCURA (Fostering Inclusion through Social Farming) is a collaborative project funded under the Erasmus + programme of the European Union, with eight partners from five European countries (Ireland, Slovenia, Germany, Belgium & Portugal). The project aim is to develop and enhance knowledge and skills in the area of social farming.

Social farming – also known as Green Care or Care Farming is the therapeutic use of farming landscapes and practices on part or all of a working farm in order to provide health, social, educational and/or vocational supports to a small number of people at risk of social exclusion.

The FARCURA project wishes to equip stakeholders (farmers; social farming representative bodies; social and health care providers; farming representative bodies etc) with the necessary knowledge, skill-sets and competencies to develop and enhance social farming as an innovative approach to fostering social inclusion amongst marginalized groups within rural society throughout Europe. It will do this through

- Analysing the current status of social farming in each of the partner countries and at a European level.
- Developing an online training course on key aspects of social farming and making this available on the projects website to direct beneficiaries through an open source training platform.
- Hosting a series of conferences and training sessions for direct beneficiaries of social farming.

Check out Our Video!!

To get a sense of what FARCURA is all about check out this short video on our home page at farcura.eu

Project Partners

The FARCURA project partners come from Ireland, Slovenia, Germany Portugal and Belgium. Most of the partners have experience of some aspect of social farming and all have a keen interest in seeing this exciting form of occupational therapy become more widely available in their countries and in the European Union as a whole.

Limerick Institute of Technology – an institute of higher education in Ireland are the lead partner. **Biotechnical Centre Naklo** from Slovenia is an educational institution which includes an adult education and research unit who are overseeing the development of the social farming report. **Hof und Leben GMBH** (translating as Farm and Life) is an independent SME focusing on business consulting for farm families that is responsible in the project for co-ordinating the content of the training course. In this they will be assisted by **Hochschule Fur Nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde** – the University for Sustainable Development in Eberswalde, Germany. **The European Landowners Organisation** represents the interests of landowners, forest managers and rural entrepreneurs at the European political level. **The Mozaic Association** is actively involved in the social inclusion of vulnerable social groups in the rural region of Pomurje, Slovenia. **South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd** is an experienced rural development organisation that runs a social farming project from its base in the south of Ireland. **Adrimag** is a non-profit organisation whose aim is to promote local development and provide opportunities to enhance the quality of life for the people of Arouca in Portugal.

The project gives the partners a platform to share insights from their own experience of social farming and share ideas from the social farming sector in their countries. Social farming is very much in its infancy and is developing differently in each European country. The partnership through their various contacts and work focus are well positioned to assess social farming in their regions.

Project Meeting

We had our project kick off meeting in Ireland in January 2020. The meeting was held over two days and hosted by Limerick Institute of Technology at their campus in Thurles Co. Tipperary. The meeting allowed us the opportunity to set out a plan for our two years of collaborative work. It also provided us with the chance to introduce our organisations and to get to know each other better.

On the second day of the meeting we went on a site visit to the Doon Social Farm. The Doon Social Farm is a relatively new initiative of the Ballyhoura Rural Services Company. It seeks to work with marginalised young people using the ethos of social farming to provide them

with a space for personnel development as well as training in horticultural skills. On the cold January morning we were met and generously hosted by staff and board members of the social farm who provided us with delicious scones and hot tea and coffee.



Visit to Doon Social Farm

Board member Noreen Ryan gave a presentation on the current work and future plans of the social farm and took us on a tour of the site. Also on the day Goran Milosevic from the Mozaik – a member of the FARCURA project team presented on his own inspiring social farm project in Slovenia. The feedback from the event was very positive from all sides. The project partners got an insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by a burgeoning social farm in Ireland. For the team at the Doon Social Farm they found the engagement with other fellow social farm advocates to be very encouraging and inspiring. Social farming remains a niche endeavour in Ireland and there are not many opportunities to network with and share experiences with other social farmers. This was a great opportunity to share contact details

and build relationships between fellow advocates of social farming. Our countries have different systems and structures but most of the challenges faced by social farmers are the same.

The Social Farming Report

The first major task of the FARCURA project was to do some research on the state of the art of social farming within the partner countries. Each of the partners created a report analysing the status of social farming in their country. Each report also contained case studies of active social farms in each country. These reports were then used to create a summary report which draws together the information from the National Reports. The summary report is now available on our website and will soon be translated into Slovenian, German and Portuguese.

This report of the FARCURA Project **The State of the art of innovative models of social farming** captures the diversity of social farming in four European countries (Slovenia, Germany, Portugal and Ireland). It gives an overview of the types of agriculture practiced in each of the countries and examines how agricultural activities are utilised for the practice of social farming. The report highlights the differing levels of supports that are offered for social farming in different countries. Four case studies from Germany, Ireland, Slovenia and two from Portugal give the greatest weight to the report. These give a clear picture of the

practicalities of social farming in these countries through the views of hosts, participants and members of support institutions.

While the report highlights the concrete challenges and opportunities for social farming it also provides us with a glimpse of the transformative potential of social farming. We see how much participants benefit from their visits to the farm and how effective it is in enhancing the quality of life for so many people who feel cut off from mainstream society because of their life circumstances or because of issues with their mental or physical health. Social farming is an innovative form of social care that is still in its infancy and that – give the right supports – can blossom into significant contributor to the health and well-being of the less fortunate members of society.

Training Course

We are currently working on our training course. This will be available as an online self-directed learning course through our website in 2021. The course will provide a comprehensive introduction to social farming and will be a valuable resource for stakeholders wishing to have a general understanding of the topic.

Social Media

Please follow the FARCURA project on Facebook and Twitter for updates