

EU LEADER + Programme

LEADER + is a European Union Community Initiative for assisting rural development. It is the third phase of the LEADER initiative and it runs from 2001-2006. Since its launch in 1991, the LEADER programme has encouraged the active involvement of local communities in the development of rural areas.

LEADER in Northern Ireland

The two previous LEADER programmes in Northern Ireland made an important contribution to economic and social development. LEADER II, which ran between 1994 and 1999, supported over 2000 projects and created over 200 new businesses.

LEADER +

The LEADER+ programme, which covers all of rural Northern Ireland, aims to encourage small business development and thereby increase the economic and employment contribution that businesses, including small farms, make to the rural economy. It also aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

These priorities are delivered by focusing on the development of micro-business and job creation. The target groups include women, young people, farmers and farm families, and the long-term unemployed.

The LEADER + programme in Northern Ireland is funded jointly by the EU and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Its total value is approximately £20 million with around £10 million provided by the EU.

The programme is managed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. It is implemented through 12 LEADER + Local Action Groups who are provided with funding to develop and implement approved strategies that take an integrated approach to address the needs and potential of small businesses in their areas.

More information

- For further information on LEADER + contact the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Rural Development Division, Dundonald house, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3SB, Tel: 028 9052 5435, <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/frames/rdpni01.htm>
- Visit www.eugrants.org for information on how to apply and for contact details of the LEADER Local Action Groups in Northern Ireland.
- Further information on EU rural development policy, including LEADER + from: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/index_en.htm

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