Season’s greetings from the Coordinator

By Paola Pittia

The Holiday season is here at last! These last few months have been very hectic for almost all of us. ...we have been working quite hard on the project activities and some good results have been obtained! This is the perfect time to take a breather before we start again to work again on the many IFOOD4 activities that in collaboration with the WP’s coordinators and collaborators of the Core Groups are dealing with and preparing for all the network from January 2013: some surveys are on the way, forums, workshops, teaching materials to be prepared and, last but not least ....the 2nd Overall meeting! Please add in your diary 15-17.May 2013: we will be in Kaunas hosted by our partner Prof. Venskutonis and his colleagues of the Department of Food Science.

Now I take the opportunity to give my best season’s greetings to all you and you’re loved ones as well as my best wishes of health, peace and success in the year ahead.

Qualification of University Teaching Staff

By Anna McElhatton, Richard Marshall, Alena Ilavska, Jesus Frias

One of the activities of the ISEKI network involves the creation of a community of teaching and learning practitioners where common issues related to training of students in the area of Food Studies can be discussed. Previous activities of the ISEKI_food network have shown the importance of sharing educational expertise and being able to promote an open dialogue with the objective of “training the trainer”. Additionally while the engagement in research for an academic is well measured and directly associated with progression in the career, the progression of academics in teaching and learning practise is not so clearly outlined in higher education. Therefore, ways of qualifying this academic progress are of relevance to acknowledge this essential component of the profession.

With this in mind the ISEKI_Food 4 WG4 work group aims to build a framework that will offer a European teaching and learning qualification in the area of Food Studies, addressing the multi-national character of lecturing staff throughout the European Food Studies community. This qualification will identify a series of competencies that are fundamental to the lecturing process while acknowledging the need to have individually tailored programmes to suit national, regional and academic field idiosyncrasies.

The initial activity of the workgroup has focused in the area of assessing the teaching and learning aspects of Food Studies higher education. For that we have developed a number of surveys where 1) training aspects have been surveyed; 2) where focus groups have been built to analyse the needs of different types of academic staff and 3) a proposal for a training module has been polled to gauge the interest of Food Studies academic staff in different teaching and learning areas.

In this short report we are going to showcase the initial analysis of the first survey results. The survey was analysed using 1) bar charts for Yes/No questions and 2) word clouds to text mine open survey questions.

The word cloud approach involved the following steps:
1. Save answers to each open question as TXT, encoding as US-ASCII
2. Remove punctuation
3. Lower case all words
4. Remove stop words
5. Manually group synonym words and use only one representative word
6. Create a matrix of word frequency
7. Produce word cloud using R wordcloud package

The main conclusions of the survey were:
• The educational process is understood by our community on the basis of knowledge and communication or knowledge transfer.
• Assessment, Curricula, Module design, reflection are not taking a relevant place in the discussion.
• Teaching and learning training is only required in 1/3 of the surveyed academic institutions.
• The content of training courses available in Universities is not clear to the lecturers/professors.
• Mentoring is only required in 1/3 of cases and sometimes is negatively associated to probation.
• Quality enhancement and feedback is actively sought after by most surveyed lecturers/professors and is mostly based on student surveys and/or self evaluation. Peer-observation is not normal practise.

Figure 1 Wordcloud mining of the responses to the question: What are the core pedagogic & teaching competences of a lecturer?

Good practices of partnership in the ISEKI_Food network

From Romania….to Germany
by Iryna Smeu

My name is Irina Smeu and I am a PhD student from Romania. I study food engineering at “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati and I work as a research engineer at National R&D Institute for Food Bioresources – IBA Bucharest. Today I am very glad that I have the chance to give my many thanks to ISEKI_Food Network. Thank you for your constant care related to food-specific PhD studies. I must confess that I say this not by any chance. I take advantage of this opportunity to give my many thanks to Mona Popa and Oliver Schlüter, because this summer they made a dream come true: I could work and study next to many great people at Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering Potsdam-Bonim. I like to consider myself a lucky young researcher, willing to find out as many things as possible related to this subject in whom I am really interested in: food science. Maybe you are asking now why I name myself lucky. Let me explain: I am lucky because I love what I am studying and the place where I work. I am lucky because I had the chance to meet so many great people.
and because this summer I had the opportunity to study the incredible cold plasma technology, which for me was fascinating. Now I have the chance to say to you how grateful I am for all of these things. I am just starting my career, and you helped me to have a beautiful beginning, and I wish that you will be able to accomplish this for as many young students as possible!

From Turkey....to Germany  
by Ferruh Erdogdu

Through the collaboration in the ISEKI_Food network, Dr. Ferruh Erdogdu (Department of Food Engineering, Univ. Mersin) spent the summer of 2012 in the Leibniz-Institut für Agrartechnik Potsdam-Bornim e.V. with Dr. Oliver Schluter’s research group working on the optimization of banana cooling process. Dr. Ferruh received a fellowship offered to academics by the Higher Education Institute of Turkey for this research activity. In the meantime, Dr. S. Belgin Erdogdu from the Department of Food Technology at the Univ. Mersin also worked with Dr. Schluter’s research group on plasma pasteurization of spices. Dr. Ferruh and Dr. Oliver are planning to extend this collaborative research activity.

Have you been visiting at a partner institution and would you like to share with all the network his/her experience? Please send us your contribution. We will publish it in the next issue of the newsletter!