



IN FOCUS: CONSORTIUM MEMBERS' MEETING

Meeting in Romania, 15–19 May 2026

OpenEAT: International Cooperation for Cereal Product Safety and the Development of European Vocational Education and Training

International Erasmus+ KA220-VET project OpenEAT — “I eat to live or I live to eat”

As part of the international educational project OpenEAT — “I eat to live or I live to eat” (Erasmus+ KA220-VET), from 15 to 19 May 2026, researchers from the Institute of Climate Smart Agriculture of the National Academy of Agrarian Sciences of Ukraine, Nataliia Valentiuk and Taras Zhygailo, Senior Researchers and PhDs, visited Timișoara, Romania, on a working visit. The visit took place within the framework of an international training programme aimed at strengthening the professional competencies of specialists, exchanging scientific and practical experience, and promoting modern European approaches to ensuring the safety of cereals and their processed products.

The OpenEAT project brings together partner organisations from Ukraine, Romania, Italy, Serbia, and France around a shared goal: improving vocational education and training in food safety, developing modern educational resources, and strengthening cooperation among research institutions, educational establishments, and representatives of the agri-food sector.

On the Ukrainian side, coordination of the partners' participation in the project is carried out by Iryna Antonik, Leading Researcher at the Department of Systems Bioengineering in Animal Husbandry of ICSA NAAS and Ukrainian Project Coordinator for OpenEAT. This coordination helps align the Ukrainian team's activities with the international programme, disseminate the project's results, and support their practical application in Ukraine.

International Training in Timișoara: Science, Education and Practical Experience

The training activities took place at the University of Life Sciences “King Mihai I” from Timișoara, which served as a platform for professional dialogue among representatives of partner organisations and for strengthening international cooperation.

The training programme focused on current issues related to cereal product safety control, the detection of chemical contaminants, the assessment of risks to human health, and the application of modern laboratory analysis methods. Particular attention was paid to European approaches to agricultural raw material quality control, the prevention of contamination throughout the food chain, and the implementation of environmentally oriented production technologies.

The importance of such training activities lies in combining scientific knowledge with the practical needs of the agri-food sector. Cereal safety depends not only on the quality of the harvested product but also on compliance with good practices at every stage, from soil preparation and crop cultivation to harvesting, storage, transportation, and processing.

For the Ukrainian researchers, participation in the international training programme provided an opportunity to learn about the experience of European partners, discuss modern approaches to contaminant control, and explore the potential application of the knowledge gained in research activities and the professional training of specialists.

Key Training Areas

Participants learned about innovative technologies for contaminant monitoring, European requirements in the field of food safety, and practices for implementing environmentally oriented technologies in agriculture.

The visit provided an important platform for professional dialogue, the development of international cooperation, and the establishment of new partnerships between Ukrainian and European research institutions.

The knowledge and practical experience gained will contribute to the further implementation of modern approaches to food safety, environmental monitoring, and the training of agricultural specialists in accordance with international standards.

Control of Cereal Contamination

The training addressed the risks of cereal contamination with nitrogen compounds, pesticide residues, and heavy metals. A key task is the timely identification of potential sources of contamination and the implementation of preventive measures to reduce risks at different stages of production.

Modern Analytical Methods and Laboratory Monitoring

Particular attention was paid to the role of laboratory testing in determining contaminant levels, assessing product compliance with established requirements, and ensuring the reliability of monitoring results.

Environmental Safety and Sustainable Agricultural Production

The discussions covered approaches to reducing the negative environmental impact of agricultural production, good crop cultivation practices, and the importance of environmental monitoring in ensuring the quality of cereal products.

European Requirements and Quality Management Systems

An important area of the training was familiarisation with European approaches to food safety control, risk management, and product traceability. These tools are particularly important for developing trade and enhancing the competitiveness of Ukrainian agricultural products.



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Harmonisation of Ukrainian Standards with European Union Requirements

An important focus of the international training was the study of approaches to harmonising national requirements for the safety of cereals and their processed products with the regulatory requirements of the European Union.

Particular attention was paid to the principles of contaminant control, compliance with established maximum levels, the application of modern laboratory analysis methods, and the implementation of food safety management systems.

Harmonisation involves not only aligning regulatory approaches but also improving practical mechanisms for monitoring agricultural product quality, ensuring traceability throughout the production chain, and enhancing the reliability of laboratory results. Key elements of this process include the application of good practices in grain production and storage, the assessment of chemical contamination risks, compliance with requirements for pesticide residues and heavy metal content, and the control of nitrogen compounds in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.

For Ukraine, this area is particularly important in the context of European integration and the expansion of access for Ukrainian agri-food products to the EU market. Bringing national legislation and monitoring practices closer to European requirements helps enhance the competitiveness of cereal products, strengthen the confidence of international partners, and improve consumer health protection.

The Importance of the Training for Ukraine's Agri-Food Sector

Grain safety is of strategic importance to Ukraine as a major participant in the international grain market. Compliance with requirements for contaminant levels, the proper organisation of laboratory testing, and the implementation of modern quality management systems are essential to preserving export potential, maintaining access to European markets, and strengthening consumer confidence.

In the context of wartime risks, disruptions to logistics chains, and damage to production infrastructure, the assessment of potential sources of contamination, strengthened agricultural product monitoring, and the development of practical recommendations for risk mitigation are becoming increasingly important. Therefore, the exchange of experience with European partners has not only educational but also practical value for Ukrainian research institutions and specialists in the agri-food sector.

The knowledge acquired during the training can be used to improve educational materials, support specialist training, advance scientific research, and promote modern methods for monitoring the safety of cereal products. Another important outcome of international cooperation is the opportunity to compare national experience with European practices and identify areas for the further development of professional competencies.



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Contact

For more information about the **OpenEAT project – I eat to live or I live to eat**, the activities carried out and the results obtained, we invite you to follow us online:

◆ Project Coordinator:

ROMPAN – Romanian Employers in the Milling, Bakery and Flour Products Industry

◆ Project website:

🌐 <https://rompan.ro/portfolio/openeat/>

VISIT TO TIMISOARA, ROMANIA

official website of ICSA NAAS (publication date 05/21/2026)

<https://icsanaas.com.ua/openeat-i-eat-to-live-or-i-live-to-eat-erasmus-ka220-vet/>

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