

## WORKING MIRACLES IN RURAL GALICIA

Tackling gender gaps in employment and supporting women in reconciling their working and family lives are the core activities of the Spanish DELOA-EQUAL Development Partnership (DP). It links equal opportunities to local development - with very impressive results!

Life appears to be a vicious circle for many women in the rural parts of the A Coruña Province. They take the brunt of family responsibilities and if they succeed in finding employment, it is generally in low-paid, part-time or short-term jobs within the black or grey economy. These women desperately need regular work to make ends meet and to ensure the survival of their families. But secure employment opportunities are usually only to be found in larger cities. Apart from the issue of having the appropriate qualifications, this presents women with a vast range of problems. How to get access to affordable care facilities for your children or frail members of your family? How to get to and from your workplace, especially if you have neither a driving license nor a car, and there is no suitable public transport? How to manage your household while you have to cope with the responsibilities of a full-time job and the additional travel time involved? How to convince a potential employer that you are able to cope with these difficulties and still be a reliable, productive employee?

For the vast majority of women in this province, it is impossible to find answers to these problems. The [DELOA](#) DP is helping to break the vicious circle that constrains them by creating new, satisfying job opportunities within the rural communities in which they live. Within the [TEAM](#) transnational partnership, DELOA cooperates with [German](#) and [Portuguese](#) DPs.

### **Assessing and valuing women's potential**

As a first step, [DELOA](#) set up a huge database to collect all the necessary information that training providers and employers might require for recruitment. The database covers formal and informal qualifications, specific needs and career expectations. The project team then interviewed 1000 women who volunteered after the DP had carried out a publicity campaign in the eight local communities that are the partners in DELOA. As a start, 100 women were selected and are currently participating in DELOA's multi-faceted activities that include training, creating and sustaining jobs and producing more satisfying work-life-balances. Most of the women had been used to working the land and this had been their main productive activity, outside the home, for many years. Although, at present, there are few economically viable activities which can provide income for rural families, their skills are proving useful for new career paths opened up by DELOA, for instance in gardening and horticulture.

### **Creating childcare also means creating jobs**

To enhance women's opportunities of finding and retaining a job, the project has set up a childcare facility in one village. A cattle farm has been transformed into a centre that now caters for children between 4 and 14 years of age. Minibuses collect and return children to all of the other villages within the DP's territorial area. This centre provides workshops that have been designed to counterbalance the use of television as a "baby-sitting-service" and so they promote the children's active participation in recycling, handcrafts, theatre, body expression, nature, popular games and sports. In term-time - these workshops take place after school but during the summer vacation they might even last all day.

Women beneficiaries are being trained and supported to set up more childcare centres, and the intention is that this should assist them to create their own jobs. The training is very much based on learning by doing, and therefore the workshops for children are being run in parallel to the training programme. Young people with relevant experience such as educationalists, nurses or teachers are hired as resource persons and work as carers alongside the women. Additional young people from other European countries (funded through the Voluntary Service Action of the EU Youth Programme) are also involved and their presence makes language learning easier for the children. Once the first group of women has completed the training programme, a second childcare centre will be set up in another village. The idea is to continue this process and gradually enlarge the provision. This will be achieved through close cooperation with municipalities and local associations. At the end of the project, the DP expects to have a small company up and running to deliver these and other family support services - a business directed



by local associations or local women that will play a key role in the promotion of both equal opportunities and economic development.

### **Training and job creation in promising market niches**

Once women have their childcare needs met, they are then free to benefit from the second key strategy of DELOA. They are offered training in a range of occupations, which present promising job prospects such as horticulture, rural tourism, carpentry and furniture restoration. Again, the idea is to

create sustainable jobs either through starting small businesses or through social economy enterprises. The DP is very well aware that facing the challenge of becoming an entrepreneur is beyond the capacities of a large number of its women beneficiaries. Therefore, the social economy is seen as a realistic option particularly, as it can build on the prior experience of the DP's lead partner, the private [Paideia](#) Foundation based in the city of A Coruña

Paideia has an impressive track record of creating inclusive employment for vulnerable groups on the labour market. Under the name of Trébore (shamrock) sl its [social economy enterprises](#) are operating in the areas of graphic design, horticulture and furniture restoration and all are renowned for the quality of both their products and their working conditions. The foundation also constructed a business incubator in A Coruña to house and support SMEs working in the craft and service sectors. Following the success of this model, DELOA is setting up its own incubator to promote the growth of micro-businesses emerging from the project. These are transport services; care for children and other dependents; a shop to market beautifully restored pieces of antique rural furniture and a sales point for a garden nursery

### **Enhancing local development through a mix of European funding instruments**

All of the above is not simply a 'wish list'. Thanks to a clever combination of EQUAL, Proder II (the EAGGF Community Initiative) and EU Youth Programme Voluntary Service funding, things are taking shape in the A Coruña Province. Proder II subsidies are used to provide financial help for starting, consolidating and growing local businesses. Five women business creators from the EQUAL project have already benefited from this scheme. Under the umbrella of Trebore sl, the mother company, they are running a nursery which grows a large variety of plants and offers gardening services to public and private customers. They have also become role models for other women who considering creating their own jobs.

Employment opportunities that are generated thanks to business growth achieved with the help of Proder II, are increasingly being offered to DELOA beneficiaries. The closely-knit network of local communities within the DP ensures fast and efficient support to companies that want to recruit new members of staff. A common Internet communication platform enhances cooperation and transparency and helps to ensure that all possible changes are taken to further the interests of the target group and to promote economic development in the various areas. This common commitment is a new experience for the municipalities. "It has never happened before ", says one of Mayors. "We can work together successfully, despite different political affiliations. DELOA-EQUAL has achieved a real miracle." This is also true for the women beneficiaries. They are each working their individual miracles: truly beginning to reconcile family responsibilities with their careers. They believe that this is due to all of the support received from DELOA. However, through their personal development, they have rediscovered a confidence in their own strengths as women and skilled workers, and this is also very much part of that miracle.

#### **DELOA-EQUAL**

Guillermo Vergara  
FUNDACION PAIDEIA GALIZA (FPG)  
Plaza María Pita 17, E-15001 A Coruña  
Tel. +34 98 1223927  
Fax +34 98 1224659  
E-mail: [vergara@paideia.es](mailto:vergara@paideia.es)  
[www.paideia.es](http://www.paideia.es) - [www.deloa.es](http://www.deloa.es)