DESIRA Kicks-Off in Pisa

Brussels, 9 September 2019.

DESIRA (Digitisation: Economic and Social Impacts on Rural Areas) is a Horizon 2020 Project coordinated by the University of Pisa. It aims to improve the capacity of society and political bodies to respond to the challenges that digitisation generates in rural areas, agriculture and forestry, and to provide a comprehensive assessment of both opportunities and threats.

The project brings together 25 organisations from across sectors and disciplines including research institutes, NGOs, and SMEs. This consortium met on Wednesday 4 September in Pisa for two and a half days to kick off the project.

To achieve its goal, DESIRA wants to build a knowledge and methodological base that makes it easier to assess the past, current and future socio-economic impacts of ICT-related innovation. It seeks to embed Responsible Research and Innovation into researchers', developers' and users' practices and policies, and looks to offer mechanisms and tools that will support decision-making on challenges and opportunities related to digitisation.

These and other goals are to be carried out by:

- Mobilising a network of Rural businesses and services, Public Authorities, Citizen groups, Digital technology operators, Farmers, Media and Academics which will be organised together in 20 Living Labs and one EU-level Rural Digitisation Forum (RDF);
- Building a Conceptual and Analytical Framework and a Taxonomy and Inventory of Digital Game Changers based upon the concept of a Socio-Cyber-Physical System[1];
- Drafting a participatory indicator-based method for impact assessment of past, current and future digitisation trends, according to the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation and aligned with the Sustainable Development;
- Developing 80 digitisation scenarios and communicating them through digital storytelling[2];
- Producing 5 Use Cases[3], and Showcase technologies[4] including a virtual reality Virtual Farm Platform for ICT-based solutions to emerging rural/agricultural/forestry problems;
- Producing a Policy Analysis, a Roadmap and an Ethical Code[5];

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[1] 'Socio-Cyber-Physical System' is a term referring to the interconnectedness and mutual constitution of the social world (people), the digital world (data) and the physical world (things).

[2] Digital storytelling is a method that encourages everyday people to share their visions and their concerns through multimedia stories produced with digital technologies.

[3] A Use Case lists and maps the flow of operations necessary to fulfil a goal, given a system and/or a context.

[4] Showcase technologies are proof of concepts demonstrating the characteristics of a RRI-based technology development.

[5] An Ethical Code is a set of principles that, when adopted by an organization, guides its members in taking the right decisions.

- Using a Virtual Research Environment[6] to boost the potential of participatory research.

During the kick off meeting, organisation delegates held several plenary sessions, parallel meetings and training sessions at the Department of Food, Agriculture and Environment of the University of Pisa. These gatherings allowed the consortium to establish the best working methods for the upcoming 4 years in which DESIRA will be running.

The first day presented the different work packages, introduced the communication aspects of the project and jointly reviewed the methodology for the Taxonomy of Digital Game Changers.

The second day included a presentation and discussion on the 20 Living Labs, an online social media training and a closing session on an initial approach to the work of the thematic groups of the Rural Digitisation Forum (RDF).

The final day covered coordination and data management issues and a training session on the project's Virtual Research Environment.

What's next?

"In order to identify a digital game changer, you first need to understand the game. Game changer is a technology that is applied to solve a particular problem in a particular context"

DESIRA will initially carry out a compilation of the most relevant and innovative actors within the concept of Socio-Cyber-Physical Systems. The aim is to come up with a Taxonomy and Inventory of Digital Game Changers. According to Gianluca Brunori (DESIRA coordinator), the first step is to gain a solid understanding of "the game" – the variables involved and the context – and then to identify the main stakeholders in the digitisation landscape who are capable of bringing about notable change to rural areas.

The official website of DESIRA will be launched very soon. In the meantime, please subscribe to our newsletter and follow us on social media to stay tuned.

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[6] A Virtual Research Environment (VRE) is "a web-based working environment tailored to serve the needs of a community of practice, providing the whole array of tools needed to accomplish the community's goal(s)".

More information

@DESIRAH2020

@DESIRA.H2020

www.desira2020.eu (coming soon)

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