



Hydroponics Agricultural Technician

Newsletter №1

About the project

The **PONICS VET** is an **Erasmus+** project, focusing mainly on young farmers from rural and semi-urban areas, which are the main target group. The idea behind the project is to provide training in a specialization which is essential for the future of agriculture.

The main aim of the **PONICS VET** project is to create an innovative professional profile, the **hydroponics technician** and to deliver training for such a profile. Along with the education, the course will incorporate formal certification with the applications of the rules drawn from the **ECVET (the European credit system for VET)** methodology that will allow – or at least facilitate - recognition of learning outcomes in all European Member States.



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The Technology



Image: [nasa.gov](https://www.nasa.gov)

Hydroponics is the method of growing plants without soil, using mineral nutrient solutions in a water solvent. Terrestrial plants may be grown with only their roots exposed to the mineral solution, or the roots may be supported by an inert medium, such as perlite or gravel.

Main advantages of Hydroponics include:

- Plants can be grown anywhere where conventional food production cannot compete such as polluted industrial sites, indoor spaces, etc.
- It is resource efficient in places where water shortages, general infrastructure, and logistics are hampering conventional food production.
- Requires reduced chemical inputs of pesticides and fertilizers.

- It is more productive per square meter when compared to the conventional food production.
- The system water can be reused, allowing conservation of resources.
- No soil setup, extensive testing or unintended residues from water and air pollution.
- No mulching, tilling, changing of soil and weeding.
- Can work year-round if indoors.

Due to technological advancements within the industry and numerous economic factors, the global hydroponics market is forecast to grow from 191.91 million euro in 2016 to 614.32 million euro by 2023.

The Consortium

In the PONICS VET project participate partners from 5 European countries - Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies and Union “Farmers’ Parliament” from Latvia, IDEC from Greece, Eurocrea Merchant from Italy, Association for Vertical Farming e.V from Germany and BIC Innobridge from Bulgaria.

Presentation of Ponics VET on GreenTech 2018 in Amsterdam



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Image: LLU

Representatives of the Association for Vertical Farming e.V (AVF) and Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU) participated in GreenTech 2018 which took place at RAI in Amsterdam, The Netherlands on June 12-14, 2018. GreenTech is the global meeting place for all professionals involved in horticulture technology including developments and solutions for hydroponic systems. The AVF hosted round table talks lead by international experts on the topics of AI in Vertical Farming, Standardization and Data, Innovation in Systems and Medicinal Plant Growing. Ainis Lagzdins of LLU gave a presentation entitled “PONICS VET: Hydroponics Agricultural Technician – from an idea to implementation” to promote existing and planned activities of the project.

Kick-off meeting in Jelgava, Latvia



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The first meeting took place in Jelgava, Latvia and was hosted by Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. During the meeting, partners had the chance to discuss about the project activities and plan the tasks that need to be carried out during the next few months, as well as organize the project's evaluation and dissemination agenda, in order to share its results and outputs with the relevant stakeholders and target groups.



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