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European Qualifications & Competences for the Vegan Food Industry

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Exploitation strategy

Workpackage 6 Dissemination and exploitation
Task 6.4 Exploitation Strategy and establishment of a sector skills alliance
Lead Beneficiary ISEKI-Food Association (IFA)

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Foreword

The work described in this report was developed under the project EQVEGAN: European Qualifications & Competences for the Vegan Food Industry (621581-EPP-1-2020-1-PT-EPPKA2-SS). If you wish any other information related to this report or the EQVEGAN project, please visit the project web-site (www.eqvegan.eu) or contact:

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Dissemination Level

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PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including Commission services and projects reviewers)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including EACEA and Commission services and projects reviewers)	

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Summary

Exploitation is associated with the use of the project's results after the implementation of the project. The EQVEGAN exploitation strategy focuses on several key aspects, including: i) identification of exploitable results; ii) establishment of an exploitation roadmap; iii) indicators to measure the roadmap performance; iv) collaboration with other partnerships; v) preliminary financial forecast and vi) intellectual property rights. The exploitation strategy will be implemented by the EQVEGAN Sector Skills Alliance members. The strategy is an open document that covers the first year after the project. After that period it will be yearly updated by the EQVEGAN Sector Skills Alliance.



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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the EQVEGAN project objectives, activities, and outcomes

The food industry is changing due to several driving forces, based on the consumer changes toward plant-based diets, leading to an increased share of production by the vegan food industry, that to maintain competitiveness needs to master new processes and technologies. Additionally, the food industry is subject to more demanding sustainability requirements, that together with digitalization and automatization trends, are quickly changing the required skills of its workers. Innovative trainings covering these technical issues are needed to support the quick change towards the vegan food industry adapted to Industry4.0.

The EQVEGAN project, funded by the ERASMUS+ Sector Skills Alliance Programme, is a dynamic initiative aimed at addressing this evolving landscape of the food industry. It consists of a diverse consortium of 15 institutions from 11 countries. The consortium brings together a range of expertise, including vocational education and training (VET) providers, companies, industry associations, professionals, researchers, and qualification agencies. By leveraging this collective knowledge, the project aims to design and deliver innovative, high-quality training programs that cater to the evolving needs of the food industry.

In a first step, the occupational profiles related to the food industry that were the objective of training were identified. These profiles were food production operator (EQF 4), food technician (EQF 5) and food technologist (EQF 6,7), all of them included in the International Standard Classification of Occupations ([ISCO](#)) and in the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations database ([ESCO](#)). These profiles, comprehensively described in basic and optional skills/knowledge, were updated by EQVEGAN in alignment with the new demand on plant-based, green, digital and soft knowledge/skills. The update was communicated to ESCO and the profiles are going to be updated based on EQVEGAN input.

Then training curricula and activities were developed for professionals and students on plant-based processing technology (vegetable, fruit, cereal and nut products), soft skills, digitalization and automation, and green skills for European Qualification Framework (EQF) levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. Training material developed for these activities will be available on the ISEKI e-learning platform by the end of the project. Four e-learning modules to train the trainers in the four project training topics were also developed and are available on the same platform.

Besides of these trainings, the project carried out other related activities that are described below:

- Creation of a stakeholders' database, where stakeholders external to the project can register and then be able to access the training material on the ISEKI e-learning platform. Registered users will also receive after the project information on the EQVEGAN Sector Skills Alliance (SSA) activities.
- Creation of a work-based learning database, with the aim of offering students and food professionals apprenticeships and internships submitted to the database by European companies. This database is supported by guidelines for recognition of work-based learning



and other prior learning developed also by the project partners, and with guidelines for apprenticeships in the food industry based on the European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships.

- A proposal of “professional certification scheme for food professionals”, with the aim of acknowledging professional qualifications, recognising work-based learning, supporting mobility of workers, and promoting life-long learning. The proposal is ready and the scheme will be implemented by the SSA after the project end on the food skills platform.

To facilitate the dissemination of information and services, EQVEGAN has developed two web platforms:

- EQVEGAN website, with information on the project objectives, partners, communication material, activities and open deliverables.
- Food Skills portal. Here are located the stakeholders’ and work-based learning databases, a link to access the training material and will be the place where the professional certification scheme will be implemented.

Finally, a Sector Skills Alliance is in the process of being established. The aims of this alliance are to monitor and tackle skill needs in the plant-based food industry, fostering continuous professional development and mobility of professionals in Europe. One of the main activities of the EQVEGAN SSA will be the exploitation of EQVEGAN results.

1.2. Aims of the EQVEGAN exploitation strategy

There are two main actions aimed at sustaining the project results and consortium. The first one is the creation of the EQVEGAN SSA indicated in the previous section. The alliance will indicate responsible members to maintain the project platforms and services, training activities, online training modules and materials.

The second action is the development of the project exploitation strategy. Exploitation is associated with the use of the project’s results after the implementation of the project. It is related with the necessary actions that will bring visibility to the project to involve the target groups, end-users, stakeholders and transfer the results/products into their professionals’ scope.

The EQVEGAN exploitation strategy focuses on several key aspects, including:

- Identification of exploitable results.
- Establishment of an exploitation roadmap, indicating target groups, exploitation channels/activities, responsible partners, and timelines.
- Indicators to measure the roadmap performance.
- Collaboration with other partnerships.
- Preliminary financial forecast
- Intellectual property rights

As commented before, the exploitation strategy will be implemented by the EQVEGAN SSA members.



The EQVEGAN exploitation strategy is an open document that covers the first year after the project. After that it must be revised by the EQVEGAN SSA.

2. Key exploitable results

The first step to develop the exploitation strategy is to identify the project key exploitable results (KERs), that is, the outputs generated during the project which can be used and create impact, either by the project partners or by other stakeholders.

Table 1 shows the KERs of the EQVEGAN project, including the corresponding code, description and related deliverables (links available when open to public).

Table 1. EQVEGAN Key Exploitable Results (KERs).

Code	Exploitable result	Description	Related deliverables
KER1	Food Skills Portal	The portal was built to facilitate the use of different project outcomes. It includes: i) a training section with links to the online modules and content; ii) a work-based learning section, including a work-based learning database; iii) a stakeholders section, including a stakeholders' database; iv) a certification section, with information about professional certification and a contact for this service	D 1.3
KER2	Stakeholders' database	Database with stakeholders interested in the project outcomes. It includes mainly VET providers and food companies, but also food associations, research institutions and public bodies. Stakeholders of this database are informed about project outcomes when ready to use. It is located in the food skills portal. These stakeholders will be important target users in the exploitation strategy.	D 1.1
KER3	Occupational profiles for the vegan food industry professionals	Three ESCO occupational profiles "food production operator", "food technician" and "food technologists" were reviewed and updated mainly incorporating new green skills, digitalization/automation skills, soft skills and plant-based processing skills. The update was communicated to ESCO.	D 1.2 , D 4.8
KER4	Work-based learning database	A database where students can search for apprenticeship or internship related to the food sector and apply directly by contacting the	D 3.2



		training organisation or company. On the other hand, training organisations and companies that offer work-based learning opportunities can post for free their vacancies and receive students' applications.	
KER5	Guidelines for work-based learning in the food industry	Guidelines for work-based learning in the food industry based on the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (2018/C 153/01), which include at least its 7 criteria for learning and working conditions and 7 criteria for framework conditions. Guidelines are available in Croatian, English, Estonian, Finish, French, German, Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish.	D 3.1
KER6	Guidelines for recognition of work-based learning and other prior learning	These guidelines are based mainly on assessment methods aligned with descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework but also take into account the National Qualification Frameworks and Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks, when existing.	D 4.7
KER7	Training modules guidelines	Four training modules on plant-based processing, soft skills, digitalisation/automation skills and green skills were developed for the occupational profiles “food production operator”, “food technician” and “food technologists”, covering EQF levels 4-7, for food professionals and students. Access will be done through the Food Skills portal.	D 2.1 , D 2.2 , D 2.3 , D 2.4
KER8	Train-the-Trainer modules	Train-the-Trainer activities are also divided into four modules as the previous modules. They are available online in the IFA Moodle e-learning platform.	D 2.5
KER9	Training materials	Training resources are available at the IFA training platform. Previous registration to the stakeholders’ database is required.	D 2.1 , D 2.2 , D 2.3 , D 2.4 , D 2.5
KER10	European certification scheme of job profiles for the vegan food industry	The main objectives of this scheme are to support the mobility of workers, recognize qualifications, and promote lifelong learning among food industry professionals. EQVEGAN has used the three ESCO's occupational profiles considered previously in the project (“food production operator-EQF4”, “food technician-EQF5” and “food technologist-EQF6,7”) to	D4.8



		design its professional certification system. The scheme will undergo piloting and implementation phases after the project.	
KER11	Project website	The project website will be maintained by IFA after the project end. It includes relevant information for exploitation purposes, such as news on project activities, public deliverables, communication materials (project video, leaflet, poste, roll up) and links to the Food Skills portal and the IFA training platform.	D 7.4

3. Exploitation roadmap

The aim of this section is to describe the activities to exploit the project results, target users, timelines and responsible partners for exploitation. These activities have been grouped in 4 actions. Some activities, mainly on dissemination and engagement, may be common for different actions.

ACTION 1. Sector Skills Alliance set up and stakeholders engagement

Main target stakeholders: sector skills alliance members, VET institutions, Higher Education institutions, food companies.

Timeline: Jan-Mar 24

The objectives of this action are to set up the EQVEGAN SSA, start the implementation of its activities and recruit new members. Right after the project end, the SSA signatories will organise regular meetings to set up the SSA governance structure and to start the implementation of the SSA activities (including Actions 2,3 and 4).

An important tool to implement is the EQVEGAN SSA landing page (see D 6.6) which will be a virtual space to disseminate the alliance and promote the engagement of new members. This page will be placed in the ISEKI-Food association website, [special interest groups section](#), which ensures ISEKI secretariat support and web platform maintenance.

Once the landing page is implemented, different engagement activities will be carried out to recruit new members.

Activities:

- Regular meetings to set up the EQVEGAN SSA governance structure and agree with activities and responsible partners.
- Set up of the EQVEGAN SSA landing page.
- EQVEGAN SSA engagement activities, including social media and e-mail communication activities and webinars.
- Planning new European/National projects by the SSA within the Pact for Skills.



ACTION 2. Exploitation of the EQVEGAN platforms: project website and Food Skills portal.

Main target stakeholders: VET institutions, Higher Education institutions, food companies, food professionals, students.

Timeline: Mar-Dec 24

The project website will be exploited to provide information and background about activities initially performed in EQVEGAN but now offered by the EQVEGAN SSA. It will give access to all the project open deliverables, will provide information about EQVEGAN aims and activities, and will give access through links to the food skills portal (stakeholders database, work-based learning database and certification scheme) and to the e-learning modules and learning materials. It will work as a one stop place to find all the project exploitable results.

Food skills portal exploitation will include the dissemination and maintenance of the stakeholders and work-based learning databases.

Activities:

- Maintenance of the EQVEGAN and Food Skills portals by IPC and IFA.
- Dissemination and recruitment campaigns for the stakeholders and work-based learning databases by all the EQVEGAN SSA members, including social media and webinars.
- Promote the use of the “Guidelines for apprenticeships in the food industry” (D 3.1) as best practices reference for work-based learning activities.
- Disseminate results through the Erasmus+ project results platform
- Foster collaborations and partnerships with other platforms, initiatives, or organizations operating in the field of work-based learning and the food sector (educational institutions, professional associations, and industry networks) to encourage participation and promote the work-based learning database as a valuable resource.

ACTION 3. Exploitation of EQVEGAN training activities and materials.

Main target stakeholders: VET institutions, higher education institutions, food companies, food professionals, students.

Timeline: Mar-Dec 24

This action includes the exploitation of i) the train-the trainer modules available in the IFA e-learning platform; ii) the training material developed in the EQVEGAN project; iii) the in-person trainings done by EQVEGAN partners in their institutions.

Activities:

- Maintenance of the TtT modules on the IFA e-learning platform (IFA)
- Regularly review and update the training modules to incorporate the latest advancements and trends in the vegan food industry, soft skills, digital-automation, and green skills.
- Dissemination of the TtT modules by all SSA members.
- Dissemination of the training material, placed at the IFA e-learning platform.
- Reporting on how the EQVEGAN in-person trainings have been included in the educational programmes of VET institutions and Universities.

ACTION 4. Implementation of the certification scheme for food professionals

Main target stakeholders: Food companies, food professionals

Timeline: Jun-Dec 24



This action aims at implementing the certification scheme for food professionals developed in EQVEGAN. The rationale, aims and procedures of the scheme have been already described in D 4.8. The next steps are to carry out a pilot phase, provide the digital resources to implement an electronic procedure and launch the scheme as a service of IFA-EQVEGAN SSA.

Activities:

- Updating of the [Foodcareers](#) website, owned by IFA, to be used as an electronic platform to submit applications, upload documentation and communicate with applicants and evaluation bodies.
- Pilot phase, including selection of the applicants and evaluators.
- Promote the use of the “guidelines for recognition of work-based learning and other prior learning” (D 4.7) by the certification scheme evaluators.
- Dissemination and engagement campaigns. Engage with key stakeholders in the food sector, including industry associations, companies, and professional bodies to create awareness and promote the value of the certification scheme.
- Disseminate results through the Erasmus+ project results platform
- Indirectly, disseminate the updates of the ESCO occupational profiles “Food Production Operator”, “Food Technician” and “Food Technologist” since these profiles are used in the certification scheme.

Table 2 shows a summary of the actions, timelines, related KERs, engagement activities and target users.



Table 2. Exploitation roadmap for the first year after project's end

Action	Timeline	Related KERs	Engagement activities	Target users
ACTION 1. SSA set up and stakeholders engagement	Jan-Mar 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSA meetings • SSA landing page • Social media campaigns, webinars • Planning new European/National projects by the SSA within the Pact for Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSA members • VET institutions • Higher Education institutions • Food companies
ACTION 2. EQVEGAN platforms	Mar-Dec 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Skills portal (KER1) • Stakeholders database (KER2) • Work-based learning database (KER4) • Guidelines for recognition of work-based learning and other prior learning (KER6) • EQVEGAN website (KER11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites maintenance • Social media campaigns, webinars • Foster collaborations and partnerships with other platforms, initiatives, or organizations • Disseminate results through the Erasmus+ project results platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET institutions • Higher Education institutions • Food companies • Food professionals • Students
ACTION 3. Training activities and materials	Mar-Dec 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training modules guidelines (KER7) • Train the trainer modules (KER8) • Training materials (KER9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability plan for the in-person training in VET and HE institutions • Regularly review and update the training content • Dissemination of the trainings and materials: social media, webinars, other channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET institutions • Higher education institutions • Food companies • Food professionals • Students
ACTION 4. Certification scheme for food professionals	Jun-Dec 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational profiles for the vegan food industry professionals (KER3) • Guidelines for recognition of work-based learning and other prior learning (KER6) • European certification scheme of job profiles for the vegan food industry (KER10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual space set up • Pilot phase • Dissemination and engagement campaign: social media, webinars, other channels • Disseminate results through the Erasmus+ project results platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food companies • Food professionals

4. Key performance indicators

In order to measure the success in the implementation of the exploitation plan, the following Key Performance Indicators (KPI) will be taken into account (Table 3). The EQVEGAN SSA will be in charge of monitoring the progress of the exploitation activities against the KPI targets in Table 3 and take corrective measures if necessary. The alliance members are also responsible for recording their exploitation actions (including respective KPIs) and reporting them to an exploitation matrix that will be available on a shared gdrive folder.

Table 3. Key performance indicators

ACTION	Activity	KPI	June 24	Dec 24
1	SSA landing page	New visitors	100	200
1	SSA membership	Number of institutional members	15	30
1	Social Media on SSA	Number of LinkedIn posts	12	24
1	SSA promotional webinars	Number of webinars	1	2
1	SSA promotional webinars	Participants	30	60
2	Food skills Portal website	New visitors	150	300
2	Stakeholders database	New registered users	50	100
2	WBL database	New vacancies	25	50
2	Guidelines for apprenticeships	Number of downloads	25	50
2	WBL database –partnerships	Number of institutions contacted	5	10
2	Social media on Food Skills	Number of LinkedIn posts	12	24
2	Food Skills promotional webinars	Number of webinars	1	2
3	TtT Modules	New registered users	50	100
3	Training material online	Number of downloads	100	200
3	Social media on training resources	Number of LinkedIn posts	12	24
3	Training promotional webinars	Number of webinars	1	2
4	Pilot activity	Number of certified professionals		3
4	Social media on professional certification	Number of LinkedIn posts		6
4	Professional certification promotional webinars	Number of webinars		1
4	Professional certification applications	Number of applications		5

5. Collaboration with other partnerships

Synergies with other related projects, partnerships or initiatives should also be explored, to support the sustainability of project results and increase the impact of the exploitation.



EQVEGAN is one of the initial supporters of the “Agri-food pact for skills”, a [skills partnership](#) for the agri-food ecosystem. The aims of this pact are upskilling and reskilling the current workforce, and making the agri-food ecosystem more attractive to young people, while providing a life-long learning perspective to both employers and employees

More specifically:

- Developing partnerships between education and training organisations, business operators, and business support organisations, to overcome the skills gap;
- Developing actions for up- and reskilling in the ecosystem;
- Mobilising students and trainees across the EU for better training;
- Highlighting the relevance of vocational education and training (VET), including apprenticeships, as well as of life-long learning across the EU;
- Ensuring better communication around the attractiveness of the agri-food ecosystem in order to attract young generations and experts to fulfil new job roles linked to the challenges faced by the ecosystem;
- Taking special care of SMEs, for a better alignment of their specific skills needs;
- Aligning and communicating amongst the employers, employees (social dialogue) and the education and training organisations for an optimal implementation of the partnership’s commitments

EQVEGAN is participating in the activities of the pact since its start in 2022.

The aims and activities of the EQVEGAN SSA are in alignment with those of the agri-food pact for skills. In this sense, EQVEGAN SSA aims at sharing its project outcomes through the pact for skills dissemination channels, whereas receiving information from the pact beneficial for the SSA activities. In this way the exploitation impact of EQVEGAN results will be increased.

EQVEGAN SSA members will decide which project outcomes will be shared with the agri-food pact for skills partnership and in which conditions they will be shared.

Cooperation with other projects, partnerships and initiatives will be also considered by the SAA.

6. Preliminary financial forecast

6.1 Revenue streams

The potential revenue streams are identified as follows:

- EU/National (co)funded projects. Projects represent a good opportunity to develop new outputs and/or to further improve the currently existing ones. Partners of the EQVEGAN SSA will periodically map funding opportunities and will inform the Alliance about interesting calls, to decide what funding opportunities are worth pursuing. In case a decision is made to submit a proposal, the EQVEGAN SSA will identify the partners with the capacity and knowledge necessary to submit a competitive proposal. Special attention will be paid to ERASMUS+ calls such those included in the Key Action 2 “Cooperation among organisations and institutions”. No revenues are expected from funding opportunities for 2024 but they might be an important revenue source from 2025 on.
- EQVEGAN SSA membership fees. Initially no membership fees will be charged. After the alliance is established, an annual fee might be paid by the members of the EQVEGAN



Alliance to cover the operation and coordination costs, if not enough other funds are obtained.

- Paid services. The KERs susceptible for requiring fees are: training modules guidelines (KER7), train-the-trainer modules (KER8), training materials (KER9) and professional certification (KER10). No revenue for the EQVWGAN SSA is expected from trainings on each partner country university. The initial train-the-trainer e-learning module and the online training material will be available for free, but further updates on these courses and materials will be available under payment of fees. Similar scheme will be followed for professional certification; applications will be submitted for free for 2024 (piloting phase), but application fees will be charged after the piloting phase to cover the cost of the procedure (management and evaluators).
- Investors/Sponsors. Another possible revenue stream consists in the funds of parties (industry, EU institutions, academies, research bodies, etc.) interested to invest (in equity and/or debt) in the overall operation of the Alliance and/or in Alliance specific initiatives., e.g., identification of skill needs, training actions, promotional events.

6.2 Costs

- Platforms maintenance. Maintenance of the EQVEGAN project website and the Food Skills portal. These costs are related with domain maintenance and updates on the content mainly on the Food Skills portal (stakeholders' database, work-based learning database). Staff costs (1 hour/month). The project website costs are paid for the next 7 years. IFA will cover the remaining costs.
- Trainings. The maintenance of the trainings on each partner training organisation will be included in the respective annual budget of the organisation.
- Maintenance of online courses and materials, located in the IFA e-learning platform. Technical maintenance will be covered by IFA and updates of the courses and materials are covered by the partners responsible of each specific course/content.
- EQVEGAN SSA presentation webpage and secretariat support. Costs will be covered by IFA.
- Other personal costs. These costs are related with other EQVEGAN SSA activities related to the exploitation of EQVEGAN results, e.g.: mapping and preparation of project proposals, Social Media promotion of EQVEGAN results, organisation of online promotional events, etc.
- Tools for online events, such as Zoom, Teams...The accounts of the SSA members will be used.
- Implementation of the professional certification scheme. Personal cost for the implementation of the web-tools to digitalize the procedure as well as personal costs for reviewing applications and manage the procedure.

Being the paid services for free during 2024, earnings are not expected for this year, this situation is expected to change during 2025 and 2026. A more detailed financial analysis must be done by the SSA by the end of 2024.



7. Intellectual property rights

Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the EQVEGAN consortium agreement describe all the aspects related to intellectual property rights necessary for the successful implementation of the project, including ownership and access rights of the project results.

The EQVWGAN SSA will follow the specifications of the consortium agreement in terms of results ownership and results access rights to carry out their appropriate exploitation.

8. Continuous improvement

This exploitation strategy is a living document and will be updated on a yearly basis by the EQVEGAN SSA.

