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Hints and tools on teaching the LitusGo Manual

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1. Introduction: about this guide

The “Hints and tools for teaching the LitusGo education Manual” document, was developed to support the trainers who are going to teach/train Local Authorities and Local stakeholders into Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and climate change, based on the LitusGo Education Manual. This short document is not a comprehensive guide: it is rather a “hands-on-experience” guide and a “how-to-do” guide. The aim is to provide the trainers with easy to use “hints and tools” that highlight the salient features of training adults in the innovative issues that are included in Integrated Coastal Zone Management and the impacts of climate changes and adaptation. It is motivated by the authors’ large experience on adult training and training of trainers and on trainings and presentations which the authors have seen “*which have not nearly done justice to the work which they were intended to train*” (Alan Pickaver, Hints on preparing training package modules, LitusGo report D6.1, January 2010).

The “Hints and tools” document is in line with the general concept of LitusGo: it is short, targeted and solution oriented. This final version of “hints and tools” incorporates the experiences from the pilot trainings of LitusGo education manual, which took place in all the three countries that pilot trainings took place (Greece-Paros, Cyprus-Pafos and Malta): the “cons” and “pros” of the processes that have been adopted during the trainings and the views of the trainees as they have been stated during the evaluation process of the trainings. The aim is to provide the LitusGo trainer with a friendly set of hints and tools, in order to deliver a successful and

interesting training, motivate the trainees and achieve their balanced and active participation in the entire problem solving approach.

2. Some theoretical tips and background on adult learning

2.1 Does an adult learn?

A very important question is “Does an adult learn?” The answer is straight forward: “Only if it’s worthwhile!” So, the aim of LitusGo is to provide its target group, i.e. Local Authorities and local stakeholders, with an interesting training system which includes a comprehensive training module presented and communicated through an interesting, participatory and up-to-date teaching method.

In the trainers’ guide of the successful OrganicMed project it is stated and we agree, thus we quote it: *“In adult learning, experience has a fundamental role. It is made up of the experiences, knowledge and information that one possesses and to which new knowledge and experiences are added during the learning process. Thus, the adult is the author of his/her own learning process. At the same time, he/she participates and contributes to other adults’ learning process.*

The adult’s participation in a learning process is the result of a conscious choice: he/she is motivated from the start, and this motivation stems from both professional and personal considerations:

- *On a professional level, in the expectations or aspirations which originate from the consciousness that certain competences (cognitive, technologic, operational) are useful to carry out more efficiently his/her work;*
- *On a personal level, learning is considered a means of satisfying his/her needs or achieving his/her ideals.*

In the end, an adult learns if and only if:

- *He/she believes that the effort of learning is useful for his/her personal or professional development.*
- *What is taught is somehow related to his/her personal experience or work.*
- *He/she is able to find meaning in what he/she is learning, and integrate it with his/her previous knowledge.”*

2.2 Let's learn together

LitusGo teaching approach is based on cooperative learning: it is the concept of group education and is described as “the work of groups composed of various subjects of different age, sex and learning capacity”. These subjects search common ways of understanding and common cooperation strategies, aimed at establishing a specific goal. Cooperative learning includes the choice of abandoning the traditional **frontal lesson** and introducing **active learning activities** such as work/case studies carried out in small groups, group discussions, field trips, outdoor work and generally it is an interactive learning process.

In the following chapters specific hints and tips are given to support the trainers to build a well structured cooperative learning activity, when teaching the LitusGo Education Manual. However, the LitusGo

teaching process is flexible and adjustable: each trainer has his/her own **teaching style** and each trainees group has specific needs and characteristics. It is important for the trainers to understand the characteristics of each group and accommodate his/her training among the group and increase **learning motivation**. Keep always in mind this basic principle for adult cooperative learning **“Let’s learn together”**.

3. Teaching the LitusGo Education Manual

3.1 The structure of the LitusGo Modules

The LitusGo Education Manual consists of 20 self contained, interrelated modules. LitusGo partners decided from the very beginning of the development work, to adopt a common structure and size/text length for all the 20 modules so that the document is logically structured and easy to follow for the reader. The structure of the modules is in line with the problem solving approach of LitusGo. The text was strictly kept short (six A4 pages, including photographs or texts), in order to “invite” the reader to go through it and not “terrify” him with enormous texts. It has a logical structure that allows the text to naturally unfold as the reader progresses through the document. Each module is structured in five chapters:

1. Theoretical background (short, with tips and references so anybody interested can go further)
2. Objective (why we deal with this problem, what are LitusGo aims?)

3. Problem (most usual problems for a Local Authority and Local stakeholders)
4. How to deal with the problem (suggestions, good practices, photographs, diagrams)
5. Bibliography and Relevant sources of information

3.2 The wiki-LitusGo modules

In their e-version that is uploaded on the LitusGo portal (www.litusgo.eu), the modules of the LitusGo Manual include a wiki application, which make their interrelation more straight forward: allows key words to be assigned to the different document sections and modules, making cross-referencing relatively simple.

It is strongly suggested to the trainers to use the e-version, wiki-modules. It is a very interactive and easy-to-use version of the modules.

3.3 The languages and the versions of the modules

The LitusGo Manual is available in three versions: a hard copy, consisting of 20 independent booklets, one for each module, which are contained in a specially designed paper case, an e-version (see par. 3.2) and a DVD, which is also included in the paper case of the hard copy version. The trainers are encouraged to make the most of these potentials of the manual. The Manual, in all versions, is available in the four LitusGo languages: English, Greek, Maltese and Turkish. Of course, it is of utmost importance to teach the Manual in the audience's native language.

3.4 Main principles to teach the LitusGo Education Manual

Five have been the main principles for the development of the LitusGo education Manual and the same go for the teaching approach:

- The training material and training approach should be **Clear** with no questions possible about the meaning of any procedure described or fact presented;
- **Complete** and detailed enough to support itself, while citing any external sources;
- **Correct** since nothing is more important than accuracy in technical writing;
- **Concise**, keep it short, since people do not enjoy reading wordy manuals and spending hours and hours in boring training sessions; and
- **Compelling**, as much as possible, technical writing and technical presentations should compel readers/ audience. Avoid complex and difficult technical vocabulary.

3.5 Who is the audience?

It is important that the trainer knows the audience. The presentation of each module must be pitched at an appropriate level with sufficient background to allow understanding by the target audience. Examples of target audiences are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Example target audiences

Report type	Target audience
EU/central government policy expertise	Persons not familiar with technical detail but very familiar with policy relevance
Local practitioner	Persons very familiar with technical detail but not with policy relevance
General public	Not familiar with either technical detail or policy relevance

Failure to pitch the level correctly will also inevitably result in failure to communicate the trainers' ideas effectively, since the reader will either be swamped with complexity or bored with blandness!

3.6 Approach to each chapter of LitusGo Manual modules

This chapter follows the directions of the LitusGo report by Alan Pickaver, "Hints on preparing training package modules", LitusGo report D6.1, January 2010. Those directions are modified to accommodate hints and tools for the trainers. Below, these suggestions are given per chapter of the LitusGo modules:

3.6.1 Three general tips:

Tip 1: Justification and rationale

For each idea presented, the trainer should establish some *rationale* or motivation for its undertaking and any assumptions made must be *justified*. Similarly, critical assessment should be made of any results.

Tip 2: Multimedia and Visual Balance

A presentation can contain information in a variety of forms. These include figures, tables and photographs. Choosing different means of representation can also be used to give visual balance to the document, for example by breaking up long sections of text with photos, tables or figures. In cases where several options are available for representing a particular piece of information, the author can choose appropriately to make the document a less daunting prospect to the reader through visual balance. In most cases, however, the appropriate choice of medium is dictated by the type of information to be communicated.

Tip 3: Photographs

"A picture tells a thousand words"? There is great substance in this statement, and nowhere more obvious than in reports. Some trainers shun the formality of photographs, preferring to describe the required relationships in textual form (as in a report). However, it is generally possible to encapsulate a whole paragraph of such text with a single photograph. Use them in the training process where possible!

For example, compare the effort which is needed to describe the two photographs below (from LitusGo Module 12: Morphological changes/erosion control), the one showing an eroded beach as a result of an inappropriate hard coastal construction and the comparison one year later after the hard structures have been removed and the beach has been restored (See Figs. 1 and 2).

Fig 1. Eroded beach at Paphos with the groyne in place

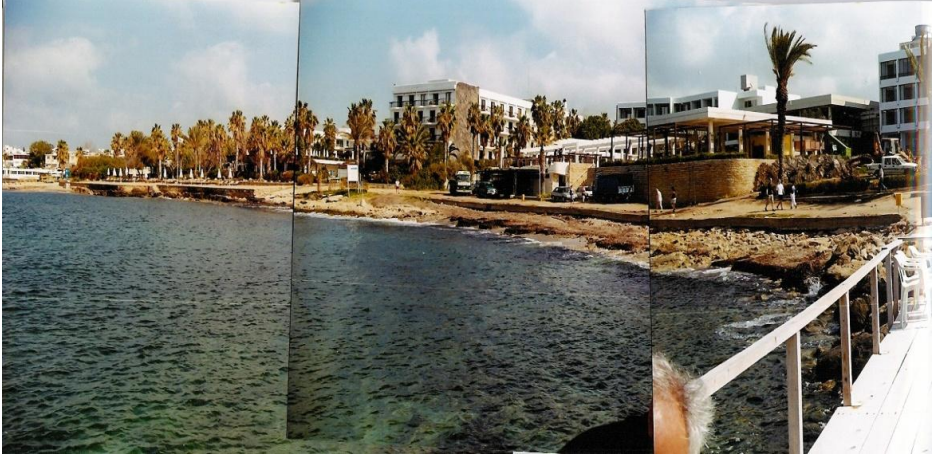


Fig 2. The same beach, recovered at Paphos one year after removal of the groyne.



3.6.2 Training tips per section of LitusGo modules:

Section 1: The Theoretical Background

This first section of each module is actually the introduction of each module and it consists of several paragraphs and serves two purposes. It is designed to *give readers an idea of what the rest of the writing will say and provides a reason for readers to continue reading. This is an important part of the training process:*

A good introduction:

- indicates the topic that the module is about
- describes how the body of the module is organized
- explains the point of writing the module.

The trainer should try to give an idea of the state-of-the art of the field the module is about by providing some background or history for the topic, including e.g. relevant theory, important reports, EU legal framework.

In order for trainees to trust the trainer, the introduction must be well presented, through a well structured presentation. The trainer's aim is to excite the audience's interest, and this is something one has to do from this first part of the presentation of the module.

Section 2: The Objective

Objectives consist of long and short-term goals which are designed to establish intent and provide direction within the subject of each module. It is important for objectives to be specific and concrete as opposed to vague and abstract.

There is a lot of confusion as to what is a goal and what an objective. Basically, a goal is an over-arching accomplishment you wish to see achieved. The goal can be more easily reached if it is broken down into smaller, easier objectives. It is important to be explicit for this part of the modules: it gives the trainees the frame that the module follows to approach the issue.

Section 3: The Problem

The problems section should outline the specific difficulties that each module is attempting to address. They are the specific issues or obstacles which make it challenging to achieve the desired goal. It is important to enrich this part of the training with examples, particularly examples from the local conditions. This will help the trainees to better realise the problem and why it is important to “learn” what to do about it. It is the “what’s in it for me” part of each module.

Section 4: The Solutions

The solutions section should try and give the possible answers to the problems highlighted in the previous section. This is the most important section of the LitusGo modules: it is the innovative part of the LitusGo education approach. It provides concrete, implementable solutions, that can be successfully implemented locally if there is a consensus among the local decision makers and the stakeholders. Usually, training sessions do not include this problem solving approach. Thus, this is the section that the trainer must devote most of the time, since this is the section that makes LitusGo a different training process. Here are some suggestions on how to make the most of this part of the training:

- include examples of best practice used elsewhere which are relevant to the area (i.e. high-tech or low-tech) and affordable,
- encourage discussion, with local potentials and possibilities to implement a certain solution,
- facilitate group work on case studies,
- organise well-structured field trips, assign specific cases to small groups of trainees (no more than 4-5) and encourage trainees to work hands-on on the problem and its possible solution,
- if the weather allows, prefer to do part of this training outdoors. The issues that a trainer teaches are issues relevant to the environment. It is important to be out, even if this only means transferring some of the teaching activities to the back yard of the teaching room!
- Use role playing with well structured scenarios. It helps the trainees to better understand the problems, the arguments and the ways to deal with these conflicting issues.

Section 5: Bibliography

The bibliography at the end of each module lists the most important sources that have been used to compile the module and several additional links to portals and websites for more information. It is important for the trainer to go through them while preparing the training session, locate examples, good practices, problems and present them to his/her audience. It is much easier for an adult (and for a child) to learn by example.

4. Evaluation of the teaching method

Having completed the teaching of the LitusGo module/s, the trainers may consider that the work is complete. However, it is important to ask the audience how they feel about the teaching performance, the education material (e.g. multimedia) and the method (e.g. outdoor activities). Evaluation by the audience has double effect: helps the trainer to improve his/her teaching performance and provides the audience with the feeling that their view matters, is respected and it is taken into account. This boosts the commitment of both trainer and trainees for better performance and a continuation of their relation with possible follow up trainings, meetings etc. The evaluation can take several forms, analytical or multiple choice etc. It can be personalised or it can address the entire training group. During LitusGo, a dedicated and synoptic evaluation questionnaire has been developed, based on two major principles: respect the available time of the trainees, and at the same time provide them with a satisfactory list of evaluation questions and the possibility to address any personal comments. The LitusGo evaluation questionnaire is attached in this document.

5. Concluding remark

The LitusGo training approach has an innovative character. It implements a problem solving orientation and involves active and cooperative learning methods, such as group work, case studies, outdoor teaching, field trips etc., in order to promote positive learning attitudes among the conflicting key actors- target groups. The aim of the LitusGo Education approach and material is to

promote social cooperation and stimulate policy debate among the local key factors involved in these innovative fields of knowledge: integrated coastal zone management and adaptation to climate change.

We hope that this “Hints and Tools” guide will support not only trainers of the LitusGo Education Manual, but also trainers who are dealing with these complex and conflicting environmental issues.

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Alan Pickaver, Hints on preparing training package modules, LitusGo report D6.1, January 2010

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OrganicMed: Trainers manual on training organic farmers in organic crop agriculture. Nicosia 2005 (A Leonardo da Vinci funded program 2000-2006)

LitusGo Evaluation of educational material/educational activity
(Paros, 4-5 July 2011)

Questionnaire for the evaluation of the LitusGo educational material by the trainee.

Title of LitusGo module:

Trainee's Name:

Please evaluate the chapter of the LitusGo educational program that you have just participated in. Thank you for your participation!

Rate from 5 to 1 (5 = excellent, 1 = very poor).

	5	4	3	2	1	Other comments/explanation
1. Overall evaluation: are you satisfied with the content of the lesson?						
2. The degree of innovation in the information you received. Are you satisfied with the new elements contained in the lesson?						
3. Do you believe that the information provided to you today can apply in your area?						
4. Do you think that you had an active role in this meeting?						
5. Evaluate the interaction between instructor and learners.						
6. Evaluate the quality of the presentation of the material and the method of teaching.						
7. Evaluate the form you received.						

8. List the strengths of this meeting.

9. List the weaknesses of this meeting.



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